



WACOSS

Western Australian
Council of Social Service Inc

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a difference*

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 11 January 2008

WA Improves, But Again Rates Worst for Cutting Power to the Poor

The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) today released a report which highlights how electricity retailers in WA are performing in the reformed energy market.

The report, *2006/2007 Annual Report: Code of Conduct (For the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers)*, publishes data showing that disconnections in WA are still higher than they are interstate, the disconnection rate in WA being nearly three times higher than that of Victoria.

“Based on the report’s figures, WACOSS estimates that during the year nearly nine thousand households went without power, many of which are likely to have been families with children,” said WACOSS Executive Director Lisa Baker. “While WACOSS supports the reduction that has occurred in WA disconnections, the current reported rates are still too high for what is an essential service”.

“Electricity is an essential service and disconnection, particularly for long periods of time, can worsen financial hardship as well as pose serious safety risks for those cut off”, said Lisa Baker, “The latest ERA report shows us that nearly half of disconnected households are still not reconnected after a month – this shows that many people out there have a clear incapacity to pay for even the most essential services”.

“Further changes are necessary to reduce the rate of disconnection to vulnerable households, especially as the ERA’s report highlights the impact that rising accommodation costs have had on energy affordability”, Lisa Baker Concluded, “Regional areas have also yet to show any significant improvement”.

WACOSS is calling for:

- Government regulation of financial hardship policies for energy retailers,
- Government to increase the service standard payments for wrongful disconnection to \$250,
- A central Government policy unit to monitor the affordability and accessibility of essential services.
- An end to the disconnection of customers who genuinely cannot afford to pay by energy retailers.

For further comment:

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