

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 501

asked on Wednesday, 20 April 2005

MS LEE LONG ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POLICY (MR MICKEL)—

QUESTION:

With reference to customers who refuse to pay the ambulance levy portion of their electricity account —

What is the process that Ergon Energy follows before disconnection of a customer's electricity supply?

ANSWER:

The Community Ambulance Cover (CAC) is administered by the Office of State Revenue, Queensland Treasury under the *Community Ambulance Cover Act 2003*. This legislation requires any monies received by the distribution entities from a customer to be applied to the ambulance levy before the customer's electricity debt. In other words the CAC levy has priority. Therefore a customer who short pays their electricity account by that amount will actually have an unpaid electricity debt.

Electricity suppliers have a statutory right under the *Electricity Act 1994* to disconnect supply to a customer that has failed to pay any amount owing to the supplier for electricity. Customers cannot walk into a shop and attempt to buy an item without paying the GST. It is the same with the Community Ambulance Cover. I expect people to pay their bills.

Ergon Energy advises set procedure is followed when recovering outstanding debts on electricity accounts.

- Written notice of the outstanding debt is provided in the form of a Reminder Notice (issued seven days after the due date). This notice provides the customer with a further seven days to pay the outstanding monies.
- After the seven days have lapsed, a final notice is provided to the customer advising that the customer will face disconnection if the account is not paid within the date specified, or a letter is provided advising that legal action will commence if the debt is not paid within the date specified.

I am advised in addition to the above process, customers often receive a courtesy call to remind them of the outstanding debt before final disconnection occurs. However, where two consecutive accounts have not been paid by the due date, only one final notice is issued with a subsequent phone call.

In summary, a customer who has an outstanding debt will generally receive two notices and a possible courtesy phone call. However, this does not happen in all cases. Where two consecutive accounts have not been paid by the due date, only one final notice is issued with a subsequent phone call.