

Attention: State Liberal Party Delegates

RE: Smart Meters

We, undersigned concerned citizens, hereby request Victorian Liberal Party members to **appeal to the Hon. Premier Ted Baillieu and Hon. Minister Michael O'Brien** to implement measures such that there is an immediate halt to the mandatory roll-out of advanced metering technology and all smart meter radiofrequency (RF) transmissions. These actions are of the utmost importance on a number of accounts, including cost increases, health risks, privacy concerns, grid vulnerability and the lack of democratic process.

Costs

Despite assurances from power distributors and the Victorian Government, many consumers have found a significant increase in their energy bills. The increase in fixed charges alone at the beginning of the rollout added up to \$152 to Victorian households with further increases expected each year. Even at this stage of the roll-out, the cost has blown out by almost \$2.5 billion, and is still rising! In January 2012 alone, the power companies won cases allowing them to add another \$300,000,000 to customers' bills.

Health

A large number of Victorians have reported significant changes in their health and well-being related to the installation of wireless smart meters on their property and in their neighbourhoods. The main symptoms reported by individuals are: sleeping disorders, headaches, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), fatigue, nausea, dizziness, irritability, listlessness, heart palpitations, and changes in cognitive behaviour. While the level of radiation emitted by smart meters is within the Australian guidelines (set by ARPANSA), that standard targets protection from immediate hazards from high-level RF exposure situations. Most importantly, the standard fails to include environmental level prolonged RF exposures that residents will experience in their homes and workplaces from smart meter technology. Many countries, especially in Europe, have set stricter (precautionary) RF standards in order to address potential adverse health effects from prolonged exposures – something ARPANSA has failed to do.

Exposure to electromagnetic fields from wireless communications has been demonstrated in a very large number of studies to be capable of causing highly unwanted health effects. Effects include cellular DNA damage (which may lead to the initiation of cancer as well as mutations that carry down generations), disruptions and alterations of cellular functions like increases in intracellular stimulatory pathways and calcium handling, disruption of tissue structures like the blood-brain barrier (which may allow toxins to enter the brain), impact on vessel and immune functions, and loss of fertility. Children are particularly vulnerable because the absorption of radio frequency energy is up to ten times higher in the bone marrow of the skull compared with adults.

Security & Privacy

Wireless two-way transmission of data intrinsically introduces vulnerabilities into the security of the grid as a result of exposure to weather and malicious manmade events. Apart from enabling power company retailers to control household appliances remotely, the system is easier to hack into and sabotage with jamming devices. Around the world there are increasing reports of smart grids' fatal insecurities with a series of hacks perpetuated against smart meter grids. Recently the FBI warned that insiders and individuals with only a moderate level of computer knowledge are likely to be able to compromise meters with low-cost tools and software readily available on the internet. In addition, mandatory collection of smart meter data contravenes individuals' fundamental rights to privacy.

Lack of research, democratic processes and adherence to human rights

The government's forcible introduction of increased near-field and far-field electromagnetic exposure violates a number of basic human rights including Sections 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 20 and 21 of Victoria's

Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 in addition to other significant declarations of human rights to which Australia is a signatory.

The so-called smart meter “review” conducted in 2011 failed to publish any submissions (over 400) that questioned or expressed concerns with the rollout of smart meters. The EMC Technologies study on which the Office of the Energy Minister claims to have based its decision that the meters are “safe” is of such poor quality that it does not meet the relevant scientific criteria for a study to be valid. Not only does it not even address the health consequences of constant exposure to radio frequency fields, it uses a sample size of 16 to assess the safety of a device that could potentially affect more than five million Victorians! Also, in most of the results tables, up to a third or more of data is missing and labelled ‘NM’, i.e., not measured. Furthermore, it is unheard of, in the scientific world, to come to conclusions about anything that may affect the health of millions of people based on only one study.

We believe the Liberal Party is under obligation to take immediate mitigative action to protect Victorians, especially children, from escalated electromagnetic radiation as a consequence of the mandated roll-out of smart meters. We believe the total lack of investigation into alternatives for advanced metering infrastructure, such as use of fibre-optic, and complete lack of consideration of non-thermal health effects, which are not covered by ARPANSA’s standards, to have unnecessarily exposed all Victorians to perverse outcomes, risks, and unintended consequences.

As of this year, due to validated health issues, consumers in California now have the right to have their smart meter removed and an analogue meter reinstalled. Opting out of the smart metering program has also been announced in markets including Maine, Vermont, Louisiana, Michigan, Connecticut and Quebec. Due to health and privacy concerns the UK Government is now planning to make the installation of smart meters voluntary, following the lead of the Netherlands.

Thousands of Victorians who are consciously refusing to accept the installation of smart meters on their property are being bullied and threatened by power distributors to accept installation or have their power disconnected. Is this action acceptable and aligned with Liberal philosophy? We call for a halt on the mandatory installation of smart meters and at the very least, people who are hypersensitive to electromagnetic radiation and have compromised immune systems (with supportive medical documentation) should have the right to ‘opt out’ of the smart meter program.



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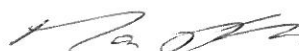
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