

CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Meeting Communiqué – 15 June 2022

1. The Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) Customer Consultative Group (CCG) met on 15 June 2022 to discuss current issues affecting residential and small energy customers.
2. The CCG Chair, Elissa Freeman, provided a welcome and overview of the meeting.
3. AER Chair, Clare Savage, provided an update on the AER's priorities, current issues, and emerging topics of interest. This included:
 - The Australian federal election
 - AER Senior Management staffing changes
 - Current events in the energy market including energy price increases and cost of living pressures, including:
 - High wholesale market prices, the reasons for the increase in prices and the impacts on retailers and consumers. Wholesale price increases also affected this year's Default Market Offer.
 - Generator bidding behaviour
 - Challenges being faced by market participants
 - Retailer of Last Resort framework and implementation.

The following topics were discussed during a Q&A response session with the AER Board:

- Longevity of the current default market offer (DMO)
 - Generator bidding behaviour
 - Consumer advocates visibility of the wholesale market
 - Protections for small residential customers from high gas prices
 - Consumers' energy literacy
 - Availability of multilingual material covering energy facts and information on rising energy prices for CALD consumers
 - Retailers withdrawing offers from the market.
4. In the Emerging issues session, CCG members discussed the following:
 - AER data collection and publication
 - Funding for consumer advocates

- Data on infrastructure and supply for exempt sellers
 - AER's capacity to hold, share and make data public.
5. The AER General Manager for Compliance and Enforcement provided an overview of the draft 2022/2023 compliance and enforcement priorities. CCG members were invited to ask questions and provide feedback on the priorities and engage in a discussion regarding issues of concern.
 6. The AER's Director and Assistant Director of Policy Development presented on the AER's review of the Retailer Authorisation and Exemption framework. CCG members discussed and provided feedback on the review approach and risk assessment tools.
 7. CCG member, Craig Memery (PIAC), gave an overview and facilitated a discussion on transmission cost recovery. CCG members discussed and provided feedback on the issues raised in the discussion.
 8. During the Items for noting discussion, CCG members commented on:
 - The difference between exposure to electricity shortages across states.
 - Aurora Energy removing both the Aurora+ app product fee and the cost-recovery charge in its Cost to Serve allowance.
 - The need for a greater focus on small businesses from the AER.
 - AER staff noted that the AER is definitely interested in hearing about the issues facing small businesses. The AER also noted that they are meeting with the Australian Small Business Ombudsman to further understand the issues facing these consumers.
 - Retailers exiting the market and retailers of last resort.
 9. In Any other business, AER advised the research proposals submitted by CCG members' have been reviewed. The AER is considering which topics/proposals can be progressed as part of existing or future projects across the AER.
 10. CCG members met for a Members Only discussion and nominated topics to be prioritised for in-depth discussion in future CCG meetings.