

# Improving the Consumer Care Guidelines

Name: *Breahn Stubbs*

The Electricity Authority intends to publish all submissions it receives. If you prefer parts of your submission NOT to be published, please indicate which parts and why.

Do you think that the Guidelines are currently delivering on their purpose and intended outcomes?

No. Not only did The Electricity Authorities review show us that retailers ~~(are)~~ are NOT consistently following the guidelines (48% of them! And that was a self-tested review!), but we can see the harm this is causing consumers. With disconnection + reconnection fees unreasonable, consumers already experiencing financial hardship either live frugally (eg. ~~the~~

~~But~~ Someone in my family rents a house, ~~but~~ and all 5 kids sleep on mattresses upstairs together, as their rooms downstairs are too cold, they can't afford to use heaters overnight, and they don't want to run out of \$ and be disconnected. They even have tried using bubble wrap on the windows to keep warm, over using heaters, to avoid eventual disconnection + the <sup>additional</sup> fees that come with that). or, they build up

Do you agree that parts 2, 6, 7, and 8 are the parts of the Guidelines that prevent the greatest harm from occurring to consumers?

debt from fees, even while disconnected.

Yes, but we think that care of customers is an absolute priority, and making ALL guidelines mandatory will ensure no-one slips through the cracks, continuing to struggle due to retailers not following guidelines that remain mandatory. Fees + bonds need to be reasonable, or consumers will continue to spiral into debt. (part 9) Info about payment difficulties would give retailers more reason to care for their customers! (part 3)

AND prepay customers should be made aware of the risk of disconnections when credit runs out. (part 4)

## Improving the Consumer Care Guidelines (continued)

Do you agree with our preliminary preference for option 3?

No. Customers are NOT sufficiently protected by option 3 - Please make all guidelines mandatory! ~~is~~ I am aware of many consumers who have ~~it~~ stacked up debt from unreasonable fees (part 9), so even if you need to make ALL mandatory in 2 stages, to have the time to set it up + monitor compliance, please include part 9 (fees + bands) in the FIRST stage of action. Please commit to making all mandatory from the start, even if change comes in waves (within a committed time-frame).

What issues that fall outside of the current Guidelines would you like to see us consult on next?

Power should NOT ~~be~~ be a privilege - Please PROTECT people who are currently being penalised for being poor.

- ① Ban disconnection and reconnection fees, ~~for~~ when people have been disconnected because they can't afford to pay their bills.
- ② Prepay electricity is currently used by many low income households - Please ensure that prepay is NO MORE expensive than pay-monthly plans.
- ③ Please PUBLISH quarterly disconnection data, so we can see harm caused by disconnections via data  
Please email a photo of your completed form to [consumercareconsultation@ea.govt.nz](mailto:consumercareconsultation@ea.govt.nz). (including prepay disconnections!)

Submissions close 5pm 2 October 2023.