

CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Meeting Communiqué – 14 March 2023

1. The Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) Customer Consultative Group (CCG) met on 14 March 2023 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 Board member, Jim Cox covered a number of AER updates and issues including the:
 - Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council meeting, with one key outcome being a change to the National Energy Objectives to include an emissions reduction objective.
 - Commonwealth Government intervention, which included the AER being given new coal regulatory powers in New South Wales.
 - Draft Default Market Offer 2023-24 (DMO5), to be released on 15 March 2023
 - AER's Retail data Q2 22/23 quarterly report, to be released on 15 March 2023.

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

- Regulations and guidelines around NSW investment in new networks.
 - Appropriate cost recovery mechanisms for distribution businesses.
 - Balancing transition to net zero costs for energy consumers.
 - Transparency of annual pricing reviews in the future.
 - A need for consistent advice from retailers regarding energy efficiency or smart usage for smaller businesses.
 - Scope to change the Default Market Offer between draft and final decision.
4. In the Emerging issues session, CCG members discussed the following:
 - Cost of living and high energy prices
 - Retailer preparedness to address the expected rise in energy hardship
 - Transition from gas to electric
 - Gas supply
 - State of the retail market
 - Tariffs.

5. The AER ran a discussion on *Consumers' experiences with tariff reform – now and in the future*, which was co-designed with CCG members Douglas McCloskey, Dr Georgina Davis and Robyn Robinson. In this session, CCG members discussed the issues consumers are facing in their interaction with retailers on tariff options, what effects this has on realising the benefits of network tariff reform, what this may mean in the future, and ideas for further consideration.
6. In the Compliance matters discussion, the AER and CCG members engaged in a discussion regarding issues of concern.
7. The AER led a discussion on the AER's plans to embed consumer insights and perspectives across the organisation. As part of this discussion CCG members provided feedback and suggestions on a definition of consumers, principles and objectives.
8. In Any other business, CCG members provided suggestions on energy transition discussion topics for future CCG meetings.
9. CCG members met for a Members Only discussion, in which they provided feedback on the sessions held as part of this meeting and discussed priorities for future CCG meetings.