



# Annual Report

2022-23



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Energy Consumers Australia respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We recognise their connection and continuous care for the lands and waters where we live, learn, and work.



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**I've always been mindful of usage, just even more so now. Switching off appliances at the wall when not using them and making sure the kids turn the lights off when they leave the room.**

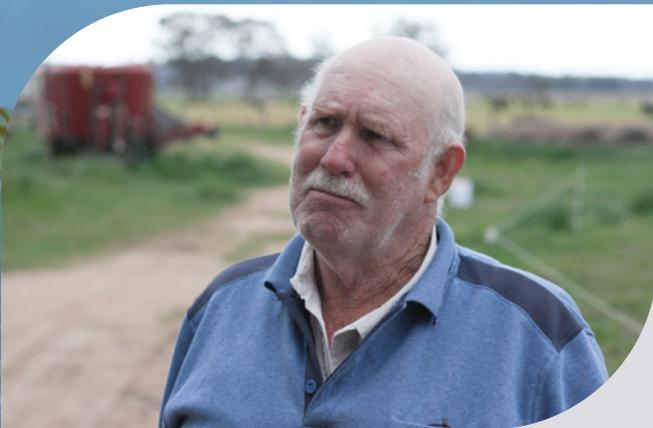
Energy Consumer Sentiment  
Research participant, female



“

**Very few businesses actually [understand] what the net zero transition would mean for them within their own business. That knowledge gap is something that really needs to be addressed.**

Simon Moore,  
Business NSW



“

**Our costs are going up and the way they're going up at the moment ... it's making it very difficult to get the extra margin out of our crops.**

Gary Cooper, mixed farmer,  
Bony Mountain



“

**I think that landlords should be providing shading, providing efficient heating, sealing up gaps – all those small things that can make a huge impact to how liveable and comfortable the homes they are supplying are.**

Caitlin, renter

## FROM THE CHAIR

Economic and geopolitical factors intervened this year to make 2022-23 one of the most challenging for consumers and for Energy Consumers Australia's work.



***Our Strategic Plan envisions that consumer values, expectations, and needs are central to a modern, flexible, and resilient energy system.***



As energy prices spiked by 20-35 per cent and inflation-driven rising costs heaped on further pressure, our team had to double their efforts on the immediate priority of energy affordability while at the same time continuing to progress our work around the energy system transformations - both decarbonisation and decentralisation.

For many Australians, federal, state and territory supports for consumers have been the difference between keeping the power on and sacrificing the essentials. For many small businesses, such supports have kept their operations from going under and kept workers in jobs. However, there is still much more work to be done in terms of transparency around retailer price increases.

While making sure people pay less for energy is important, Energy Consumers Australia also conducted significant work this year to help consumers use less energy safely. Empowering households and small businesses with the right tools and information to manage their energy bills at the right time, through the right sources, is probably the most overlooked area of energy policy in Australia, yet it is critical for three reasons. First, simple actions have

the potential to lower energy bills immediately by as much as 20-30 per cent, which is more than existing rebates provide. Second, lowering energy use across the board can mean we avoid or defer significant infrastructure investments that have long-term cost impacts. And third, by engaging consumers on the issue that matters most to them - affordable bills - we take the first step in engaging them on the broader issues that will require their attention during the energy transition.

Electrification and switching off gas will require an engaged and informed consumer base. Governments will need to ensure that people are provided with help to upgrade their home or business premises to minimise their bills and make them climate resilient. Every stone we turn over on the path toward net zero reveals another challenge that relies on engaged energy consumers. This is why so much of our work is focused on the importance of, and the steps needed for, a new compact between consumers and the energy institutions that affect their lives.

Our Strategic Plan envisions that consumer values, expectations, and needs are central to a modern, flexible, and resilient energy system. For the second year, our team has

used that as our 'true north', from the big system-wide questions of transmission access reform to accommodate the future renewable energy generation mix, to 'big-small' issues like making sure inverters on solar panels can do their job of maximising individual and system-wide benefits of consumer energy resources. This way of focusing – from the whole of the system to the issues crucial in people's daily lives – forms the foundation of our approach.

Sadly, for me, I have reached the end of my time at Energy Consumers Australia. As the inaugural Chair, I had the privilege of watching the organisation grow from start-up to maturity over these past 8 1/2 years. And it is with great pride that I can say that Energy Consumers Australia now plays an indispensable role in our system. I have also been privileged to work with a strategic, skilled, and united Board and I thank each of you for your contributions and expertise.

I would also like to sincerely thank our former Chief Executive Officer, Lynne Gallagher, who should be enormously proud of her contribution: leading and growing our organisation's impact through some turbulent times. In May, Jacqueline Crawshaw stepped into the Interim CEO role with great professionalism and poise, and I thank her for her leadership. As well, my deep thanks to the team for their passion for good outcomes and their hard work on all of our important issues.

Finally, thank you to all our stakeholders for your important contributions throughout 2022-23. There is virtually nothing that 'gets done' in energy consumer advocacy that is not a team effort – it's been a privilege to work together.

**Louise Sylvan AM**  
*Chair, 2015 - 2023*  
Energy Consumers Australia



## FROM THE INTERIM CEO

This year saw significant progress by governments and industry in key areas of the energy transformation agenda in the midst of an energy bill crisis that had significant impacts for residential and small businesses consumers.

“

***Several years of collective work with stakeholders led to significantly improved housing regulation aimed at increasing the standard of residential properties across the country.***

”

As prices took off, Energy Consumers Australia responded by immediately augmenting our regular consumer research, initiating a monthly ‘Pulse Survey’ to track consumer sentiment from June to August 2022. As well as significant bill stress, these surveys showed falling confidence in the market at a time we needed people to engage.

From our other research, we also know that prices are expected to remain high over the short-to-medium term. This informed our calls to combine immediate bill relief, with a longer-term consumer information and engagement initiative that helps people take control of their energy use.

Several years of collective work with stakeholders led to significantly improved housing regulation aimed at increasing the standard of residential properties across the country. Building ministers announced an upgrade to the energy performance standards for new homes in the National Construction Code, with all new homes to be built to the NatHERS seven stars rating – the first increase in 10 years – while appliances will be captured in a new ‘whole-of-home’ rating.

In addition to bill relief, the May 2023 federal budget delivered a range of

measures under the National Energy Performance Strategy (NEPS), which had been a focus of our advocacy with the new Federal Government since the election. New measures under the NEPS include support for energy upgrades, consumer information initiatives, expanding NatHERS to include established homes and a National Framework for the Disclosure of Residential Energy Efficiency Information.

These reforms will underpin a more efficient national housing stock, and we look forward seeing the nation’s average home energy rating rise from its current level of 1.7 stars, and to a time in the near future when the average Australian home has better energy efficiency provisions than a tent. I would like to congratulate the many advocates who have driven this agenda, including our staff and the diverse coalition of more than 100 voices for change who carried it over the line.

There were also green shoots of progress in a wide range of reform processes that cover our strategic areas of ‘new energy markets and services that work for consumers’ and ‘distributed energy future enablers’. These two priority areas in our Strategic Plan 2021-24 are

about clearing a path for consumers to benefit from their engagement in the changing market. We saw progress in the way regulators are approaching these challenges, such as recognising the need for flexible retail pricing structures that reflect diverse consumer needs. We also saw a pleasing pivot from ‘system-benefits’ to ‘consumer-benefits’ in the approach taken in several regulatory reviews aimed at better integrating consumer energy resources.

These types of reforms will pave the way for a more empowered consumer base that can benefit from technology changes, new services, and products. This is important because there is no single path through the transition. Our job is to help governments and industry to anticipate the potential roadmap of opportunities and barriers that consumers may face along the way, while making sure no one is left behind in Australia’s energy future.

This Annual Report draws a clear line between the impact areas and priorities in our Strategic Plan 2021-24 and the actions we have taken to progress these in 2022-23.

I would like to thank the Board for the opportunity to lead Energy Consumers Australia at such a critical time. I would also like to thank our outgoing inaugural Chair, Louise Sylvan, for her more than eight years of service. Louise’s expertise and passion for good consumer outcomes has helped build and shape the organisation into the influential advocacy body we are today. I would like to thank our former Chief Executive Officer, Lynne Gallagher, for her leadership, mentorship, and friendship. Her work, along with that of our Board and wider team, has set our organisation up for long-term impact.

Because of the systemic nature of our work, these impacts can only be achieved with our stakeholders, and I thank them for their generosity and collaboration as we work towards a better energy system for all consumers. I would also like to acknowledge and thank all the contributors, contractors, and consultants we have worked with throughout the year.

Finally, thank you to our staff who have stretched themselves to the limit this year to juggle multiple competing priorities in a fast-moving environment.

**Jacqueline Crawshaw**  
*Interim CEO*  
Energy Consumers Australia



# OUR WORK - HAVING AN IMPACT

## 1 Affordable energy for households and small businesses



Energy Consumers Australia successfully advocated to Energy Ministers for urgent rebates to shield the most exposed consumers from bill shock, and for tools that help people take control of their energy use, culminating in the Energy Bill Relief Fund.

The new Consumer Information Hub on our website received tens of thousands of visits. The Hub provides information on how consumers can reduce their bills and the types of supports available to them.



- We conducted regular and extensive stakeholder engagements across Australia to raise our concerns about price increases for households and small businesses with governments and industry.
- Our SME Retail Tariff Tracker was updated twice during the year, providing valuable insights for small-to-medium business owners on energy bill trends.

## 2 Individualised energy services that give consumers choice and control



The New Energy Tech Consumer Code came into operation. Energy Consumers Australia worked with industry and other consumer bodies to make this happen.



Building ministers announced an upgrade to the energy performance standards for new homes in the National Construction Code and an expansion of NatHERS to include established homes.



We conducted two studies that supported energy regulators with evidence on best practice retail pricing structures reflecting diverse consumer needs.

- We expanded our consumer and small business research with new Energy Consumer Sentiment and Behaviour Surveys.
- Federal funding was announced for home energy upgrades and a Draft National Framework for the Disclosure of Residential Energy Efficiency Information was published.
- The International Organisation for Standardization on Consumer Vulnerability adopted a more inclusive approach to defining 'vulnerability'.



### 3 A modern, flexible and resilient energy system

Our calls for well-designed transmission access reform were successful, with energy ministers committing to implementing 'enhanced information' reforms to provide east coast generators with optimal location information.



We helped shape program guidelines for the funding rollout for community batteries by the federal government.

- We saw a greater focus by government on consumer benefits in regulatory reviews aimed at better integrating consumer energy resources (CER).
- We advocated for the interests of consumers as part of the Australian Energy Market Commission's (AEMC) review into consumer energy resources (CER) technical standards, including calling for a coordinated and enforceable approach to compliance.



### 4 Your voice heard



ECA's former CEO, Lynne Gallagher, and Interim CEO, Jacqueline Crawshaw made 1100+ broadcast appearances – and ECA appeared in 2000+ news articles.

We made a record

**37**

submissions



on behalf of consumers on major reforms, market developments, and public consultations.

- We provided Business NSW with a grant to conduct research that will help governments and industry better understand the challenges facing small businesses in navigating the energy system.
- We created new resources to lift direct engagement with the Australian small business community, including targeted fact sheets on lowering energy use and bills.
- We saw a successful return to an in-person Foresighting Forum – our flagship event – with record attendance at Energising Australians FF23.

### 5 Strategy & Governance – Living our values

We instituted a regular Stakeholder Engagement Survey to monitor our stakeholders' views.



Our new grants framework delivered \$2.7 million to partners, and we also provided more support to applicants to help boost the quality of applications.

- We reviewed and updated our Strategic Risk Map.
- We published a new external-facing Work Plan to provide stakeholders with clarity about our work and its connection to our Strategic Plan.
- Energy Consumers Australia continued to provide a great working environment with more than 80 per cent of our employees reporting high satisfaction rates.



# Affordable energy for households and small businesses



The first impact area identified in our Strategic Plan 2021-24 is affordability, in recognition that this is the top issue raised with us in all forums with household and small business consumers. This year, we have balanced our advocacy on these long-term planning issues related to ensuring the affordability of the energy transition with the need to address the immediate energy affordability crisis.



In both spheres, we have brought evidence to the table to inform policy and regulatory decisions and sought to work with others to present unified positions to decision makers based on the evidence to ensure good outcomes for consumers.

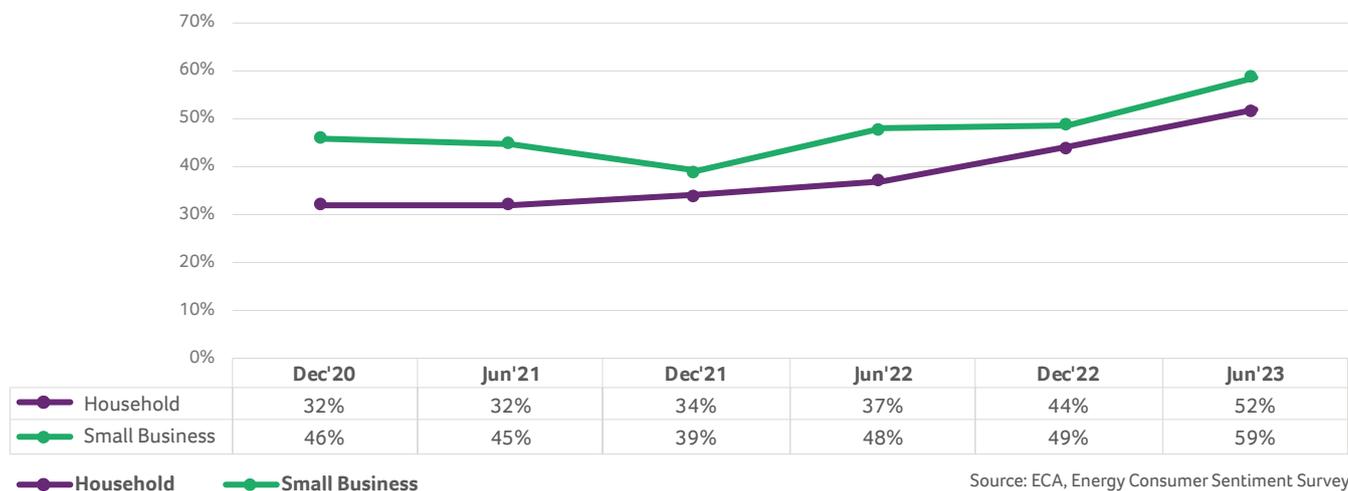
In the context of the ongoing price rises seen this year, Energy Consumers Australia's advocacy in this area has never been more necessary.

The announcement of the Australian Energy Regulator's Default Market Offer (DMO) and the Essential Services Commission's Victorian Default Offer (VDO) in May signalled increases in retail electricity prices from 1 July 2023. On average, prices rose 21 per

cent and 31 per cent respectively – the highest rises since the default offers came into effect.

Sustained price rises over the course of the year were reflected in the findings of multiple consumer sentiment surveys. The most recent version, published in June 2023, reported a substantial increase in the number of households and small business owners who are more concerned about being able to afford their electricity bills than they were a year earlier. Given the timing of the DMO and VDO announcements late in the financial year, it is likely the full impact of this on consumer sentiment will be captured in the upcoming December survey.

**Figure 1: Concern about being able to afford electricity bills, Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey, 2020-2023**



Source: ECA, Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey



Similarly, household confidence in the energy market dropped 9 points to 35 per cent. For small business customers, confidence fell 10 points to 46 per cent.

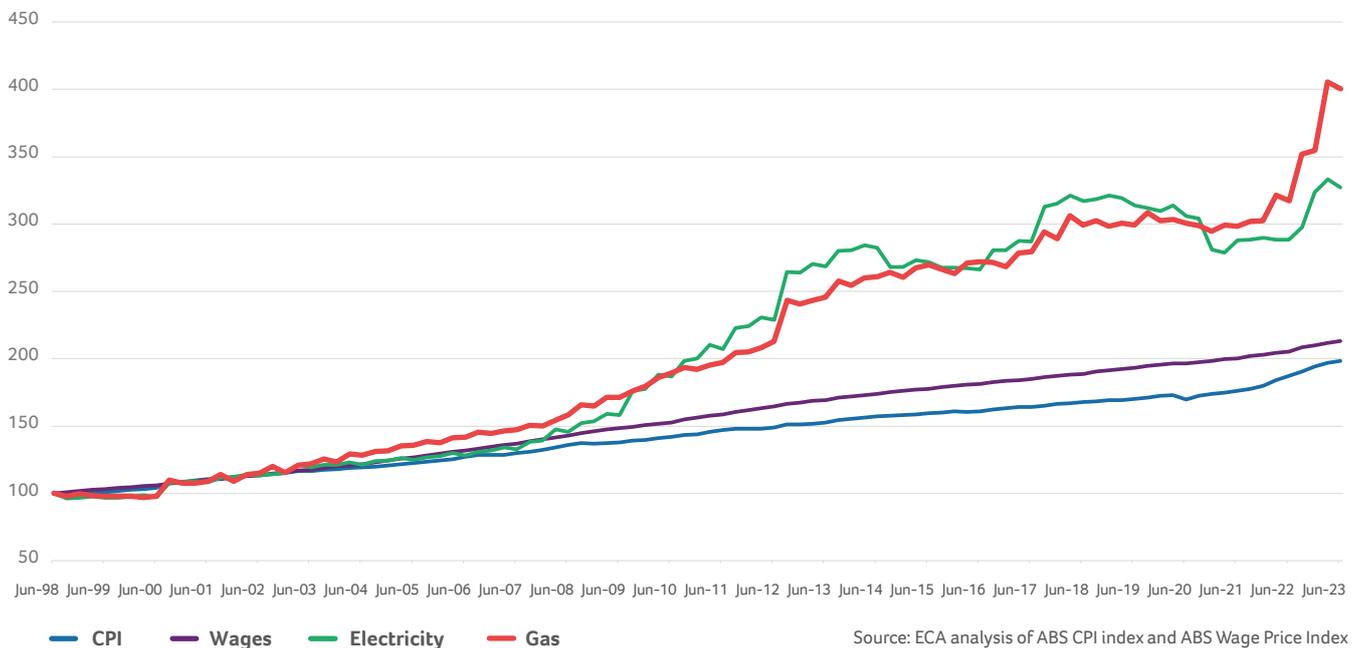
Meanwhile, this year’s Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Retail Tariff Tracker found that, on average, annual electricity bills for small businesses increased by approximately \$1,050 (18 per cent) in the year to April 2023. On average, annual gas bills increased by \$710 (22 per cent) between April 2022 and April 2023.

The energy bill crisis was a key focus of our advocacy work to all governments in 2022-23, with our position summed up in our submission to the Senate Select Committee on Cost of Living, where we provided clear data about price trends (set against far lower CPI increases) and how the energy cost crisis was being felt on the ground, as the basis for cost relief to households and small businesses.

We carried this analysis into ministerial council meetings, raising our concerns at the highest decision-making levels of government. Following the release of the interim budget in October 2022, which flagged expected rises in electricity and gas prices over the next two years, we reiterated our calls for assistance for consumers struggling to pay their bills, as well as support for people to control their energy use. Energy ministers subsequently confirmed they were committed to measures to bring down power prices for Australian households and businesses, and by December, they announced rebates for consumers.

The Energy Bill Relief Fund, unveiled in the May federal budget, provided \$1.5 billion in federal funding for rebates for eligible households and small businesses, with the state and territory governments to match that amount by making their own contributions. More than 5.5 million households will be eligible for assistance, in addition to around a million small businesses.

**Figure 2: Consumer Price Index growth, wage growth and electricity and gas prices between 1997-2022**



Source: ECA analysis of ABS CPI index and ABS Wage Price Index

To support these measures, energy ministers asked us to provide guidance and research for a national energy information campaign to support and empower consumers to further reduce their energy use and costs. Our work on this campaign is further detailed in the next chapter of this report.

In a related initiative, this year we also launched a [new Consumer Advice Hub](#) providing clear and practical answers to common consumer concerns ranging from reducing energy use and bills on a budget to finding the best deal with an energy retailer. We have provided data showing the engagement with the Hub in the 'Voice' chapter of this report.

Our strategic focus on affordability acknowledges that consumers rely on energy for comfortable homes and competitive businesses. While our broader work program across all impact areas also affects affordability, the three specific affordability 'impact areas' targeted in our Strategic Plan 2021-24 are:

- Rate of return on network investment in the long-term interests of consumers.
- Least cost electricity and gas distribution network infrastructure.
- Market design that is fit for purpose to ensure system security.

## Impacting the rate of return on network investment

The rate of return is one of the most significant long-term drivers of energy costs. Set by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), it accounts for roughly one quarter of consumers' bills.

ECA sits on the Consumer Reference Group that supports the regulator's determination of the Rate of Return Instrument. We provided \$210,000 to fund technical expertise that ensures the reference group's views are backed with solid technical foundations.

This technical input also supports other stakeholder submissions to the Rate of Return evaluation process and helps to counterbalance the industry's calls for considerations around investor certainty.







**KPI 3A.2**

*Resources provided to support consumer working groups and coalitions in major review processes, with a target of three major consumer working groups or coalitions annually.*

**Least cost electricity and gas distribution network infrastructure**

In light of the AER’s Better Resets Handbook that seeks to encourage networks to better engage and have consumer preferences drive the development of regulatory proposals, we need consumers to feel equipped and empowered to influence and challenge network reset processes and decisions. Since June 2022 we have made significant funding available to other consumer representatives working in the network revenue setting process via our Consumer Empowerment Funding Program.

The first group supported under the program was the TasNetworks Reset Advisory Committee, which was provided with funding to support the delivery of an independent engagement report that assessed TasNetworks’ consumer engagement efforts around the revenue determination process. This report was included as part of TasNetworks’ Combined proposal submission to the AER.

In partnership with the AER, we delivered specific training for consumer advocates on network resets, including legislated regulatory framework, the ‘building blocks approach’ to revenue proposals, the role of consumers in reset processes, and the key points for intervention. *The Bite-sized Learning on Resets and Building Blocks* training occurred in November 2022, with nearly 80 consumer advocates from all Australian states and territories joining three online sessions on topics spanning building blocks, capital expenditure, operational expenditure, incentive schemes and energy transformation implications in regulatory proposals. Of the participants, 41 per cent were already involved or engaged in a reset process, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

By upskilling the community of consumer advocates and representatives, sharing knowledge and lived experiences, and building a network wherein advocates can learn from each other, we are contributing to a more consumer-driven energy future. These are examples of how we are working to arm stakeholders to bring about change – individually and in collaboration with other consumers.

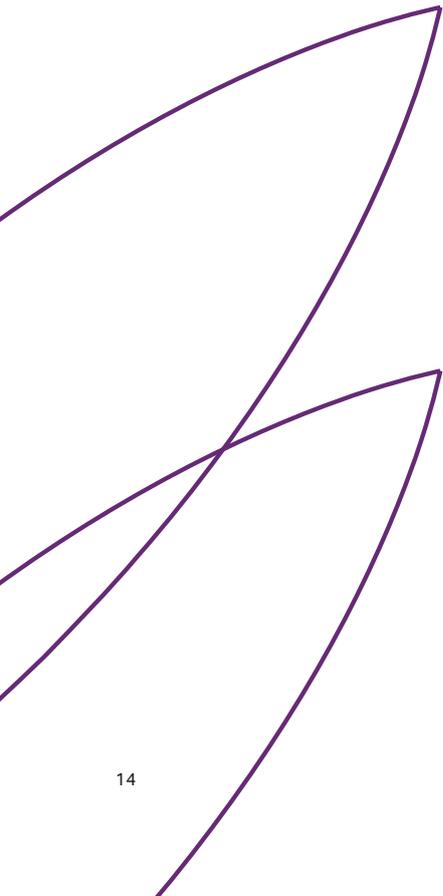
**Market design that is fit for purpose to ensure system security**

Under this priority area, we participate in the development and implementation of the resource adequacy mechanisms, essential services, ahead scheduling, and transmission and access arrangements.

These issues are particularly pertinent in the energy transition, which is underlined by the 2022 Integrated System Plan which forecasts a nine-fold increase in grid-scale wind and solar capacity and a 30-fold increase in storage capacity between 2022 and 2050.

This has major ramifications for transmission access in particular, with generation assets spread over a much larger area. As state and territory governments promote a more planned and coordinated approach through the establishment of Renewable Energy Zones, the Energy Security Board was tasked by National Cabinet with progressing detailed design on transmission access reform for the overall National Electricity Market.

Given the significant impact of transmission costs on long-term energy affordability, transmission access reform is crucial to ensuring the market is designed in a way that appropriately signals the right combination of new generation, new





storage, and firming resources, as well as new transmission, without spending more than is necessary on consumers' behalf.

Our advocacy on this critical issue in 2022-23 included several submissions to the Energy Security Board as well as direct engagement with ministers, focused on three primary issues:

- The ESB must retain the Priority Access Model and focus reform on the interests of consumers.
- The final policy should be operational and implemented no later than 2027 and when choosing between competing priorities, detailed designs that are simpler to implement should be preferred.
- New market approaches should be reviewed from the outset, with opportunities to formally review them as soon as practicable.

Ministers announced a way forward on transmission access reform in February 2023. The announcement commits governments to immediately implementing 'enhanced information' reforms to provide east coast market participants with better information on the optimal location for new generation and storage.

We have also been an active participant in the broader post-2025 market reforms. Our multiple submissions regarding the proposed design of a Capacity Mechanism for the National Electricity Market were supported by expert reports, advocating strongly for the development of a coherent framework for system design changes to meet both immediate and longer-term challenges to maintain system security. Our input, which included overseas case studies, was aimed at ensuring Australia doesn't over-capitalise on infrastructure and prioritises energy



**KPI 4A.1**

*New research, policy proposals or rule changes to address systemic issues, with two “thought leadership” papers published annually*

efficiency and demand response as capacity resources to preserve network efficiency in the long-term interests of all consumers. This culminated in the establishment of the Capacity Investment Scheme, announced in December. While the initial phase of this scheme is expected to focus on larger-scale capacity resources, our work has effectively created an evidence base to support future reviews going forward, aimed at securing capacity at lowest cost and providing additional benefits to consumers by considering demand-side solutions.

Through the year, we published several thought-leadership articles that drew on our research and advocacy in this area.

Other processes we were involved in this year to ensure affordability is a constraint on market design for system security included:

- Providing input to the AER’s consultations about its approach to incentivising and measuring export service performance.
- Making a detailed submission to the AER’s Draft Decision in the Connection Charge Guidelines Review to ensure a final rule was amended to clarify that Distributed Network Service Providers (DNSPs) are required to conduct detailed, transparent analysis in the circumstances where a basic export service is denied.

As we transition away from fossil fuel generation to a system that is powered by renewable energy and storage, affordability must be an explicit criterion in all decision making up and down the supply chain, whether that is investing in new generation, storage or network infrastructure or maintaining existing infrastructure.



**FEATURED GRANT:**

## Building a Coalition for Better Housing in Queensland



Due to a lack of legal protections, renters often go without power, or pay too much for electricity, due to poor-quality homes. And it is typically the lowest income households who are forced to live in the poorest quality rentals, leading to significantly worse financial and health outcomes.

Energetic Communities Association was this year supported by an Energy Consumers Australia grant in its campaign for state government agreement to mandate energy efficiency minimum standards in rental properties, mandatory disclosure of those standards on leases, as well as stronger and more equitable policies on energy efficiency.

The campaign brings together a coordinated network of state-based organisations and raises awareness of energy efficiency amongst renters (with specific targeted approaches for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and First Nations renters) through face-to-face and online meetings and workshops, webinars, interactive theatre performances, social media content, and infographics.

A newly formed Residential Energy and Climate Advocacy Network and Renter Advocacy Group will seek to persuade the government of the benefits of greater energy performance ambition, including stronger and more equitable policies on energy efficiency.

Involving renters in the Renter Advocacy Group will ensure their voices are heard by decision makers and remain central to the activities and outcomes of the project.

# Individualised energy services that give consumers choice and control



The scale and pace of change taking place in Australia’s energy transformation means system planners sometimes overlook the importance of engaging with people about what change means for them. Yet engaging with consumers and giving people agency is probably the single biggest factor that will determine the success of this transformation.



This is because almost every aspect of the energy transition requires consumers to take some form of action, whether it be electrifying their homes, responding to new price signals, updating technology, using smart meters, or shifting energy use outside peak periods of demand. If consumers feel that their engagement and actions will deliver better outcomes, then they will engage further, and the future energy system will be a good one. If we reach 2030 and beyond with disengaged and disenfranchised households and small businesses, it will not.

This explains why creating more individualised energy services is the second key ‘impact area’ identified in our Strategic Plan 2021-24.

Our work in 2022-23 in this area has continued to focus on the four priorities we set out in the plan:

- New energy services and markets that work for consumers.
- Protecting consumers in rapidly evolving markets.
- Fit-for-purpose frameworks to support consumers in vulnerable circumstances.
- A fair transition to low-energy homes and businesses.

Below, we explain the impact we have had on each of these priorities during 2022-23.

### New energy services and markets that work for consumers

Listening to consumers about their values, expectations, and needs – and what will most help them to manage their energy use and costs – is critical to the work we do in advocating for new energy services and markets.

Last year, we decided to complement our Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey with a new, annual behaviour study. In October 2022, we released the second Energy Consumer Behaviour Survey, which already provides Australia’s richest national picture of the attitudes and activities of residential and small business energy consumers. It covers how people use power and associated energy technology, their attitudes to new technology, and how they see the future of energy for themselves and their communities.

This research is helping shape our advocacy position on big questions like network pricing reform and the approach to electric vehicle regulation.

#### **Evidence to inform advocacy on network pricing reform**

We now know from the Behaviour Survey that most people would find it relatively easy to shift their energy use outside peak times for the dishwasher, washing machine, charging devices.

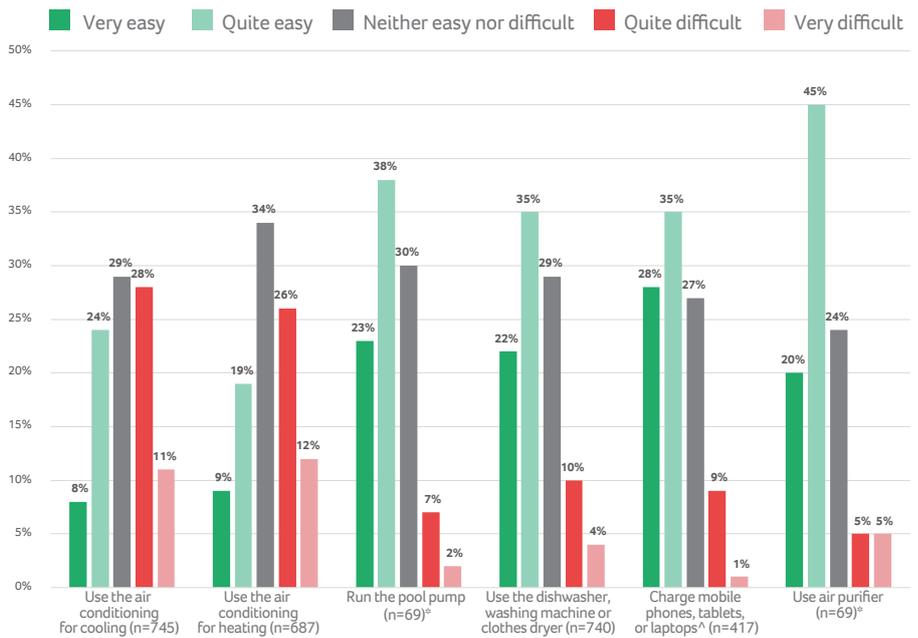


**KPI 1A.2**

*Consumer research undertaken on a regular basis with ECSS published in June and December; ECBS published in September; and SME Retail Tariff Tracker published in June and December*



**Figure 3: How difficult would consumers find it to change their time of energy use?**



Source: ECA, October 2022 Behaviour Survey

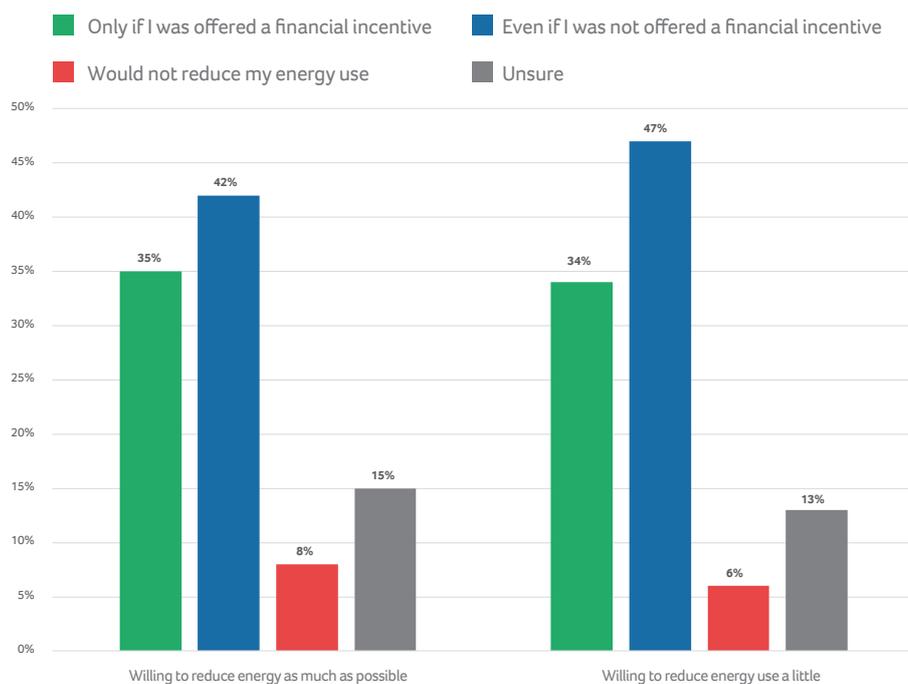
There is also a high willingness to change energy use to deal with a crisis, such as very hot periods with high demands on the energy system. Being financially rewarded for doing so is a major driver, which speaks to the importance of network pricing reform providing positive incentives for consumers.

To deepen our analysis in this area, we carried out two studies on the question of network pricing reform. The first of these – *Industry perspectives on electricity tariffs and retail pricing* – looks at what is holding back innovation in network and retail tariffs by investigating what is being offered and used and how network tariffs translate into retail tariffs that consumers can see. The second – *Consumer Pricing Preferences Report* – looks at how consumers are managing

their energy bills to gauge their interest in different types of retail electricity pricing structures that may provide them with more control over the size of their bills. The findings of this work tell us that consumer preferences are diverse, ranging from those who are attracted to cost benefits from shifting their energy use outside peak time, to those who prefer a simpler system.

This means that consumers should have the ability to choose a retail pricing structure that works for them, but that requires simple tools and information that allows them to make informed choices. This research complements broader network tariff reform efforts and provides distribution networks and the AER with evidence and insights regarding how they set network tariffs in the regulatory cycles.

**Figure 4: How willing are consumers to reduce energy use on a very hot day?**



Source: ECA, October 2022 Behaviour Survey

### ***Driving smart regulation of electric vehicles and charging***

Recognising the accelerating pace of change on Australia’s roads, we dedicated significant time to understanding consumer needs in relation to electric vehicles and advocating for these to government. We engaged with the Federal Government’s National Electric Vehicle Strategy Consultation Paper, and with the Energy Security Board on arrangements for EV smart charging.

Our advocacy supports the accelerated roll out of EVs and argues that forward thinking should enable us to build good consumer practices and behaviours that optimise the way people use energy for their EVs so that everyone benefits. We have highlighted

with governments and regulators the importance of giving consumers choice and control over how and when they charge their vehicle, and making sure charging infrastructure is available to all – including renters and those without off-street parking at home.

Finally, we argued strongly for communications with consumers about the transition, recognising that our Energy Consumer Behaviour Survey finds only one-in-three Australians believe they will own an EV in the future. Given our research shows that it is likely almost all Australians will own an EV within the next 20 years, this underlines the challenge of engaging with consumers and avoiding creating obstacles or hurdles for people to make the transition.



## More great insights from the Digital Energy Futures Project

The four-year Digital Energy Futures Project – a \$2.3 million joint venture with Ausgrid, Ausnet Services, the Australian Research Council and Monash University – reached a critical milestone with the release of its final report.

Launched at the Energy Consumers Australia Foresighting Forum in February, the *Digital Energy Futures: Scenarios for Future Living 2030/2050* report presented a range of scenarios for future living to guide energy industry planning. The scenarios, which drew on evidence from all six stages of the project, provide forecasters, policy makers and demand-response specialists new foresights to anticipate plausible outcomes of emerging trends in the years 2030 and 2050.

The culmination of this project outlines a vision and roadmap to support the energy industry in modelling energy scenarios by adding a unique and rich consumer-centric perspective backed by research that is responsive to people’s priorities and needs.

Ausgrid and AusNet Services have already signalled that they are looking to adapt findings from the project into their own planning for the shift to a low-carbon future and the researchers are hoping other companies will do the same.

Foresighting Forum 2023



## Protecting consumers in rapidly evolving markets

July 2022 will be remembered for a set of extraordinary circumstances, whereby rising prices on the wholesale electricity market in response to international events coincided with flooding in Queensland and NSW, and colder-than-usual weather led to widespread talk of an ‘energy crisis’.

Conscious of the impact of these factors on consumer sentiment, we launched a series of Pulse Surveys to track monthly consumer sentiment from June to August 2022. These Pulse Surveys showed that confidence in the market dropped significantly to just 37 per cent in August 2022, with clear evidence consumers were concerned about paying energy bills.

This underpinned ECA’s two calls to action for governments: urgent rebates to shield the most exposed consumers from bill shock, and tools that help people take control of their energy

use. These actions would help relieve immediate pressure on consumers while longer-term work continues to drive down energy prices.

Energy Ministers also asked Energy Consumers Australia to provide strategic guidance and research for a national energy information campaign to empower consumers to reduce their energy costs.

The request recognised that while work to reduce the price of energy on the demand side was critical, consumers also needed to have agency to reduce their energy use.

From March to June 2023, we investigated the key elements of running a successful energy campaign for consumers and reported back to government on our findings. We published the initial findings that informed our recommendations to government on our website. Further research is now underway to inform future government energy information campaigns.

This year, we also updated the questions in our Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey to ensure we are gathering data that can best inform the work of regulators to address the barriers that prevent people getting the best deal for their circumstances.

To help protect consumers in rapidly evolving markets, we built on our efforts last year to improve the regulatory framework as part of the Australian Energy Regulator’s review of Consumer Protections for future energy services – Options for reform of the National Energy Customer Framework. To inform our advocacy, we analysed overseas models, including from the Financial Conduct Authority and OFGEM in the UK. We also drew from the Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey and modelled the future consumer in 2050 to determine the risks and opportunities they would be facing.





#### KPI 2A.1

*Participation in significant review, regulatory and rule change processes with at least 15 major submissions annually (37 submissions developed in 2022-23)*

Our submission to the review argues for an outcomes-based model with less prescription. The AER provided three options in their consultation process, one of which was loosely aligned with our position. The end result of our advocacy is that a hybrid model, which takes an outcomes-based approach is emerging as the preferred approach and we are hopeful our efforts have been successful in reaching a positive outcome.

We hope these consumer protection reforms will complement the outcomes-focused New Energy Tech Consumer Code (NETCC), which, after our successful defence of the Code in the Australian Competition Tribunal, went live in 2022-23, ensuring a consistent approach to the way we regulate the two primary ways that people engage with the energy market – through their retailers and technology providers. We will monitor the implementation through our role on the NETCC Council.

Finally, as default market offers have become a mainstay of the energy market, we surfaced the key lessons of their early years in operation, arguing strongly to the AER that they should take on board the Victorian model for assessing retailer margins, which applies a far lower margin. This advocacy work will continue in 2023-24.

### Fit-for-purpose frameworks to support consumers in vulnerable circumstances

Our research shows that a majority of households encounter barriers to managing their energy costs, and the energy transformation is likely to present new challenges. However, the definition of 'vulnerability' and 'hardship' used in the energy market is narrow and excludes many households and small businesses that face significant barriers. These include barriers accessing the energy they need at an affordable cost, limitations accessing generation, storage, and other technologies that enable them to manage their energy use.

Last year we adopted a stand-alone directorate within Energy Consumers Australia that is dedicated to addressing the broad issue of energy inclusion. In 2022-23, this directorate worked with regulators to examine the way the energy system supports people facing challenges accessing affordable energy, but who do not fit into the traditional boxes of vulnerability and hardship.

To leverage the capacity of the broader advocacy and research community, we designated energy inclusion as a grant priority area and developed a paper that helps potential applicants understand the areas of research and advocacy where there are gaps and opportunities for future impact.

We made a submission to AEMC's Draft Rule Determination – National Energy Retail Amendment (Protecting Customers Affected by Family Violence) Rule 2022 in support of strengthening



protections for customers who may be experiencing family or domestic violence. The new rules, announced in September, acknowledge family violence can be a likely cause of payment difficulties and hardship and seek to promote certainty and transparency for customers that are also proportionate and cost-effective for retailers.

We also highlighted the narrow regulatory parameters for energy inclusion in our submission to the AER's Consumer Vulnerability Strategy, as well as in our engagement with the AER's Game Changer initiative, which was a collaborative process to

think about the structural reforms that could make a big difference to people experiencing vulnerability. We participated in monthly design group meetings, which aim to produce a game-changer package of measures next financial year.

We then elevated the conversation about energy inclusion to the International Organisation for Standardization, successfully pushing for a more inclusive approach in the IOS on Consumer Vulnerability. We are currently working with Standards Australia to see these changes reflected locally.



**Addressing disparities in our energy system**

First Nations communities in the Top End already face different obstacles to access affordable, reliable power than other Australians. Several governments have in place pre-payment meters, which require people to purchase power cards that are swiped on to the meter to access power. Research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic made clear the different levels of protection available to the 15,000 homes on prepayment meters, including from disconnection.

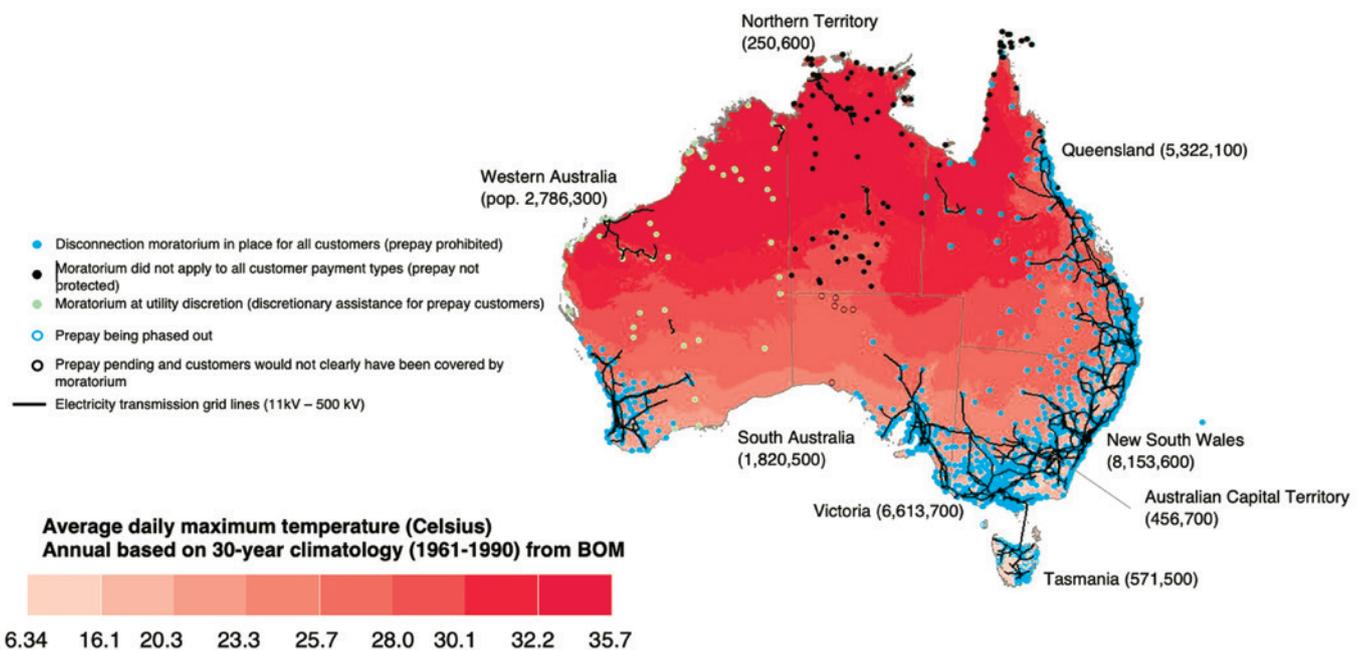
This practice creates significant disparity and as part of our energy inclusion agenda, we support First Nations people to advocate for their communities, including their desire to end this practice. As part of this, we

are funding the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University to look at the affected communities and provide evidence to inform advocacy on this issue.

We recognise this work should be First Nations-led and our grant is about enabling and supporting this important work. Our role is to elevate these concerns in forums such as ministerial council meetings and we took the opportunity to brief energy ministers at the May meeting in Alice Springs, highlighting that prepayment meters exclude many First Nations people from consumer protections.

Other work in this area is discussed in the *ECA Grants Supplementary Report*.

**Figure 5: A geographic view of pre-payment meters and the impact on disconnections**



Source: *Disconnected during disruption: Energy insecurity of Indigenous Australian prepay customers during the COVID-19 pandemic* (Bradley Riley, Lee V. White, Sally Wilson, Michael Klerck, Vanessa Napaltjari-Davis, Simon Quilty, Thomas Longden, Norman Frank Jupurrula, Morgan Harrington), Energy Research & Social Science, Volume 99, 2023.

**Featured Grant:**

## Breaking Down Barriers to Power Access in First Nations Communities



Remote First Nations communities experience extreme temperatures that affect their energy use and needs. However, most remote First Nations households are provided with a prepayment electricity meter that is associated with high disconnection rates.

When the meter runs out, households immediately lose access to other essential services that uninterrupted access to electricity provides, such as food storage, washing, cooking, and lighting. They also lose access to the normal consumer protections that are provided to other consumers, such as time to pay, payment arrangements and processes designed to avoid disconnection.

Energy Consumers Australia has provided a grant to the Australian National University to assess the extent to which remote communities and Indigenous residents are statistically more likely to lack a) key information on protections for consumer wellbeing, b) hardship policies and disconnection protections including for life support, c) a clear contractual relationship with electricity provider, and d) clarity on rooftop solar connection.

This will provide evidence to inform an advocacy position for reforming this area of policy and provide equity to affected communities.



### A fair transition to low-energy homes and businesses

A fair transition requires us to think carefully about who is most affected by the changes happening in our energy system and what we can do to support people to make changes in their homes and businesses to reduce inequities in the changes ahead.

#### Getting ahead of the curve on electrification

One of the key areas we are exploring is the transition from gas to electricity, with the expectation that will accelerate in coming years with rising gas prices and inefficiencies in retaining limited gas services in homes and businesses. Yet according to our Energy Consumer Behavioural Survey, only 16 per cent of people are expecting to make the switch within the next decade.

To help build the evidence base around this issue, we identified electrification as a grant priority area, producing a ‘gap analysis’ to guide potential grant applicants.

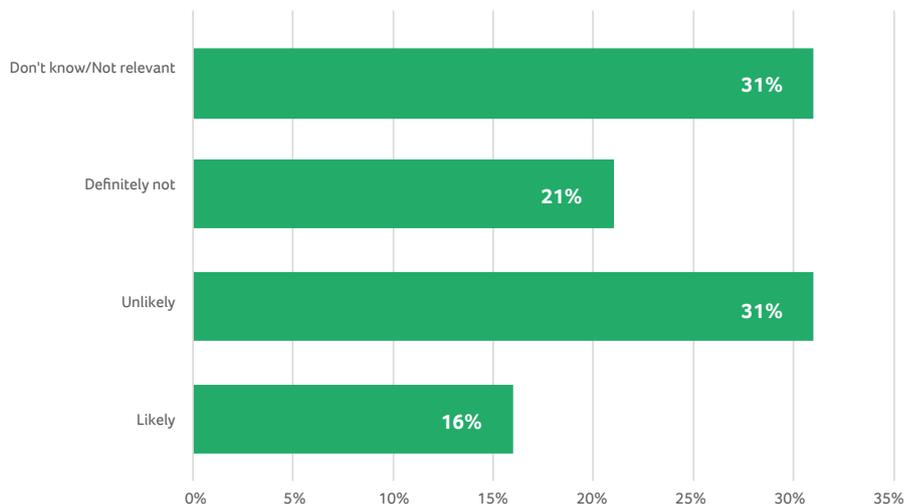
We also commissioned a report titled *Risk to gas consumers of declining demand*, which looks at international experience and local issues around the abolishment of gas, and the impact of blended hydrogen on consumers.

This work showed that electrification could, in the long term, be a money saver, however, many groups face barriers such as consumers who rent, low-income households, apartment dwellers and some businesses for whom alternative technologies are not viable.

We have used this evidence to inform our submission to the *Review of the Victorian Gas Distributions Networks Code of Practice* and other critical work this year.

**Figure 6: Anticipated future changes over the next 5-10 years according to consumers**

#### You will remove gas appliances and swap for electric appliances



Source: ECA, October 2022 Behaviour Survey

While these issues are long-term ones, we aim for this work to drive greater awareness and forward planning by governments, which is required if we are to ensure that no consumer, regardless of their circumstances, is left behind as we transition away from reliance on fossil fuels.

### ***Our housing energy efficiency agenda bears fruit***

There are significant opportunities for cost savings through energy efficiency measures and developing good policy in this area, it will help deliver a fairer and more equitable transition for households and small businesses.

Our advocacy and research in this area is centred on what we describe as “the 4 Rs”:

1. **Retrofitting:** A campaign to retrofit the 8 million or so of our homes that have an average energy efficiency rating of 1.7 stars.
2. **Reporting and disclosure:** A nationally accredited compulsory scheme to report the energy efficiency of a home on sale or rental listing.
3. **Rental standards:** Requiring landlords to meet a minimum threshold so that the costs of energy inefficiency are not unfairly borne by tenants.
4. **Residential Building Code:** We called for the National Construction Code to lift energy performance standards to 6-7 stars, ensuring all new buildings are captured.





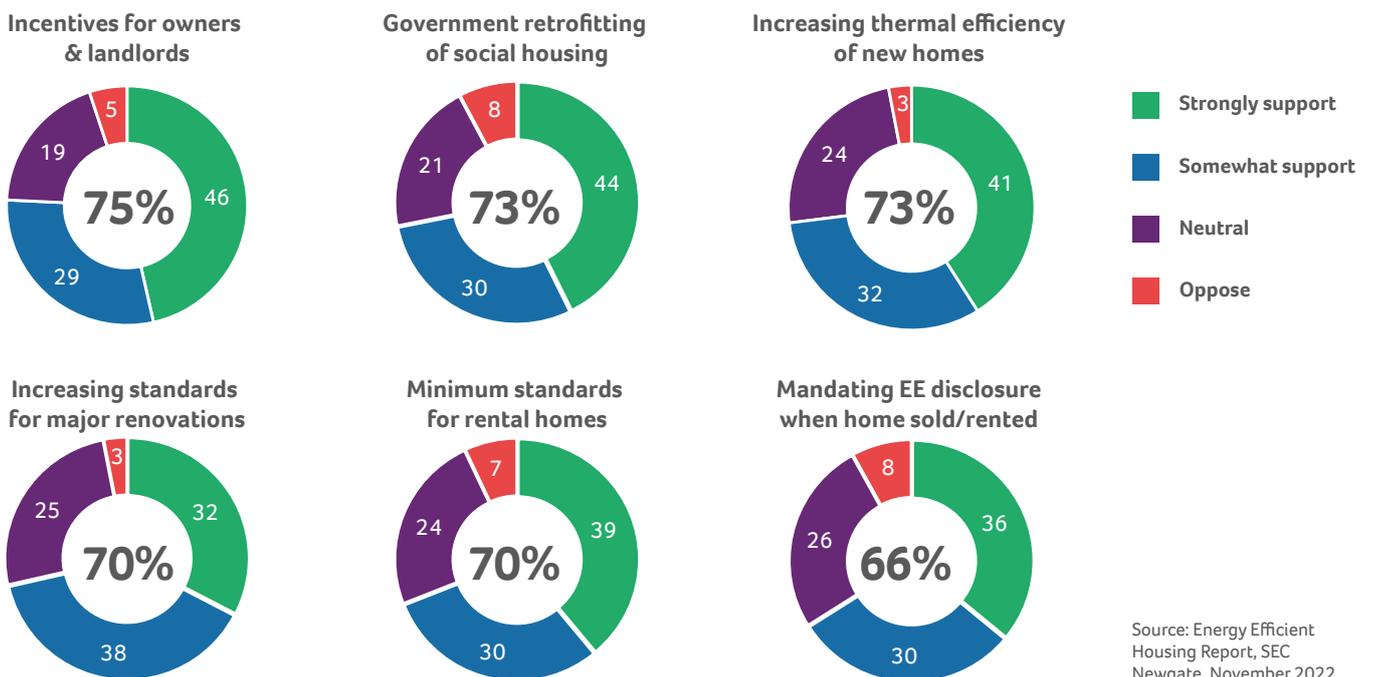
To help inform this agenda, we partnered with Renew, through our first Collaboration Grant, to better understand consumers’ views and needs around the energy efficiency of their homes. The research showed that while consumers understand the value and benefits of energy efficiency, they are not aware they will soon be asked to make major home improvements as part of the net-zero pathway ahead. The market segmentation looked at the experience of renters, landlords, homeowners, and other groups, finding very few participants in the research were planning an energy upgrade, which tends to be seen as a luxury expense. We also asked people what they thought about the range of government reforms under consideration by jurisdictions that are aiming to improve the overall efficiency of Australian homes. There was very strong support for governments’ efforts to build better homes but an

equally strong call for help – that people aren’t sure what to do or who to trust, and we need to provide them with independent, accurate and timely advice. That research reaffirmed the focus and priorities in our 4 Rs campaign.

The *Energy Efficient Homes report* was launched by Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy Senator Jenny McAllister in November 2022 at our Energy Efficient Homes Roundtable and used to brief the COAG Energy Technology Transformation Working Group. We also briefed advocates and that evidence base informed our submission to the National Energy Performance Strategy.

Ultimately all this work – much of which stretches back five years for our team and stakeholders – has contributed to major positive changes this year.

**Figure 7: Over two thirds support for all key ‘better homes’ initiatives**





*(L-R) Renew CEO Fiona Gray, Assistant Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Senator Jenny McAlister, Energy Consumers Australia former CEO Lynne Gallagher*

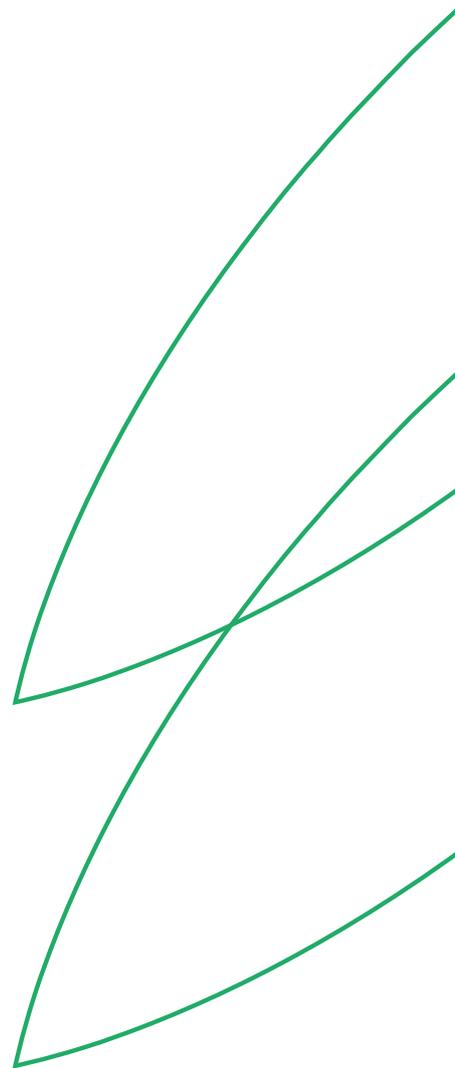
On 26 August 2022, building ministers announced an upgrade to the energy performance standards for new homes in the National Construction Code. The Code will come into effect on 1 May 2023 and will be mandatory from 1 October 2023. The Code now requires all new homes to be built to the NatHERS seven stars rating, the first increase in 10 years. Appliances used for hot water, heating and cooling, solar energy generated onsite and battery storage will be included in a new 'whole-of-home' rating.

This outcome would not have been possible without the coalition of community and industry peak bodies we worked with, including Renew, the Property Council of Australia, Australian Sustainable Environment Council, Energy Efficiency Council, Climate Council, Zero Carbon Moreland, Green Building Council of Australia and the Australian Council of Social Service. The group's secretariat services were provided by Renew through its ECA grant, initiating and organising weekly meetings

to share information and feedback on the progress of the campaign, and coordinating the signing of a joint statement by more than 100 organisations in support of the change.

The May federal budget then delivered a range of measures that included:

- \$1 billion for the Clean Energy Finance Corporation to partner with banks and other lenders to provide concessional loans for household energy upgrades for around 110,000 households.
- \$300 million over four years to support energy efficiency upgrades to social housing in collaboration with states and territories.
- \$36.7 million over four years (and \$2.1 million per year ongoing) to provide households with access to better information about how to save on energy bills.
- Expanding the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) to include energy ratings for established homes.





- Accelerating and including apartments in the National Framework for the Disclosure of Residential Energy Efficiency Information.
- Continuing the work, initially funded in the October 2022 budget, to expand, update, improve and promote NatHERS for new homes.
- Continuing the work, initially funded in the October 2022 budget, to modernise and expand the Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards (GEMS) Act 2012 regulating the energy efficiency labelling of appliances.

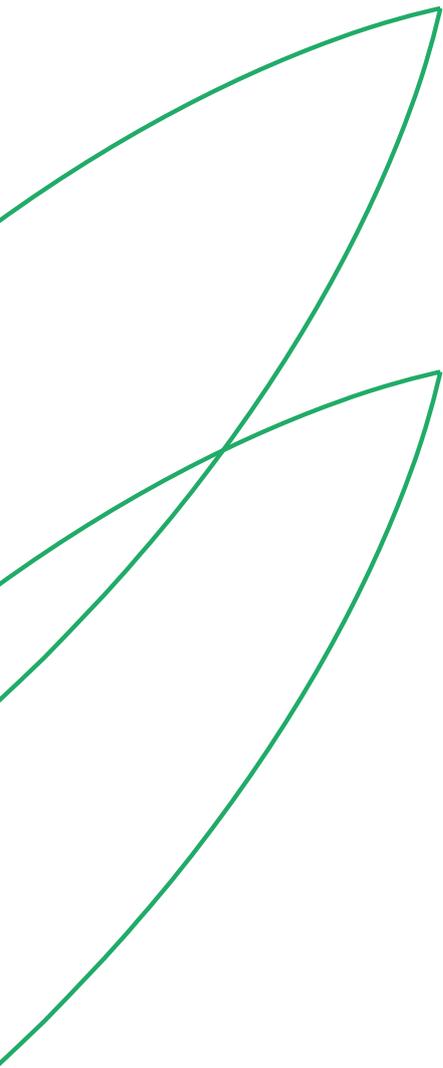
These reforms are a significant step forward in supporting a more equitable transition and lower energy costs by investing in people’s homes and businesses.

There is more work to do in progressing this agenda and this financial year we supported a three-year *Renovation*

*Pathways* project with ClimateWorks at Monash University to model the costs of renovating different types of homes and apartments to consider the most cost-effective renovation options to save money on power.

The cost-benefit analysis is positive for individual consumers, but a key finding is that there are substantial broader societal benefits from improving home energy performance, with significant deferred network costs and emissions reductions. We intend to use this work in 2023-24 to make the case for government stepping in to help capture the substantial collective benefits on offer in the energy transition.

The intended outcome of our work in this impact area is that homes and small business premises are no longer a hard structural barrier to affordable energy, and that energy services are developed around the needs and values of consumers.



Featured Grant:

## Sydney Community Forum



In the transition to energy net zero, culturally and linguistically diverse communities can be particularly vulnerable to disadvantage.

For the past two years, Energy Consumers Australia has supported the Sydney Community Forum in its work engaging diverse migrant communities, ensuring they have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to actively participate in, and benefit from, renewable energy.

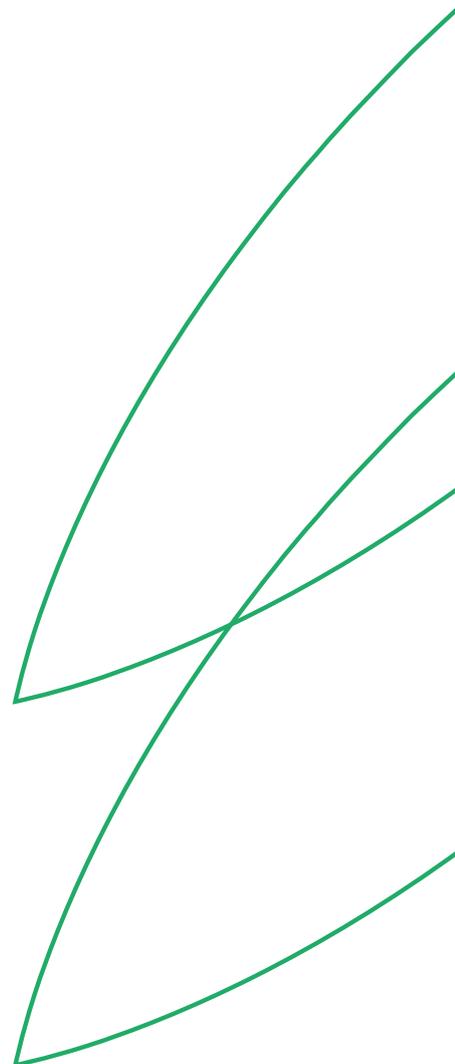
Its Voices for Power CALD Community Engagement in Energy Transition project has supported approximately 50 migrant community leaders build their knowledge and skills around energy advocacy as well as the technologies available to support a just and equitable transition for all.

Community leaders have then been able to run information sessions in their own languages for their communities, helping thousands of households as well as small business owners improve the energy efficiency of their homes and premises and reduce bills in the process. The sessions have also focused on introducing consumers to new technologies and initiatives they may have previously been unaware of, such as the low-income solar scheme.

In addition to removing the barriers that prevent some consumers from participating in the energy transition, Voices for Power has a track record of engaging effectively with NSW ministers and officials to highlight issues facing their communities. Its ability to mobilise has been impressive – it brought 2000 people to a Sydney Town Hall meeting with the NSW Energy Minister that canvassed energy issues relevant to their communities.

Project priorities over the coming year include the continued roll out of culturally safe and appropriate training sessions in leadership and advocacy for community leaders throughout Western and South-Western Sydney. Table talks and listening activities were held with a broad cross-section of CALD communities to surface energy related concerns, issues, needs and priorities.

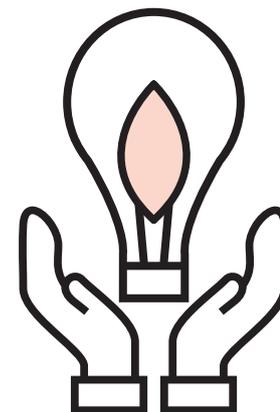
This project aligns with Energy Consumers Australia's Strategic Plan – not only the need to ensure that residential and small business communities benefit from the transition, but that no one is left behind in the transition to net zero.



# A modern, flexible, and resilient energy system



The national energy system is increasingly reliant on many small, local and distributed resources that generate, store, and manage power in the community, which means consumer buy-in will become more and more important over time.



Australia’s 10 million households and 2.5 million small businesses are at the forefront of the energy transition, as more people invest in technologies to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy costs, and cut their carbon footprint.

While the rooftop solar roll out slowed slightly during 2022 due to supply chain and workforce constraints, it still represents the highest contribution in the renewables sector. Approximately 3.4 million Australian households contributed 25.8 per cent of Australia’s renewable energy generation in 2022 – the first time it has represented more than a quarter of total national generation.

According to the latest Integrated System Plan, distributed solar PV will increase five-fold by 2050.

As distributed energy resources (DER) – or as we prefer to call them, consumer energy resources (CER) – become increasingly integral to the transition, we continue to advocate for the interests of consumers in the future roll out.

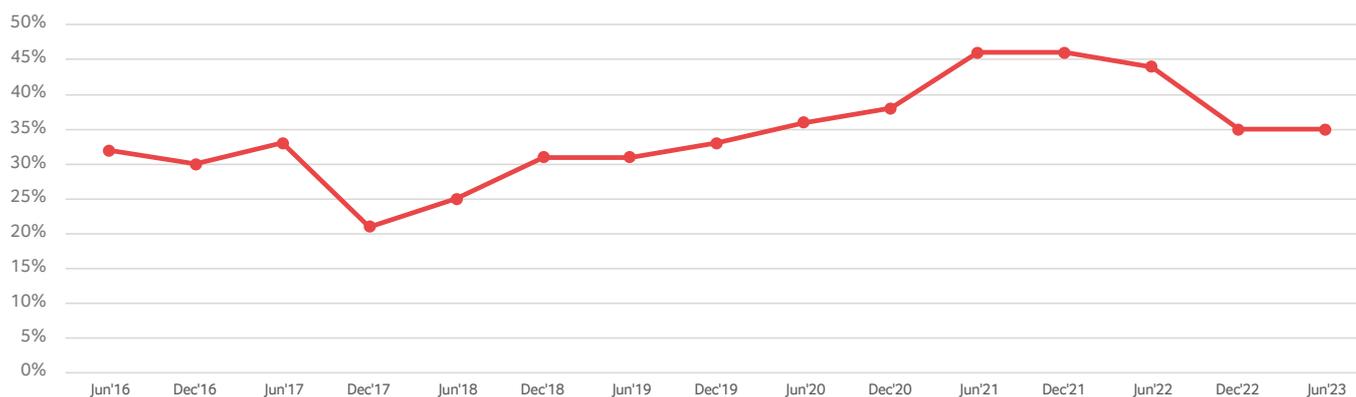
The energy system and the energy transition rely upon consumer participation and trust to utilise this CER for the benefit of everyone and to circumvent load on the grid.

The future energy system that consumers want is one where both demand and supply can more seamlessly adapt to changing circumstances and respond to the changing needs of people and communities.

Consumers need to trust that energy system actors are working in their interests. This requires companies, market bodies, and governments – collectively known by consumers as “the energy system” – to plan for and implement changes in conjunction with people, not simply in their interests.

Of concern, the June Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey revealed that less than half of all consumers trust energy companies to do the right thing by them.

**Figure 8: Declining confidence in the market working in the interest of consumers**



Source: ECA, Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey, 2016-2023



At the same time, just 41 per cent of households feel that advances in technology will provide better market outcomes for them in five years, down from 52 per cent the previous year. These declines are a concern when we consider the critical role of engaged consumers in the energy transition.

Developing a more modern, flexible, and resilient energy system is the third impact area prioritised in our Strategic Plan 2021-24. In this part of our work program, we play a significant role in imagining a future energy system in which energy is affordable, abundant, and clean by collaborating with other stakeholders on the pathways for realising that future, with a focus on building trust and social licence for change with consumers.

We have three core priorities, within this impact area:

- Long-term planning for demand flexibility and security of supply.
- Alternative supply models.
- Distributed energy future “enablers”.

### Long-term planning for demand flexibility and security of supply

Transitioning our energy system to clean resources, such as wind and solar, will require some \$320 billion of investment in generation, network, and storage assets. If we are to limit the impact this investment will have on consumers’ bills, there must be equal importance given to reshaping the demand side of the energy system.

Although households and small businesses are actively participating in the transition to a clean, affordable energy system by investing in their own energy resources, sufficient thought needs to go into what we need to do to earn trust with consumers so the full potential benefit of their assets are being used to lower total system costs – which may include voluntary share of control of their assets.

Last year, we invested considerable time in the planning and development of the 2022 Integrated System Plan (ISP) arguing for a more symmetrical approach to demand and supply-



side planning and consideration of demand-side options such as energy efficiency and consumer hot water storage, batteries, and other forms of flexible use that helps avoid or defer costly, large-scale infrastructure.

In 2022-23, with the ISP bedded down and planning beginning for the 2024 ISP, we conducted foundational analysis to inform our submission to AEMO's *Draft Inputs, Assumptions and Scenarios Report (IASR) 2023*. Specifically, we engaged experts to investigate how our energy system can better support demand-side flexibility. The analysis in the expert report identifies the potential of demand flexibility to lower energy costs and improve affordability, and actions that can be taken to unlock this opportunity, including the role of targets. It also provides examples of initiatives in other parts of the world that could help accelerate action in Australia.

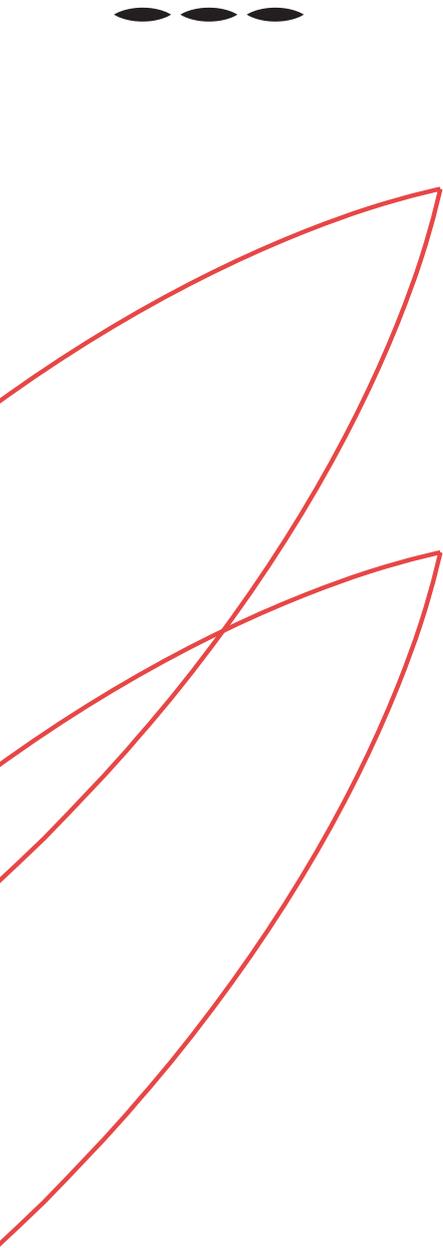
Beyond the ISP, this work also informed our engagement with the Federal Government on the National Energy Performance Strategy (NEPS). Our submission to the draft strategy recommended setting targets that deliver clear benefits to consumers, including that all homes and small businesses are net zero by 2050 and that energy costs represent a small and manageable proportion of household and small business input costs. We continue to engage and provide expertise on the NEPS design, and we look forward to seeing how the Federal Government will further embed consumers and the demand-side into government decision making to improve Australia's energy performance.

## Alternative supply models

The 2022 ISP highlighted the centrality of alternative supply models to the energy transition with projections of a five-fold increase in distributed solar PV generation, meaning there is a pressing need in the next decade for dispatchable storage, such as community-scale batteries, to balance variations in renewable generation.

Alternative supply models include those owned and operated by communities and have the potential to contribute to greater affordability and take pressure of the system for everyone. They also have significant public support. Our Energy Consumer Behaviour Survey shows that 57 per cent of Australian households have interest in community batteries.





For these reasons, this year, we have been actively involved in shaping the planned roll out of hundreds of community-scale batteries across the country. We advised that the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) adopts a cap on the number of projects initiated by Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSPs) to avoid the potential risk of these being disproportionately funded due to current market advantages (their ownership and control over the network hardware, such as power poles, wires, transformers and substations that move electricity around the grid). The result was a decision for funding to be issued equally across two different streams, a) approved DNSPs and b) other eligible applicants, excluding DNSPs. This segmentation will help to ensure sufficient opportunity for other market actors to build the capability to provide community batteries, and for more community-led business models to be tested and proven.

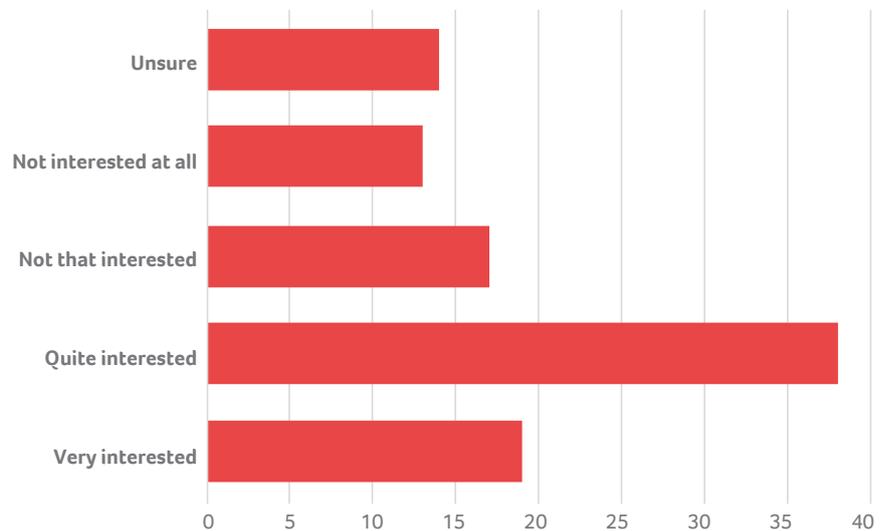
In April 2023, ARENA announced program guidelines for Community Batteries Funding Round 1 of up to \$120 million, which reflected our recommendations.

The increasing prevalence of extreme weather events, including bushfires and floods, have put the spotlight on the need to build resilient communities. This is especially critical as our nation decarbonises, and our infrastructure electrifies. Ensuring communities' resilience to prepare, withstand, recover, and thrive after severe weather events and other hazards has been the focus of several grants. These included funding to support the Venus Bay Community Centre to document and share with others the lessons and insights from its community-led project on energy resilience.

We also supported UTS's Institute for Sustainable Futures to conduct its (Em) powering Communities project via a

**Figure 9: Interest in community batteries is high among households**

**Interest in community batteries**



Source: ECA, Energy Consumers Sentiment Survey, December 2021

Collaboration Grant. This project will provide practical guidance that can be used by communities to become more energy resilient and respond to issues such as loss of telecommunication, cooling, heating, hot water and impacts on health. Insights from engagement with communities impacted by, or at risk of, extreme weather events that disrupt their electricity supply will be collated into a guidebook. This will be shared by and among communities, as well as used by energy industry stakeholders wishing to better engage with and understand communities' perspectives on energy resilience.

### Distributed energy future “enablers”

In this part of our work program, we support technology and regulatory enablers and system architecture that drives a distributed energy future, in which consumers can have trust and confidence.

In 2022-23, we invested significant time in the package of regulatory reviews and projects to better integrate consumer energy resources. These reforms are being undertaken by energy market bodies and the ESB, cooperatively, to realise the opportunities presented by CER for all energy consumers.

Across our submissions and advocacy in this area, the consistent thread is about making sure regulations protect consumers and are realistic in terms of compliance and enforcement on makers, not consumers. The regulatory arrangements should reflect who is best to manage risk and, in most cases, this is the maker of the technology.

This work program includes the AEMC's review of CER technical standards to ensure inverters are in line with international best practice to support

#### Featured Grant:

## Keeping the Community in Community Batteries

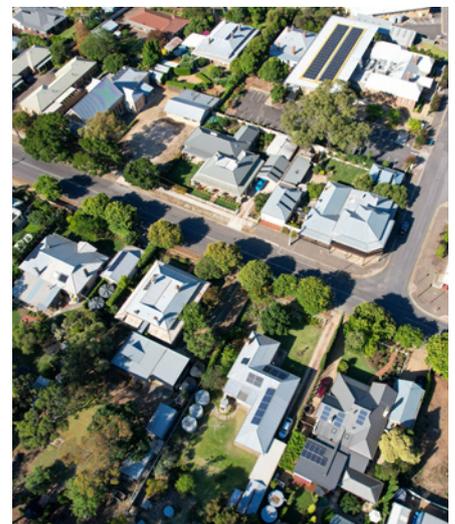


Previous research by the Australian National University has identified what consumers expect from neighbourhood-scale batteries, including savings on their bills, fairness and transparency, and effective decarbonisation.

This latest project is seeking to better understand how to get the best outcomes for consumers and communicate those findings to promote changes in the roll out to ensure the benefits are realised. Our Energy Consumer Behaviour Survey conducted in 2021 found that more than half of households would like to access shared batteries in their local communities. With energy price increases and rising interest rates, that figure is likely to have grown substantially as consumers look for ways to mitigate their energy costs.

Targeted research by the university will aim to inform policy recommendations around the role of community batteries in minimising rooftop solar curtailment and increasing solar export limits for consumers; how to transparently share financial outcomes and ensure benefits are passed on to consumers; and battery trial tariffs that lead to the best outcomes for consumers.

secure power system operation with high levels of CER penetration. Noting the poor consumer outcomes due to widespread non-compliance, we pushed for immediate action on the establishment of an overarching policy framework and a separate governance body, moving away from a voluntary system to a more coordinated approach to standard development, implementation, and enforcement. This would increase consumer confidence that their devices are delivering full value throughout the transition, and also help support the effective operation of the network.





We also made a submission to the Energy Security Board for its Electric Vehicle Smart Charging Issues Paper where we again argued for fit-for-purpose pricing and standards that support the delivery of value and options for consumers. Specifically, we pushed for a nationally consistent communication capability requirements and minimum functionality for domestic EV chargers to be installed with built-in scheduling and remote management (and consumer over-ride capabilities).

This is fundamentally about making sure that the technology rolled out in Australia maximises the benefit to consumers and the system overall in the energy transition, where sub-standard technical requirements could undermine this goal.

Our Interim Chief Executive Officer also sits on the Standards Australia Smart Energy Advisory Group to develop new technical standards. This allows us to connect the work we do with regulators to the broader decisions about standards for technology in Australia. It also enables the regulator to keep up with developments in the energy regulatory regime so that the standards that impact energy consumers align with their work.

This work on technical standards connects with our work on energy export services, which are about supporting consumers to benefit from the increased volume of energy they export to the grid from solar and other home generation. The AER conducted consultations to measure and incentivise export performance and review the regulatory framework with a view to balancing the need to give consumer flexibility to export when and how they choose; with the cost impact this has on networks (which is paid for by all consumers).

We have argued against a hard cap on exports, and in favour of flexible limits that are based on different factors such as time of day, distance to substation, and other considerations. Here we must balance the benefits to consumers who are exporting power with the potential cost implications for all other consumers on the network.

This year, we also made a submission to AEMC's smart meters review, where we supported its proposed acceleration target of 100% by 2030 for the roll out of smart meters. Smart meters are part of the essential infrastructure required to deliver affordable and reliable energy as our system transitions to net zero. Our recommendations included





ensuring consumers don't pay direct costs of metering installations, that consumers and their representatives have access to real-time energy data from their metering installation, and that consumers are not automatically reassigned to time varying retail pricing following their metering installation. Our submission also spoke to the need for a clear, consistent communications campaign to accompany the roll out.

We engaged with AEMC's consultation on unlocking consumer energy resources benefits through flexible trading. Here, we commissioned a report – *Flexible Trading Arrangement Rule Change Assessment* – to investigate the issues from a consumer perspective. This analysis suggested flexible trading arrangements, as proposed by AEMO, are unlikely to provide a net benefit for consumers. This is because the additional costs and increased complexity could outweigh the benefits of increased choice of multiple service providers. The analysis also found that smart technology embedded in CER assets may be able to be leveraged to access some of the same benefits for consumers. Noting this analysis, we see value in the proposed outcomes of the rule change to increase the value of CER for consumers in enabling choice

of different service providers for the electricity supplied to the household or small business premise, and for charging electric vehicles or their "vehicle to X" generation. However, the proposed mechanisms outlined in the report do raise challenges of how to achieve this at least cost and complexity. We will continue to engage with this process throughout 2023.

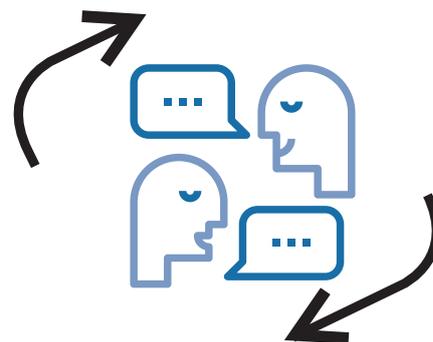
As part of our ongoing Stepping Up project, we are investigating the benefits and challenges of CER resources for everyone in Australia, and what governments will need to do to enable the energy transition for consumers. The project has brought together a sizeable reference group comprising distribution companies, energy retailers, consumer energy resource providers including EV manufacturers, and the Climate Council.

CSIRO and Dynamic Analysis are providing exclusive new modelling on the costs and benefits to consumers from Consumer Energy Resources, including EVs, which will help to inform planning decisions and avoid exacerbating the divide between the "energy haves" and "have nots". This report will be released in the first half of 2023-24.

# Your voice heard



As the nation transitions towards net zero, ensuring that the values, expectations and needs of consumers are reflected in the public debate – as a driver of public policy and regulatory decisions – is more important than ever before.



### Supporting each consumer to become a “net-zero hero”

A successful energy transition is dependent upon engaged consumers: those who actively participate in the energy market as generators and storers of electricity in their homes, by electrifying their appliances and vehicles, or by changing their electricity use to different times of the day. There is no net zero unless the consumer is the “hero”.

These two reasons are why our communications and engagement ‘with consumers’, ‘for consumers’ and ‘to consumers’ matter so much.

Our Communications Strategy, which reflects ECA’s Strategic Plan 2021-24, has two primary objectives:

- To engage consumers in dialogue that opens new possibilities for them and provides valuable evidence of their needs to us – strengthening our credibility and our capacity to act as their voice in persuasive

engagements with decision makers and processes.

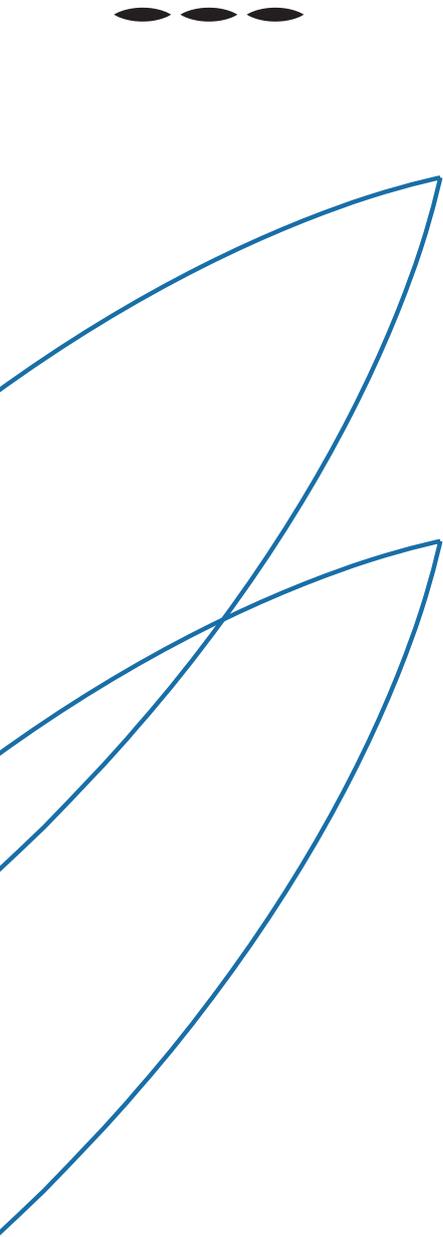
- To engage with decision makers, using consumer voices to challenge and reframe dominant narratives about the energy system and – as a result – shape the system so that it better meets the needs, expectations, and values of consumers.

We continue to evolve how we think about communications, who our audiences should be, and how to best reach them.

### Insights gained by listening to consumers

As a “national voice” for energy consumers, we recognise we are most influential and authoritative when our messages are informed by evidence obtained by listening to consumers and understanding how they feel about the energy market and how that impacts the decisions they make.





Our foundational research project, the Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey, continues to be integral to our ability to tap into consumers' thoughts and feelings about the energy system. Recent enhancements such as exploring the issue of trust and adapting questions about switching plans and providers has enabled us to better understand views, priorities and concerns regarding the energy transition, and the implications of these.

Our Energy Consumer Behaviour Survey, now in its second year, provides telling insights into the attitudes and behaviours of households and small businesses that will be tracked over the long term. For example, the 2022 survey released in October highlighted the role of financial incentives in encouraging household consumers to change how they use energy. While 35 per cent of household consumers indicated they were willing to reduce energy use as much as they could if they were offered a financial incentive, more (42 per cent) said they would try even if they weren't offered a financial incentive.

It also canvassed consumers' interest in upgrading and purchasing more efficient products or appliances, with 24 per cent of households considering battery storage in the future and 23 per cent considering electric vehicles, although not in the coming 12 months.

In 2022-23, these flagship research projects have been supported by insights drawn from the Digital Energy Futures Project, Grants Program and our community listening work discussed in the previous chapters of this report.

### Acting on consumer insights

Since the pandemic, we have increased direct outreach to ministers and senior government officials regarding our major research projects and have worked collaboratively with ministers on a range of issues, including the response to energy price spikes, as described in the above chapters.

Our increased policy capacity and capabilities from investing in our people means we produced 37 submissions





on topics such as National Energy Market rule changes, market reforms, network planning decisions and major policy processes, aggregating our research and insights about consumer preferences, behaviour, and sentiment to insert their voice into the decisions being made.

In all of these processes, we backed our submissions with significant direct engagement, both in our own right and in collaboration with our stakeholders. All these processes have a significant bearing on our strategic priorities, as described in the above sections.

We also participate in a range of state and territory forums and reference groups. These include:

- Observer on WA's Advocates for Consumers of Energy Forum
- Representative in ACT Energy Consumer Policy Consortium
- Attendee of Victoria's Energy Consumer Insights Forum
- Attendee of the NSW Energy Consumer Reference Group

- Representative on the NSW Energy Infrastructure Roadmap Consumer Reference Group
- Representative on the Energy Queensland Customer and Community Council
- Representative on the Transgrid Advisory Council
- Participant on the Jemena Gas Networks Expert Panel
- Participant on the NSW Electricity Supply and Reliability Expert Panel
- Participant on the NSW Renewable Energy Sector Board

In 2022-23, we also participated in one-on-one meetings with all jurisdictions, to ensure our priorities are discussed in an ongoing way.

We were committed to further lifting our engagement with small business advocates and our collaborative work with the sector, including an increased level of support through the grants program, reflects this focus.



#### **KPI 5A.1**

*Build and strengthen relationships with governments and regulators through at least eight meetings annually with jurisdictional governments, engagement bi-annually with the Energy Council and quarterly meetings with market bodies*



## Lifting direct two-way engagement

During 2022-23, we focused on engaging in a two-way dialogue to build an ongoing relationship with consumers based on trust to empower them to navigate the energy system and build a shared vision for the future.

This year, conscious of the broader market challenges and economic factors at play, and their impact on consumers, we launched several proactive initiatives designed to inform, empower, and enable consumers to meet challenges head on.

In September, we launched Plug In – our new dedicated information hub for Australians wanting to know more about buying and using new energy technology.

The materials were created by Energy Consumers Australia following a request from energy ministers who identified a gap in the market for trusted, independent information on new energy products and services such as solar installation, purchasing a battery, and using an electric vehicle.

As well as appearing at the website [www.energytechguide.com.au](http://www.energytechguide.com.au), these materials are 'white-labelled', meaning they can be readily downloaded and used by other organisations. We have seen uptake and use from stakeholders including consumer groups, NGOs, market bodies, local councils, and government websites.

The launch attracted solid media interest, including coverage in mainstream and industry specialised publications including the ABC, The New Daily, Energy Magazine, Energy Matters, and One Step Off the Grid.

The campaign has also met with positive feedback from stakeholders who have reiterated how the resources have filled a much-needed gap for independent information. This enthusiasm has been reflected in strong engagement metrics.

Plug In has served as a successful test case for our ability to create high-level consumer advice and target it to an audience of consumers for whom such resources are needed.

As the August Pulse Survey confirmed, only half of Australians felt they had access to the information they need to make decisions around energy. To address this, the Communications Team developed and trialled consumer-focused content aimed at providing clear, independent, and practical information to help people navigate a fast-changing energy landscape.

### Consumers are 'plugging in' to new energy tech advice

- ✔ Over **15,000** users visiting the website
- ✔ Over **25,000** page views
- ✔ **5,000** factsheets downloaded
- ✔ More than **200,000** Facebook and Instagram users were reached
- ✔ Resources shared **16,790** times by third-party energy communicators

These new resources drew on ECA's PowerShift research, best-practice energy communications techniques, and advice from the Australian Energy Foundation and are provided on the new **Consumer Advice Hub** platform on our website.

The Consumer Advice Hub provides clear and practical answers to common energy market concerns ranging from reducing energy use and bills on a budget to finding the best deal with an energy retailer. The site was launched in July with a promotions campaign that involved creating content such as blogs, social tiles and posts, influencer outreach, and an animated video.

These activities delivered a mass audience of 35,785 visitors to the site during the months of July and August alone. Our content has been widely shared by stakeholder organisations, such as the Energy and Water Ombudsman of NSW, Queensland, and Victoria, ACTCOSS, ASBEC, and many others.

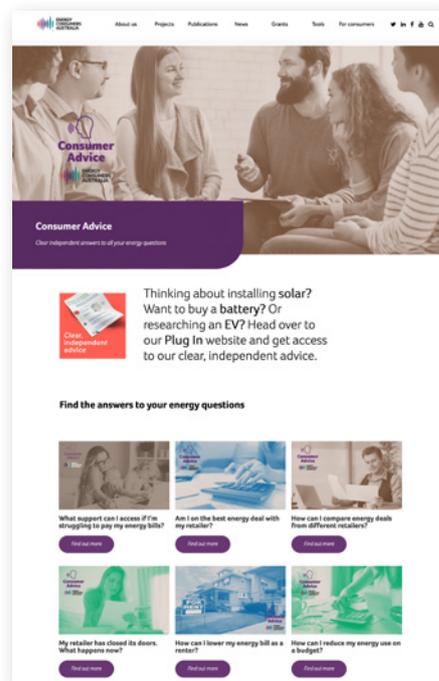
**The animated video**, designed to provide simple information to help people reduce their energy use and "crush their bills", has been viewed over 17,000 times on YouTube. On Instagram, where we are working to expand a newly established presence, the video reached 13,411 people with 536 'engaged viewers'.

As a result of these activities, the organic reach of our content has also grown. Our Consumer Advice Hub is now the top-ranked result on Google when searching for 'Energy Consumer Advice'.

Coupled with the successful launch of Plug In, both initiatives are symbolic of our strategic shift to directly supporting consumers and providing them with the resources they need to navigate the energy transition.

Our media profile has continued to grow, with Energy Consumers Australia mentioned in approximately 3,200 news reports over the course of the year, including 2,080 broadcast items and more than 1,100 print or online articles. The Chief Executive Officer, and later Interim Chief Executive Officer, were increasingly sought out by the media to provide expert commentary on market developments as well as provide consumer-specific advice, further cementing the role of the organisation as an independent and trusted voice on matters relating to the market now and into the future.

We continue to drive engagement with our social media channels, with bespoke content, including videos, blogs, tiles, and posts to support priority campaigns.





Our Watts Next? Podcast was launched in April, featuring industry thought leaders in conversation about building the energy system of the future. The first seven episodes are available across multiple podcast platforms (Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and other apps), and audience numbers continue to grow with each new episode.

Engagement with our online channels is usually strongest when we take a visual storytelling approach and this is reflected with a deliberate decision to increase the volume of video content, we have produced this year, including profiling Great Grants success stories.

Our newsletter email engagement remains well above average for non-profit organisations based on industry benchmarking reports and in many respects has increased this year:

- The average email open rate for 2022-23 was 37 per cent compared with the non-profit average of 26.6 per cent
- The average click-through rate for the mailing list is 9.73 per cent higher than the non-profit average of 2.7 per cent.
- Our mailing list grew to a total of 2,611 making it a powerful direct channel.

Our social media channels strongly performed this year and we have substantially grown our audiences across several platforms, particularly LinkedIn and Facebook.

In total, we had 148,978 video views throughout this financial year, which is a 17 per cent increase compared to last year. This content was also integrated



throughout our digital communication channels to deliver high-impact messaging to stakeholders and the community at large.

### Energising Australians

Our flagship Foresighting Forum provided an opportunity to bring leaders, decision-makers, advocates, and thinkers from across and beyond the energy sector under the same roof for the first time since the pandemic to explore the future of the energy system, the role of consumers in it, and the challenges and opportunities it brings.

To promote this year's theme, Energising Australians, we launched several social media and search ad campaigns to engage our target

audience and direct them to the ticket page. In addition, we invested significant efforts in highlighting all speakers and panel discussions on our website and organic social media both before and during the event.

Our Communications Team also provided additional support for the Forum by developing extensive content for the program and sharing event highlights in real time to our social media channels.

The Forum, which was sponsored by ACIL Allen, Ausnet, and Ausgrid, developed a rich archive of resources including recordings of sessions in full, highlight reels, speaker interviews, consumer advocate reflections, and a virtual showcase of the Digital Energy Futures project.





**KPI 1A.1**

*Foresighting Forum is held on an annual basis and attended by representatives from all sectors of the energy system*

## Foresighting Forum 2023: Highlights



More than 20 speakers over two days, including three international keynote presenters



Approximately 200 attendees including consumer advocates, researchers, innovators and representatives from industry, regulators and government



65% were first-time attendees, with 80% of surveyed attendees indicating they would like to return next year



### Four panel discussions

Consumers' experiences in the current energy markets

Consumers' expectations of the future energy markets

Working together - integrating the energy system and people

The 'model' consumer?



Feedback following the two-day event has been overwhelmingly positive with 70 per cent of attendees who responded to a survey saying that after attending the forum they had a “clearer sense of how and why the current energy system could better deliver for consumers”. While 75 per cent said they had a “new or increased motivation” to take on the lessons from other industries and apply them to the energy transition ahead.

Events over the past 12 months have reinforced the value of Energy Consumers Australia’s proactive approach to communications. Consumers have told us there is an overwhelming amount of information in the public domain about the energy market and there is a need for independent, credible, and evidence-backed communications that other players in the market cannot provide.

This was reinforced during research conducted by the former Australian Energy Foundation and funded by our Grants Program. The report, *Effective Energy Consumer Advice Models*, released in September 2022, found that information and advice were readily available, but it was “complex, confusing, delimited, and often not delivered in a way that resonates with households”.

As a first step in the development of a national consumer campaign to facilitate bill reductions, we conducted a review of existing audience research, the broader communications landscape, and lessons from international energy-related campaigns. We published these findings on our website.



The Australian Energy Foundation (AEF) conducted research on effective energy consumer advice models. The report outlines why energy advice is essential in successfully transitioning to an equitable, net-zero carbon society and in addressing the cost-of-living crisis. It presents a snapshot of today's energy advice services in Australia and looks at ways these can be better delivered. The research included a review of relevant websites and literature, stakeholder interviews and workshops, consumer surveys, and AEF's eight years' experience of providing an Energy Advice Service.

Through the provision of a grant, we also supported Business NSW to better understand the challenges facing small businesses in navigating the energy system. The research project examined business owners' relationship with five aspects of the energy market – advice, procurement, energy efficiency upgrades, renewables, and net carbon zero – and findings from the survey have already been used as supporting evidence to inform NSW and Commonwealth governments as they shape business-oriented energy policy design.

Energy Consumers Australia will continue to conduct this important two-way dialogue with consumers: asking them what they want and need from the energy market but also talking to them about what they can do because we understand that better-informed and engaged consumers are key to creating a modern and resilient energy system that is affordable and fit for purpose.



#### KPI 6A.1

*Support models for industry engagement with consumers and consumer organisations by publishing at least one annual consumer engagement report*



#### KPI 7A.1

*Undertake at least three direct engagements with consumers and communities*



# Living our values in strategy & governance



Energy Consumers Australia is an independent body established through an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments to provide residential and small business consumers with an influential voice in national energy matters.



We are incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee and are funded by consumers from levies collected by the Australian Energy Market Operator.

Our role is set out in our Constitution, which also sets out our Objectives and the Activities to achieve it. This is available on our website. We note that a constitutional review was completed and recommendations on Constitutional changes were made to the Member. These changes were approved by Ministers in August 2022 and passed via Special Resolution by our Member at our November 2022 Annual General Meeting. The changes provide the necessary arrangements

to support greater flexibility in the approach to Board tenure, make-up, remuneration and administration, and a more responsive governance framework.

### Strategy and performance framework

This year was the second in our 2021-24 Strategic Plan, which sets up our purpose, vision, mission, and values. It also identifies three strategic impacts we are seeking to have on behalf of households and small businesses and maps our priorities, outcomes, and activities against those impact areas.



#### Our purpose

To influence the shape of the energy system now and in the future by creating a trusted and influential voice for residential and small business consumers.

#### Our vision

Consumer values, expectations, and needs are realised through a modern, flexible, and resilient energy system.

#### Our mission

We research and understand consumer expectations, values, and needs. We proactively shape a vision for the future, set priorities, influence, and work with others to drive change across the energy system to benefit consumers.

#### Our values

- We are independent – we are rigorous and inquisitive in challenging the status quo
- We are evidence-based – what we think, say, and do is supported by research
- We work collaboratively – we are inclusive in our engagement and open in our communications

#### Our impact

- Affordable energy for households and small businesses
- Individualised energy services that give consumers choice and control
- Modern, flexible, and resilient energy system



The Performance Framework outlines the impact-based key performance indicators, which provide the basis for our reporting, including in the Annual Report. The Plan is available on our website.

Understanding the significance of our stakeholders' views about our success in delivering against the Strategic Plan, in 2022-23 we designed a stakeholder engagement project centred on an annual stakeholder survey, with questions linked to the delivery of our strategy. This is already providing rich insights to help us better meet our strategic goals.

The work will inform a new stakeholder engagement plan and is now embedded in our business-as-usual activity. An early outcome of this work is that we are releasing an external-

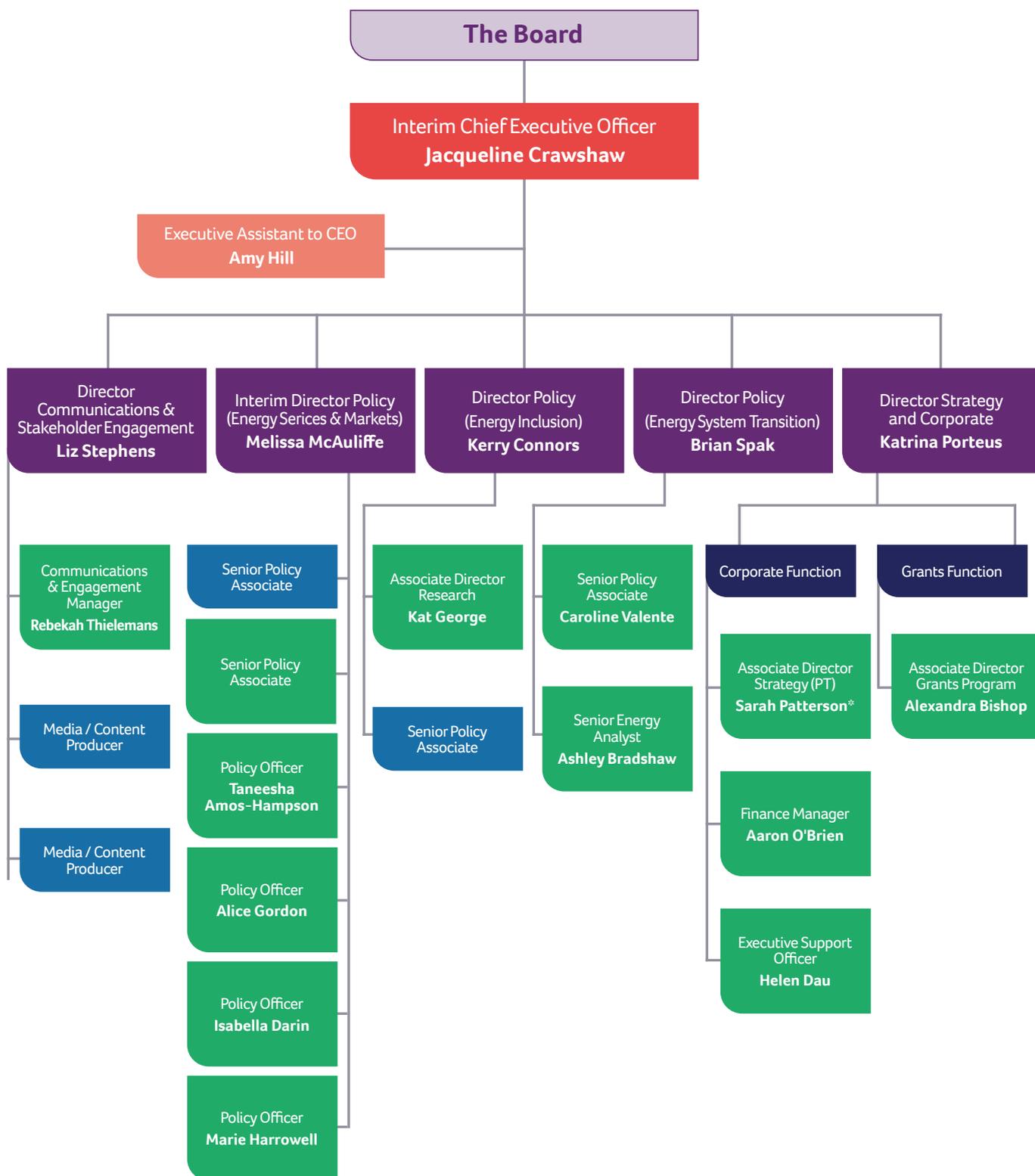
facing work plan which provides stakeholders with clarity about how our work relates to our strategic plan.

### **Better managing risk and aligning with strategy**

Through the Board's Risk Management Framework, Energy Consumers Australia has processes in place to identify, evaluate, assign responsibility, and report against key risks. In 2022-23, we reviewed our Strategic Risk Map to ensure we can effectively manage risks in a fast-changing environment, in line with our updated strategic priorities. We have streamlined the approach to risk and made updates that reflect the importance of retaining a high-performing team and positive work culture.



Figure 11: Energy Consumers Australia organisational chart





### Our people and organisation

The evolution of our organisational structure reflects priorities in our strategic plan, ensuring we have the people and resources to deliver on our impact areas and priorities.

Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, our five-person Executive Leadership team is responsible for executing our work plan, including leading our policy advocacy supported by our research, investing in the advocacy capabilities of other organisations through our grants, engagement with stakeholders, and the effective day-to-day management of our organisation.

We have seen two significant changes in personnel this year with the

change in CEO and a new Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement headlining those updates to the organisational chart below.

We also updated our employment contracts to reflect changes in government policy and legislation, including a focus on workplace mental health.

Our annual staff survey shows we are meeting our targets for employee satisfaction with more than 80 per cent of staff agreeing that Energy Consumers Australia provides a positive working environment.

To underpin high levels of satisfaction, we are providing learning and professional development opportunities for staff, holding regular



team-building events, providing flexible hybrid working arrangements, improving internal communications and collaboration within the team, and continuing the buddy system, which has been particularly important for new starters and graduates.

Our Employee Assistance Program is also an important initiative to support employee health and wellbeing needs and we proactively promote this to our people.

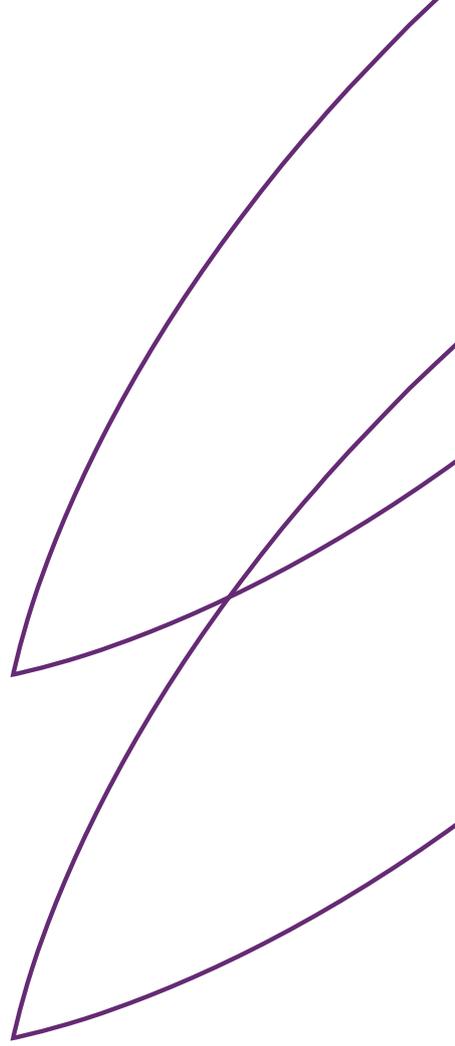
### Grants program under a new structure

We are continuing to evolve the Grants Program under the new structure to ensure it aligns with our strategic priorities. While the

change in strategic focus was driven by our stakeholders, the impact of these changes has required ongoing consultation and engagement with our stakeholders, which has had some impact on the number of grants approved in 2022-23.

We have seen a significant uptick in applications in the second half of the 2022-23 and \$2.7 million approved during the financial year. Further details are provided in the accompanying grants booklet.

We have continued to prudently manage our resources, with annual expenditure within our performance target.



**Grants**

Energy Consumers Australia is committed to working effectively with consumer advocates to be a strong and effective voice on National Energy Market issues of importance to energy consumers.

One of the ways that we support energy consumer advocacy is through our Grants Program. This program seeks to fund high quality and innovative research and advocacy initiatives that have potential to deliver outcomes that will benefit the long term interests of energy consumers in the National Energy Market.

**Applicants**  
Understand what grants are available, then develop and submit your application.

**Recipients**  
Resources, materials and information for grant recipients.

**Great Grants**  
Grant funded bright ideas and projects.

**For applicants**  
Understand what grants are available, then develop and submit your application.

**For recipients**  
Resources, materials and information for grant recipients.

**Great Grants**  
Grant funded bright ideas and projects.

**KPI 3A.1**

*\$2 million investment annually in advocacy (through the Grants Program), nationally and across a range of consumer groups*

**KPI 8A.1**

*Annual expenditure within +/- 5 per cent of budget*



## Our Board

Energy Consumers Australia has a five-member Board, appointed by the Energy Council (comprising the Commonwealth, State, and Territory Ministers with portfolio responsibility for energy).

### The Board has three core functions:

- Setting the strategic direction and risk appetite of Energy Consumers Australia and engaging with stakeholders.
- Determining the funding and requirements of the Grants Program and being the decision maker on applications other than those delegated to the Chief Executive Officer.
- Overseeing Energy Consumers Australia's performance and financial management, with annual accountability to the members.



### Louise Sylvan, AM, FAICD

#### *Chair and Director, Energy Consumers Australia*

Louise has significant experience in consumer affairs policy analysis and advocacy. She is Chair of the Reliable Affordable Clean Energy for 2030 Cooperative Research Centre; a non-executive director of the Social Enterprise Fund Australia, the Australian Centre for Social Innovation; and Member of the Advisory Panels of the Net Zero Australia project and the Australian Privacy Foundation. Louise is a policy adviser to the Australian Risk Policy Institute. Formerly Chief Executive Officer of the Australian National Preventive Health Agency, Louise was also a Commissioner of the Productivity Commission and Deputy Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC). Louise is a member of our Risk and Audit Committee.



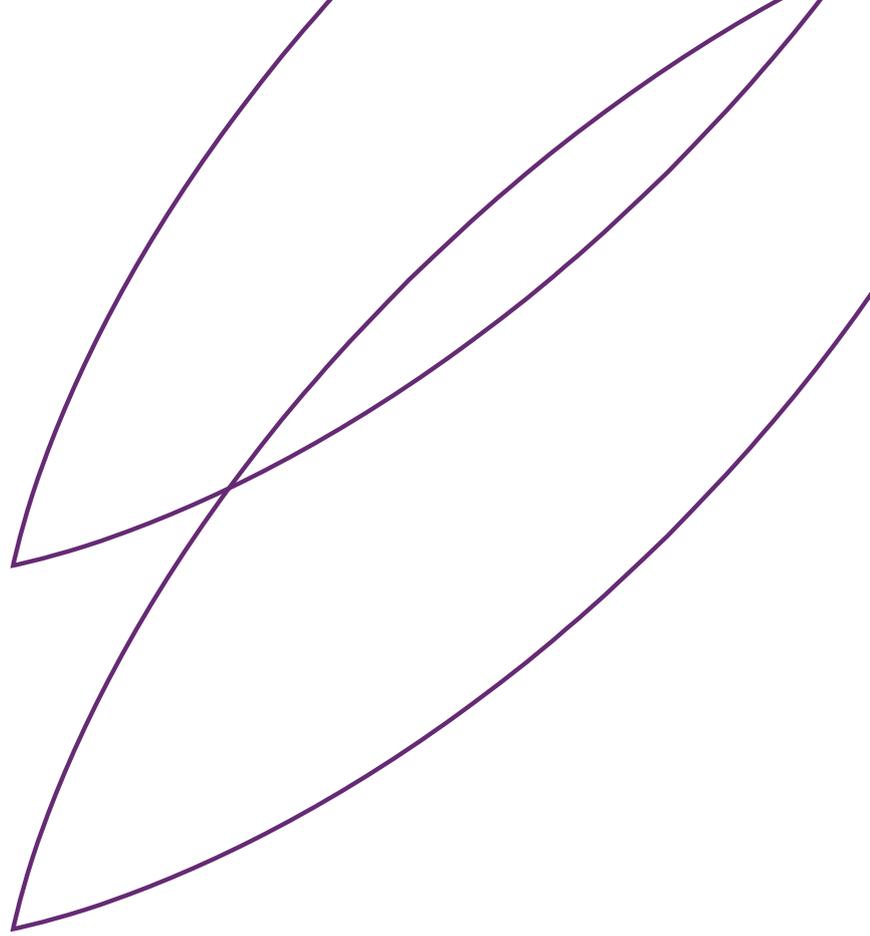
### Gavin Dufty

#### *Director, Energy Consumers Australia*

Gavin has significant consumer advocacy and energy policy experience. Gavin is Manager Policy and Research at St Vincent de Paul Society, Victoria. He has worked as a consumer representative in the energy sector for over 30 years undertaking research and policy evaluation on its impacts on domestic consumers. Gavin is currently a consumer representative of several government and industry committees, including the Australian Energy Regulator and the Essential Services Commission. Gavin is a member of the 2024 ISP - AEMO Advisory Council on Social License and a member of the Consumer Reference Group of NSW renewable energy roadmap and was awarded the 2001 Centenary Medal for services to the community.

The Board has a Risk and Audit Sub-Committee and a Reference Committee. The role of the Reference Committee, as set out in the Constitution, is to act as an advisory group to the Board on energy consumer issues and is chaired by a member of the Board.

There were no changes to our Board make-up in 2022-23 however we note that our Chair's term ended in February 2023 and will remain on a casual appointment until the end of 2023. Our Board members' full profiles are available on our website.



**Helen Garnett PSM, FTSE, FAICD**  
*Director, Energy Consumers Australia*

Helen has significant corporate experience gained through directorships on government entities and ASX-listed companies in the energy, mining, agriculture, and education sectors as well as entities involved in regional economic development and the arts. She currently chairs Generator Property Management and is a director of Developing East Arnhem Land, The Crawford Fund, Becquerel Laboratories, and Larrakia Development Corporation. Helen is also a member of our Risk and Audit Committee.



**Virginia Hickey FAICD**  
*Director, Energy Consumers Australia*

Virginia is a lawyer, corporate governance expert, and a company director. She was previously a partner of commercial law firm, Finlaysons. She has significant experience in national regulatory environments through her previous governance positions as a National Competition Councillor, a National Transport Commissioner, and the Independent Chair of the Telecommunications Ombudsman Council. Virginia also Chairs our Reference Committee.



**Chris Spangaro, GAICD**  
*Director, Energy Consumers Australia*

Chris has a background in law and public policy. He is a member of Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's (IPART) Energy Savings Scheme Tribunal Committee. Chris is a former senior director of the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) where he led the Retail and Wholesale Markets team addressing key aspects of consumer energy pricing and protection as well as the reshaping of wholesale market rules. He previously worked for the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal as General Manager of the Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme and as Manager, Water Pricing. Chris is also a member of our Risk and Audit Committee.



## Our Reference Committee

Our Reference Committee underpins our close engagement with other advocates in the sector and now has an oversight role with annual feedback from advocates on our effectiveness. The Reference Group remained stable throughout the financial year with the exception of Thuy Nguyen who departed in July 2022. The Committee is being reconstituted in July 2023

## Geoff Buchanan ACT

Geoff is a Research Fellow at the ANU Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research in Canberra. From 2015-2022 he was a Senior Policy Officer at the ACT Council of Social Service where he managed the ACT Energised Consumers Project, undertaking evidence-based advocacy for small energy consumers and for a just and inclusive transition in the ACT. Geoff remains active in the ACT community sector as a member of ACT Shelter's Executive Committee and as a director on the board of the Council on the Ageing ACT. He remains engaged in energy consumer advocacy locally and as a member of the COTA Energy Advocates national network.

## James Colbert VIC

James has spent the last 15+ years working at the forefront of the energy transition in Australia and internationally. He has expertise in strategy development and execution, consumer insights, energy technologies, business development, and partnerships. His experience includes deep customer understanding and insights and driving growth for Energy Australia and Origin along with spending three years in a multi-market energy technology start-up. James is a Partner, Management Consulting at KPMG and is a member of the RACE for 2030 Board.

## Dr Georgina Davis QLD

Georgina is the founder of the Waste to Opportunity Enterprise and current Chief Executive Officer of the Waste Recycling Industry Association of Queensland (WRIQ), the peak body for the waste management and recycling industry. She has worked in energy advocacy for the past six years authoring over 60 energy submissions within that time, achieving positive outcomes for Queensland's regions and communities, most recently as the CEO of the Queensland Farmers' Federation.

## Professor Neil Horrocks QLD

Neil has more than 30 years of energy industry experience across the electricity and gas sectors including roles in retail, distribution, and asset management. He currently holds several roles including Director of the Research Centre for Energy Data Innovation and Director, External Engagement in the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Queensland as well as Chair of the Customer and Community Reference Group for Queensland Urban Utilities.

## Justine Jarvinen GAICD NSW

JJ is Managing Principal of Sustainably and Climate Change at Aurecon; Adjunct Professor in the School of Electrical Engineering and Telecommunications at UNSW Sydney; Chair of Wattwatchers; Director of the Port Authority of NSW; and Director of Climate-KIC Australia. She is an energy executive with international experience spanning the energy, finance, education, and non-profit sectors over 27 years. JJ specialises in leading innovation, change, and incubating corporate initiatives until they become established and flourish.

### **Simon Moore NSW**

Simon Moore is responsible for Business NSW advocacy relating to the infrastructure businesses depend on to function, including energy as well as transport, telecoms, and water. Simon sits on several energy industry stakeholder bodies as Business NSW's representative, including Essential Energy's customer advocacy group and Jemena Gas Network's customer council.

### **Dr Fiona Simon VIC**

Fiona Simon is the CEO of the Australian Hydrogen Council (AHC), the peak body for the Australian hydrogen industry. AHC connects the hydrogen industry and its stakeholders in building a secure, clean, and resilient energy future based on hydrogen. AHC's members are from a range of sectors, including energy, transport, consulting, banking, and technology.

### **Gabrielle Sycamore NSW**

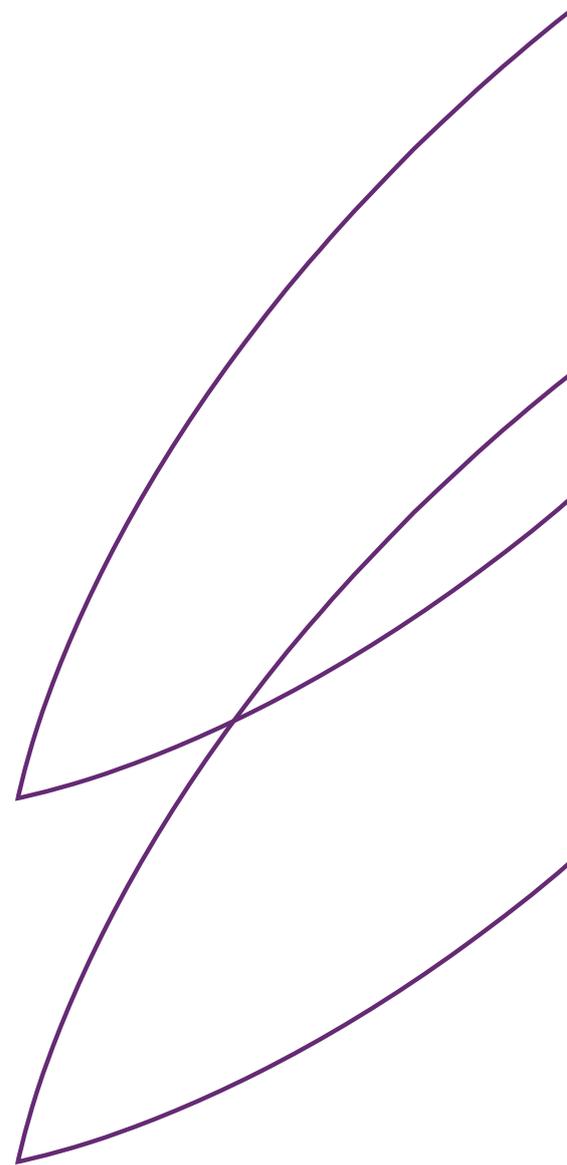
Gabrielle is an experienced senior commercial manager specialising in leading teams, managing complex commercial projects, and enhancing commercial outcomes. With 17 years' experience in the energy sector, Gabrielle also has expertise in finance and business development. Gabrielle is currently the Head of Strategic Services, at BHP Perth.

### **Dr Phillipa Watson Tasmania**

Dr Phillipa Watson aims to support people to live great and sustainable lives. To this end, as a Senior Research Fellow at the Australian National University and the University of Tasmania (UTAS), she works in applied research with a variety of collaborators, to understand and enhance peoples' real-life housing transition and energy transition experiences. Phillipa joined the BSGIP team at ANU in July 2022 and is currently investigating energy users' values and social aspects of dynamic operating envelopes.

### **Ross Womersley SA**

Ross is the CEO of the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS) – the peak body for the non-government community and health sector – which leads a fight against poverty and inequality. Ross also serves on a range of boards and regulatory committees, with a focus ranging from energy and water hardship and regulation, digital inclusion, housing, procurement, and gambling through to workforce planning.



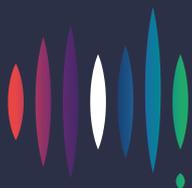
## Summary of financial performance for 2022-23

Year Ending 30 June	2023	2022
<b>Statement of Comprehensive Income</b>		
Industry Levies		
AEMO Levies	8,442,866	8,068,640
Other Income		
Interest Earned	65,629	15,959
ACT Grant	25,000	25,000
Foresighting Forum	115,565	-
Other Income	3,624	93,810
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>8,652,684</b>	<b>8,203,409</b>
Grants	2,111,172	2,222,840
Research & Engagement	1,582,683	1,497,223
Administration Expenses	1,242,311	1,306,476
Staff Expenses	3,510,561	3,409,592
Board & Reference Committee	226,389	160,635
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>8,673,116</b>	<b>8,596,766</b>
Income Tax Expense	-	-
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>(20,433)</b>	<b>(393,357)</b>
<b>Statement of Financial Position</b>		
Current Assets	2,503,630	2,600,861
Non-Current Assets	1,254,921	1,557,271
Current Liabilities	825,621	985,858
Non-Current Liabilities	638,794	857,705
<b>Equity &amp; Reserves</b>	<b>2,294,136</b>	<b>2,314,569</b>
<b>Statement of Cash Flow</b>		
Cash Outflow from Operating Activities	(9,684,277)	(9,472,891)
Cash Outflows from Investing Activities	(730,572)	(648,430)
Cash Outflows from Financing Activities	(195,194)	(131,837)
Cash Inflow from Operating Activities	9,705,946	9,195,696
Cash Inflows from Investing Activities	-	-
Cash at Beginning	1,645,635	2,703,097
<b>Cash at End</b>	<b>741,538</b>	<b>1,645,635</b>

## Notes:

1. Summary version only of ECA financial accounts for 2022-23. Full accounts available on ECA website [www.energyconsumersaustralia.com.au](http://www.energyconsumersaustralia.com.au)
2. ECA's Income are fees recovered by Australian Energy Market Operator in accord with national electricity and gas rules.
3. ECA is registered as a charity by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and has income tax exemption by the Australian Tax Office





**ENERGY  
CONSUMERS  
AUSTRALIA**

T +61 2 9220 5520  
E [info@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au](mailto:info@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au)  
W [energyconsumersaustralia.com.au](http://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au)

 [@energyvoiceau](https://twitter.com/energyvoiceau)  
 [/energyconsumersaustralia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/energyconsumersaustralia)  
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