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Minister for the Environment and Energy

**MEDIA RELEASE**

29 March 2018

**IMPROVING THE ACCURACY OF ENERGY BILLS FOR CONSUMERS**

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve outcomes for energy consumers, the Turnbull Government will be asking the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) to make a rule change which will improve the accuracy of energy bills.

While smart meters which can be read remotely are being rolled out across the National Electricity Market, gas and other types of electricity meters still need to be read manually. When there are issues with reading these meters, bills can be based on estimated rather than actual usage. In some cases, these estimates can result in significant under or overcharging.

This needs to change.

The proposed amendments to the National Energy Retail Rules will allow consumers to have their gas or electricity bill based on their own reading of the meter. In cases where a customer receives an estimated bill from their retailer, the proposal will allow them to have it replaced with a more accurate bill based on their reading.

The proposal also introduces an obligation on retailers to ensure a bill is not based on an estimate that is grossly inaccurate and asks the AEMC to consider the imposition of penalties for breaches of the estimation rules.

These changes will improve the accuracy of billing and reduce the risk of consumers being exposed to the financial shock of an inaccurately estimated bill.

Some companies already offer their customers the ability to provide a self-reading by submitting a photograph of their meter. This proposal will extend this option to everyone which makes good sense in the era of smart phones.

This proposed rule change from the Turnbull Government complements actions we have already taken as part of our plan to deliver more affordable energy for Australian households including:

- a rule change requiring retailers to notify electricity and gas customers when their energy discounts are about to finish or change;
- a rule change proposal requiring retailers to provide their customers with advance notice of price changes; and
- a rule change proposal to introduce maximum timeframes for meter installations.

**Ends**