

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 727

asked on 17 July 2015

MR WHITING ASKED THE MINISTER FOR MAIN ROADS, ROAD SAFETY AND PORTS AND MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND WATER SUPPLY (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister inform the House how households in the Murrumba Electorate will benefit from stronger consumer protections to help them obtain the best deal from energy retailers?

ANSWER:

Energy consumers of Murrumba have never been better protected thanks to the National Energy Customer Framework (NECF), which commenced in Queensland on 1 July 2015.

NECF introduces nationally-consistent energy protections to help customers engage confidently in the retail market. Queensland customers can now benefit from accessing the Energy Made Easy price comparator, which can assist them compare offers from different retailers more easily.

Importantly, NECF boosts customer protections especially for those households finding it difficult to pay their bill on time. Retailers are now required to more actively identify and offer assistance to these customers. Retailers must also develop hardship policies aimed at helping consumers to manage their bills on an ongoing basis if they are experiencing financial difficulty due to hardship.

Customers buying from energy on-sellers, such as those in retirement villages, caravan parks or businesses in shopping centres, also receive improved protections. For example, access to payment options, improved access to government concessions and better, more detailed information on their bills.

Queensland has included additional support measures in the national package to give consumers even greater confidence in the market. These include a minimum 10 business days' advanced notice of price increases and 20 days for expiry of benefits, like price discounts. Also, each retailer must offer at least one market contract without an early termination fee, and early termination fees on all other market contracts are capped at \$20.

I encourage the people of Murrumba to shop around to ensure they get the deal that's best for them. To start, they can go to www.energymadeeasy.gov.au.