



Better regulation

Consumer reference group subgroup guide

March 2013

Introduction

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) has undertaken the 'Better regulation' program to deliver an improved regulatory framework focused on promoting the long term interests of electricity consumers. As part of this program we have put together a consumer reference group (CRG) which seeks to encourage input from consumers.

This document provides context for the CRG subgroups (by giving an overview of the AER's Better regulation program and the CRG), as well as the specific purpose and role of the AER's CRG subgroups.

Context

The 'Better regulation' program

We have commenced the Better regulation program to deliver an improved regulatory framework focused on promoting the long term interests of electricity consumers. This follows from changes to the National Electricity and Gas Rules that were published by the Australian Energy Market Commission on 29 November 2012.

The Better regulation program includes seven work streams. The final outcome of each work stream is the development of a new guideline for that area. We are keen for consumers and their representatives to participate in the development of these new guidelines.

The consumer reference group

The CRG is a key forum for the AER to get consumer input as we develop new guidelines, as part of the Better regulation program, on how we regulate network service providers (NSPs) in the NEM.

The intention of the CRG is to make it easier for consumer representative groups to have input into the 'Better regulation' consultative process without necessarily writing formal submissions. CRG members are able to distil key issues and information to constituents for consideration, consult and report back to the AER. This will provide a mechanism for co-ordinated and informed input from a cross-section of consumer groups. The CRG will also give guidance on where consumer representative groups can invest their limited resources to most effectively contribute to future regulatory processes.

The CRG subgroups are a part of this process.

Purpose

We are adopting a dual approach to consultation through the CRG. Accordingly, we have organised:

- monthly CRG meetings
- monthly subgroup meetings.

We anticipate that the monthly CRG meetings will provide a general overview of all work streams in the Better regulation program. The purpose of the subgroups is to engage in a more in-depth discussion than can be achieved in the monthly CRG meetings.

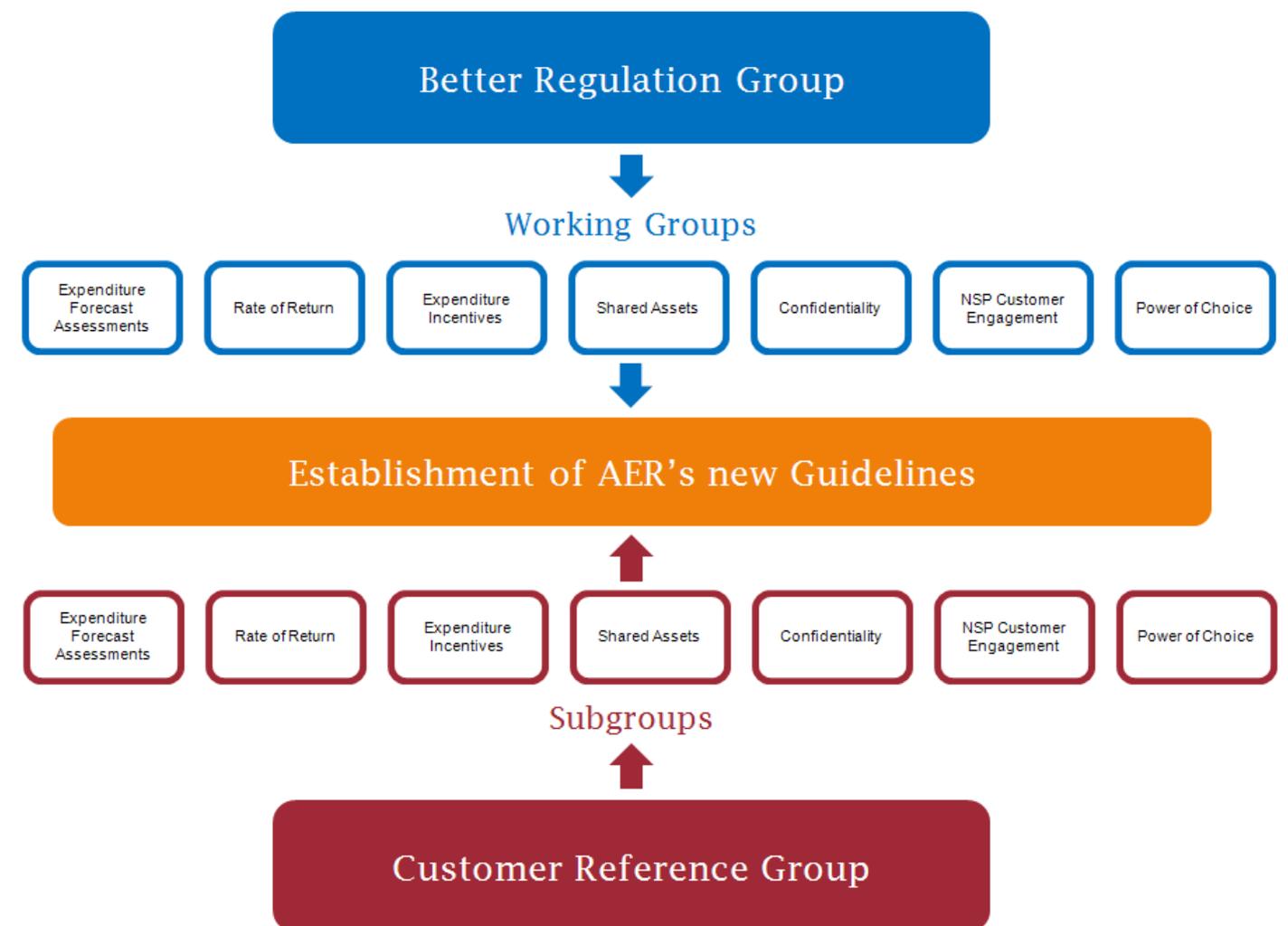
The CRG subgroups are made up of various consumer representatives from the CRG who have nominated to participate in the subgroups. Participation in CRG subgroups will allow members to target their contribution to specific areas that are of particular interest to their organisation.

Members of the subgroups are not expected to have a detailed knowledge of the subgroup that they are a member of. However, we hope subgroup members have an interest in finding out more and providing a customer perspective over the coming year.

Subgroup meetings will be facilitated by us. We will provide key discussion points ahead of the subgroup meetings.

The subgroups are complements to the Better regulation working groups. The working groups are a broad forum for any interested parties but tend to be a more technical discussion. In comparison, the subgroups are for consumers, and will be less technical. Both input from the working groups and the subgroups will be taken into account as the AER establishes new guidelines later this year. Figure 1 shows the relationship between the AER working groups and the customer reference group and subgroups.

Figure 1: Better regulation program



Roles and logistics

Each subgroup will consist of a spokesperson and general members from the CRG who have nominated to participate in that subgroup. In addition, we will make available the AER director responsible for that work stream and an AER contact to assist by providing expertise on the specific work stream.

Here are some guidelines of what we would like to see from different participants in the subgroup meetings. We acknowledge that there are many demands on your time so we appreciate that may not always be possible.

Spokesperson

The role of the subgroup spokesperson is to ensure that a summary of subgroup meetings is recorded, in particular action items. The spokesperson will liaise with the AER secretariat and subgroup members to ensure that action items are followed up. The spokesperson may be asked to report at the CRG on the discussions of the subgroup—the AER secretariat can assist with this. The spokesperson may ask another subgroup member to provide the report.

We will organise and facilitate the meetings of the subgroups. However, we envisage that the AER secretariat will liaise, in the first instance, with the spokesperson to ensure that the subgroup meetings occur at appropriate times. The spokesperson may consider that more meetings are required and may work with the AER secretariat to organise this.

Importantly, the spokesperson does not speak 'on behalf of' the subgroup. Rather, the spokesperson should report to the CRG the range of viewpoints presented at the subgroup meetings.

Subgroup members

Subgroup members should try to attend the subgroup meetings and participate where possible. To assist with this, the AER secretariat will provide information, including summaries of previous meeting and issues papers. Subgroup members are encouraged to present the views and opinions of themselves and their organisations at subgroup meetings.

AER contact

We have nominated an AER contact for each work stream who will be available to assist the subgroups as much as required. The AER contact will be available to provide technical guidance on the content being discussed in a particular subgroup. The AER contact could be available to follow up on action items and provide more in depth information as required. The AER contact Subgroup members should feel free to direct questions about the work stream to the AER contact. We expect that the AER contact will attend most subgroup meetings. Generally, the AER secretariat will also seek to be involved in the CRG subgroup meetings.

The AER contact and details are provided in Attachment 1.

AER director

We have assigned responsibility for each work stream within the Better regulation program to an AER director. The director will provide a report to the subgroup of any working group meetings. We envisage that the AER director will attend every CRG subgroup meeting.

Importantly, directors provide the link that ensures that both customer and business perspectives are accounted for in the development of the final guidelines.

Timeframes

Subgroups are expected to meet at least once between CRG meetings but can meet more frequently should they choose to. This will be largely dependent on the timetable of work stream. The AER secretariat will organise appropriate meeting times with the subgroup. The AER secretariat will likely engage with the spokesperson in the first instance.

We anticipate that most subgroup meetings will use teleconference facilities. The AER secretariat has organised for the following numbers to be used for teleconferences. This can be used for all subgroup meetings.

Dial in number: 1800766715
Conference Code: 361472

(note: you may be prompted to press # or *).

Subgroup meetings will be scheduled to run for approximately one or two hours (depending on the analysis required and the stage of the process).

Secretariat contacts

The following are contacts details for the AER CRG as at January 2013. In the first instance:

CRG Secretariat:	Tanja Warre Director Tel: (02) 6243 1103 Email: tanja.warre@aer.gov.au
CRG General Enquiries:	Kurt Stevens Senior analyst Tel: (02) 6243 1329 Email: kurt.stevens@aer.gov.au

All correspondence should be provided to: customerreferencegroup@aer.gov.au

Alternatively, correspondence can be mailed to:

Customer Reference Group
Australian Energy Regulator
GPO Box 3131
Canberra ACT 2601

Attachment 1—Details: members, directors and contacts

	Expenditure Forecast Assessment	Rate of Return	Expenditure Incentives	Shared Assets	Confidentiality	NSP Customer Engagement	Power of Choice
CRG Spokesperson	Tennant Reed	Mark Henley	David Headberry	Tennant Reed	Graham Mawer	Carolyn Hodge	Katrina Lee
CRG Members	Mark Henley	David Headberry	Mark Henley	Mark Henley	Mark Henley	Mark Henley	Mark Henley
	David Headberry	Jonathan Pavetto	David Headberry	David Headberry	David Headberry	David Headberry	David Headberry
	Jonathan Pavetto	Carolyn Hodge	Heather l'Anson	Heather l'Anson	Heather l'Anson	Dr Siwei Goo	Carly Allen
	Janine Rayner	Janine Rayner	Jonathan Pavetto	Bruce Mountain	Deanna Foong	Carly Allen	Belinda Crivelli / Matt Helme
	Angus Nardi	Bruce Mountain	Dr Siwei Goo		Bruce Mountain	Belinda Crivelli / Matt Helme	Carolyn Hodge
	Bruce Mountain		Bruce Mountain			Carolyn Hodge	Damian Sullivan
						Alexandra Geddes	Heather l'Anson
						Jonathan Pavetto	Ro Evans
						Sue Fraser	Tennant Reed
						Ro Evans	Carly Allen
						Heather l'Anson	Deanna Foong
					Deanna Foong	Bruce Mountain	
					Angus Nardi		
					Bruce Mountain		
AER Contact	Lawrence Irlam	Sajjad Minhas	Anne Sastro	Dale Johansen	Shalini Prasad	Robyn Lowien	Shalini Prasad
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	03 9290 1438	02 9320 3815	02 9320 9109	07 3835 4679	02 9320 3829	07 3835 4659	02 9320 3829
AER Director	Lawrence Irlam (see above for contact details)	Craig Madden	Blair Burkitt	Moston Neck	Adam Petersen	Moston Neck	John Skinner
		Craig.madden@ aer.gov.au 03 9290 6927	blair.burkitt@ aer.gov.au 03 9290 1442	Moston.neck@ aer.gov.au 07 3835 4669	Adam.peterse n@ aer.gov.au 08 8213 3458	Moston.neck@ aer.gov.au 07 3835 4669	John.skinner@ aer.gov.au 02 9320 3855