

Board Communique: May 2017

AGENDA ITEM 11

PAPER TYPE	For Decision
PURPOSE OF PAPER	To provide the Board with the draft May 2017 Board Meeting Communique for review and approval.
RECOMMENDATION	That the Board review and resolve to accept the Communique subject to any amendments.
DRAFT RESOLUTION	The Board resolves to approve the May Board 2017 Meeting Communique.
RESPONSIBILITY	Chris Alexander, Director Advocacy & Communications

The Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) Board met in Sydney on 25 May 2017. The key focus was on considering elements for the Strategic Plan 2018/2019 and research and advocacy grant applications.

Board Meeting

April 2017 grants round

The Board considered 14 applications for advocacy and research grants in the current round, totalling almost \$2.3 million (exc GST). These projects also offered a co-contribution of \$2.3 million (exc GST).

The Board noted that the grant applications reflected the continuing improvement in the overall quality and rigor of applications with a number adopting strong project management approaches.

The Board continues to welcome interest in the grants program from a range of different groups and will continue to work with all applicants to develop high calibre projects that address priority issues for consumers.

Grants approved

The Board approved 7 grants, to a total value of \$672,422 (exc GST) in this round. Two grants were approved on a multi-year funding horizon as part of more flexible arrangements introduced in 2016. These grants will fund work that will deliver valuable new evidence and insights to support consumer advocacy.

The Board welcomed the opportunity to consider applications for funding which covered a diverse range of consumer energy issues, including the changing energy needs of elderly consumers, strategic options to secure more reliable energy supply and retail price tracking. The Board was also pleased to consider applications for funding to participate in the ACCC *Electricity supply and prices inquiry*.

There continues to be strong interest in projects to empower consumers as the energy market transforms. This includes analysis about the ways different consumer groups use energy and options to ensure their needs are met. Work will also be funded to enhance the functionality and accessibility of retail price tracking tools for consumer advocates and energy market stakeholders.

More information about each grant is available in the grants section of the ECA's website. In summary, the grants approved were:

REF	APPLICANT	PROJECT	GRANT AMOUNT (EX GST)
AP 887	Macquarie University	<i>Exploring the nexus of energy use, ageing, and health and wellbeing among older Australians</i>	\$98,394
AP 888	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	<i>Opportunities for more affordable, reliable & secure energy in the national electricity and gas market</i>	\$73,000
AP 892	National Irrigators Council	<i>Empowering irrigation consumers to improve their long term electricity purchase arrangements</i>	\$48,000
AP 893	National Irrigators Council	<i>Research and analysis support irrigator submissions to ACCC inquiry into electricity prices</i>	\$32,000
AP 894	Tasmanian Small Business Council	<i>Tasmanian Small Business Advocacy to ACCC Inquiry Into Retail Electricity Prices</i>	\$51,800
AP 898	St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria	<i>Tariff-Tracking and price analysis in NSW, Queensland, South Australia, the ACT and Tasmania post price resets in July 2017, 2018 and 2019</i>	\$264,330
AP 900	SACOSS	<i>National Consumer Roundtable on Energy –organisation of meetings</i>	\$104,898

Strategic Planning

The Board, CEO and Senior staff participated in a facilitated discussion regarding ECA's future strategic plan. ECA is still at an early stage in that process, with the discussion designed to help scope the upcoming primary engagement and development phase.

Next Meeting

The next ECA Board meeting will be held in Brisbane, on 22 June 2017.