

AUSTRALIAN ENERGY REGULATOR CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE GROUP

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

OVERVIEW

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) invites organisations and individuals who have experience dealing with issues affecting energy consumers across participating jurisdictions to apply for membership on its Customer Consultative Group (CCG).

Membership on the CCG will provide organisations with the unique opportunity to inform the AER about issues that impact on the groups they represent and to work together with other consumer representatives on key issues affecting energy consumers.

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.

Further information about applying for the CCG can be obtained by emailing a request to james.fahey@aer.gov.au or by contacting James Fahey on (03) 9290 6436.

Further information about the roles and functions of the AER is available at www.aer.gov.au

Applications addressing the selection criteria must be received by **5:00pm AEST Monday 28 November 2011**.

BACKGROUND

The AER is an independent Commonwealth statutory authority and administratively part of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission under Part IIIAA of the *Competition and Consumer Act 2010*.

The AER regulates the wholesale electricity market and is responsible for the economic regulation of the electricity transmission and distribution networks in the national electricity market (NEM). The AER is also responsible for the economic regulation of gas transmission and distribution networks and enforcing the national gas law and national gas rules in all jurisdictions except Western Australia.

A new National Energy Retail Law and National Energy Retail Rules have been developed by the Ministerial Council on Energy. The Ministerial Council on Energy agreed on 10 December 2010 that jurisdictions would work towards a common target date of 1 July 2012 for commencement of the new law, rules and regulations. On 9 March 2011 the Retail Law was passed in the South Australian Parliament, and

received Royal Assent on 17 March 2011. The Law, Rules and Regulations to be made can be accessed from the Ministerial Council on Energy website.

The AER will have various roles under the Retail Law and Rules, and in early 2010 it commenced consultation on the guidelines and instruments required. The AER's 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).

Further detail on these roles and the development of the guidelines and instruments can be found on the AER's website (www.aer.gov.au).

Under the Retail Rules, the AER is required to establish and maintain a Customer Consultative Group (CCG). The Retail Rules state that the Group's purpose is to provide advice to the AER in relation to its functions under the energy laws affecting energy consumers across participating jurisdictions.

MEMBERSHIP ON THE CCG

Members of the CCG should be capable of reflecting the viewpoints and concerns of energy consumers. Members are required to consult with their constituents outside the CCG meetings and should provide comments based on this consultation and their organisation's expertise and experience of:

- issues and energy market developments affecting energy consumers that fall within the scope of the AER's functions under the National Electricity Law, the National Gas Law, the National Energy Retail Law and the National Energy Retail Rules;
- information dissemination strategies and appropriate external networks available to enhance communication with community and consumer groups and energy consumers; and
- issues as requested by the AER.

By providing comment on the above issues, members assist the AER in its administration of its statutory responsibilities and assist the AER to identify opportunities to more effectively meet these responsibilities.

CCG meetings will be held three times a year at the AER's Melbourne office, with one of the meetings using the format of a workshop. At meetings members will be encouraged to share information on their activities with the AER and other members of the group. Meetings will usually run for a full day.

The AER prefers members to attend meetings in person. However, if any member is unable to attend a meeting in person, organisations may, with the prior approval of the AER, send an alternative representative with equivalent experiences and qualifications. Alternatively, videoconference facilities may be made available at the nearest AER or ACCC Regional Office.

The AER will cover the reasonable costs of meetings for one nominee per member. Meeting costs include travel, external meeting venues, carer and support services and interpreters, if required. Members will be paid a sitting fee for attendance at CCG meetings and will be recompensed for the reasonable costs incurred by members for attending CCG meetings.

From time to time, the AER invites comment and input from members on consumer issues outside of meetings, for example, in the development or implementation of guidelines. Members are expected to support the AER if advice is requested.

HOW TO APPLY FOR CCG MEMBERSHIP

Applications will be sought from organisations and individuals who can demonstrate experience dealing with consumer affairs and knowledge of the issues affecting Australian energy consumers.

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 submit an application (of no more than two pages) that address the following selection criteria:

1. Links to consumers and relevant consumer organisations which would allow the member to convey current issues of concern to the CCG;
2. Capacity to consult with relevant consumer organisations on issues affecting consumers that fall within the scope of the AER's administration of the Act;
3. Freedom from conflicts of interest;
4. Knowledge and understanding of the role and operation of the AER and the issues affecting consumers that are relevant to the National Energy Customer Framework.
5. Demonstrated effectiveness in representing the interests of consumers generally, or particular groups of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers such as:
 - Indigenous consumers;
 - consumers with disabilities;
 - particular age groups;
 - financially disadvantaged consumers;
 - consumers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Your application must include:

- A resume or description of the organisation;
- Covering letter addressing the selection criteria (no more than two pages) and contact details of the organisation representative or individual who will attend CCG meetings; and

DUE DATE AND LATE APPLICATIONS

Applications are due by 5:00pm AEST Monday 28 November 2011.

Applications that have not been received before this time will not be considered for CCG membership for the 2011/12 review period.

WHERE TO SEND APPLICATIONS

Applications can be emailed to james.fahey@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:

Australian Energy Regulator
C/o Retail Markets Branch
GPO Box 520
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

For purposes of posted applications, the post marked date on the application will be taken as the date received by the AER. Applications post marked as 28 November 2011 but received by the AER at a later date will be deemed as being received within the application period.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR ENQUIRIES

Enquiries concerning the CCG or the application process can be made to Mr James Fahey by email to james.fahey@aer.gov.au, or by telephone (03) 9290 6436.