

28 May 2021

Utilities Disputes' response to the Commerce Commission open letter on regulatory priorities

Utilities Disputes Limited (UDL) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Commerce Commission on its *open letter – our regulatory priorities for energy networks and airports*.

Our background

UDL is an independent, not-for-profit company that provides fair and independent resolution of complaints and disputes between utilities companies and their customers when they are unable to be resolved between the parties. We also resolve indemnity disputes between scheme members. Our purpose is to facilitate a strong relationship of trust between consumers and utilities organisations. We focus on three aspects being prevention, education and resolution as reflected in our tagline: Prevent, Educate and Resolve. We currently operate three dispute resolution schemes: The Government approved Electricity and Gas Complaints Scheme, Broadband Shared Property Access Disputes Scheme, and a voluntary Water Complaints Scheme.

Each scheme has been tailored to the unique requirements of its sector. Our model promotes conciliation, but also includes investigation and if needed, a decision by a central decision maker. We have continuously refined our processes since starting in 2001 as the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commission. UDL is governed by an independent Board. It has established Advisory Committees made up of industry and consumer representatives to provide feedback to our operations.

UDL's contribution

Transpower (other than in its capacity as system operator), First Gas, and every distributor and retailer, must be a member of UDL's Energy Complaints Scheme. As such, we are in a privileged position of holding complaints data from across the industry. In the 2019/20 year the Scheme saw almost 7000 energy cases, including over 1800 energy complaints, the 2020/21 total cases are tracking towards 11,000. We have amassed data from around 100,000 cases dating back to 2001.

One possible indicator of the performance of the sector, or consumers' acceptance of a particular price-quality trade-off could come from the complaints data held by UDL. We can contribute this perspective through aggregated data as the Commerce Commission progresses work on the gas reset and input methodology review, and any other sector specific areas.

Next steps

If we can be of further assistance at this stage, please contact Paul Moreno Research and Reporting Manager directly at p.moreno@utilitiesdisputes.co.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Ollivier', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Mary Ollivier

Commissioner + CEO

Utilities Disputes Limited