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Complaints Commissioner welcomes electricity switching rule change

The Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Judi Jones welcomes a rule change that will cut the time it takes for electricity users to switch between suppliers.

The new rule, approved by the Minister of Energy and Resources, is effective from 1 October 2010. It means customers can expect a switch to be completed within 12 working days. The first two days are for the new company to tell the old company about the switch. The old company then has 10 working days to provide information for the switch, including a final reading. Companies previously had up to 23 working days to complete a switch.

Switching only accounted for two per cent of complaints handled by the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner Scheme (the Scheme) last year.

“People may not be aware the Scheme can look at this sort of complaint,” says Ms Jones. “In fact, the Scheme can look in to almost any complaint about an electricity or gas company, including problems with bills, meters, disconnections and damage to property. It can also look at complaints about access to land with electricity and gas equipment and the actions of staff or contractors.”

Media coverage of the announcement of the rule change prompted a woman to call the Commissioner’s office with her story of how a delay in switching cost her money. She said the old supplier switched the gas quickly, but took over three months to switch the electricity. That meant the customer was paying two sets of bills for over three months, and missing the discount available for being an electricity and gas user. Because of the time that has passed since the event, the Commissioner is unable to look into this complaint.

Ms Jones says people should complain to the company involved as soon as they see a problem. If the parties are unable to resolve the complaint between them within 20 working days, the complainant can ask the Scheme to look at it. A complaint must be taken to the Scheme within two months of the 20 working days.

Anyone with queries or complaints about an electricity or gas company can contact the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner on freephone 0800 22 33 40.

For more information, contact:

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