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Dear Ms McGrath

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *AER price comparator website – Issues paper*.

As you would be aware, the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA) currently operates an estimator website for South Australian consumers to compare retailer offers. The website has been very successful in achieving the aim for which it was established, namely offering a simple and effective tool to users in researching switching options.

The issues paper illustrates that the AER price comparator will similarly offer a useful tool to users. It is suggested that the AER also try to ensure, as much as possible, that the website remain easy to use and accessible to all users. Excessive amounts of in depth information may lead to confusion for users. Energy Division supports the AER's proposal of offering additional information to those customers who choose to follow links to retailer fact sheets.

While South Australia is a single distributor jurisdiction, the identification of a user's distributor, where the postcode alone cannot identify the distributor, would be most simply accomplished through the use of an interactive map as suggested by the AER on page 5 of the issues paper. Instructing a customer to leave the website to contact their retailer may lead to users abandoning the tool.

With regard to question 10 of the issues paper, Energy Division considers that the most appropriate way for the estimated result to be presented is as an annual figure, regardless of the time period for which information is initially inputted. Annual amounts are larger and will illustrate more clearly those offers which contain the greatest saving for users. An option could then be included for the user to see information in quarterly or monthly figures.

Question 13 of the issues paper asks what other price components would be appropriately included in a results table. Energy Division considers that customers should be made aware of the possibility that they may be charged

switching fees, special meter read fees or early termination fees if they decide to switch retailers. These fees may impact on the amount of savings achieved.

With regard to question 17 of the issues paper, Energy Division supports the inclusion in the results table of an estimation of annual savings compared to the local standing offer. The comparison clearly illustrates the discounts available from the applicable regulated price. The ESCOSA estimator currently provides this comparison for users. An annual savings estimate would be even more appropriately compared to the user's current market contract, however, it is understood that this would necessitate a more complex input requirement for the comparator.

Finally, Energy Division supports the ability of people to access the comparator via telephone either as a freecall or for the cost of a local call.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the issues paper.

Yours sincerely



**Vince Duffy**

Executive Director, Energy Division

Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure

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