

Austin, Lisa (DPaC)

From: SANDRA HEALEY
Sent: Monday, 1 August 2011 3:23 PM
To: Electricity, Mailbox (DPaC)
Subject: Submission to The Electricity Supply Industry Expert Panel

Importance: High

ATTENTION: MR. JOHN PIERCE - PANEL CHAIR

Dear Sir,

I write as an ordinary citizen, a tax payer, a voter and a former school teacher and principal, living now on a fixed income, not a large fixed income, but a fixed one and needing to be carefully budgeted and spread over many costs, none of which are luxurious or could in ones wildest dreams be regarded as lavish. I also write as a person having just read in this mornings Examiner of [retired] politicians who are still living off tax payers money flying around Australia all expenses paid, not in the course of public business, but just enjoying themselves, whilst those on low incomes struggle to make ends meet, unable to afford to pay their electricity and other necessary bills to keep their families from going under. It's not difficult to understand why citizens and vote-payers become annoyed, even disillusioned.

Electricity prices in this state have increased by over 30% since 2006 and are predicted to increase a further 20% + by 2012 and more again beyond this without even factoring in carbon tax. These figures are frightening Mr. Pierce and the government does nothing to allay anxiety about them. In fact, they insult the intelligence of most by inferring that inability to pay these inflated prices is a matter of poor budgeting skills, rather than the problem being the largely unaffordable costs.

Another issue which is often unaddressed is the fact of lack of competition. Here in Tasmania we have no choice in our service provider. It's Aurora or nothing. Were we to live in Melbourne for example we would have a choice of ten [10] providers all vying for our connection fees, contracts, billing arrangements, supply charges and addresses so they could send us their accounts. We could discuss discounts and benefits, we could discuss concessions, we could discuss tariff variations, the list is endless. Here we can do nothing. It's like being held to ransom. It's Aurora or nothing.

But not so for the government. No. They have choice. Not citizens. Just the government. The government does not choose Aurora.

Recently I contacted Aurora to express my concerns about these issues. The response I received was less than satisfactory. Basically I was told that the charges were reasonable, competitive [with who or what?] and that I could look up a couple of [Aurora] websites if I doubted what I was being told. So much for customer service. But then, that's what happens when there's no competition. Arrogance and complacency. Because of course, they're right. What am I going to do? I have no other resource. No other provider to turn to.

What will your Panel do Mr. Pierce? I look forward to the outcome. Not, I have to tell you, with breath that is bated.

Yours sincerely
Ms. Sandra Healey
St Helens