



## **ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION – SERVICE QUALITY PERFORMANCE FOR THE SEPTEMBER QUARTER 2004**

### **Introduction**

The Authority's *Electricity Distribution: Service Quality Reporting Guidelines* require Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSPs) to provide data on specific service quality measures on a quarterly and annual basis. The Guidelines are available on the Authority's website at [www.qca.org.au](http://www.qca.org.au). The Authority commenced posting the reports provided by the DNSPs on its website with the September quarter 2002 reports.

For the quarterly reports, the Authority provides a very brief overview of the measures reported by the DNSPs. For the annual reports, the Authority provides a more detailed review of DNSPs' service quality performance and, as annual data is accumulated, it will review the performance of each DNSP over time. The Authority's annual report of service quality performance for 2002-03 was released in March 2004 and is available on the Authority's website. The Authority expects to release the 2003-04 annual report in early 2005.

The March quarter 2004 saw the occurrence of a number of weather related events affecting Energex's network. In addition to the well reported problems with the distribution network itself, those events exposed some weaknesses in the reporting regime, particularly in relation to customer service measures when the call centre is unable to handle the volume of calls being received. The data reported for the March quarter 2004 also raised some general questions as to how calls reaching the call centre were being classified.

As a result, the Authority will be amending the Service Quality Reporting Guidelines to record: the number of calls to the automated interactive voice response system; the number of unsuccessful calls to the call centre during an overload event; and to clarify the definition of a complaint. In addition, changes will be made to collect a slightly more detailed set of reliability data. These amendments are discussed in the Authority's 2005 Draft Determination on distribution regulation, which is available on the Authority's web site.

The Electricity Distribution and Service Delivery (EDSD) Review recommended that the distributors and the Authority consider applying a statistically-based method for excluding reliability data. In response to this recommendation, a working group with representatives from Energex, Ergon, the Department of Energy and the Authority was established. The working group has agreed to adopt what is known as a 2.5 beta method for determining exclusion events. This decision is also discussed in the Authority's 2005 Draft Determination on electricity distribution. For the sole purpose of supporting uniform national reporting of reliability data, the Authority has also proposed that the distributors be required to provide the Authority with the same data normalised on a 3 minute SAIDI basis.

## **Summary of the DNSPs' September quarter 2004 service quality reports**

The service quality measures collected by the Authority are not intended to allow comparison of the two DNSPs with each other. This is because Energex and Ergon Energy operate in very different environments. Energex operates a distribution network that is located in the urban area of South East Queensland whereas Ergon Energy operates a distribution network spread across the remainder of the state. As a result, it is to be expected that the distributors' performance will vary significantly on a number of service quality measures.

The service quality measures that the DNSPs are required to report against fall into three broad groups – reliability measures, quality of supply measures and customer service measures.

**Reliability** measures provide information about interruptions to electricity supply. Interruptions can occur because of problems with generation, transmission or distribution. Distribution interruptions may be planned or unplanned, and unplanned interruptions will at times be due to events that are beyond the control of the DNSPs, such as severe storms. A DNSP's performance is best indicated by the duration and frequency of planned and unplanned interruptions that are due to distribution network problems within the distributor's control (although lengthy and frequent interruptions due to other influences may indicate a need for improved risk management measures on the part of the distributors).

**Quality of supply** measures are intended to indicate problems with the nature of electricity supply, such as low or high voltage levels, based on customers reporting symptoms that are typically associated with such problems.

**Customer service** measures provide information about how customers' problems, enquiries and requests for services are handled by the DNSPs.

## **ENERGEX**

### *Reliability measures*

Energex improved its reporting of reliability data in the September quarter 2004 by using the actual number of customers affected by interruptions in its calculations rather than estimated customer numbers as used previously. However, as reliability data is calculated based on a 12 month rolling average basis, the full effect of moving to the use of actual customer numbers will not be revealed until the June quarter 2005 report (when 12 months of data collected under the new method will be available). It would appear that moving to actual customer numbers will slightly worsen Energex's reliability performance relative to the likely outcome under the previous estimated approach.

Based on the data submitted by Energex in accordance with the Authority's Service Quality Reporting Guidelines (which allows for the exclusion of the impact of severe weather-related events), Energex customers, on average, experienced 1.88 distribution-related interruptions during the 12 months to end September 2004, leaving them without power for a total of 174.9 minutes. These figures compare to 1.79 distribution-related interruptions and 160.6 minutes without power during the 12 months to end June 2004, indicating that the underlying reliability of electricity supply for the September quarter 2004 deteriorated slightly compared to the September quarter 2003.<sup>1</sup>

Consistent with the Authority's Guidelines, Energex removed the impact of six severe weather-related events from its distribution-related reliability performance for the March quarter 2004. Although these events occurred in the March quarter 2004, they still impact the September quarter 2004 reliability data because the reliability measures are based on a 12 month rolling average.

Without these events excluded (that is, measuring the distribution-related reliability customers actually experienced), Energex's customers, on average, experienced 2.51 distribution-related interruptions, leaving them without power for a total of 386.3 minutes during the 12 months to end of September 2004. These figures compare to 2.40 distribution-related interruptions and 362.6 minutes without power during the 12 months to end June 2004. After allowing for the effect of changing the basis of determining customer numbers, these figures indicate that the unadjusted reliability of electricity supply for the September quarter 2004 deteriorated slightly compared to the unadjusted reliability performance for the September quarter 2003.

Energex reported that customers made 51 complaints regarding the reliability of supply in the September quarter 2004, compared to 74 complaints in the June quarter 2004.

### *Quality of supply measures*

Energex reported that it received a total of 489 technical quality of supply complaints during the September quarter 2004 which was an improvement on the 547 complaints during the June quarter 2004. The largest decreases were recorded for complaints relating to low supply voltage

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<sup>1</sup> As quarterly reliability measures are based on 12 month rolling averages, the only difference between results for the June and the September quarters in 2004 is that the former includes September quarter 2003 reliability data while the latter includes September quarter 2004 reliability data. Therefore, comparison of reliability data for the June and September quarters in 2004 is effectively a comparison of reliability performance during the September 2003 and 2004 quarters.

(which can cause light dimming and motor starting problems) and waveform distortion or unbalance (which can cause erratic performance of electrical equipment). Changes recorded for the quality of supply complaint categories in the September quarter 2004 might have been affected by Energex's adoption of a new data reporting system that, according to Energex, should be more consistent with the Authority's reporting categories.

#### *Customer service measures*

During the September quarter 2004, Energex customers had to wait, on average, 34 seconds to speak to an operator when calling the call centre, down from 50 seconds during the previous quarter. However, the percentage of calls abandoned increased from 7.1% in the June quarter 2004 to 8.2% in the September quarter 2004. Energex's loss of electricity supply phone number reached its capacity on 13 August 2004 due to loadshedding-related outages caused by a generation problem in NSW. As a result, some calls directed to this number on that day were not answered. The mixed performance of Energex's call centre may have been influenced by the 4.4% increase in the total number of calls to the call centre compared to the June quarter 2004.

The proportion of total customer appointments that were not met within 15 minutes of the agreed time deteriorated from 2.4% in the June quarter 2004 to 2.9% in the September quarter 2004.

In other measures, Energex customers had to wait, on average, 4.03 days for a new connection to the network compared to 4.06 days during the June quarter 2004. The proportion of new connections that were not made on the agreed date improved significantly from 4.4% in the June quarter 2004 to 2.1% in the September quarter 2004, even though the number of new connections made increased by 51. The proportion of re-connections that were not made on the agreed date improved from 2.7% to 2.1% over the same period, even though the number of re-connections made increased by 160.

The average time taken to repair faulty street lights decreased from 3.7 days in the June quarter 2004 to 3.5 days in the September quarter 2004. Over the same period, the occasions on which the required notice of a planned interruption to supply was not given decreased from 32.0% to 27.0%, while the occasions where the duration of a planned interruption exceeded the time specified in the notification increased from 39.0% to 43.0%.

The reported total number of complaints decreased slightly from 377 in the June quarter 2004 to 372 in the September quarter 2004. The average time taken to resolve these complaints improved from 10 days to 8 days over the same period. The percentage of total complaints resolved within 20 days improved from 84.0% in the June quarter 2004 to 93.0% in the September quarter 2004.

The average time taken to fix a technical supply fault increased significantly from 9 days in the June quarter 2004 to 44 days in the September quarter 2004. In order to be more consistent with the Authority's Guidelines, Energex has changed the reporting of this measure. Energex has changed the method of calculating the average time taken to fix a technical supply fault to reflect the total time taken to rectify the problem. Previously this did not include network augmentation work.

## **ERGON ENERGY**

### *Reliability measures*

During the 12 months to end September 2004, Ergon Energy customers, on average, experienced 5.07 distribution-related interruptions, leaving them without power for a total of 560.0 minutes. These figures compare to 5.10 distribution-related interruptions and 561.2 minutes of time without power during the 12 months to end June 2004, indicating that the reliability of electricity supply for the September quarter 2004 improved slightly compared to the September quarter 2003.

Ergon Energy customers made 173 complaints regarding the reliability of supply in the September quarter 2004, compared to 200 complaints in the June quarter 2004.

### *Quality of supply measures*

Ergon Energy reported that it received a total of 606 quality of supply complaints during the September quarter 2004 which was an improvement on the 653 complaints during the June quarter 2004. The largest decreases were recorded for complaints relating to severe voltage dips (which are based on symptoms such as interrupted production, switches dropping out and direct financial loss) and other non-categorised complaints.

### *Customer service measures*

During the September quarter 2004, Ergon Energy customers had to wait, on average, 44 seconds to speak to an operator when calling the call centre, up from 36 seconds during the previous quarter. However, the percentage of calls abandoned decreased from 4.6% in the June quarter 2004 to 4.2% in the September quarter 2004. Ergon Energy's loss of electricity supply phone number reached its capacity on 13 August 2004 due to loadshedding-related outages caused by a generation problem in NSW. As a result, some calls directed to this number on that day were unanswered. The mixed performance of Ergon Energy's call centre may have been influenced by the 3.9% increase in the total number of calls to the call centre compared to the June quarter 2004.

In other measures, Ergon Energy customers had to wait, on average, 2.50 days for a new connection to the network compared to 2.70 days during the June quarter 2004. The proportion of new connections that were not made on the agreed date deteriorated from 4.9% in the June quarter 2004 to 6.8% in the September quarter 2004, while the proportion of re-connections that were not made on the agreed date improved from 5.1% to 4.8% over the same period. This may have been partly due to the 128 fewer re-connections made. Ergon Energy customers had to wait, on average, 0.95 days to be re-connected to the network in the September quarter 2004 compared to 1.23 days during the June quarter 2004.

The average time taken to repair faulty street lights decreased from 3.3 days in the June quarter 2004 to 2.8 days in the September quarter 2004. Over the same period, the occasions on which the required notice of a planned interruption to supply was not given decreased from 7.2% to 5.2%, while the occasions where the duration of the planned interruption exceeded the time specified in the notification also decreased from 33.1% to 29.8%.

The reported total number of complaints decreased from 1,479 in the June quarter 2004 to 1,429 in the September quarter. The average time taken to resolve these complaints improved from 14

days to 12 days over the same period. However, Ergon Energy modified its reporting of the total number of complaints and the average time taken to resolve these complaints in the September quarter 2004, which may explain some of the improvement in these measures. The percentage of total complaints resolved within 20 days deteriorated slightly from 93.9% in the June quarter 2004 to 93.1% in the September quarter 2004. The total number of repeat complaints increased from 19 in the June quarter 2004 to 26 in the September quarter 2004, while the average time taken to resolve repeat complaints significantly increased from 3 days to 24 days (which were respectively the lowest and highest average waiting times since public reporting of Ergon Energy's service quality data began under the Authority's Guidelines).

The average time taken to fix a technical supply fault increased slightly from 16 days in the June quarter 2004 to 19 days in the September quarter 2004, which may have been due to a change in Ergon Energy's reporting of this measure to be more consistent with the Authority's Guidelines. Previously, Ergon Energy only included the time taken to resolve the problem for the customer without including any time taken for network augmentation work. Ergon Energy changed the method of calculation of the average time taken to fix a technical supply fault to include the total time to rectify problems which arise and are fixed during the current quarter.