

Submission to ...

AER Draft Decision on Retail Exempt Selling and Network Exemptions Guidelines – Further Conditions



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Dear Stephanie,

We thank-you, and your team, for the opportunity to offer feedback on the two further conditions that you have flagged (email dated Monday 23rd June 2025). However, we, again, reiterate that these proposals only reinforce our firm belief that the Retail Exempt Selling Guidelines must be split into the five main categories (or via activity class as some submissions have suggested). Grouping all embedded networks under the one regulatory umbrella unfairly penalises those network operators who do not operate their network for profit, and the continual addition of more impost is increasing the unnecessary administrative and cost burdens on small Residential Park Operators.

Questions 1, 2, and 3 – Addition of Ombudsman Scheme Details to Billing

While we understand the intent of this proposal, we are concerned that this will add confusion to billing, and will, in the longer term, contribute to a rise in the costs associated with utility supply and with the viability of continuing to supply permanent residential opportunities for operators.

The NSW Residential (Land Lease) Communities Act 2013, already offers a robust set of consumer protections, particularly:

- Section 83 – Billing frequency and detailed content requirements
- Section 77A – Electricity price caps tied to the IPART median market offer
- Section 80 – Mandatory separate metering
- Section 84 – Immediate receipt provision
- Section 81 – Disclosure of changes to utility charges bundled in site fees

These protections already mirror the intent of the Better Bills Guidelines, by ensuring transparency and fairness. Introducing Ombudsman contact information risks confusing residents, delaying or complicating the resolution process. Furthermore, in NSW the cost for the operator could also increase.

EWON's 2024 Annual Report notes more than \$17 million collected from 'Fixed base and customer number fees' and 'Variable casework fees'. Though not all of these fees apply to embedded networks, it is worth noting that under the current fee structure, a park may be charged [REDACTED] for a resident making an enquiry and an additional [REDACTED] for a formal complaint. These are costs that we cannot recover, as EWON's own Case Handling Manual prohibits passing these on to residents during investigations. This imposes a disproportionate financial burden on small embedded network operators, including Residential Parks.

Additionally, the suggestion by EWOQ that this would “ensure embedded network customers are aware of the existence of EWO’s as **the** relevant external dispute authority” (emphasis added), overlooks the fact that there are other avenues for Residential Land Lease Residents. In NSW, residents already have access to dispute resolution through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) under Section 82 of the Residential (Land Lease) Communities Act. (This fact is true for other states.) These tribunals offer a more simple, cost-effective method of resolving disputes of all manner of issues, including utilities disputes, in Residential Parks.

We support the exemption for Residential Park Operators with fewer than 30 permanent residents. However, based on our operational experience, we believe this threshold should be increased to 50 residents. The operators of embedded networks within Residential Land Lease Communities will typically lack in-house billing or administrative support and use semi-automated systems. They will require the support of their third-party providers to update templates and systems, which could take upwards of three to six (3-6) months.

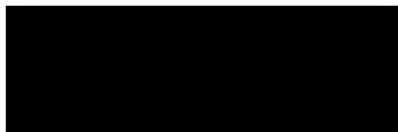
Additionally, requiring them to update billing templates or interfaces imposes a compliance burden that is disproportionate to any identified risk or systemic consumer harm. We believe that increasing the exemption threshold to 50 residents would achieve better regulatory balance and reduce unintended compliance costs for small operators who are already adhering to strong consumer protections under our state-based legislation.

**Question 4 –
Refund of Remaining Credit**

We support this proposed requirement. It aligns with good commercial practice and fairness principles. Returning any credit balance upon termination is standard in many industries and helps maintain trust and transparency with residents. Most park operators would already operate under this assumption and formalising it in the guideline reinforces consistent treatment across the sector.

Should you require any further information or want clarification on any of our points above, you can contact either of us on [REDACTED] or email us at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Frank Edwards
(Owner)



Alison Edwards
(Manager)