

## **23 March 2023 | Electricity: What Kiwis fear and how UDL can help.**

The Consumer Advocacy Council recently completed its first sentiment survey of small business and residential electricity consumers, gauging public opinion on the biggest electricity issues facing consumers. Following this release, UDL has put together the following summary outlining some of the biggest issues consumers face, and how we can help you manage them.

### **Price**

#### *The findings*

Over two-thirds of respondents expressed concerns that the price of electricity may become too high for some consumers in the future, with 52% believing they may be amongst those priced out. Over the last year, 42% of consumers believe it's become more difficult to pay their electricity bill.

#### *How we can help!*

We cannot investigate complaints solely about the price of electricity. Price is decided via contractual agreement between provider and consumer, which cannot be challenged within our jurisdiction. However, we can check the provider has given you good information about the price, and we can check your bills are correct. This includes issues around billing periods, meter readings, and forms of payment.

If you believe you've received an incorrect charge and can't settle with your provider, UDL may be able to help.

### **Severe Weather**

#### *The findings*

Somewhat presciently, the survey included a question on the importance of ensuring New Zealand's electricity system is resilient to extreme weather events to avoid electricity outages. Unsurprisingly, 74% of consumers surveyed responded with a 7 or higher, signalling 'important'. Similarly, 57% of consumer respondents expressed concerns that the existing network was not resilient enough.

#### *How we can help!*

While UDL offers support to anyone impacted by severe weather, our discussions with utility providers have highlighted the unprecedented nature of the recent conditions and the immense work happening across the industry to deal with outages. We encourage anyone impacted by outages due to severe weather now or in the future to first contact their provider.

If the situation is urgent, such as an outage to those medically dependent on electricity, and attempts to contact your provider fail, please contact UDL on 0800 22 33 40 or email us on [info@udl.co.nz](mailto:info@udl.co.nz). We will use our own channels to contact providers and ensure the necessary care is immediate provided.

## **Quality of Service**

### *The findings*

The survey found that 72% of New Zealanders are satisfied with their current provider, while only 4% are actively dissatisfied. A variety of metrics were used to define satisfaction, including regularity of outages, existence of special deals (e.g., free power at certain time), and quality of customer service. Dissatisfied consumers faced issues such as inconsistent billing, poor customer service, and regular outages.

### *How we can help!*

In cases where consumers face quality of service issues, UDL may be able to help. The Consumer Guarantees Act requires that electricity providers supply electricity that is safe, reliable, and consistent. The guarantee says this safety, reliability, and consistency must be what a reasonable consumer would expect supply to be in that place.

This guarantee can be breached through consistent surges, damage to appliances, or regular outages. However, these issues may be considered reasonable depending on the location of the property, the level of control the provider had in avoiding these issues, and more. If you've experience any consistent problems with your electricity and believe it may be unreasonable, contact UDL and we'll see what we can do.

If you have a complaint to lodge against your utility provider, please get in contact with UDL on 0800 22 33 40 or email [info@udl.co.nz](mailto:info@udl.co.nz)