

# Communique

## Game changer leadership group meeting

Wednesday, 27 September 2023

9:30 am – 11:00 am (AEST)

Location: Microsoft Teams

Chair: Clare Savage, AER Chair

Attendees: CEOs and senior representatives from across the energy sector (including consumer groups and government)

## Summary of discussion

### 1 Recap on game changer outcomes and process

- Clare Savage (Chair) opened the meeting with a recap on the purpose of the game changer initiative. She outlined the aim for the meeting (to run through the proposed package of reforms to be presented to Energy Ministers) and advised that a report providing more detail on the proposed package will be shared in early October 2023, with the intention of giving stakeholders time to review the document rather than seeking agreement at the meeting.
- The Chair noted that some stakeholders have raised the issue of a duty of care to consumers, which is being considered in the review of consumer protections for future energy services that will be presented separately to Energy Ministers.
- The Chair provided an overview of problematic assumptions about consumer vulnerability, noting that the market is designed to be efficient but issues persist for consumers experiencing vulnerability.
- The Chair revisited the problem statement and design principles agreed to by the Leadership Group, as well as the initial solution spaces identified. She acknowledged the work undertaken by Design Group members to further develop the ideas prioritised by the Leadership Group.
- The Chair noted the 54 one-on-one meetings held with Leadership Group members to seek feedback on which ideas should be progressed to Energy Ministers.
- The Chair provided an overview of recent hardship statistics and outcomes from lived experience workshops undertaken by Uniting to inform the game changer proposals.

### 2 The proposed game changer package

- The Chair outlined the proposed game changer package, which works collectively to:
  - lower bills for consumers experiencing vulnerability by ensuring they receive their concession entitlements and are on the best tariff available

- ensure financial counselling assistance is available for those who need support, to help them manage debt and make informed choices
- provide debt relief for consumers who cannot pay off their entrenched debt, and help these consumers to reduce their bills in the long term through energy efficiency measures.
- The Chair noted that the proposed debt relief and energy efficiency measures are to be co-funded by a shared industry pool funded by networks and generators, and outlined an example of an illustrative costing for the pool.
- The Chair noted that there is strong support for the concessions systems upgrade, automated better offer, and financial counselling industry funding ideas, but one-on-one discussions with Leadership Group members indicated that some concerns remain about the other proposals.
- The Chair noted that none of the ideas are ready for implementation, but that risks, parameters and opportunities for each idea have been identified and outlined in the report. She noted further thinking and analysis is needed for the ideas, but considers that they are worthy of being presented to Energy Ministers for consideration and further development.
- The Chair outlined the intent to ask Energy Ministers to further develop the package, and noted that it is not expected that ideas will be implemented immediately.

**Key Outcome:** The Leadership Group were asked not to provide advice at the meeting on whether they support the proposed package, but were encouraged to ask questions to clarify the details of the package.

### 3 Discussion

- Leadership Group members generally indicated support for the Game changer initiative and the need to do something for consumers experiencing vulnerability.
- Some Leadership Group members raised further considerations for the proposed package, including in relation to risks, jurisdictional differences, and implementation approaches.

**Key Outcome:** The AER will further consider feedback and questions from the Leadership group in developing the report.

### 4 Next steps

- Justin Oliver, AER Board member, outlined next steps as follows:
  - The report will be shared with the Leadership Group on Wednesday, 4 October 2023.
  - Leadership Group members to confirm if they support the game changer package by Wednesday, 11 October 2023.
  - Final Leadership Group input and feedback on the report to Ministers to be provided to the AER no later than Wednesday, 18 October 2023.
  - AER to submit the report to Senior Energy Officials by Friday, 27 October 2023.
  - Senior Energy Officials' meeting to be held on Friday, 3 November 2023.
  - Report to be presented to Energy Ministers for meeting on Friday, 24 November 2023.
- He highlighted that these ideas are being put to Energy Ministers as being worthy of additional exploration, noting that it would be beneficial if industry supports their further consideration. He asked Leadership Group members to consider how they can support advocacy to Ministers.

## Action items

Agenda Item	Action	Owner
1	Circulate draft report on 4 October 2023	AER
2	Confirm support for game changer package by 11 October 2023	Leadership Group
3	Provide further input and feedback on report by 18 October 2023	Leadership Group
4	Compile and share feedback received with the Leadership Group	AER
5	Submit package for Senior Officials' and Energy Ministers' consideration	AER