



Press Release: 3 August 2012

URA Statement Regarding Misleading Information about Prepayment Meters

On 20 July 2012, the Utilities Regulatory Authority was concerned to see in the Daily Post (Issue no. 3606) a photo showing the Honourable Minister of Lands and a UNELCO employee putting a card into a meter. The caption said “Launching Matantapua prepaid meter.” and the related article started with those words:

“The members of Matantapua community, in Port Vila now have a prepaid meter, set up by UNELCO last week.”

Prepayment meters are mentioned several more times in the article. However, the Authority has not yet approved this type of meters as it is conducting a review to ensure that the roll out is in the best and long term interest of electricity consumers.

The Authority has written to UNELCO’s General Manager Philippe Mehrenberger seeking clarification and confirmation regarding the purported use of such meters.

The letter stated:

“Referring to the public launch of the extension of the electricity network to the Matantapua Community on 20 July 2012, the Authority request UNELCO to confirm or disconfirm that prepayment meters have been installed in the area of Matantapua Community.”

On 3 August 2012, the Authority received UNELCO’s response stating:

“UNELCO is able to assure the URA that it has not installed any prepayment meters in the area of Matantapua Community.”

The Authority concludes that there has not been any breach of contract by the utility.

Moreover it wishes to inform the public, electricity customers and interested parties, that after a long and comprehensive consultation with all stakeholders on its Electricity Prepayment Meter System Position Paper March 2012, the Authority will soon release its draft decision for further consultation before publishing its final decision.

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About the Utilities Regulatory Authority

The URA was set up under the *Utilities Regulatory Authority Act No. 11 of 2007*. The Authority acts independently of the Government and its primary purpose is to increase access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity and water services, and to protect the long-term interests of consumers throughout Vanuatu. In the electricity sector, the Authority monitors the concessions operated by UNELCO in Malekula, Port Vila and Tanna; and Vanuatu Utilities and Infrastructure Ltd (VUI) in Luganville. In addition, the Authority manages consumer disputes and advises the Government on matters related to electricity and water. It also reviews tariffs under the rules of the Concessions Agreements and relevant legislation.

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