

Energy Consumers Australia Board Meeting Communique

14 May 2015

ECA's Chief Executive Officer

The ECA Board was pleased to welcome its newly appointed Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mrs Rosemary Sinclair to its fourth Board meeting. Mrs Sinclair formally started with ECA on 4 May 2015.

The Board considers Mrs Sinclair's appointment to be a significant development in the establishment of ECA and in its capacity to perform effectively as an organisation.

Over the coming months, the Board will work closely with Mrs Sinclair to progress a range of items for ECA's establishment and to begin to engage with the consumer advocate community, energy market participants, governments and energy market regulatory agencies to ensure that ECA is well positioned to deliver on its wide reaching agenda to promote the long term interests of consumers of energy.

ECA Establishment Items

With a CEO now in place, this Board meeting provided an opportunity to agree on a range of establishment and company structure matters including.

- **Office location:** It was agreed that ECA will be permanently based in Sydney. The Board and CEO discussed rental options for the ECA offices, noting the importance of being centrally located within Sydney given the role ECA will have in engaging with a wide range of stakeholders across the consumer advocacy, industry, government and regulatory sectors.
- **Organisational Structure:** Led by the CEO, the Board engaged in a strategic discussion on ECA's organisational structure including the appropriate size of the organisation and desired staff capabilities to support the achievement of ECA's objective, activities and strategic priorities. The recruitment process for ECA staff will commence shortly.
- **Budget:** ECA's 2014/15 and 2015/16 operating budget was discussed and the Board further considered how monies should be appropriately allocated against different activities, given the objectives and strategic intent of the organisation.

Energy Consumers Australia Grant Applications

One of ECA's functions, transferred from the former Consumer Advocacy Panel, is to provide grants to build knowledge and sectoral capacity supporting National Energy Market policy development and consumer education.

On 10 March 2015, ECA issued a notice seeking applications from organisations or individuals to undertake advocacy or research projects in line with ECA's mandate and strategic priorities.

A key focus of this meeting was the Board's consideration of ECA's first tranche of grant applications. The Board was pleased to have the opportunity to consider applications from over 30 organisations for projects covering a wide range of advocacy and research issues.

Applicants put forward projects addressing one or more of the four consumer priority areas identified in ECA's strategic planning including:

- New technologies- their effect on traditional business models and impact on consumers.
- Effectiveness of competition across the whole supply chain, and the ability of consumers to drive competition.
- Reasonableness and affordability of energy prices, including how understandable pricing structures are to consumers.
- Contributing to the review of governance arrangements for the market bodies, and the impact of these on consumers.

ECA expects to advise grant applicants of the outcomes of its assessments in the coming weeks.

Future Grants Processes

As ECA is still in its establishment phase, it is using the same grant application processes and guidelines as the former Consumer Advocacy Panel until it has consulted, established and publicised its own processes.

At this meeting, the Board considered its approach to its future grant application processes. In particular, it discussed the principles governing its grant application and grant review processes.

The ECA Board and CEO will continue to work with its stakeholders as it develops and considers its advocacy and research priorities and its approach to grant applications.

Using the guidelines of the former Consumer Advocacy Panel, the Board will continue to assess grant applications. The Board meets monthly, and will consider applications quarterly.