

## Background

On 27 March, the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) released a statement of expectations<sup>1</sup> of energy businesses titled *Protecting consumers and the energy market during COVID-19*. This statement included networks, retailers and embedded networks across both gas and electricity. The statement had 10 key principles which the AER said were designed “to ensure the continued safe and reliable supply of energy to homes and businesses, and to support both residential and small business customers experiencing financial stress, we expect retailers, distributors and exempt sellers to adhere to the following principles to the maximum extent possible.” Subsequent to this release, the AER has run some FAQ sessions with retailers and other affected parties.

At this stage, retailers are receiving a range of different advice from networks on issues which affect the response to COVID-19 including:

- Some disconnections being stopped
- Some meter reads being stopped
- How retailers should request disconnections/reconnections
- How networks will process and accept jobs (ie some have requested information in special instructions while others have advised that only certain types of service orders should be raised to allow them to be processed in a certain way)

## Actions to date

Subsequent to the variety of network responses, the Australian Energy Council (AEC) who represents retailers, the Energy Networks Australia (ENA) who represents networks, as well as a number of representatives from various retailers and networks, commenced discussions with a view to provide a consistent, fuel agnostic approach to implementing the AER’s expectations. This work has led to a list of B2B transactions impacted by COVID-19, for which we have added in some simple steps for both retailers and networks to follow. The processes do not require any system changes, and are mainly focused on how best to handle each scenario identified as impacted by COVID-19, whilst taking into account any impacts to the customers and staff, as well as meeting the AER’s expectations.

## Next steps

The ideal outcome would be:

1. Networks and retailers to agree on the document, and implement it in their own processes.
2. Publish the attached document outlining the interim steps for the identified B2B transactions. This should be a stand alone document and not a modification to the current B2B Procedures as it does not require Procedure or system changes.

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER%20-%20Statement%20of%20Expectations%20-%209%20April%202020.pdf>