

Submission to Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications

Inquiry into the performance and management of electricity network companies

Committee Scope:

The performance and management of electricity network companies.

How electricity network companies have calculated and presented costings and infrastructure changes and the effects on energy users, including anomalies, possible rorting or discrimination.

Submission Background

In 2011, I was notified by my electricity distributor they were about to replace my analogue power meter for a smart meter. Subsequent investigations revealed that smart meter installations in countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Africa were disastrous for customers, and offered them no benefit – just higher bills. This has also proven to be the case here in Victoria. A significant number of USA states have either banned them, placed a moratorium on them or provided an 'Opt-out' on smart meters such as the UK; Italy; and various [states across the USA](#) namely California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas and Vermont.

A number of serious issues associated with smart meters has caused me great concern; these being smart meter fires; covert surveillance monitoring; billing irregularities and very serious health issues caused by the high levels of Electro Magnetic Radiation (EMR) they emit. These issues are discussed below.

Smart Meter Concerns

1. Smart Meter Initiated Fires:

Many smart meters have been known to burst into flames. It appears there is a massive cover-up of these fires by authorities at all levels of government. This claim is confirmed by a newspaper article by an MFB officer quoted below:

“One brigade officer, who refused to be named because he was opening “a political can of worms”, said this was the third serious fire in Northcote he’d attended in the past six months that started at the smart meter. He said the power companies were involved in “a massive cover-up” denying responsibility. “The problem is not with the meter itself but with connecting it to wiring in older houses,” the officer said. “Unless something’s done (to fix the problem), unfortunately we’ll see a lot more of these fires and we just have to hope no one will get hurt.”

The MFB officer said he’d repeatedly watched power company authorities visiting the houses after the fires and claiming sabotage or other factors were involved to take the heat off them.

Original source: Northcote Leader – Northcote fire questions safety of smart meters 9 May 12 @ 05:03am by Michael Gleeson <http://stopsmartmeters.com.au/2012/05/19/northcote-fire-questions-safety-of-smart-meters-emergency-services/>

News - Geelong

Firemen quick to put out house fire

| May 11th, 2012

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Firefighters and police attend the fire.

A BLAZE ripped through the front end of a Moorabool St house today.

CFA crews arrived just after noon to find the Moorabool St house well alight.

Police were also called to redirect traffic and close the Geelong-bound lane of Moorabool St.

Witnesses said they saw smoke pouring from a recently installed smart meter just moments before the fire started.

But firemen later ruled out the smart meter as being the cause of the blaze.

The home's owner said she was heartbroken to see her investment property blackened with smoke and ash.

The photograph (following) of this smart meter fire shows it definitely was the source of the blaze, as the fire in the roof did not work its way down electrical wiring and then into the smart meter as the firemen later claimed.

Please note that the article says:

“Witnesses said they saw smoke pouring from a recently installed smart meter just moments before the fire started.”

“But firemen later ruled out the smart meter as being the cause of the blaze.”

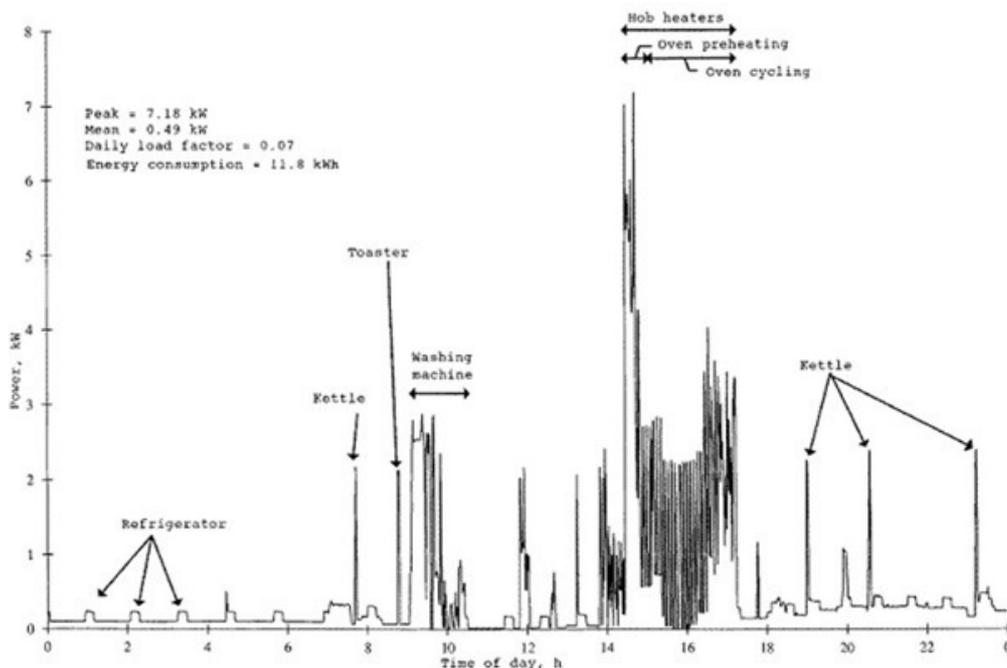


The image below clearly shows that the fire at this house started in the smart meter. The smart meter is located underneath the burnt section of roof shown in the above image.



2. Covert Surveillance Monitoring Issues

A smart meter monitors every item that is switched on in the home such as when the washing machine, toaster, kettle and refrigerator are operated. Such events are represented on the chart below.



This monitoring of power usage by the smart meter and then sending this data to a remote location is termed 'surveillance monitoring'. Performing this function 'secretly' (without informing the person being monitored) is termed Covert Surveillance Monitoring (or wiretapping) and this is one aspect of what smart meters do constantly. Such 'wiretapping' is illegal!

Legally, the power companies are required by law to disclose to the householder being monitored where such personal information is stored. Quote:

“1.3 At or before the time (or, if that is not practicable, as soon as practicable after) an organisation collects personal information about an individual from the individual, the organisation must take reasonable steps to ensure that the individual is aware of:

- a. the identity of the organisation and how to contact it; and
- b. the fact that he or she is able to gain access to the information; and
- c. the purposes for which the information is collected; and
- d. the organisations (or the types of organisations) to which the organisation usually discloses information of that kind; and
- e. any law that requires the particular information to be collected; and
- f. the main consequences (if any) for the individual if all or part of the information is not provided.”

<http://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-resources/privacy-fact-sheets/other/privacy-fact-sheet-2-national-privacy-principles>

Prior to the smart meter rollout commencing in Victoria, the then Privacy Commissioner informed the Victorian Parliament that smart meters breached Victoria's privacy regulations. In her document dated 17 May 2010, Helen Versey said:

3. Despite these advantages, smart meters have the potential to impact severely upon the privacy of individuals who have smart meters installed. These concerns go to the very heart of a right to privacy, given that smart meters collect detailed usage data in an area which is usually “off limits” – a person's home. I acknowledge that unless a premises is singularly occupied, usage data from a smart meter will not identify individual usage; nevertheless, the data has the potential to be privacy intrusive.
4. Any encroachment into the privacy of a person's domicile should be treated seriously and should only occur when absolutely necessary. Indeed, this principle is espoused in section 13 of the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*, which states that a person has the right not to have his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with.
5. Smart meters, incorrectly implemented and regulated, run the risk of interfering with a person's privacy. Accordingly, I note the following privacy concerns:

2. Privacy implications of smart meters

6. A person's electricity usage data is not, by itself, “personal information”. However, by linking usage data to a customer's account, which will list at the very least the customer's name, address and contact details, information about a customer's behaviour may be gleaned from the usage data. This is potentially intrusive where the use or disclosure of usage data goes beyond the primary purpose for which it is collected.

4. Conclusion

16. It is my view that any amendments to regulations regarding smart meters should ensure that the collection and retention of personal information and usage data is kept to a minimum where possible. If the information is to be disclosed to or shared with third parties, the express consent of the customer should be required wherever possible (“opt-in” rather than “opt-out”).

http://www.google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB0QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.privacy.vic.gov.au%2Fprivacy%2Fweb2.nsf%2Ffiles%2Fsmart-meters-submission-2010%2F%24file%2Fsubmission_05_10_no1.pdf&ei=wpOPVLraIoXq8qXF4YHIDw&usq=AFQjCNFprTtlxwsgEq7P0-pyWv5dn8U7Ow&sig2=5oh0KHIBUcK4qx4RBTpNg&bvm=bv.81828268,d.dGc

NOTE: The Smart Meter Rollout in Victoria continues to violate every Victorian’s rights to personal privacy.

3. Billing Irregularities

There are countless claims of overcharging by electricity companies since smart meters were installed into their customer’s homes and businesses.

The following newspaper article highlights the degree of irregularities smart meter billing can create and the headache it can become for those affected.

Electricity billing errors a massive switch-off for customers | Herald Sun

Posted on [February 10, 2012](#) by [Stop Smart Meters Australia](#)



Gillian Joyce with the \$5482 bill. Picture: Mike Keating Herald Sun

SHOCKED electricity customers are being overcharged as much as 1400 per cent due to billing blunders.

Chirnside Park woman Gillian Joyce demanded an investigation after receiving an AGL account for \$5482.03 – at least 14 times higher than her typical quarterly bill.

The article also states:

“Energy and Water Ombudsman figures released to the Herald Sun show the watchdog has been bombarded with more than 76,000 electricity billing complaints and inquiries in the past five years. These include 11,000 alleged billing errors.”

<http://stopsmartmeters.com.au/2012/02/10/electricity-billing-errors-a-massive-switch-off-for-customers-herald-sun/>

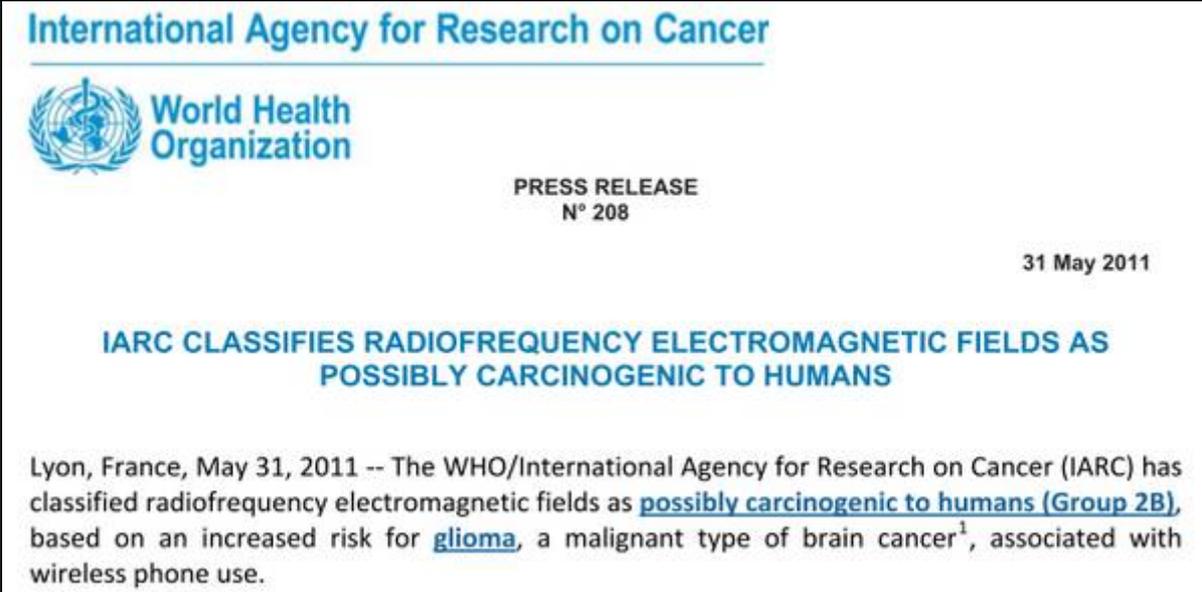
There is no indication that any of these problems have been fixed or are likely to be addressed.

NOTE: Consumers are entitled to have an honest and reliable electricity billing system.

The smart meter system has proven that it CANNOT be the accurately billing system it was claimed to be. If it was, then there would not be “76,000 electricity billing complaints and...11,000 alleged billing errors”.

4. Electro Magnetic Radiation Issues

Electro Magnetic Radiation (EMR) otherwise known as ‘radio waves’ or ‘wireless transmission’ has been classed as a “possible carcinogen” by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in their document below.



International Agency for Research on Cancer

 **World Health Organization**

PRESS RELEASE
N° 208

31 May 2011

IARC CLASSIFIES RADIOFREQUENCY ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS AS POSSIBLY CARCINOGENIC TO HUMANS

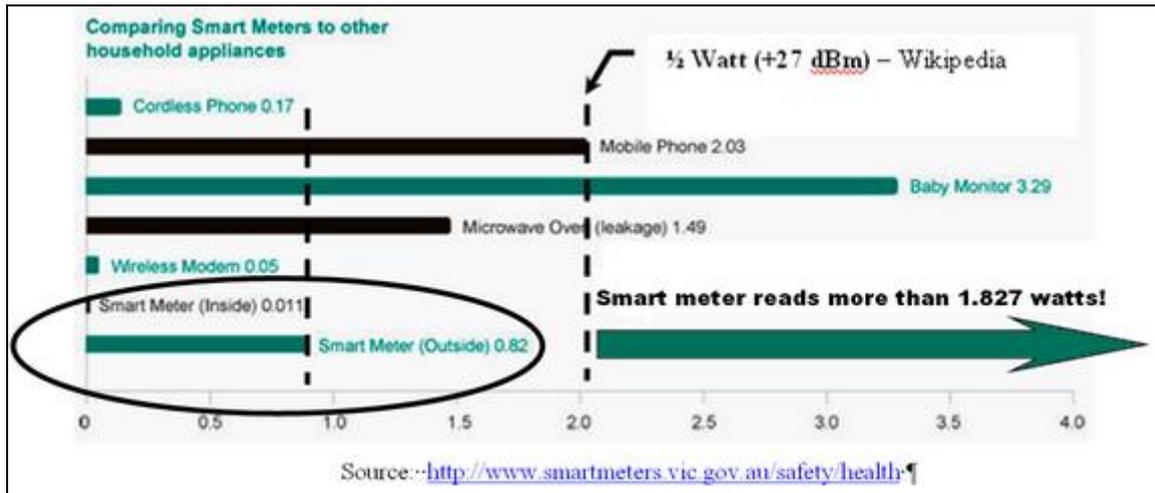
Lyon, France, May 31, 2011 -- The WHO/International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified radiofrequency electromagnetic fields as **possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B)**, based on an increased risk for **glioma**, a malignant type of brain cancer¹, associated with wireless phone use.

Numerous studies and peer-reviewed research undertaken over many years has proven that microwave EMR is biologically dangerous to human health – yet smart meters implement this highly dangerous (experimental) technology upon their customers.

Such behaviour is the same that violates the 10-point Nuremberg Code of Medical Experimentation on the population – which is a criminal act equal to that of Hitler’s Third Reich that was perpetrated upon 6 million Jews last century.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuremberg_Code

To highlight another fallacy regarding smart meter radiation, a Victorian government report produced in 2011 claims that “*radiofrequency exposures from smart meters are lower than other household devices such as mobile phones and baby monitors (as shown in Figure 1)*”.

The following chart has been modified to highlight the reality of what has actually been measured on more than one smart meter.



Radiation tests conducted on a smart meter using a Cornet Electromog meter indicate that a smart meter emits more than 1.827 watts while transmitting; and that transmissions occur at least once per minute (or more than 3,600 transmissions per day) rather than the published 4 transmissions per day.

Such radiation being emitted into a customer's home (often from only a metre or two from beds) is causing debilitating sickness known as Electro Hyper Sensitivity (or EHS) in electricity customers.



Some of the symptoms of this illness are:

- Dermatological symptoms (redness, tingling, and burning sensations)
- Neurasthenic and vegetative symptoms (fatigue, tiredness, concentration difficulties, dizziness, nausea, heart palpitation, and digestive disturbances) – <http://www.who.int/peh-emf/publications/facts/fs296/en/>

Other symptoms include:

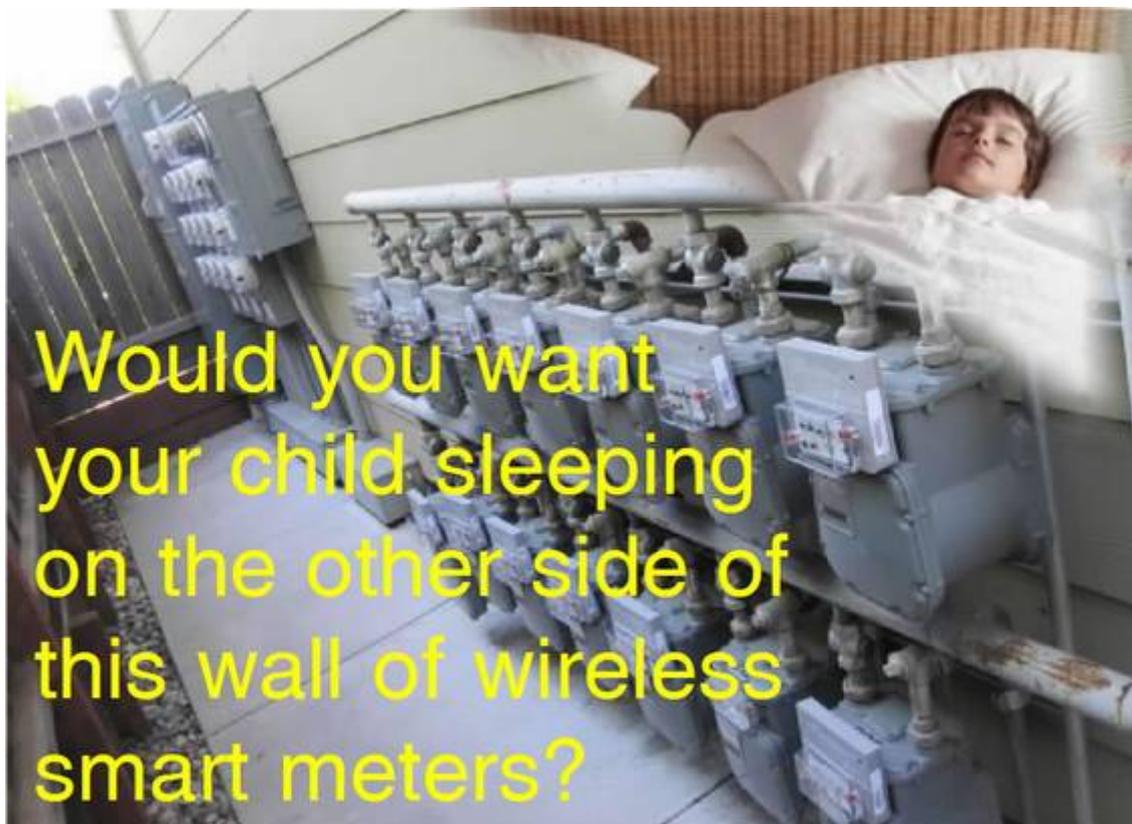
- Headache,
- Fatigue,
- Stress,
- Sleep disturbances,
- Skin symptoms like prickling, burning sensations and rashes,
- Pain and ache in muscles
- Many other health problems. – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electromagnetic_hypersensitivity

To illustrate how a smart meter's radiation adversely affects our ecology, the image below highlights the negative impact its EMR has on plant life.



If this level of damage can be inflicted upon vegetation, why should power companies be permitted to impose such unsafe technology on their customers?

Is profit (at the cost of customer's health) the only factor being considered here by the power companies? It seems so.



Submission

Power companies in Victoria are well aware of the above **fire** dangers, **billing**, **privacy** and **health** issues associated with their smart meters.

Despite them gaining excessive fees through smart meter billing irregularities along with regular price hikes provided by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), they have failed to be accountable regarding the billing issues detected by their customers.

Their 'victims' have been forced to take their grievances to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV) for resolution, which can be quite a daunting task for some people. Even the EWOV has recognised this as being a problem.

Those who have developed health-related issues from smart meters have nowhere to go with their complaints, as the Australian regulator of 'safe' radiation levels (ARPANSA) refuses to acknowledge any association of biological damage caused by EMR on the human body. Such an 'un-scientific approach' by ARPANSA towards this vital issue for an increasing number of people is diabolical for a supposed scientific institution. Some argue their actions constitute criminal conduct.

It is my opinion that the five electricity companies in Victoria need to resolve all of the above issues rather than using their excessive profits to '*gold-plate their network infrastructure*'.

Any assistance the committee members can provide to the Victorian electricity consumers regarding the serious issues raised here would be most appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Manson