

5 December 2020

Manager
Smart Meter review
Australia Energy Market Commission
PO Box A2449
South Sydney NSW 1235

Dear Manager

RE: private submission into review of Smart Meters

I put forward the following so you know from a user / real customer perspective what are the issues that we have experienced. Talking to friends and colleagues who have no knowledge of the power market they incurred similar issues. So what is written is broader than just our experience.

Your rules are driven by the powerful grid and retailers not the customer.

Your rules talk about the customer getting information and hence being able to manage their energy.

This is NOT possible under the current rules

These current rules are totally in favour of the grid and add yet more complexity to the customer who it has to be said knows little about energy market.

Your current rules were never followed up in spirit with any form of education. Why? This is a massive fail.

I am an engineer with power industry background and to be honest the current rules are way too complex even for someone like myself who has some knowledge. The rules are based on highly technically focused and motivated engineers from the various grid companies / vested interests who's sole aim is to circumvent the true intention of smart meters / power of choice etc. You cannot expect the average person to be an expert in energy particularly when you make it so obscure / do not enable information and there is not education.

We have two properties in QLD. In Brisbane - Alinta retailer and Energex as distributor. In Esk Origin as retailer and Energex as distributor.

Both houses had digital meters and were built 2011 and 2013 respectively.

We recently decided to put PV solar in both.

Should have been simple.

The PV supply and install was.

However then the problems started after install.

At Esk we got a text telling us that Origin would be changing meter. We texted back saying NO call us. They did not. They just went ahead and installed a smart meter. The matter is now with the QLD Energy ombudsman.

At Kenmore we received a call from Alinta (overseas not local and almost impossible to understand). They said the meter would break etc and had to be replaced. I rang the meter supplier. The model of meter we have works VERY well with solar The ONLY function it does not have that the

newer smart meter has is there is no ability for the grid to remote disconnect export. This matter is also in hands of the ombudsman.

The explanation /lies including telling us that AEMC rules are breeched etc. All this from the retailers has been nothing less than market dominance trying to continue maul the customer.

At no time did either retailer advise us of Power of Choice. Indeed they seemed unaware of even when it was pointed out.

When asked how we the customer get the energy information from the proposed smart meter there has NOT been any response. They do not understand this concept it seems or are unwilling to provide.

Doing some research reveals that it is likely only a few smart meters might be capable of providing the customer data directly from the meter. What is the use of installing so called smart meters which do not provide the capability to send energy information directly to the customer?

Why is this not a mandatory requirement of all new smart meters that they we set up with information to customer capability? This is the first rule change you have to make. All smart meters - that have been installed to date and will be installed must allow the customer direct access thru wireless protocols to their energy information. This is NOT to go to the retailer who then tries to hid it / use is for their purposes / sell it back to the customer.

When asked why only PV installations since 2017 need smart meters - there is no answer. What is your answer to this? If my smart meter allows the grid to auto disconnect export supposedly on rare occasions of grid instability (I do not trust them on this what so ever by the way as they are market manipulators) why does this same rule not apply to all PV installations that export? What is the difference between my PV system just installed and my neighbours which was installed 10 years ago?

So rule number 2 that needs to be changed is if you mandate smart meters for new PV then ALL PV systems that export must be retrofitted with these new smart meters. Failure to do this creates clear preferential treatment - or is this what AEMC wishes to perpetuate?

Rule 3 - AEMC to provide suitable apps for computers and smart phones that allow the customer to understand and analyse their energy. You say you want people involved but you failed to provide the tools and relied instead on self interested grid / retailers who really do not want to give that power / information to customer.

Why are smart meters really necessary? Sure if I can get energy data directly it will help me. But perhaps I am technically savy to understand this and use it. My wife - a highly educated person with decades of senior management experience in banks just cannot understand Energy. So are you really pushing this smart meter for the customer? If so where is the access to information thru current smart meters and apps that allow us to understand and compare? You say one thing then your actions are counter. I do not believe smart meters are necessary

I do not believe the grid needs local control of individual household export unless such was say over 100kW. The local distribution systems are of a suitable size that if there are grid issues the grid would be able to adjust the area - not isolate particular households and stop export. Show me facts that justify this remote disconnection is necessary on individual basis. Show me the added cost for a meter with this compared to a meter without it. Until AEMC has transparency on such matters your decisions will be challenged and rightly as you have failed in the setting of rules many times and this smart meter implementation is just another example.

When we asked the retailer what meters were available and what do they do / what comms each has we were meet with silence. Not one word has come back on this. You need to punish retailers for this sort of action. You are way easy on them.

If a new smart meter is needed - and you have not shown it is other than to say its part of your rules - its imperative that the right meter be installed. Surely if you want to buy a car you just don't ring up a car company and say send me a car? Or perhaps AEMC does and hence why the rules are such a poor state for the customer.

Rule 4. Retailers and grid who fail to provide a new meter within 5 business days (not 15) of the PV system install shall compensate the customer for loss of energy not produced by the PV system. 6 hours per day X 0.85 factor X inverter rating.

The above is highly critical of AEMC and the existing rules. Simply put after going thru the process - which is still not finished as there is still no meter at Brisbane for a system installed 5 November - its clear that the current rules are the outcome of grid and other powerful lobby groups.

You have failed completely to look after the customer. Simply put there is no powerful customer groups that can push back against the vested interests of the grid companies. We expect AEMC as Govt. agent to be peoples champion and stop helping build more power to the grid companies.

Final comment - what developed countries around the world have implemented smart meters and how successful have they been in regard to enabling the customer to manage their energy? Surely you know this. UK? After all the modelling that was done to prove it was financially best outcome that was a disaster. So tell me why I need a smart meter - that I cannot get information directly from yet gives the grid more control over my system and also gives them data on how I consume power.

Sincerely

Geoff McEntee

