

[REDACTED]

From: Rob Shepherd [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, 5 August 2017 3:23 PM
To: Retail Electricity Inquiry
Subject: TRIM: My Experiences with Electricity Retailer - Regional Queensland

HP TRIM Record Number: D17/108523

ACCC
Retail Electricity Pricing Inquiry
5 August 2017

RE: Some observations on residential retail electricity pricing

I write in response to the ACCC, who seek feedback from retail electricity consumers.

Some observations

In Queensland, the large electricity generators such as CS Energy and Stanwell, plus retailers Ergon and Energex remain as government-owned corporations. As a result, these corporations who represent about two-thirds of generation and supply capacity, use their significant market power to drive up wholesale and retail electricity prices. In my opinion, this represents Queensland Government taxation by stealth of the state's electricity consumers.

In the 1960's when I was a young adult in Victoria, the State Electricity Commission (SEC) delivered residential power supply which was **sufficient, affordable and reliable**.

In 1992 under the Keating Labour Government, Professor Fred Hilmer presented a ground breaking review in 1993 of national competition policy, which established the framework for the regulation of Australia's public utilities, including electricity, for the following two decades. Competition was supposed to reduce prices and offer greater choice. It has achieved neither of these objectives !

In Toowoomba, Queensland our only retailer is Ergon Energy, no competition and higher prices over the past decade, including the Service Fee which has become a significantly higher percentage of the total bill. The various retail electricity price comparison web sites, are meaningless to those consumers who live outside south east Queensland.

On 30/01/2016 we were vacant from our home for 45 days. ALL power was turned off and no one visited our home. Yet our quarterly bill received for the period 17/02/2016 – 18/05/2016 (26 days away from home) was \$30 higher than the previous bill for the period 18/11/2015 to 17/02/2016 (19 days away from home). We generally see Ergon contractors reading our meters and query whether the meter reading for our bill in question was an estimate ? Interestingly, we'd previously phoned Ergon Energy to advise we would be away for 6+ weeks and would turn off all our power appliances over the 2 billing cycles.

Continued gouging of electric consumers, is certain to cause social dislocation and economic hardship to those on pensions or fixed incomes, and without doubt will become a touch point issue at future State and Federal elections.

Robert Shepherd

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