

CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Meeting Communiqué – 22 August 2024

1. The Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) Customer Consultative Group (CCG) met on 22 August 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 discussed emerging issues and topics for future meetings.
3. The CCG Chair, Elissa Freeman, provided a welcome and overview of the meeting.
4. The AER Chair, Clare Savage, covered the following AER updates:
 - Value of Network Resilience guidelines review
 - Consultation on Cost Benefit Analysis and Regulatory Investment Test guideline amendments
 - Transgrid HumeLink contingent project stage 2 decision
 - Consultation paper on Basslink Determination 2025:30 conversion.
5. In the *Emerging issues* session, CCG members discussed:
 - AER best practice engagement on key issues
 - Affordability in the context of increases in cost of living and the impact for consumers.
6. In the *Compliance matters* discussion, the AER responded to compliance issues raised. These focussed on retailers who provide misleading, incorrect or insufficient information to consumers about offers and their recourse.
7. The AER ran a consultation on payment methods used by consumers in financial stress. There was discussion about the impacts of vulnerable consumers using different types of credit (such as buy now, pay later products) to pay their energy bills.
8. The AER ran a workshop on payment difficulty review recommendations. The AER consulted on specific areas of opportunity to strengthen protections for consumers experiencing payment difficulty and identify protections for people in energy debt.
9. The AER thanked Elissa Freeman for her work over the past 3 years as CCG Chair, recognising this meeting as her last as chair. AER staff and CCG members reflected on the positive contributions Elissa made to the group during the time. Elissa has taken a new full-time role as CEO, Financial Counselling Industry Fund.
10. The AER confirmed the next meeting date would be held online on Thursday, 14 November 2024.