

AER CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION – SELECTION CRITERIA

Overview

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) invites organisations and/or individuals who have a general interest and knowledge of Australian energy consumer issues to apply for membership on its Customer Consultative Group (CCG). The AER aims to achieve a balance and variety of interests and perspectives among the membership and encourages both national and state-based consumer representatives to apply. The AER also encourages existing members of committees formed by jurisdictional regulators to apply.

Membership on the CCG will provide organisations and/or individuals with the opportunity to inform the AER about issues that impact on the groups they represent and to advise the AER on key energy consumer issues together in a collaborative environment alongside other consumer representatives.

While the CCG will form a significant part of the AER's consultative processes, it will not be the AER's sole mechanism for consultation. The AER will also, for example, seek public submissions on guidelines, and run stakeholder workshops on an ad hoc basis. The AER is also establishing jurisdiction-based consultative mechanisms for distribution reset processes.

Applications addressing the selection criteria must be received by **5:00pm AEST on Monday 7 September 2009**. Further information about applying can be obtained by emailing a request to Jessica.Zito@aer.gov.au or on (03) 9290 1412.

Background

The AER is an independent Commonwealth statutory authority and administratively part of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission under Part IIIAA of the *Trade Practices Act 1974*.

The AER monitors the wholesale electricity and gas markets and is responsible for the enforcement of the relevant wholesale market rules and laws. The AER is responsible for the economic regulation of the electricity transmission and distribution networks and the gas transmission and distribution networks (outside of Western Australia and the Northern Territory). These functions will expand over time as non-economic distribution and retail functions in all jurisdictions (except Western Australia for gas and electricity and except Northern Territory for electricity) transfer to the AER.

Under the First Exposure Draft of the National Energy Retail Law and National Energy Retail Rules, the proposed new AER functions include:

- responsibility for authorising (licensing) energy retailers and for approving exemptions
- preparing guidelines on the presentation by retailers of their prices
- overseeing the contractual relationship between distributors and customers

- overseeing the credit support aspects of the relationship between distributors and retailers
- monitoring and reporting on the performance of regulated entities, including retailers' performance against hardship indicators
- Administering a retail and non-price distribution compliance regime, including compliance auditing and annual compliance reports.
- The AER will also undertake any enforcement action. The responsibility for electricity and gas retail prices is to remain with state and territory jurisdictions, unless expressly transferred to the AER by the respective jurisdictions.

The AER is establishing the CCG to:

- provide advice to the AER in relation to the AER's functions under the energy laws affecting small to medium energy consumers across participating jurisdictions;
- comment on issues affecting domestic and small to medium sized consumers that fall within the scope of the AER's administration of national energy legislation;
- assist the AER to obtain community perspectives on energy regulatory issues, and
- assist the AER in identifying emerging and systemic issues.

The AER will form the CCG in early 2010 and is inviting interested applicants to apply.

The AER seeks to maintain a dynamic membership representing the diversity of consumer organisations working within the community. Participation in the CCG allows members to inform the AER about energy issues that impact on the groups they represent.

About the CCG

The CCG will be composed of approximately six consumer organisations.

Members are required to consult with their constituency outside the CCG meetings and members are expected to provide comment on:

- issues and processes affecting energy consumers and small to medium sized users that fall within the scope of the AER's functions under national energy legislation;
- emerging energy issues or energy market developments that may be of concern to particular groups of consumers/users;
- information dissemination strategies and appropriate external networks available to enhance communication with community and consumer/users groups and consumers/users; and
- issues as requested by the AER.

By providing advice on the above issues, members assist the AER in carrying out its functions under the national energy legislation and assist the AER to identify opportunities to more effectively meet its statutory responsibilities.

The AER expects that CCG meetings will initially be held three times a year then revert to two times per year. Meetings will usually run from 10.00am to 2.30pm.

The AER prefers members to attend meetings in person. However, if any member is unable to attend meetings in person, teleconference facilities may be made available.

The AER will cover the reasonable costs of meetings for one nominee per member. Members will be paid a sitting fee for attendance at CCG meetings and will be recompensed for reasonable travel expenses and an interpreter service if required.

How to apply for CCG membership

The AER aims to achieve a balance and variety of interests and perspectives among the membership of the CCG. Applications will be sought from organisations which can demonstrate a general interest and knowledge of energy consumer issues in Australia.

In assessing applications for membership on the CCG, the AER will take into account merit-based principles through the use of selection criteria.

The AER therefore requires applicants to address the following selection criteria:

1. ability to advise the AER in relation to the AER's functions under the energy laws affecting small to medium sized energy consumers across participating jurisdictions.
2. links to consumer or other relevant organisations which would allow the member to convey current energy issues of concern to the CCG
3. freedom from conflicts of interest
4. an understanding of the role and operation of the AER
5. demonstrated effectiveness in representing the interests of energy consumers generally, or particular groups of energy consumers, such as (but not limited to):
 - consumers from rural and regional communities
 - consumers in particular states and territories
 - financially disadvantaged consumers

Your application must:

- address all the selection criteria (between 750 and 1000 words in total);
- nominate which jurisdiction(s) the applicant is active in;
- provide contact details of the organisation and/or individual who will attend CCG meetings; and
- be received by the AER by the due date (see below).

You may also wish to include relevant background material with your application in addition to information provided in response to the selection criteria.

Due date and late applications

Applications are due by 5:00pm AEST on Monday 7 September 2009.

Applications that have not been received before this time will not be considered for CCG membership.

For purposes of posted applications, the post marked date on the application will be taken as the date received by the AER. Consequently, applications post marked as Monday 7 September 2009 but received by the AER at a later date will be deemed as being received within the application period.

Where to send applications

Applications should be emailed to Jessica.Zito@aer.gov.au and Neil.Howes@aer.gov.au. All applications received will be acknowledged by return email.

The AER's preference is for applications to be submitted by email, however applications by post will also be accepted and can be sent to:

AER Customer Consultative Group
C/o AER/ACCC – attention Jessica Zito
GPO Box 520
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Contact details for enquiries

Enquiries concerning the CCG or the application process can be made to Jessica Zito, Markets Branch, AER, on (03) 9290 1412 or by emailing a request to Jessica.Zito@aer.gov.au.