

Consumer NZ

Approval of a Joint Electricity and Gas Complaints Resolution Scheme

Comment on Consultation Paper

May 2008

Consumer New Zealand Incorporated
Private Bag 6996
Wellington

Ph (04) 3847963
Fax (04) 3858752

www.consumer.org.nz

Consumer NZ is a broad-based national consumer organisation. On behalf of our 80,000 members we test products, compare the quality of services, research and comment on current consumer issues and expose exploitation of consumers by unscrupulous traders.

Overall Consumer agrees with the process and creation of a single Electricity and Gas Complaints dispute resolution scheme as set out in the consultation paper. It needs to be spelt out clearly that the scheme is free to consumers, is an alternative to going to court (but does not prohibit that), that complaints will be dealt with in a timely fashion, it should clearly outline what powers the service has, and that other people can complain on a consumer's behalf, with their authority. The scheme must comply with both the Fair Trading Act and Consumer Guarantees Act, where applicable.

Suzanne Chetwin
Chief Executive Officer
Consumer NZ

Email: suzanne@consumer.org.nz

Ph (04) 3847963

1. Objective and Scope Requirements

1.2.5 30 working days is probably too long for a complaint to be considered. Consumer recommends 20 working days.

2. Membership Requirements

2.1.1-2.1.2 Promotion of the scheme should be done in plain language and consideration be given to promoting in other languages ie Maori, Pacific Island and Asian languages

3. Procedure Requirements

3.4 Consumer questions the need for legal representation. The dispute resolution service should be seen as informal and encouraging of consumer complaints. The Banking Ombudsman Scheme specifically says lawyers are not required as it is a free service operating as an alternative to going to court.

3.7.2 Consumer questions the need for confidentiality unless requested by the complaining consumer. This could be seen as the members trying to keep controversial subjects away from the public eye. It should be up to the consumer to decide what is public and what is not.

5. Decision Making

5.3.2 Maximum compensation should be periodically reviewed.