



MINISTER FOR ENERGY

MEDIA STATEMENT

Attention: News Editor/Chief of Staff

23/09/05

Customer protection paramount in reformed electricity market.

Energy Minister Alan Carpenter has today announced a new Energy Ombudsman to safeguard the interests of nearly 1.4million Western Australian electricity and gas customers.

Mr Carpenter said the major consumer protection measure reflected the Gallop Government's commitment to ensuring that the interests of the people of WA were protected and promoted in the reformed electricity and gas markets.

The new Energy Ombudsman will be Ms Deirdre O'Donnell, who is also the current Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations.

"The Energy Ombudsman will provide residential and small business customers with an alternative, impartial and cost-free avenue to handle complaints with their electricity or gas supplier," he said.

"In addition, the Energy Ombudsman will have the power to make decisions that are binding on electricity and gas companies."

The Minister said the presence of the Energy Ombudsman would create strong incentive for industry to improve customer service and in particular their internal processes for resolving customer complaints.

"This type of consumer protection is essential to the successful reform of WA's electricity market, where our emphasis is on creating competition, reliability and choice for all Western Australians," he said.

The existing role of the Gas Ombudsman, which had been operating since June 2004, will be extended to include electricity and thus become the Energy Ombudsman.

It will see a further 850,000 residential and small business electricity customers, in addition to the 490,000 strong residential and small business gas market, fall under the jurisdiction of the Energy Ombudsman.

Mr Carpenter thanked industry for its key contribution to the establishment of the Energy Ombudsman, and acknowledged the support provided by Western Power, Alinta, Perth Energy, Wesfarmers Kleenheat and Burns Roe Worley Power (Esperance) Generation.

More information is available on the Ombudsman website at <http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au>

The Energy Ombudsman can be contacted by Freecall on 1800 754 004.

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