

Supplementary submission in response to the Utilities Commission of the Northern Territory's
2024 Electricity Industry Performance Code Review – Draft Decision paper

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Sent by email: <utilities.commission@nt.gov.au>
Attention: Adam Hadley, Assistant Director

Submission by:

Sally Wilson, PhD Candidate at the Australian National University's Crawford School of Public Policy

Brad Riley, Research Fellow at the Australian National University's Centre for Indigenous Policy Research

Michael Klerck, Adjunct Lecturer at the University of Newcastle

Vanessa Napaltjari Davis, Senior Aboriginal Researcher at Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation

Dr Lily O'Neill, Senior Research Fellow at Melbourne Climate Futures & Onemda at the University of Melbourne

We refer to our previous submissions to the Utilities Commission's review of the Northern Territory Electricity Industry Performance Code (**EIP Code** and **review**), including our latest submission dated 24 June 2025.

The Commission recently published information directly relevant to the matters under review. This supplementary submission responds to that material and is intended to complement our earlier submissions.

New Information – Code Exemption for PWC

On 18 August 2025, the Commission published a Register of Code Exemptions on its website.¹ The register reveals that Power and Water Corporation (**PWC**) holds a partial exemption from compliance with hardship policy requirements of the Electricity Retail Supply Code (**ERS Code**).

Under this exemption, PWC—in its capacity as the licensed electricity retailer in remote communities—is not required to have processes for contacting prepayment customers identified as experiencing hardship to discuss options for staying connected to household electricity services. The Commission granted PWC a 2-year exemption, effective from 14 March 2024, on the basis that the government-owned retailer faces difficulties in contacting remote living prepayment customers due to limited data sharing with the NTG department responsible for remote housing.

¹ Utilities Commission, 'Register of Utilities Commission Code Exemptions, as at 18 August 2025', available here: https://utilicom.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1552703/1-register-of-utilities-commission-code-exemptions-18aug2025.pdf.

This exemption is significant because it waives the retailer’s only proactive obligation to support remote prepayment households experiencing hardship in affording energy services. Without this proactive hardship support, prepayment customers face the risk of immediate disconnection when their meter runs out of credit.

Under the current arrangement, affected customers can only receive hardship assistance—such as a temporary hardship credit—by initiating contact with PWC. However, prepay customers living in remote communities may face a range of barriers to seeking such support, including information, language and financial obstacles.

Relevance to the EIP Code review

Hardship protections for prepayment customers have been a central piece of the Northern Territory’s electricity consumer protection framework since their introduction in 2023.² The exemption granted by the Commission excludes remote prepayment households from the benefits of those protections i.e., retailer-initiated hardship supports.

Simultaneously, there is no public reporting of retail performance indicators for households in remote communities.

The hardship exemption has been in place during the period in which the Commission has been considering submissions calling for the implementation of remote retail performance reporting through the EIP Code review – including prepayment self-disconnection reporting as an indicator of customer hardship.

There is a clear overlap between the two regulatory matters:

- Public reporting of retail performance indicators assists with identifying and addressing customer needs, such as electricity affordability and hardship.
- Without basic supports, remote prepayment households experiencing hardship are exposed to disconnection from electricity services.
- This situation falls within the Commission’s regulatory remit and reinforces the need for remote retail performance reporting to provide greater transparency and insight into customer outcomes in these communities.

Consistent with previous submissions, we reiterate that the EIP Code should include comprehensive public retail performance reporting requirements for licensed retailers operating in remote communities. This is a necessary step to ensure appropriate regulatory oversight and support equitable outcomes for all electricity customers across the Territory.

² Hardship policy provisions for retailers with prepayment customers were introduced in the ERS Code from 1 July 2023 to address recognised gaps in prepay consumer protections. Retailers were given a period of six-months for compliance after the commencement of the new provisions i.e. up to 1 January 2024. PWC’s exemption took effect from 14 March 2024 and is operative until 27 March 2026.