

ActewAGL Distribution Energy Consumer Reference Council Communique

Meeting 18 – 21 June 2017

The ActewAGL Distribution Energy Consumer Reference Council (ECRC) met on 21 June 2017. Representatives from Council on the Aging ACT (COTA), Canberra Business Chamber, Master Builders Association, ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS) and the Gungahlin and Tuggeranong Community Council participated in the meeting. The ACT Energy Consumer Advocate attended as an observer.

The following presentations and associated discussion occurred at the meeting:

- **Consumer Challenge Panel (CCP);** Mr Mark Henley of the AER CCP attended the meeting as an observer. He explained the role of the CCP as an independent adviser working within the AER to argue the case for customers and provide advice to the AER on the quality of consumer engagement being undertaken by the network businesses with respect to the 2019-24 Electricity Regulatory Submission. Areas of discussion by the ECRC included the role of the CCP in challenging the National Electricity Rules that may not be working for customers and seeking input from the CCP on how to explain the many different factors impacting energy prices.
- **Electricity Regulatory Matters;** ActewAGL Distribution provided the ECRC with an update on the 2019-24 Electricity Regulatory Proposal, including an update on the Framework and Approach; the Expenditure Forecasting Methodology and the AER review of benchmarking techniques.

The presentation also explored the topics to be discussed with customers as part of developing the regulatory proposal. Example case-studies, information and customer feedback questions were presented in the areas of capital expenditure, operating expenditure and network tariffs. Areas of discussion and feedback from the ECRC included options for alternative customer engagement techniques, areas where more information could be provided to consumers, the importance of simplified terminology and suggested reframing of customer questions. Topics of interest included the impact of future embedded generation, and the trade-off between cost and reliability.

The meeting was provided with a brief update on the outcomes of the legal appeal to the 2014-19 Regulatory Determination. It was noted that until the AER remakes its decision it is not possible to know the impact on network charges.

- **Commonwealth Government media release** titled 'Securing our Energy Future' dated 20 June 2017 was tabled and discussed.
- **Customer validation work;** ActewAGL Distribution presented the ECRC with a brief overview of work being undertaken to recast customer relationships, incorporating some important customer research to better understand what customers want from the network business over the longer term. Members of the ECRC were asked to help recruit customers to be part of this research. ECRC members highlighted the importance of ensuring the finer grain of customer segments were considered, such as vulnerable customers and very small businesses.
- **Power of Choice project;** ActewAGL Distribution reminded ECRC members of the current customer trial of the new customer portal and encouraged members to participate.

Copies of PowerPoint presentations and papers presented to the meeting are available at www.actewagl.com.au/consumerengagement. The next meeting of the ECRC is scheduled for August 2017. For further information contact Jo Fisher, ActewAGL on 02 6248 3314.