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Energex

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Dispute resolution in the electricity industry

Energex

Richard Raymond

Getting started

Energex management is committed to developing a dispute management system (DMS). One staff member with previous experience in development of health, welfare and safety procedures was seconded to the project on a full-time basis. The dedicated focus of this individual was a major factor in the development of the Energex DMS procedure, based on guidelines distributed at a workshop where the strategic direction of the DMS was resolved.

Design

The process for establishing a DMS for Energex was split into two sections. While an organisation may receive a number of complaints over a wide range of issues, very few progress to a dispute requiring the intervention of a neutral third party to find resolution. Energex has therefore developed a complaints handling procedure to record and manage complaints received by the organisation and a more formal dispute management procedure to be implemented if two parties cannot resolve the conflict themselves.

These procedures have been documented and are registered in Energex's Business Management System (BMS) in line with the organisation's quality accreditation guidelines.

IT backup

The complaints handling system is supported by a commercially available 'help desk' software package. A special

screen is being developed within this package to act as a DMS register for complaints which escalate to be classified as a dispute. The customised screen will allow data fields to cover special events; for example, milestone dates for progression of dispute resolution through various stages.

In-house training on the DMS and Energex's associated BMS procedure was provided for 22 employees, over two days. Approximately 50 other employees have completed a two-hour training course on the procedure and associated software package.

The complaints handling software package has been designed to provide statistical data to the Queensland Regulator on performance measures stipulated within the Queensland Standard Customer Contracts.

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Implementation

Energex is well progressed towards having an effective DMS, which is referred to internally by the acronym ECHO (Energex's Complaints Handling Obligation). All the procedures, standard letters, forms, and the software package are in place. The next challenge is to change the organisation's culture such that staff consistently enter complaints, update the system and record all future contact between the parties. ❖

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