MEDIA RELEASE

COMMISSION RELEASES FINAL DECISION ON CONSUMER PROTECTION CODE REVIEW

The ACT Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission today released its final decision on updating the Consumer Protection Code for utility services. The Code sets out the rights of consumers of electricity and gas services and water and sewerage services.

"The new Code ensures ACT consumers have strong basic consumer protections that address the priority concerns of consumers and are, where possible, consistent with consumer protections in other jurisdictions," Senior Commissioner Joe Dimasi said.

Under the new Code, the utilities will have to monitor their performance against guaranteed service levels and pay customers a rebate when service levels are not met. Previously, customers had to know about the available rebates and apply to the utility when a guaranteed service level was not met. Now affected customers will automatically receive a rebate when the service they receive doesn't meet the guaranteed standard.

"Automatic payment of rebates will not only see more customers receive the rebates they are entitled to, but also give the utilities stronger incentives to improve their performance," Senior Commissioner Joe Dimasi said.

The Commission has also amended the Code to ensure that ACT consumers receive similar protections as consumers in other jurisdictions. The new Code includes:

- new guaranteed service levels for wrongful disconnection and poor reliability;

- requirements for water utilities to have a financial hardship policy; and

- enhanced processes and protections for customers on life support.

As part of its review, the Commission has considered rebate values and ensured they are appropriate and in line with other jurisdictions. The new Code also includes enhanced reporting requirements to support effective monitoring of utilities' compliance with the Code.

In reviewing the Code, the Commission has undertaken extensive community consultation and worked closely with Icon Water, Evoenergy and consumer representatives. The Commission thanks everyone who made submissions or attended the public forum.

The new Code will come into effect from 1 July 2020.

ENDS

To contact the Commission, please visit www.icrc.act.gov.au.

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BACKGROUND

The Consumer Protection Code sets out the rights of consumers in relation to the supply of electricity, gas, water and sewerage services. The Code contains a range of consumer protections including:

- guaranteed service levels and payment of rebates to customers;
- requirements for standard customer contracts for water and sewerage services;
- customer information requirements and processes for billing and debt collection;
- obligations the utilities must meet when dealing with customers, such as notice periods and complaint handling;
- the circumstances in which a utility can interrupt, restrict or disconnect services; and
- protections for consumers in properties with life support equipment.

The Code was first determined in 2000. The Code was last amended in 2012, when changes were made as result of the ACT entering the national electricity market. Some consumer protections applying to electricity retailers were moved into the national electricity consumer framework at that time.

Guaranteed service levels and payments that will be made to customers

Guaranteed Service Level	Rebate value	
Connection times - connection timeframe not met	$60 per day (max $300)	
Responding to complaints - substantive response to complaint not provided within 20 days	$20	
Wrongful disconnection (energy only)	$100	
Planned interruptions (Notice period) - Required notice not given	$50	
Interruption duration - single interruption lasts more than 12 hours	$80	
Interruption duration **(cumulative per year)** (energy only)	Level 1 – 20 hours Level 2 – 30 hours Level 3 – 60 hours	$80 $150 $300
Frequency of interruptions - more than 9 interruptions per year	$80	
Respond to network fault or incident - response timeframes not met	$60	