

ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION – SERVICE QUALITY PERFORMANCE FOR THE DECEMBER QUARTER 2002

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. The Authority commenced posting the reports provided by the DNSPs on its website with the September quarter 2002 reports, released in February 2003.

For the quarterly reports, the Authority will provide a very brief overview of the measures reported by the DNSPs. For the publication of annual reports, the Authority plans to provide a more detailed review of DNSPs' service quality performance. The annual reports will include more extensive analysis and, as annual data is accumulated, allow the performance of each DNSP to be assessed over time.

Summary of the DNSPs' December quarter 2002 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

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).

During the 12 months to the end of the December quarter 2002, Ergon Energy's customers, on average, experienced 4.67 distribution-related interruptions, leaving them without power for a total of 500 minutes. These figures have increased from 4.34 distribution-related interruptions and 451 minutes of time without power as at the September quarter 2002, indicating that the reliability of electricity supply for the December quarter 2002 has deteriorated compared to the December quarter 2001¹. Ergon Energy noted that the reliability measures deteriorated due to a number of natural

¹ As quarterly reliability measures are based on 12 month rolling averages, the only difference between results for the September and the December quarters in 2002 is that the former includes December quarter 2001 reliability data while the latter includes December quarter 2002 reliability data. Therefore, comparison of reliability data for the September and December 2002 quarters is effectively a comparison of reliability performance during the December 2001 and 2002 quarters.

phenomenon, including bushfires and dust storms followed by rain, which caused damage to the network.

Over the same period, Energex customers, on average, experienced 2.01 distribution-related interruptions, leaving them without power for a total of 187 minutes. These figures have increased from 1.92 distribution-related interruptions and 169.9 minutes of time without power in the September quarter 2002, indicating that the December quarter 2002 reliability performance has deteriorated compared to the December quarter 2001. The increase in complaints for reliability of supply for both DNSPs would appear to reflect the slight decline in reliability performance.

Quality of supply measures

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.

Ergon Energy reported on five of the nine measures required in the Guidelines and has indicated that it is implementing a new complaints system to report the remainder by the September quarter 2003. Ergon Energy received a total of 761 quality of supply complaints during the December quarter 2002 compared to 585 complaints during the September quarter 2002. The most significant contributor to this increase was complaints about minor voltage dips.

Energex reported on eight out of the nine categories of quality of supply problems required in the Guidelines and has indicated that it will report the ninth (voltage spikes) in the June quarter 2003. Energex received a total of 672 quality of supply complaints during the December quarter 2002 compared to 768 complaints during the September quarter 2002. The largest falls in complaints were recorded for low supply voltage and voltage swells.

Customer service measures

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

Two measures that both DNSPs have reported against for the December quarter 2002 relate to call centre performance and timeliness of new connections. During the December quarter 2002, Ergon Energy customers had to wait, on average, 53 seconds to speak to an operator when calling the call centre, compared to 27 seconds during the previous quarter. On average, customers had to wait 4.5 days for a new connection to the network compared to 11.81 days during the previous quarter. Energex customers had to wait, on average, 1 minute and 45 seconds to speak to an operator when calling the call centre, compared to 3 minutes and 3 seconds during the previous quarter. Customers had to wait, on average, 4.15 days for a new connection to the network compared to 4.1 days during the previous quarter.

Other measures of interest include, for Ergon, the total number of complaints, which increased from 1187 in the September quarter to 1519 in the December quarter 2002. However, the percentage of total complaints resolved within 20 days improved from 90% to 92% over the same period.

For Energex, the proportion of total customer appointments that were not met within 15 minutes of the agreed time improved from 3.22% in the September quarter to 1.96% in the December quarter 2002. However, the proportion of total new connections that were not made on the agreed date increased from 3.69% to 7.02% over the same period.