



Opportunities and risks

*What's different about energy
and why does it matter?*

*Dean Lombard
Alternative Technology Association
27 June 2016*



Agenda

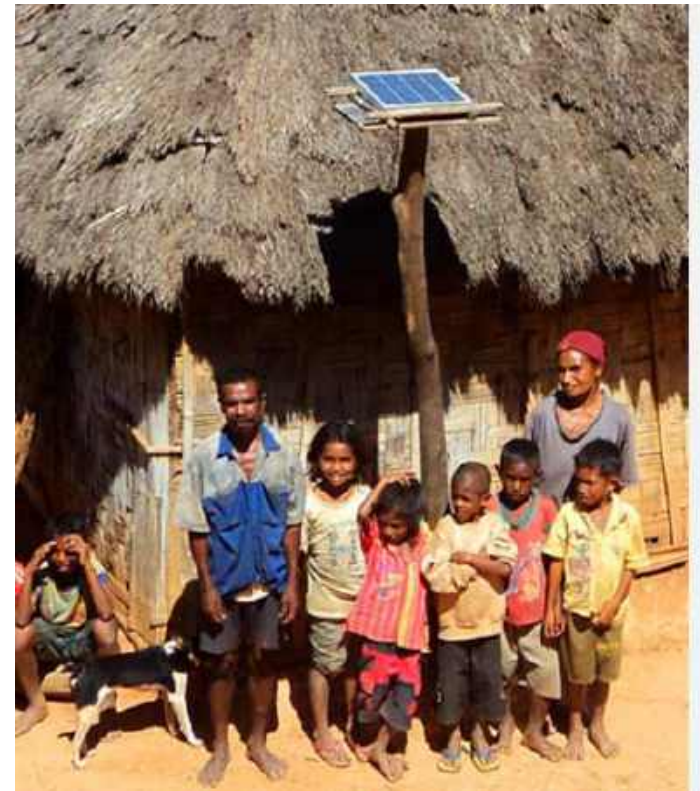
- What is the ATA?
- What's different about energy?
- The suite of consumer protections
- What can go wrong?
- Putting it all together
- Next steps...



What is the ATA?



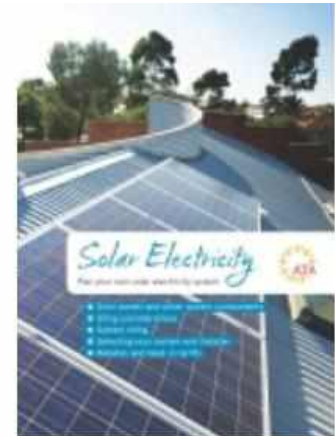
- Help people to make sustainable choices
- Membership base, branches around Australia
- Independent, not-for-profit
- Policy and research team
- Advice and consultancies
- International projects



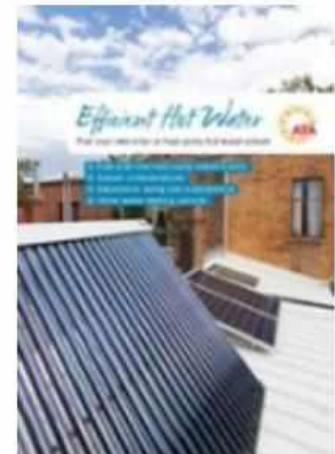
The ATA – Publications



- Published since 1980
- Energy efficiency, renewable energy, electric cars, retrofitting homes, recycling and reusing
- DIY projects



- Published since 2005
- Sustainable homes case studies including house plans and spec sheets



The Innovation Project



- Consumers accessing new energy technologies and services should:
 - have appropriate, energy-specific protections
 - not be impeded by market barriers
- The costs and benefits of new energy technologies should be distributed fairly, and without placing other consumers (particularly vulnerable consumers) at a disadvantage

What's different about energy?



It's essential – but so is food and clothing

- You can't buy it second-hand
- You can't buy it once and then use it for ages
- You can't keep some in the back of your cupboard for emergencies
- You can't mix the expensive stuff with cheap or free stuff to make it go further
- You can't not use it yourself and just give it to your kids to make it go further

It underpins health, hygiene, comfort, nutrition, social engagement, entertainment...



The suite of consumer protections

What does regulation provide?

- Right to connect
- Reliability, quality, safety
- Explicit informed consent
- Transparent, regulated billing
- Concessions and hardship assistance
- Dispute resolution
- Continuation of supply (RoLR)



The suite of consumer protections

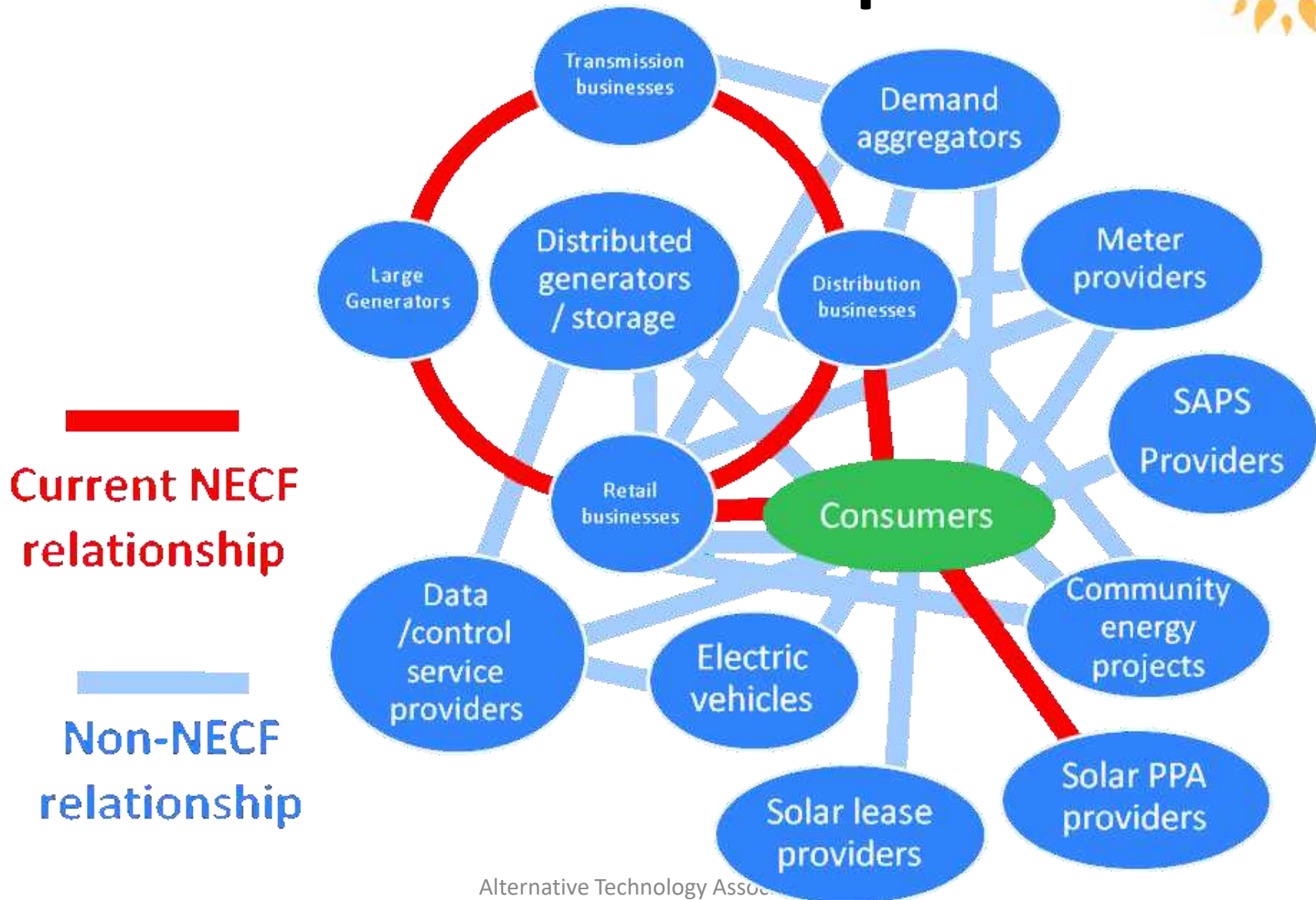
What does it apply to?

- The sale of units of energy to small customers
- ...with exemptions for non-traditional retailing
- Everything else is outside
 - generally subject to Australian Consumer Law
 - Sometimes subject to National Credit Code

[flickr.com/mukluk/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mukluk/)



The suite of consumer protections





What can go wrong?

- Person gets PPA that's bigger than they need
 - Ends up selling electricity for less than they buy it
- Person with solar lease gets into financial hardship
 - What happens next?
- Person gets off-grid system and then their usage increases significantly
 - What are their options?
- Person buys house with off-grid system
 - Can they get back on the grid?
- Off-grid system breaks down within warranty period but liable business no longer exists
 - What now?
- Battery management service has timeclock error
 - Battery charged during peak tariff

Putting it all together...



Universal consumer protections

- Dispute resolution
 - Internal and external
- Clear and transparent product/service information
 - Marketing rules
 - Explicit informed consent
- Concessions
 - Tailored, delivered as a rebate or discount as appropriate
- Right to reconnect
 - At a reasonable cost



Putting it all together...

Product class-specific protections

- Safety and reliability
- Basic quality standards
- Accuracy of measuring and timing equipment
- Responding to financial hardship
- Provision of usage information
- Treatment of life support customers
- Provision for business failure

***Proportional to
the essentiality of energy supply and
the impact of financial hardship on the customer***



Next steps...

- Getting more specific
 - Which requirements for which products?
- Looking at the licensing/authorisation and exemptions framework
- Looking further at the barriers – including those facing low-income and vulnerable consumers
- The fine line between appropriate regulation and burdensome requirements
- A technology- and mode-agnostic market

How do we make sure everyone has access to an essential supply of energy?

Questions or comments?



Dean Lombard
Senior Energy Analyst
dean@ata.org.au