

# AER CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION – SELECTION CRITERIA

## Overview

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) invites organisations and/or individuals who have a general interest and knowledge of Australian energy consumer issues to apply for membership on its Customer Consultative Group (CCG). The CCG was established in 2009 and was reconstituted in 2011. The AER aims to achieve a balance and variety of interests and perspectives among the membership and encourages both national and state-based consumer representatives to apply.

Membership on the CCG will provide organisations and/or individuals with the opportunity to inform the AER about issues that impact on the groups they represent and to advise the AER on key energy consumer issues in a collaborative environment alongside other consumer representatives.

While the CCG forms an important part of the AER's consultative processes, it will not be the AER's sole mechanism for consultation. The AER will also, for example, seek public submissions on guidelines, and run stakeholder workshops on an ad hoc basis. The AER has also established a range of specific consultative mechanisms for its regulatory determination processes.

Applications addressing the selection criteria must be received by **5:00pm AEST on Friday 28 February 2014**. Further information about applying can be obtained by emailing a request to [AERinquiry@aer.gov.au](mailto:AERinquiry@aer.gov.au) or by contacting Seona March on (03) 9658 6521.

## Background

The AER is Australia's national energy market regulator and has an independent board. The AER is funded by the Commonwealth and shares staff, resources and facilities with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

The AER operates under the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*. Our functions are set out in national energy market legislation and rules, and mostly relate to energy markets in eastern and southern Australia. These functions include:

- setting the prices charged for using energy networks (electricity poles and wires and gas pipelines) to transport energy to customers;
- monitoring wholesale electricity and gas markets to ensure suppliers comply with the legislation and rules, and taking enforcement action where necessary;
- regulating retail energy markets in the ACT, Tasmania (electricity only), South Australia and New South Wales;
- publishing information on energy markets, including the annual State of the energy market report and more detailed market and compliance reporting, to assist participants and the wider community;
- assisting the ACCC with energy-related issues arising under the Competition and Consumer Act, including enforcement, mergers and authorisations.

Under the National Energy Retail Law and National Energy Retail Rules, the AER's functions include:

- monitoring and enforcing compliance with obligations in the Retail Law, Rules and Regulations;
- reporting on performance of the market and energy businesses, including information on energy affordability and trends in disconnection of customers for non-payment;
- assessing applications for national retailer authorisations from businesses that want to become energy retailers, and exempting businesses from the requirement to be authorised (for example, for nursing homes and caravan parks that pay for energy and onsell it to their tenants as part of their normal business);
- approving policies energy retailers must implement to assist customers who are facing financial hardship and looking for help to manage their bills;
- educating consumers and small businesses about their energy rights and managing the energy price comparison website – Energy Made Easy; and
- administering a retailer of last resort scheme, which protects customers and the market if a retail business fails.

The role of the CCG is to:

- provide advice to the AER in relation to the AER's functions under energy laws affecting residential and small to medium sized business energy customers across participating jurisdictions;
- comment on, and provide advice to the AER on, issues affecting residential and small to medium sized business energy customers that fall within the scope of the AER's administration of national energy legislation;
- assist the AER to obtain community perspectives on energy regulatory issues, and
- assist the AER in identifying emerging and systemic energy issues.

The AER is seeking to appoint members to the CCG that represent a diversity of consumer and business organisations working within the community. We will look to appoint members to the CCG that represent a breadth and balance of expertise and experience (including across a range of jurisdictions, consumer/user groups). Participation in the CCG allows members to inform the AER about energy issues that impact on the groups and consumers they represent.

### **About the CCG**

The CCG will be composed of approximately ten organisations.

Members are required to consult with their constituency outside the CCG meetings and members are expected to provide comment on:

- issues and processes affecting residential and small to medium business energy customers that fall within the scope of the AER's functions under national energy legislation;
- emerging energy issues or energy market developments that may be of concern to particular groups of customers/users;

- information dissemination strategies and appropriate external networks available to enhance communication with community and consumer/users groups and consumers/users; and
- issues as requested by the AER.

By providing advice on the above issues, members assist the AER in carrying out its functions under the national energy legislation and assist the AER to identify opportunities to more effectively meet its statutory responsibilities.

The AER expects that CCG meetings will be held in person in Melbourne three times a year. Meetings will usually run from 10.00am to 3.00pm. If any member is unable to attend meetings in person, video or teleconference facilities may be made available. Subject to prior AER agreement, the member may also nominate an alternative representative to attend the meeting in their place.

The AER will cover the reasonable costs of attending meetings for one nominee per member. Members will be paid a sitting fee for attendance at CCG meetings and will be recompensed for reasonable travel expenses and an interpreter service if required.

### **How to apply for CCG membership**

The AER aims to achieve a balance and variety of interests and perspectives among the membership of the CCG. Applications will be sought from organisations that can demonstrate a general interest and knowledge of energy consumer issues in Australia.

In assessing applications for membership on the CCG, the AER will take into account merit-based principles through the use of selection criteria.

The AER therefore requires applicants to address the following selection criteria in their applications:

1. ability to advise the AER in relation to the AER's functions under energy laws affecting residential and small to medium sized business energy customers across participating jurisdictions.
2. links to consumer or other relevant organisations which would allow the member to canvass the views and perspectives of the energy customers they represent and convey current energy issues of concern to the AER
3. freedom from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest
4. an understanding of the role and operation of the AER
5. demonstrated effectiveness in representing the interests of energy consumers generally, or particular groups of energy consumers, such as (but not limited to):
  - consumers from rural and regional communities
  - consumers in particular states and territories
  - financially disadvantaged or vulnerable consumers
  - small to medium sized business energy consumers
  - Indigenous consumers
  - culturally and linguistically diverse consumers.

### **Your application must:**

- address all the selection criteria (no more than 400 words per criterion);
- nominate which jurisdiction(s) the applicant is active in;
- provide contact details of the organisation and individual who will attend CCG meetings (including their ability to commit to attending all CCG meetings and that they are suitably qualified to participate in meetings); and
- be received by the AER by the due date (see below).

You may also wish to include relevant background material with your application in addition to information provided in response to the selection criteria.

### **Due date and late applications**

**Applications are due by 5:00pm AEST on Friday 28 February 2014.**

Applications that have not been received before this time will not be considered for CCG membership.

For purposes of posted applications, the post marked date on the application will be taken as the date received by the AER. Consequently, applications post marked as Friday 28 February 2014 but received by the AER at a later date will be deemed as being received within the application period.

### **Where to send applications**

Applications can be emailed to [AERinquiry@aer.gov.au](mailto:AERinquiry@aer.gov.au). All applications received will be acknowledged by return email.

**The AER's preference is for applications to be submitted by email.** However, applications by post will also be accepted and can be sent to:

AER Customer Consultative Group  
C/o AER – attention Seona March  
GPO Box 520  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

### **Contact details for enquiries**

Enquiries concerning the CCG or the application process can be made to Seona March, Retail Markets Branch, AER, on (03) 9658 6521 or by emailing a request to [AERinquiry@aer.gov.au](mailto:AERinquiry@aer.gov.au).