



9 December 2015

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio
Minister Industry, Energy and Resources
181 Exhibition St
Melbourne 3000

Dear Minister

Victoria's Future Industries: New Energy Technologies Discussion Paper

The Consumer Action Law Centre (**Consumer Action**) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the New Energy Technologies Discussion Paper.

New energy technologies will provide opportunities for consumers to source energy products and services that better meet their lifestyle or budget. In a market which is much more flexible, consumers need no longer be simply the price-taker at the end of a vertical supply chain, and many may choose to find new solutions to manage their consumption and bills. New energy industries may also offer new employment opportunities for Victorians, and we welcome the focus of the Victorian government on growing these important industries.

However the new energy market will also create new challenges for consumers. As the number of products and services to meet a consumer's energy supply and demand increases, so too will the volume and complexity of information. Furthermore, many new products and services are more complex than the current model of energy retailing (for example, solar power purchase agreement models), and may require a web of relationships to establish, finance and maintain. The potential for consumer detriment and complex disputes is high.

It is critical that the government's aim of reducing barriers to development of new energy technologies and jobs growth does not come at the expense of consumer protections. Consumer protections are not a barrier, but a fundamental support to confident consumer participation and effective competition.

Consumer Action supports a level playing field for new entrants and traditional incumbents in the energy market. This must extend to consumer protections. In a complex and data-driven energy market, it is critical that consumers have guaranteed access to:

- Adequate hardship arrangements;
- Simple, free and consistent dispute resolution processes; and
- Strong data privacy and security protections.

Consumer Action Law Centre

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Consumer protections need not stifle innovation. We encourage you to continue your strong track record of prioritising consumer experience and rights as we support the development of a new energy market in Victoria.

Please contact Claire Maries on 03 9670 5088 or at claire@consumeraction.org.au if you have any questions about this submission.

Yours sincerely

CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE

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Gerard Brody
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Maries', written in a cursive style.

Claire Maries
Senior Policy Officer