



MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES  
MINISTER FOR ENERGY  
MINISTER FOR MINERAL RESOURCES  
MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Iemma Government Acts to Protect Electricity Customers**

The Iemma Government will extend energy price regulation for households and small businesses – while at the same time strengthening protections for customers, Energy Minister Ian Macdonald said today.

Mr Macdonald said the Government would ensure households weren't worse off following its response to the Owen Inquiry, by ensuring electricity prices remained regulated until 2013 – or until it was satisfied there was sufficient competition in the retail energy market.

"This is all about protecting consumers. We will ensure there are price regulations in place until the energy retail market is mature enough for effective competition," he said.

"In the UK for example, prices are now substantially lower than they were before the private sector became involved in electricity.

"NSW energy prices are already amongst the lowest in the world, however, the continuing effects of the drought as well as carbon prices will have some effect over time.

"Nevertheless, the Government remains determined to protect consumers from any potential negative market impacts.

"Rest assured, the Reference Group on Consumer Protection in the Energy Market remains in place and will continue to provide me with the latest advice on all consumer matters including price regulation.

Minister Macdonald said strong consumer protection measures will also be in place including:

- Allowing customers facing financial difficulties to pay in instalments;
- The continuation of social programs including pensioner concessions;
- Life support and the energy accounts payment assistance scheme (EAPA);
- Compulsory membership of the Energy and Water Ombudsman scheme for all retailers;
- Compulsory compliance with the marketing code of conduct; and
- The 'retailer of last resort' process – designed to ensure that all customers have a continuous supply of electricity (even if their supplier can no longer supply it).

"Very strong disconnection procedures will also remain and be overseen by the Energy Ombudsman – including preventing the disconnection of customers while a dispute is underway or for the most vulnerable customers.

"The Department of Water and Energy will also establish an electricity and gas price comparison service for households and small business.

"These are common sense measures for the protection of the people of NSW."

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