

Submission to the Electricity Commission on the proposed Joint Electricity Commission and Gas Complaints Resolution Scheme, from David Close

1. My name is David Constable Close. I am a former member of the Commission. During my time as a member, I took an active interest in consumer affairs.
2. I note that the objective is to provide consumers with “free access to a complaints resolution scheme founded on the principles of accessibility.....effectiveness and community awareness.”
3. I am fully supportive of this objective, but consider that the scheme fails the principles of accessibility, effectiveness and community awareness. I am aware of the current scheme because it came to my attention often when I was a Commissioner. However, it has not been brought to my attention as a consumer since I have been simply a consumer. A complaints scheme that consumers do not know exists cannot pass the tests of accessibility, effectiveness and community awareness.
4. I do not blame the organisers of the current scheme for this failure; I lay the blame squarely on the shoulders of my retailer, who does not inform me that the scheme exists. My monthly bill provides a telephone number for enquiries about the bill, but does not so much as hint that there is a complaints resolution service available to me if I am not satisfied with my retailer’s response. (In passing, I note that my retailer took prompt remedial action when I made a complaint several years ago about a grossly inaccurate bill.)
5. The practice of electricity retailers (I assume mine is typical) is in contrast to that of broadcasters, who regularly inform me of my right, after first contacting the broadcaster, to complain to the Broadcasting Standards Authority. It is essential that retailers make known to their consumers the existence of the complaints resolution service that they purport to support.
6. **Submission: That the Commission, as a condition of approval of the scheme, require retailers to agree to inform consumers of the availability of the complaints resolution service on all bills that they send to consumers.**
7. I do not wish to comment on other matters. In my view, all other aspects of the scheme are peripheral as compared with the matter I have raised.

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