



# 1st Energy Complaint and Dispute Resolution Policy

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<b>Policy Owner</b>	1st Energy Head of Regulatory and Compliance
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Executive Director
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## Introduction

1st Energy is a participant in the Australian energy industry and aims to be a leading provider of energy services. The 1st Energy Board and Senior Management recognise that, to participate in this industry and meet this aim, 1st Energy needs to be committed to comply with a range of state based and national laws and regulations.

### 1.0 Purpose

1st Energy recognises the value of customer complaints as an important tool in monitoring and responding to customer expectations. The purpose of the 1st Energy Complaint and Dispute Resolution Policy, (Policy), is to:

- Recognise, promote and protect customers rights to complain about dealings with 1st Energy;
- Ensure that an accessible complaints management process is in place; we will take appropriate action to resolve complaints as required;
- Provide a mechanism for resolving complaints in a timely, efficient and courteous manner; and
- Record, assess and review complaints on an ongoing basis to improve the products and services offered by 1st Energy.

### 2.0 Scope

The policy applies to all employees, individuals and agents acting on behalf of 1st Energy.

### 3.0 Objective

The objective of this Policy is to:

- Embed an effective and efficient complaints management process that is aligned with 1st Energy business values, core vision and strategic objectives.
- Demonstrate that 1st Energy has adopted industry best practice and ensured that its customer complaints management process is compliant with the Australian Standard AS ISO 10002 – 2006 “Customer “Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations”<sup>1</sup>.
- Demonstrate a commitment to this aspect of our business enshrining our approach to complaint handling into 1st Energy’s broader Governance framework.

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<sup>1</sup> Noting AS/NZS 10002:2014 is now available; however, the Energy Retail Code V12 references AS 10002:2006

## 4.0 Definitions

1st Energy - is an energy retailer.

A complaint- is an “expression of dissatisfaction made to an organization, related to its products, or the complaints handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected” (as defined by the Australian Complaint Handling Standard ISO AS 10002-2006).

Dissatisfaction – the customer expresses displeasure, disappointment, unhappiness, anger or frustration regarding experience.

Customer- A party that receives or consumes products (goods or services) and can choose between different products and suppliers.

Employee – Any employee, contractors and third-party agents of 1st Energy.

Enquiry – A request for information about 1st Energy products or services that does not reflect dissatisfaction and is generally any question or concern that is not resolved through the customer’s initial contact when 1st Energy provide appropriate information or referral which satisfies the customer or any query that needs an answer from another business unit / person where no Dissatisfaction is expressed.

Dispute - A conflict or controversy; a conflict of claims or rights; an assertion of a right, claim, or demand on one side, met by contrary claims or allegations on the other.

## 5.0 Policy Statement

1st Energy recognises that all individuals have the right to complain, have their complaint heard and be treated with dignity and respect. Any individual who makes a complaint also has the right to not be discriminated against because of making the complaint. This means customers will not be treated unfavourably, including in the way 1st Energy communicates and provides services both during the resolution of the complaint and once the complaint is resolved.

1st Energy recognises that complaints can often highlight gaps in our processes and encourages customers to raise issues so that they can be addressed.

The guiding principles from the AS ISO 10002 – 2006 “Customer Satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations” apply to 1st Energy in the following manner:

- Commitment –Senior Management are committed to an integrated dispute resolution system and providing the necessary support and resources for the system to operate effectively (including the provision of appropriately trained employees, the implementation of complaints management process and existence of a robust complaints reporting procedure).
- Resources – 1st Energy has deployed the necessary resources to ensure that the customers Dispute Resolution process operates effectively and efficiently, and that complaints are managed by employees who have received sufficient training and are competent to deal with the customer complaints that are received.

- Visibility – 1st Energy informs its customers of its customer complaints management process through its customer contracts and via our website [www.1stenergy.com.au](http://www.1stenergy.com.au).
- Employees who also receive and / or manage complaints have a thorough understanding of 1st Energy customer complaints management process and can provide this information to customers upon request.
- Accessibility – 1st Energy customers have the right to make a complaint to 1st Energy by any reasonable means (e.g. telephone, email, online and in writing) and we provide appropriate direction on how to do so in our Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedure.
- Responsiveness – 1st Energy deals with and responds to complaints promptly and keeps complainants informed of the process and the progress of their complaint. 1st Energy will acknowledge all complaints received within 10 days and seek to achieve a resolution in a timely manner or point to another document where such a statement is contained.
- Objectivity – Each complaint is addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. 1st Energy recognises the need to be fair to both the complainant and any employee involved in handling the complaint.
- Charges – 1st Energy does not charge customers for the lodgement and processing complaints.
- Confidentiality – All complaints are recorded and dealt with in the strictest confidence.
- Personal information of the complainant is accessed only as necessary and only for the purposes of addressing the complaint. All personal information is treated by 1st Energy consistent with its obligations under the Privacy Act and 1st Energy Privacy Policy.
- Customer - focused approach - 1st Energy is committed and acknowledge everyone's right to complain to will provide efficient and equitable resolution.
- Accountability – An overview of complaints statistics is reported to 1st Energy's Senior Management for review, together with information on the 1st Energy complaints management process.
- Continual Improvement – 1st Energy has established a complaint tracking system to ensure that systemic problems are identified; classified and analysed. The 1st Energy customer dispute resolution process is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it is delivering effective outcomes. Complaint root causes are identified and used to drive business improvement.

## 6.0 What happens when a Complaint is made by a Customer?

When a complaint is received by 1st Energy:

- a) 1st Energy will accurately record the details of the complaint as part of 1st Energy customer complaint management process, give it fair and genuine consideration and seek to achieve a fair outcome for both the customer and 1st Energy;
- b) If the complaint is not received by telephone 1st Energy will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 business days;
- c) Customer complaints are dealt with by the service representative focusing on first time resolution. 1st

- Energy will seek to resolve the complaint within a reasonable timeframe, having regard to the nature and complexity of the complaint;
- d) 1st Energy will keep customers informed of any progress via the customers preferred communication method – or if the customer does not specify a communication method, via the communication method by which they made the complaint;
  - e) Customers can provide a self-read when an estimated bill has been received and have their bill reissued based on the self-read. In some circumstances 1st Energy may not accept the self-read for example, when the self-read is lower than the previous actual read, or the self-read is received on or after the day the bill is due. In the circumstances when we can't accept a self-read 1st Energy will:
    - let the customer know in writing why we can't accept the self-read;
    - advise the customer they can raise a complaint with 1st Energy; and
    - advise the customer they can raise a complaint with their Ombudsman.
  - f) If appropriate, 1st Energy will make changes to remedy the situation to prevent the situation from recurring.

## 7.0 What happens if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome?

If a complainant is dissatisfied with a decision we will inform the customer of their right to have their complaint reviewed by a more senior 1st Energy representative.

If the complaint is not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, we inform the customer that they may take their complaint to the relevant external dispute resolution body (i.e. the relevant ombudsman).

## 8.0 Non - Discrimination

Every customer has the right to make a complaint to 1st Energy if they are not satisfied with 1st Energy services and policies. 1st Energy will not discriminate against any customer because of that customer making a complaint.

## 9.0 Consequences of Non-Compliance with this Policy

All employees, individuals and agents acting on behalf of 1st Energy are required to adhere to all 1st Energy Policies and Procedures. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary measures or retraining.

## 10.0 Policy Review

This policy is to be reviewed in 12 months after its initial approval and thereafter every 2 years.

## 11.0 Document Control

Version No.	Version Date	Author	Nature of amendment
1.0	07 June 2015	Compliance Manager	Initial Issue
1.1	24 October 2017	Head of Regs & Compliance	Minor inconsequential amendments
1.2	April 2018	Head of Regs & Compliance	Minor inconsequential amendments
2.0	January 2019	Head of Regs & Compliance	Formatting amendments Amendments to drafting and grammar National Energy Retail Amendment (Estimated meter reads) Rule 2018 No. 4 amendments