

CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Meeting Communique – 30 March 2022 online meeting

1. The Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) Customer Consultative Group (CCG) met on 30 March 2022 to discuss current issues affecting residential and small energy customers.
2. The new CCG Chair, Elissa Freeman, provided a welcome and overview of the meeting.
3. AER Board member, Catriona Lowe, and project consultants from EY Port Jackson Partners presented on Consumer Vulnerability – a case for change.
4. AER Chair, Clare Savage, provided an update on current work and issues for the AER, including the:
 - AER's response to support consumers impacted by floods in NSW and Queensland
 - AER's Strategic Plan 2020-25
 - AER's Better Bills project
 - transitioning energy market, the AER's role and consumer protections.

Issues raised by CCG members in response:

- Cost recovery for shared transmission
 - The impact of smart meters and non-smart meters, and retailers' ability to calculate the new better offer requirement on bills to customers
 - The impact of the transition away from gas
 - Security of domestic hydrogen investment in the market and sources of future investment
 - Ability to share data from the energy sector to a broader base of consumer advocates.
5. In the Emerging issues session, CCG members discussed the following:
 - Default Market Offer (DMO)/ Victorian Default Offer
 - Energy market transition/climate change
 - Flood response
 - Cost of living/hardship/vulnerability

6. The AER General Manager for Compliance and Enforcement presented on the use of CCG intelligence in AER compliance and enforcement work, including providing:
 - An overview of the work the Compliance and Enforcement branch (C&E) does and how they engage with stakeholders
 - The intelligence the AER uses to identify breaches and the types of actions the AER takes in response.

CCG members were invited to ask questions and provide feedback and engage in a discussion regarding issues of concern.

7. During the Items for noting discussion, CCG members commented that they would appreciate greater awareness of upcoming training sessions and consultations across the energy sector and two additional research papers were brought to the attention of members.
 - AER staff noted that the AER will consider how to boost capability and capacity of consumer advocates in the sector, including a strategic way to reduce duplication in consultations.
8. In Any other business, AER staff advised of the following:
 - Further induction session for CCG members who do not have a solid background in the energy sector
 - AER's interest in CCG members' research proposals
9. CCG members met for a Members Only discussion and nominated topics to be prioritised for in-depth discussion in future CCG meetings.