

Submission to AER

Powercor Problems

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Unfortunately we have suffered ongoing problems with Powercor and our attempts to resolve the issues with them have been unsuccessful.

We made a complaint to EWOV because of a high number of power outages including ten in one year, seven in a two month period. Five were planned. A loss of power is one thing – it ruins food supplies and interrupts our ability to care for animals - but access by strangers and vehicles without sufficient notice, is worse.

Powercor have frequently entered our property with no notice. (They cut our chain and installed their own padlock). They have left gates open and driven over paddocks crushing new vegetation and their trucks have terrified our animals who have either escaped or ended up caught in fencing.

Whilst we understand emergency situations are different, in the case of planned access all we wanted was the courtesy of notice as is required under 3.3.4 of the act.

1. Notice of access.

We asked for one week's notice (preferably two) of required access for planned events such as cyclic maintenance/inspections. This would appear reasonable given Powercor would have a pre-defined schedule of inspections/maintenance. Other regional energy providers provide this notice.

Powercor say they will only provide one day's notice which is completely inflexible and unreasonable. It does not allow us time to prepare or move jittery animals. We are not always at the property.

One day's notice is not in line with what other providers would provide, nor with clause 3.3.4 which states "other than in emergency situations, a distributor must use reasonable endeavors to access a customer's premises at a time that is reasonable and convenient to both the customer and the distributor".

2. Notice of planned outages.

We also asked for assurance of two weeks' notice of planned outages to allow us to prepare. This appears reasonable given other regional providers can provide it to their regional customers and Powercor themselves say they can provide it (but have never provided it).

But Powercor will only commit to providing the four days minimum notice as required under the Act.

3. Contact point.

We have asked for a local contact or regional manager to be able to speak with given the problems we have had. This was in fact suggested by other energy providers.

But Powercor say they will only provide the contact name and number of their Customer Service which has not helped in the past. They are not available or able to assist at any time Powercor crews are working.

Not only have Powercor entered with no notice, they use routes that are not for vehicle access.

We have worked hard to revegetate our property and to provide a safe environment for animals. Our experience with Powercor has been nothing but stressful and adversely impacted our ability to enjoy our property. We wish we could change providers. Even installing solar panels would apparently not stop us having to deal with Powercor because we have one of their poles on the property. We would not ever buy a property with Powercor assets on it again.

Thank you