

Dear Sir/Madam

I just learned that the Senate was holding an Inquiry into electricity prices and wanted to make a comment if at all possible.

We are a small business (Fitness Centre) in Queensland that employs 32 staff including full-time, part-time and casual and have been in business for nearly 15 years.

Due to our climate we rely on air-conditioning, especially during the hot summer months.

Our electricity bill over the last 2 months since the beginning of the new financial year, has gone up an average of 35% which equates to approximately \$12000 to \$15000 extra this financial year.

Of this increase, carbon tax accounts for 13% and Network charges account for the remaining 22% of the increase.

As a small business we get no assistance with the carbon tax and had budgeted for this increase, however we did not expect such a massive jump in the network charges and had not budgeted for those.

I have spoken at length with our provider and have also contacted the Network provider, Energex, regarding the increases. We have been told that we are basically at the mercy of Energex as they are solely owned by the Queensland Government and have a total monopoly in the area that we live and operate our business.

The increases are due to a number of factors. Firstly they increased all the network charges and secondly they did a tariff review and removed the tariff we were on and placed us on another tariff that had even higher network charges.

\$12-\$15000 is a hell of a lot of money to find when we are a small business and we are seriously wondering if it is all worth it or if we should simply pack it all in. Either way we will have to reduce staff work hours as we simply cannot afford the current increases along with increases in rent, wages etc.

We get no assistance from the Government to meet the increases and are not able to pass the increases on without losing clients.

What can we do???

This inquiry is really our only hope.

Kind regards
Richard Cessford