

CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Meeting Communiqué – 12 June 2024

1. The Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) Customer Consultative Group (CCG) met on 12 June 2024 to discuss current issues affecting residential and small energy consumers.
2. CCG members met at the outset for a Member-only discussion, in which they prioritised emerging issues and discussed future topics for the AER to cover.
3. The CCG Chair, Elissa Freeman, provided a welcome and overview of the meeting.
4. The AER Deputy Chair, Jim Cox, covered the following AER updates:
 - Default Market Offer 2024-25
 - Final decision for six network businesses for 2024-2029
 - NSW pricing decisions by the AER that covered two-way pricing/export reward tariffs
 - Unpublished retail performance reporting data for Q3 2023/24, including analysis of numbers of customers on hardship programs in Tasmania.
5. In the *Emerging issues* session, CCG members discussed:
 - Tariffs and a need for retailers to obtain explicit informed consent when changing a customer's tariff
 - The significant number of family violence referrals being received by the energy sector, and a need for a national approach to address risks and impacts of inadvertent disclosures
 - Buy Now Pay Later services for energy bills.
6. In the *Compliance matters* discussion, the AER and CCG members engaged in a discussion regarding issues of concern, including consumers placed on unsustainable plans developed without due consideration of a consumer's capacity to pay.
7. The AER ran a consultation on the Review of payment difficulty protections in the National Energy Customer Framework. The AER sought CCG members' feedback on the proposed approach for the review, the eligibility framework for payment difficulty protections, and the potential costs and benefits of changes.
8. The AER ran a consultation on the issues paper regarding the Value of Network Resilience (VNR). The AER sought feedback on an approach the AER could take in estimating the value customers place on network resilience during prolonged outages (outages more than 12 hours). The AER also sought CCG member on better practice for engaging with the priority consumer cohorts and the assessment criteria for establishing a VNR for priority customers.