



## Introduction of metering coordinator planned interruptions

**The AEMC has made a more preferable draft rule to provide customers with shared fusing at their premises greater certainty on when their electricity meter will be installed.**

Customers with shared fusing cannot have their meter installation completed without affecting supply to one or more other customers as there is only a single point of isolation. These customers may experience delays when they want a new electricity meter installed or a faulty electricity meter needs to be replaced.

### The Commission's draft rule

The draft rule introduces timeframes for the installation of meters to be completed in cases where there is shared fusing at a premises. Under the draft rule, where it is discovered the installation of an electricity meter, or the rectification of a malfunctioning meter, will require interrupting the supply to other customers the following timeframes would apply:

- retailers would be required to complete the meter installation within 30 business days of discovering the shared fusing
- metering coordinators would be required to rectify meter malfunctions within 30 business days of discovering the shared fusing
- upon request by a retailer or metering coordinator, distributors would be required to carry out a distributor planned interruption within 25 business days in order to allow for the retailer or metering coordinator to meet their timeframes.

The draft rule also:

- contains minor changes to make it clear that a retailer is able to interrupt supply to any of its own customers for the purpose of installing, maintaining, repairing or replacing metering equipment, not just the customer receiving the new meter, subject to meeting existing notice or consent requirements.
- amends the requirements to be covered within the Metrology procedure to require retailers and metering coordinators to inform distributors when shared fusing is discovered, with distributors to then record the shared fusing information as soon as practicable.

### The rule change request

The Chair of the Competitive Metering Industry Group (CMIG) submitted a rule change request to the Commission seeking to reduce delays in meter installation for customers where the customer's supply cannot be interrupted without interrupting the supply of another customer.

The Chair of CMIG proposed resolving this issue by allowing metering coordinators to carry out planned supply interruptions of any customers (subject to their consent being obtained or the provision of four business days' notice) for the purposes of installing, maintaining, repairing or replacing an electricity meter. Under the proposed rule, metering coordinators would be able to interrupt supply of the customer who has requested metering work, as well as interrupting supply to any other electricity customers as required to enable the planned metering work to be completed.

The Commission considers that the rule proposed by the CMIG introduces a number of risks for customers, particular in the area of consumer protections. Additionally, the Commission considers that the rule proposed by the CMIG only partially solves the issue.

The draft rule provides new meter installation timeframes for customers with shared fusing to improve meter installation timeframes for these customers without impacting consumer protections.

### **Consumer protection risks of the proposed rule**

There is a lack of any contractual relationship between the metering coordinator and both the customer whose meter is being installed and other customers whose supply will be interrupted. Customers therefore have inadequate consumer protections and limited recourse if obligations in the national electricity rules (NER) and national energy retail rules (NERR) are not met. This includes a lack of access to independent dispute resolution via energy ombudsman schemes should they not be able to resolve an issue directly with the metering coordinator.

There is also an increased risk that customers may ignore, or be confused by, planned interruption notices from metering coordinators, as they generally will not be aware of the metering coordinator. Additionally, some metering coordinators are likely to have less access to customers' data and life support information than retailers or distributors.

### **The proponent's solution only addressed part of the issue**

The Commission considers that the rule proposed by CMIG would only provide partial resolution for delays in meter installation where there is shared fusing. Metering coordinators will still generally not be aware of shared fusing until the site visit to attempt the meter installation. The proposed rule did not require information on shared fusing to be collected and shared with other market participants. Further, site visits and the associated costs once shared fusing is discovered would only be saved if the adjacent affected customers are home at the time of the installation attempt, and the authorised customers are willing to consent to the supply interruption on-the-spot.

### **Benefits of the Commission's draft rule**

The Commission is of the view that the draft rule better promotes the long term interests of energy consumers. Issues relating to contractual relationships with the impacted customers are addressed by the draft rule, and recourse is available to customers should the retailer or distributor not comply with its obligations in the NER and NERR. Further, the draft rule minimises risks to customers using life support equipment.

The draft rule provides certainty of installation timeframes for customers with shared fusing. Requiring retailer to carry out meter installation where there is shared fusing within a specified time, along with a requirement for distributors to carry out planned interruptions, where requested within a specific timeframe should assist in reduce meter installation delays for these customers. This would allow customers who have requested a new meter to access new services to manage their use and cost in a more efficient timeframe than under the current rules.

The draft rule also seeks to improve consumer outcomes over time by the requirement for AEMO to include in its metrology procedures obligations on retailer and metering coordinators to inform distributors of shared fusing that they become aware of, and on distributors to record the shared fusing information as soon as practicable.

### **Background**

Under the NER, retailers are responsible for arranging metering services for small customers. Retailers must appoint a metering coordinator for each of their small customers' connection points. In general, the retailer provides instructions to the metering coordinator for any metering work needed by the customer. The metering coordinator has overall responsibility for all issues related to the metering installations for which it has been appointed, and in turn appoints a metering provider for each connection point to provide, install and maintain the meter installation.

There are timeframes in the NER under which a metering coordinator must arrange for a small customer's faulty meter to be repaired or replaced, as well as metering installation timeframes for retailers to install meters for new connections and meter exchanges. For customer initiated meter replacements there are currently a number of exceptions from meeting the metering installation timeframes. One of these exceptions relates to where the installation of a new meter cannot occur without interrupting the supply to another customer. Therefore, there are currently no timeframes for customers with shared fusing.

In order for the metering coordinator to carry out a meter replacement, a planned interruption to the electricity supply must occur. Under the NERR there are retailer planned interruptions and distributor planned interruptions. Retailers are able to arrange for an interruption to their customer's electricity supply without the involvement of the distributor (a 'retailer planned interruption') where the interruption:

- is for the purposes of installing, maintaining, repairing or replacing an electricity meter; and
- does not involve either the distributor effecting the supply interruption or interrupting the supply of electricity to a customer that is not the customer of the retailer arranging the interruption.

In other circumstances a distributor planned interruption must currently be arranged.

### **Consultation on draft determination**

The Commission invites submissions on the draft more preferable rule and draft rule determination by **13 February 2020**.

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