

18 April 2023

Dear Retailer

Better Bills Guideline - Bill relief rebate message

On 9 December 2022 National Cabinet agreed to the *Energy Price Relief Plan*.¹ As part of the plan, the Australian Government is working with state and territory governments to provide up to \$3 billion in targeted electricity bill relief to residential consumers and small businesses facing rising energy costs.

These changes are expected to take the form of a series of bill relief rebates commencing from 1 July 2023.

Under section 37 of the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) *Better Bills Guideline* version 2², the AER may decide to approve information as 'Tier 1 information' that is otherwise not defined as part of Tier 1 information. Tier 1 information must be included on the front page of a bill.³

In response to a request from the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy and Water, the AER is considering making a decision under section 37 of the Guideline to approve a statement to the following effect to be included as part of Tier 1 information for all retailers:

Your electricity bill has been reduced by your eligibility for a \$x rebate funded by the Commonwealth and state governments under the Energy Price Relief Plan".

We note that depending on how the rebate is implemented across Commonwealth and state governments it is possible that the level of the rebate may differ across jurisdictions.

We propose to make the section 37 decision on the basis that the message may assist customers to better understand their bills, in line with the "bill objective" set out in the National Energy Retail Rules. Under the bill objective the bill is to provide, amongst other things, billing information that enables small customers to easily understand payment amounts and how their bill is calculated.⁴

¹ See <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/energy-price-relief-plan>

² See https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER%20-%20Better%20Bills%20Guideline%20%28Version%20%29%20-%20January%202023_0.pdf

³ Section 24, Better Bills Guideline, Version 2

⁴ Rules 25A(3) of the National Energy Retail Rules.

While the section 37 decision would require retailers to comply from 30 September 2023 when the new billing requirements take effect, retailers may elect to adopt the new billing requirements at an earlier date.

We note that under the transitional arrangements that are in place until the new billing requirements take effect, retailers are required to include on a small customer bill *'any amount deducted, credited or received under a government-funded energy charge rebate, concession or relief scheme or under a payment plan'*.⁵

Under these transitional arrangements, retailers are required to specify any rebate under the Energy Price Relief Plan on small customer bills. The AER will consider retailers to be complying with these transitional arrangements if they include on small customer bills, from 1 July 2023, the words set out above that the AER is proposing to approve as Tier 1 information under section 37 of the Guideline.

We would welcome submissions on our proposal to approve the bill relief rebate message as Tier 1 information. If you would like to comment, please send a submission to consumerpolicy@aer.gov.au by 2 May 2023. If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact Mark Feather on 03 9290 6958.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Clare Savage', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Clare Savage
Chair

⁵ Under Part 2, Section 10(p) of the Better Bills Guideline, Version 2