

# AER REFERENCE GROUP

**Record of meeting – 18 October 2017**

1. The AER’s consumer information reference group (ARG) met for the third time on 18 October 2017 (see attendee list at **Attachment A**).
2. The AER’s Elisha Kelly greeted attendees and introduced the representatives from the Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA) - Jane Lloyd, Shea Houlihan, Janine Bilaecki (Melbourne) and Simon Gordon (Canberra) who were conducting an interactive workshop on price fact sheets.
* BETA’s workshop ran through its initial ideas on the content and design of fact sheets, with a view to identifying the features that would make the fact sheet more user-friendly.
* The focus of the workshop was obtaining members’ views on the content and design of fact sheets, given their experience and knowledge of the sector, and in particular on the four mocked up fact sheets provided by BETA for the workshop.
1. Ben Barnes (BB) from Red Energy and Damian Sullivan (DS) from the Brotherhood of St Laurence provided additional mock fact sheets for circulation and discussion.
2. BETA started the workshop with a general discussion about fact sheets and the group discussion covered a number of elements, such as:
* the purpose of the fact sheets, i.e. whether they are intended as a comparison tool or to inform a customer about key information relating to the offer
* ensuring the fact sheets are not the sole way customers access information about their energy offers. It was suggested that research should be undertaken to identify what is driving consumer choices, and information should be provided at key decision points
* the group agreed that it is important to ensure that the fact sheets will work with EME
1. BETA ran through the various fact sheets with the group.
* Discussion covered:
	+ the language to be included, noting consistency in language is very important
	+ presenting offers in dollar figures showing customers what they can expect to pay, based on the amount on a bill.
	+ flagging benefit periods and fees/charges associated with offers
	+ testing should be conducted with consumers that don’t use the internet
	+ the ‘tariff comparison’ component of the fact sheet should be prominently located
	+ work needs to be done with benchmarks (the AER noted that this is occurring)
	+ the use of ticks and crosses are better than terms like ‘good’, ‘better’, ‘best’
	+ displaying multiple plans on one fact sheet may confuse customers; EME assists customers with comparing plans
	+ displaying the estimated figure first given there are many variables
* there was also discussion around how the fact sheet might manage the addition of demand and TOU tariffs
* the group noted while the extra descriptions of the household sizes on the mock fact sheets were helpful, it wasn’t the best way of displaying information
* the group was less inclined towards a fact sheet that read like a comparison sheet (essentially the way results are displayed on EME) or a tree diagram.

The next steps:

* BETA will use the information garnered in the meeting to mock up a number of modified fact sheets for testing (which will include testing with non-digitally reliant customers).
* The group will provide any further views at the next meeting on 1 November 2017.



## AER Reference Group Attendees

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| Organisation | Name |
| Australian Energy Regulator | Sarah Proudfoot - General Manager, Retail Markets (Chair) |
| ActewAGL Retail | Kate Goatley - Manager, Business Projects |
| Australian Energy Council | Tess Fitzgerald - Retail Policy ManagerFiona Simon – Consultant  |
| Brotherhood of St Laurence | Damian Sullivan - Research and Policy Senior ManagerDavid Bryant - Research Officer |
| Consumer Action Law Centre | Zac Gillam - Senior Policy Officer |
| Consumer Policy Research Centre | Lauren Solomon - CEO |
| COTA Australia | Robyn Robinson - Director |
| EnergyAustralia | Samantha Nunan - Industry Regulatory Lead, Corporate |
| Energy Consumers Australia | Oliver Derum - Associate Director, Advocacy and Communications |
| Origin Energy | Timothy Wilson - Manager, Regulatory Policy |
| Powershop | Michael Benveniste - Head of Commercial & StrategyDanielle Holey - Commercial Analyst |
| Red Energy | Ben Barnes - Regulatory Manager |
| Uniting Communities/Uniting Care | Mark Henley‎ - Manager Advocacy, Uniting Communities and Energy Advocate, Uniting Care |

**Non-member attendees**

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| Organisation | Name |
| Australian Competition and Consumer Commission | Rebecca Holland - Director, Retail Electricity Pricing Inquiry |
| Behavioural Economics Team of the Australian Government (BETA)  | Simon Gordon |
| BETA | Jane Lloyd |
| BETA | Janine Bilaecki |
| BETA  | Shea Houlihan |