

CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Meeting Communique – 13 March 2018

1. The Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) Customer Consultative Group (CCG) met on 13 March 2018 (see membership list at page 3) to discuss current issues affecting residential and small energy customers.
2. CCG Chair, Jim Cox, noted the key areas of work for the AER since November 2017, including:
 - a. Review of various guidelines under the National Energy Retail Law and National Energy Retail Rules (Retail Rules) and development of new Benefit Change Notice Guideline.
 - b. Infringement notices issued to AGL and Energex for failing to comply with certain provisions of the Retail Rules.
 - c. The first steps in the AER's redevelopment of Energy Made Easy (EME) which includes user experience enhancements to the search and results aspects of EME.
 - d. Observations on the electricity high price events in South Australia and Victoria in early 2018 and the AER's observations from monitoring the domestic gas market
 - e. The proposed rule change that will allow the AER to apply its new demand management incentive scheme.
 - f. Publication of the inflation review and rate of return guideline position paper.
3. The Alternative Technology Association presented on the findings of its 2017 research on the economics of fuel choice when replacing household appliances across the National Electricity Market. Arising from the presentation, there was discussion about:
 - a. The types of appliances and fuel types for different climates
 - b. The upfront costs of energy efficient appliances and the savings over the lifetime of the appliance.
4. Staff from the AER's Retail Markets Branch presented on the changes to the Retail Exempt Selling Guideline including expanding access to ombudsmen services to

exempt customers. There was also a discussion of the trends in energy sales in embedded networks such as retrofits, authorisations and agency arrangements.

5. Staff from the AER's Networks Branch discussed the rule changes on the role of embedded network managers.
6. During Member's time, Jim Cox, Sarah Proudfoot (Retail Markets General Manager), Peter Adams (Wholesale Market General Manager) and members discussed:
 - a. Resourcing of consumer advocates to ensure a consumer perspective is considered in the decision making processes relating to energy policy.
 - b. The AER's role in ensuring participants effected by reforms to tariff structure statements understand their obligations and rights.
 - c. The National Energy Guarantee, including the role of the AER with respect to compliance with the guarantee.
 - d. The AER's approach to compliance
 - e. The importance of educating network operators and exempt sellers on their responsibilities in relation to embedded network policy changes.
7. Jim Cox facilitated a panel discussion on competition in metering with panel members from the Energy Water Ombudsman South Australia (EWOSA), the St Vincent de Paul Society and AER's Retail Markets Branch. There was discussion of the complexity and implementation challenges arising from the rules in this new market. Members agreed it will take time to bed down the policy and allow innovation in the market to develop.
8. The AER's Retail Markets Compliance Team presented on the outcomes of the AER's review of retailer's hardship policies and upcoming work related to hardship, including a rule change proposal, audits and investigations.

ATTENDEES

CCG members

CCG Chair	Jim Cox, AER Board Member
Alternative Technology Association	Kieran Price
Ethnic Communities Council NSW	Iain Maitland
Care FCA	Eileen Newmarch
Country Women's Association Australia	Elizabeth Nash
COTA Australia	Robyn Robinson
National Retail Association	Ian Winterburn
Public Interest Advocacy Centre	Craig Memery
Queensland Council of Social Service	Rose McGrath
St Vincent de Paul Society	Gavin Dufty
Tasmania Council of Social Service	Cynthia Townley
Uniting Communities	Mark Henley

Observers

Australian Energy Market Commission	Kate Wild
Australian Energy Market Commission	Michael Bradley
Energy Consumers Australia	Oliver Derum
Energy and Water Ombudsman SA	Sandy Canale

AER Representatives

AER Retail Markets General Manager	Sarah Proudfoot
AER Wholesale Markets General Manager	Peter Adams

Apologies

Brotherhood of Saint Laurence	Damian Sullivan
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