

Evoenergy Energy Consumer Reference Council Communique

Meeting 47 – 30 June 2022

The Evoenergy Energy Consumer Reference Council (ECRC) met virtually on 30 June 2022.

Member representatives attended from Tuggeranong Community Council, Gungahlin Community Council, the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS), Better Renting, Property Council of Australia (ACT), the Council on the Ageing (COTA), ACT Conservation Council, and Master Builders Association. Observers attended from the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). Guest speakers attended from the ACT Government and Communication Link.

The following presentations and discussion occurred at the meeting:

EN24 & TSS update

Ms Emily Brown presented an update on the Tariff Structure Statement (TSS). She provided an overview of recent consumer engagement activity including a survey of ACT electrical vehicle owners, a Community Pricing Panel, and co-design workshops. Results from the EV survey showed an opportunity to influence recharge behavior for EV vehicles in return for consumer network bill reduction of approximately 30% per year. Ms. Brown then explained how the Community Pricing Panel was made up of 30 members who represented the ACT community. They have held four sessions to date and support for the proposed changes to the current tariff structure was well received overall. Next steps include further engagement with retailers, aggregators, business customers and the ACT government.

Ms. Gillian Symmans provided an update on planning for the electricity network for 2024–29 (EN24) consumer engagement and the draft plan. Key components of EN24 will be discussed at the next ECRC meeting. At the fifth Community Panel session on 25 June 2022, Evoenergy presented forecast predictions for its operating and capital expenditure. Ms. Symmans explained the draft plan includes a preliminary forecast on capex and opex which will increase a typical residential customer bill. She explained how three proposed step changes for security of critical infrastructure, distribution of energy resources, and insurance premiums were all taken into this calculation and explained the factors for the increase. She advised the majority of panel members agreed that the proposed step changes appropriately balanced customer expectations regarding risk, the changing needs of the network, and consumer cost impact.

Ms. Ellen Samuels presented the EN24 consumer engagement dashboard which summarised recent activity and invited feedback from the council on how we are achieving our engagement objectives and pillars. She also reviewed the EN24 engagement health check report card with council members. Council members discussed and felt Evoenergy is on track. No members disagreed with this.

Big Battery

Mr. Sam Engele from the ACT Government presented an overview of the big Canberra battery by giving a project snapshot. He explained how the goal of battery storage would be to match generation and consumption peaks by enhancing the electricity supply. He discussed the three types of batteries that would be developed which included transmission scale batteries (large), batteries at ACT government sites (small–medium) and neighbourhood scale batteries (small–medium). He took questions and facilitated discussion about battery ownership and how batteries relate to the target to achieve net zero by 2045.

Mr. Leylann Hinch presented Evoenergy's update on regulatory obligations and grid scale batteries. He offered further insight into how batteries can assist Evoenergy in low voltage distribution areas. He explained the current batteries in place around the ACT region and their expected growth. Finally, he spoke about how Evoenergy is working towards building capability around battery planning and location but also the challenges presented due to regulatory requirements. It was agreed this topic will be addressed in more detail in a future ECRC meeting.

Update regarding recent National Electricity Market events

Mr. Peter Billing provided a brief update about the recent National Electricity Market events and how the increased demand, driven by customers, created load peaks while available generation in the network was limited. This led to intervention by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) to suspend the spot price, capped at at \$300 MW/hour. He gave further insight into how the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) responded to the situation and details about how load reduction enabled effective balancing of supply and demand; including how these arrangements were addressed in the ACT.

Customer share

Mr. Joel Dignam from Better Renting discussed current topics relating to winter renter issues he has observed. These included poorly insulated homes with escaping heat, anxiety from consumers about growing energy costs, and the lack of public knowledge relating to how the energy market works or how energy is delivered. He opened the floor for discussion and council members raised further points about the need for deep reform which has again been highlighted with the recent concerns and issue.

Safety share

Ms. Zoe Dougall and Ms. Samantha Lloyd spoke about the severe storm event which took place on 3 January 2022. The supercell storm caused extensive damage throughout the West Belconnen region and she provided photo and video evidence to demonstrate its significance. Ms. Samantha Lloyd went through a summary of statistics of the event including extent of customers affected, assets numbers and types damaged, outages, and customer interactions. Ms. Zoe Dougall also provided an update about how Evoenergy is internally continuing improvement processes as a high priority action to be better prepared in future for these events. She also explained that on 1 July 2022 Mr. Peter Billing and Ms. Alison Davis will be representing Evoenergy at the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the storm.

Member update

Due to time constraints, member updates were not able to present updates however Mr. John Knox, CEO of Evoenergy, thanked ECRC member Geoff Buchannan for this assistance and contribution to the community and council over the years.

Information about the ECRC is available on our website: www.evoenergy.com.au/consumerengagement

The next meeting of the Evoenergy Energy Consumer Reference Council is to be held on 18 August 2022. For further information please contact Evoenergy Communication & Engagement Manager Samantha Lloyd on 02 6248 3524.