

Guidance Note

Compliance obligations: Retail Pricing Information Guidelines (RPIG)

Issued: January 2019

Version 5 of the Retail Pricing Information Guidelines (RPIG) was issued in April 2018. The purpose of the RPIG is to provide guidance to retailers in the presentation of standing offer plans and market offer plans, thereby assisting small customers to consider and compare various plans by retailers.

Basic Plan Information Document (BPID)

Retailers are required to present standing and market offer plan prices in accordance with the RPIG including when publishing and advertising those plans.

A key requirement of the RPIG is that retailers must have plan documents available for customers in relation to generally available and restricted plans.

This document is known as the Basic Plan Information Document (BPID).

The BPID is generated through the Energy Made Easy (EME) retailer portal and retailers must link to this document in EME.

Marketing of retailer plans

The RPIG specifies the obligations that need to be met when the retailer either engages in marketing activities for itself or where the retailer engages outsourced sales channels to undertake marketing activities on its behalf.

These obligations extend to door-to-door sales, in-person marketing and other marketing by agents including third party comparison websites and utilities connection services.

New obligations from 1 January 2019

From 1 January 2019, obligations around the provision of BPIDs extend to retailers publishing or advertising through third party call centres and websites.

Summary of key obligations

BPID links

Retailers are required to:

1. On their websites—provide a prominent link to the BPID on EME for all generally available plans they market.
2. If using a third party (including a comparison website) provide a prominent link to the BPID on EME for all generally available plans being marketed.
3. On mass media and social media—include a statement as prescribed in the RPIG describing where the BPID is available.

BPID links must be clear and prominent and in close proximity to any reference of the plan.

Retailers must also ensure customers are able to:

1. access BPID links without having to provide technical or personal information other than information required to determine the customer's eligibility for the plan
2. access a link to the BPID as an initial step in any online search or sign up process.

Other key obligations

Retailers must also:

1. in any door-to-door sales or in-person marketing activity—provide customers with a BPID at the time of contact
2. be able to identify and refer to the EME generated plan ID in communications with customers
3. remove expired or obsolete plans from EME within two business days of that plan being unavailable to customers.

Compliance with the RPIG

Where retailers choose to market their product offerings by using outsourced sales channels, including third party comparison websites and utilities connection services, it is the retailer's responsibility to ensure that arrangements and commercial agreements are such that compliance with the RPIG (and the use of compliant BPIDs) is met.

Approach to compliance and enforcement

As set out in the AER Compliance and Enforcement—Statement of Approach, the AER considers a culture of compliance to be critical to the achievement of the national energy objectives and to build consumer confidence in energy markets.

The prevention of contraventions of obligations under the National Energy Retail Rules and the National Energy Retail Law is preferable to the AER taking enforcement action after a breach has occurred.

If you require further information regarding this guidance note, you can contact the AER at AERConsumerandPolicy@aer.gov.au.

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