

## *Improving customer transfers*

### **Suggestion: initiate the transfer application process in parallel with the 10 day cooling-off period**

The current customer transfer process is unnecessary slow and complicated for consumers whose meter is read once every three months. One possible solution would be for retailers to accept photographs of electricity meters instead of estimated reads. Users who want a speedy transfer could sign a statutory declaration saying that the photograph was taken on the stated day.

Another significant problem is that the current 10 day cooling-off period is not working as intended. It might have been beneficial when retail companies were conducting door-to-door recruitment campaigns. However, a different protocol is needed when consumers initiate the request to change retailers. If the transfer process were to begin in parallel with the cooling-off period, current retailers would have the option of contacting the customer and perhaps offering a better plan. What is the point of having a 10-day period that has already expired before the current retailer has a chance to respond?

Many customers plan their switches around the 3 monthly meter reads and might not be aware of the cooling-off period, or that some retailers treat the cooling-off period as 10 business days, and therefore do not even start the switch until 14 days after they receive the transfer request.

The cooling-off period was intended to protect the interests of consumers. In most cases customers making valid applications to transfer at the next meter read, should be allowed to do so, even if the next read is within the cooling off period, rather than having to wait for another 3 months. A rule change is therefore required.