

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Disconnections up, service standards down in latest energy retailer report card**

A report released today shows that while energy prices continue to rise, retailers' service standards are slipping. The Essential Services Commission's *Energy Retailers Comparative Performance Report* assesses retailers' performance over the year, revealing major problems.

The report shows that the number of customers disconnected from electricity supply was up by 33 per cent in 2010-11 when compared to the previous year. The rate of electricity disconnections has more than doubled since 2006-07.

"We are very concerned about this dramatic increase in electricity disconnections," said David Stanford, CUAC's Policy Officer.

"Disconnections from an essential service like electricity should only ever be a last resort. These figures indicate that retailers are not doing all that should be done to keep customers on supply."

"CUAC is calling on energy retailers to adopt a New Year's resolution of reducing the number of disconnections by 20 per cent in the coming year."

Customers have also seen a dramatic decline in energy retailer call centre performance. Over the past two years, the time the average customer must wait to speak to an operator has doubled, reaching 101 seconds. 8.5 per cent of callers simply abandoned their calls rather than endure the delays.

"Consumers regularly express their frustration to me about energy retailer call centres. It is about time that energy retailers learnt the importance of high quality and responsive customer service," said Mr Stanford.

"The competitive market was supposed to drive improvements in customer service standards. However, the latest figures tell a different story."

"Poor call centre performance is reason enough for another New Year's resolution on the part of energy retailers. Improve customer service and reduce call centre wait times by 30 per cent in 2012. Your customers will thank you for it."

The report is available on the Essential Services Commission's website [www.esc.vic.gov.au](http://www.esc.vic.gov.au).

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