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By email
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Minimum Disconnection Amount Consultation

The ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) makes the following comments on the minimum disconnection amount in its capacity as Jurisdictional Energy Ombudsman for the Australian Capital Territory.

Question 1

The factors discussed in the Consultation Letter are appropriate and do not need amendment or expansion.

Question 2

There is no need to consider any additional data.

Question 3

ACAT has not recorded any cases where an energy account was disconnected for a debt of less than \$300.

We consider that the minimum disconnection amount is currently set at an appropriate level. It is preferable for collection action to commence at an early stage rather than when the debt has grown to an amount (in the thousands of dollars) which is effectively unrepayable by a low income client.

In the ACT, disconnections generally occur only at a much larger amount than \$300. It should be noted that the ACT has the additional hardship disconnection/ reconnection mechanism provided by Part 12 of the *Utilities Act 2000*.

It should also be noted that the average quarterly gas bill of \$383 is made up of much lower average bills in Summer and much higher average bills in Winter, because of the dominance of space heating in domestic households in the ACT.

Questions 4 and 5

ACAT supports retaining a minimum disconnection amount of \$300.

Question 6

A further review in 5 years is appropriate.

Yours sincerely



su Peter Sutherland
Senior Member
ACT Civil & Administrative Tribunal