

Cowell Electric Supply Prepayment Customer Monitoring and Reporting Policy

About this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that customers utilising the Remote Area Energy Supply (RAES) scheme Electricity Prepayment System (EPS) are supported in maintaining their electricity supply and are provided assistance when needed. The Policy applies to all customers with access to the EPS in remote townships and communities within the RAES scheme. This incorporates the townships of Blinman, Cockburn, Glendambo, Kingoonya, Manna Hill, Marla, Maree, Nundroo, Oodnadatta and Parachilna, including Prescribed Prepayment Customers in Communities and associated Homelands within the APY Lands, Oak Valley and Yalata.

This policy does not extend to the RAES Independent Operators in Andamooka, Coober Pedy and Yunta.

Special arrangements have been made for Prescribed Prepayment Customers. Details of these arrangements are outlined further in this Policy.

All generation, distribution, and retail services under the RAES scheme are regulated by the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA). The ESCOSA Prepayment Meter System Code (Code) provides rules around how electricity should be sold to customers using an EPS. ESCOSA is responsible for issuing the relevant licences to Retailers to specify how these rules are carried out.

This Policy details how monitoring and reporting requirements are to be carried out by Cowell Electric Supply (CES) under the RAES scheme to ensure that customers experiencing hardship are identified and supported in a timely manner.

Payment Difficulties and Hardship

The ESCOSA Code identifies a prepayment customer as potentially being in hardship (and therefore potentially has difficulty paying for electricity) when the following occurs:

- the customer or a third party acting on behalf of the customer, informs the retailer that they are experiencing payment difficulties, or
- when the retailer's prepayment management system identifies that a customer has self-disconnected three or more times in any three-month period for longer than 240 minutes on each occasion.

In addition, RAES considers extended self-disconnection (24 hours or more) is also a potential indicator of customer hardship.

Monitoring

Daily monitoring of customer self-disconnections will be undertaken by CES, utilising data from the smart meter operating system. The information will be analysed to highlight which customers have self-disconnected, how frequently they are disconnecting, and for what length of time. Customers who meet the stated criteria will be highlighted in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) database.

Customer Contact and Support

Customers who have been identified within the potential payment difficulty and hardship criteria will be contacted by CES to establish the reason for self-disconnection.

Per the requirements of the Code, CES must:

- make reasonable enquiries to identify the reason(s) for the self-disconnections
- provide the option to revert to a post-payment system, at no cost to the customer (not applicable to Prescribed Prepayment Customers)
- provide information about the standard terms and conditions options available to the customer
- provide information about and referral to state government assistance programs
- provide general energy efficiency advice and/or referral to an energy efficiency advice service and;
- provide information on independent financial and other relevant counselling services.

Home Energy Support Officer (HESO)

The HESO role is to provide on-ground support to prescribed prepayment customers who have been identified within the potential hardship criteria however CES have been unsuccessful in making contact via phone. CES may also refer a customer to the HESO as a result of a discussion with the customer if they need additional financial support.

Upon visiting the household, the HESO will ascertain the reason for self-disconnection and provide education and support per the requirements of the Code and relevant licence, as stated in the Customer Contact and Support section above.

Reporting

As part of the licence conditions, CES is required to report to ESCOSA on the below metrics on a quarterly basis, including data 'as at' the end of each month.

- number of prescribed customers
- number of prescribed customers on payment splitting arrangements
- number of times emergency credit was accessed
- number of times friendly credit was accessed
- number of self-disconnections
- average duration of self-disconnection (greater than 5 minutes and excluding instances where a house is intentionally disconnected, e.g., house is unoccupied).
- number of times the minimum requirement for follow-up of self-disconnection were met
- the reason for self-disconnection
- number of life support customers notified to the Retailer
- number of life support customers registered with the Retailer

ESCOSA will summarise the quarterly information received into an annual report and publish it on the ESCOSA website.