



Media Release

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Consumers not getting best deal from energy switching sites

Energy consumers need good information to make informed buying choices. However, research published today by the Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre (CUAC) shows that while energy switching sites are generally saving people money, they still cannot be sure they are getting the best deal.

“CUAC’s mystery shopper research shows that switching websites are a good way to find savings on your power bill,” said CUAC Executive Officer Jo Benvenuti. “However, in some cases the deals offered on different websites varied by as much as \$200, even though identical postcode and usage information was entered. This is mainly because several websites did not include offers from all retailers.”

Another potential source of confusion is the way that some sites’ calculations include bonuses and discounts that only apply for limited periods. This makes it difficult to compare offers, and gives a misleading view of the savings over time.

“It was also clear that some of the websites’ calculations were wrong, producing inaccurate results. On top of that, we are concerned that switching websites are not always transparent about how they calculate offers and whether they receive a commission from retailers.”

CUAC’s report found that consumers wanting to choose a gas deal are in an even worse position because there are fewer gas retailers and not all switching sites allow gas offers to be compared.

The Essential Services Commission’s *Your Choice* website, the only independent switching site, included most of the cheapest offers. However, at the time the research was conducted, it suffered from usability problems and some offers were missing. The ESC has responded to CUAC’s recommendations and taken action to improve their website for the benefit of Victorian consumers.

“We are calling on the operators of commercial switching sites to commit to minimum quality standards through a voluntary code of practice.”

CUAC has also called on the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) to ensure price comparison websites comply with the new Australian Consumer Law.

The full CUAC research report along with a briefing paper can be obtained by contacting CUAC on 03 9639 7600.

Consumers can access the ESC Your Choice website at www.yourchoice.vic.gov.au

For more information call Jo Benvenuti, Executive Officer, CUAC on 03 9639 7600.