



Continuing **Cultural Connections**

CALD
Best Practice
in a consumer
centric energy
market



Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW
Representing All Communities



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Executive Summary

Scope of project

This project aimed to find out how the guidelines produced by ECCNSW, *Cultural connections: Engaging CALD energy consumers*, were being used by energy businesses and agencies in their engagement and consultations with CALD consumers. We anticipated participants in the project would complete a survey instrument regularly to detail how, when and what they were each doing in CALD engagement. Feedback from a variety of energy businesses was used to inform the questions posed in the instrument and the timing/frequency of responses required.

There was considerable enthusiasm in sections of the energy market and additional businesses and agencies sought to participate so the project was expanded. Initial expectations about the frequency of data collection were tempered by the reality of a very busy energy sector with a range of competing priorities.

The project enjoyed wide participation across the energy market, with distribution networks in NSW, Victoria and South Australia providing data and projects for inclusion in the expanded case studies section.

Projects from energy agencies, regulators and Ombudsman (AER, AEMC, EWON, ESC Victoria and IPART) have also been included in the case studies.



Data

Participants in the project included all Victorian DNSPs, two out of three NSW DNSPs as well as SAPN in South Australia. A range of other energy bodies joined the project and these included AEMC, AER, IPART, ECA and EWON. The three largest energy retailers were approached: only one, AGL, chose to join the project.

Among a range of those businesses and agencies who did not officially join the project by submitting data via the survey instrument, there was engagement in the spirit and intent for both the instrument and the *Cultural Connections Guidelines*. ECCNSW has consulted separately with these businesses and agencies to advise them on better practice engagement and consultation with CALD consumers.

Projects initiated and completed by energy businesses and agencies have been identified as case studies of better practice CALD engagement and form an important section in this final report.

Use of guidelines and instrument

All participants recognised the importance of the Cultural Connections Guidelines in their individual CALD engagement journeys. The Guidelines had been produced with wide consultation within the industry yet there was a range of understanding and use of the Guidelines within the industry.

Universally, they valued the survey instrument matrix as a potential 'road map' for their respective projects involving CALD consumers and in informing their engagement policies more generally.

The Guidelines, the survey instrument and the potential to join the project provided very valuable initial conversations about each organisation's CALD policies and procedures as well as focusing staff consideration of possible projects involving CALD consumers.

Staff change within organisations presented challenges. Difficulties were encountered when there were several changes in personnel who were looking after an organisation's involvement in the project and detailed handover processes were not evident. These challenges highlighted the central importance of strategic organisational and senior managerial level commitment to CALD strategies: this was identified as one of the critical indicators of movement towards best practice identified in the instrument matrix along with staff training and allocated budgets.

Wider conclusions from the project

The Cultural Connections Guidelines:

The *Cultural Connections Guidelines* document has been very useful as a conversation starter with businesses and agencies. Although many already knew of them, they provided a timely reminder of the possible strategies available.

When businesses and agencies are aware of the Guidelines they are used as a valued resource. Analysis of the participant data suggests that while they are useful the Guidelines are seen more as an ideas resource than a step-by-step manual.

The Case Studies section is seen as a particularly useful part of the Guidelines, especially by those organisations who did not know where to start or what works/does not work. This feed-back points to the value of an expanded Case Studies section to provide a wider range of case studies with links to a more detailed exposition of the various projects conducted.

Personal contact, being in the room and the way forward:

The three years duration of this project have seen a range of CALD consultations and engagement undertaken by energy businesses and agencies. In our analysis the single most important factor in helping to progress these projects has been the one-to-one conversations between ECCNSW and the businesses and agencies around CALD consultation and engagement. With some businesses and agencies ECCNSW has been able to provide various levels of support, including: employment for trained bilingual facilitator support to a project; timely reminders of their CALD engagement and consultation; and with others, advice and guidance on better practice for CALD engagement and consultation.

People who speak a language other than English at home make up roughly one fifth of the Australian population, rising to more than one quarter in the two most populous states and exceeding one half of the population of some areas of Sydney and Melbourne. While these communities are by no means homogeneous, they share structural and institutional challenges in negotiating the energy market. They are under-represented in a range of areas, from payment assistance programs, the use of Ombudsmen complaints and dispute resolution services as well as information, access and use of emerging new services and technology. ABS census statistics point to the over-representation of many CALD communities in the lowest two quintiles of the income spectrum. Often, they do not complain (or their complaints are not heard) and so they can safely be ignored unless specific mechanisms exist within the energy market to ensure that their interests are taken into account as business-as-usual practice.

It is within this context that important findings of this project are emphasised:

- The necessity of maintaining capacity for energy advocacy for CALD consumers
- Secure and ongoing financial support for wide CALD advocacy across the energy market

These two measures would contribute to helping ensure that CALD consumers and their advocates are part of the conversation and maintaining continuity, innovation and consistency of action across the sector for CALD consumers.



Continuing Cultural Connections: CALD Best Practice in a consumer centric energy market

Since its formation over 40 years ago the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW (ECCNSW) has been the peak body for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members and representative organisations in NSW. ECCNSW main activities are advocacy, education and community development.

ECCNSW has undertaken energy, water and environmental projects in research, advocacy and sustainability and is the only State-wide peak body for ethnic communities with an energy focus to its research, community development, community education and advocacy work. ECCNSW represents the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) in its energy advocacy role across the National Energy Market (NEM) and as such has a national energy advocacy role.

Over more than a decade ECCNSW has undertaken advocacy and research projects across a range of energy and water issues. Some examples include:

- Consumer Advocacy Panel (CAP) and Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) funded research on the energy market understanding of CALD communities across a range of language groups in both NSW and Victoria. This research was conducted twice (in 2012 and more comprehensively in 2016) for both domestic and small business consumers and included responses about CALD consumers understanding of new and emerging products and services in the energy market ¹
- The Business Energy Smart Tips (BEST) project. A 12 month project to directly support small ethno-specific businesses in managing their energy use. Trained bi-lingual staff made on-site energy use assessments, provided energy efficiency action plans and follow-up visits to evaluate the effectiveness of the project to over 800 businesses in Sydney and Melbourne ²
- Consumer Advocacy Panel (CAP) and Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) funded advocacy on CALD engagement with new products and services in the energy market
- Ongoing projects conducted by our team of trained bi-lingual educators and facilitators on energy efficiency, recycling and food waste
- Ongoing consultation, advice and guidance to energy businesses and agencies on better practice engagement and consultation with CALD consumers.

The development of the Cultural Connections Guidelines (*Cultural Connections: Engaging CALD energy consumers* ³) was informed by the success of several projects that used a wide range of techniques for communicating and consulting with CALD communities. Some of that work had an energy and water focus and these formed the basis of the four case studies in the Guidelines. Extensive consultation with energy businesses was undertaken in the lead up to finalising the Guidelines and their feedback was important in formulating the current document.

¹ See [http://www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Advocacy/Consumer-Energy-Research-\(1\).aspx](http://www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Advocacy/Consumer-Energy-Research-(1).aspx) and <http://www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Advocacy/Consumer-Energy-Research.aspx>

² See <http://eccnsw.org.au/best.aspx>

³ Find the original *Cultural Connections Guidelines* at <http://www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Advocacy/Guidelines.aspx>

Scope of project

The Cultural Connections Guidelines had been available to energy businesses and agencies from 2016 and ECCNSW considered it important to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the document in improving CALD consumer engagement, consultation and access in the energy market. It was always anticipated that the energy market behaviour change necessary to have major impact for CALD consumers would be a long term process, in the order of at least 3 – 5 years, and this view was confirmed in our preliminary discussions with energy businesses about the project. Following successful funding for twelve months from ECA a survey instrument was developed with assistance from our consultant.⁴

The instrument was in five sections:

- Information about the organisation/person completing the instrument
- The **better practice matrix**⁵ with drop-down boxes for completion
- An additional opportunity to provide further explanation for the responses in the **better practice matrix**
- Further questions about the organisation's 'drivers for action' on CALD engagement
- Questions about the usefulness, efficacy and value of the *Cultural Connections* document.

Advice and feedback on the draft instrument were sought from a range of energy businesses and the instrument was adapted to reflect their suggestions. A version of the instrument was developed specifically for energy agencies rather than businesses and advice and feedback was obtained to fine-tune this document. Subsequent minor changes were made to the both instruments over the course of the first year of implementation.

It was our initial expectation that several iterations of the instrument could be completed by each participant over the first year. The businesses and agencies consulted indicated that it was overly optimistic and we revised this expectation, anticipating completion twice per year at best. For a variety of factors, even this frequency was optimistic. ECCNSW has been fortunate to have been able to extend the project through continued ECA funding to gather 2½ years of data.

Over the course of the project a range of energy market participants have completed the instrument and provided information and data about their respective CALD engagement, research and consultation activities.⁶

In addition to the active participants of the project, ECCNSW has conducted successful consultations with a range of other businesses, agencies and energy market bodies, some of whom have undertaken or are planning to undertake projects directed specifically towards CALD consumers and utilising a range of better practice approaches.

⁴ See contact list Appendix A

⁵ See Appendix B for a copy of the Better Practice matrix

⁶ See Appendix C for list of energy market participants who provided data for the project

Things to note:

In preliminary and subsequent discussions with energy businesses and agencies there was a common understanding that better practice CALD communication was not widely understood and that the matrix of better practice progress within the instrument provided a useful 'road map' for action. Coupled with the four case studies and other suggestions in the *Cultural Connections Guidelines* document provided businesses with practical ideas on how to start and how to improve their CALD engagement and communications processes. Feedback from businesses and agencies also highlighted the importance of personal communication with the Energy Advocate around potential projects to identify the best methods and techniques for each project.

Expectations about completion of the instrument and the breadth and pace of implementation of CALD specific projects by energy businesses and agencies have adjusted over the course of the project. The range of activities undertaken has been broad and implementation slower than originally envisaged at the start of the project. Iterations completed by businesses and agencies have been lower than initially expected. There appear to be several reasons for this:

- CALD engagement and communication is not business as usual in most businesses and agencies and there is often little corporate knowledge or expertise and hence a fear of poor response/failure. Cultural change within a large organisation is complicated and takes time (and high-level senior management commitment and appropriate funding).
- The expectation that businesses and agencies would complete multiple iterations of the instrument was predicated on discussions with businesses and was unrealistic in retrospect. Network revenue determinations, businesses and agencies undertaking multiple urgent and on-going projects and competing staff priorities all led to less iterations of the instrument.
- Staff change within organisations has been an ongoing issue with the successful completion of the instrument and initiation of projects. There have been instances in some businesses where staff responsible for completion of the instrument have changed five or six times over the course of this project. The difficulties with staff turnover and the related issues of having participation contingent on one staff member or sub-group having carriage of the process is related to the importance of senior managerial sign-off in the best practice matrix. Until the issue becomes a high-level managerial commitment successful CALD projects will remain contingent on follow-up by individuals within the organisation. We note that recent initiatives in the Energy Charter ⁸ process highlights the importance of high level (ie at CEO level) sign-on in the successful implementation of consumer-centric processes. ⁹
- An additional and associated issue is that of 'siloeing' within larger organisations. One section of the business or agency is engaged with the project and information about better practice is not shared with other sections and a separate consultation needs to be undertaken to provide guidance and advice.

⁸ see www.theenergycharter.com.au

⁹ https://www.theenergycharter.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Charter_Poster_04_Hr_20190328.pdf

- Input from the major retailers has been lower than initially expected. AGL was an early participant and has completed two iterations of the instrument. Energy Australia consulted early in the preparation of the initial version of the instrument and decided subsequently that other projects in their vulnerable consumer program would take preference to becoming an active participant in this one. ECCNSW has been in discussions with Origin over the length of the project about becoming a member and they have investigated involvement within their engagement with the Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP) but did not join as a member. Smaller retailers have less resources to devote to joining this project and have not formally joined. We have provided support, information and guidance to Red Energy in the design of a proposed project addressing life support communications.

Data

There was considerable interest from DNSPs about the project from its inception and following the initial drafting of the instrument meetings with interested businesses were arranged to fine-tune the matrix and accompanying questions. Enthusiastic first joiners included Jemena, Ausgrid, Ausnet Services, United Energy/Multinet Gas, Citipower/Powercor, SA Power Networks and Essential Energy. Initial interest was shown by two of the three major retailers. AGL joined the project early in 2017, Energy Australia, after providing input into the format of the instrument and accompanying questions, decided that it could not commit to the project for time management reasons.

Subsequently, the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC), the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) and the Energy and Water Ombudsman of NSW (EWON) joined the project.¹⁰

Several other businesses and agencies expressed interest in the aims of the project and were not able to fully commit to completion of the instrument. Our energy advocate consulted at length with Origin Energy, Red Energy, the Essential Services Commission of Victoria, Service NSW and several consultancy firms regularly employed by energy businesses and agencies on the effective mechanisms of CALD consultation and engagement. While not technically part of this project, some of these organisations are included in the case studies section because they have undertaken effective and specific projects targeting CALD consumers.

Personal contact with industry personnel working in customer facing roles has been crucial in providing support and information about proposed industry initiatives and subsequent commentary and evaluation of the outcomes of these activities. This contact has not been without issues around continuity of contact, as indicated earlier. With some businesses and agencies, there have been up to five staff changes over our project timeline who have been contacted and briefed about this project. This only emphasises the importance of senior-level commitment to CALD engagement in establishing business-as-usual practices in this area.

There was a wide range of success in completing the full instrument when the data recorded from the responses to the instrument was analysed. Staff change, the pressures associated with network revenue resets and other ongoing consultations contributed to some of the issues in completion of the matrix and associated questions. There was

¹⁰ For access to de-identified data set, please contact ECCNSW (iain.maitland@eccnsw.org.au)

mixed success in 'change over time' between iterations and recognition of work done by participants was sometimes only teased out in follow-up conversations about what the business/agency had been undertaking since the previous contact.

There were differences in responses within the matrix between the customer facing, internal business and external stakeholder fields. There were also differences in interpretation of what constituted success or completion of some sections within each field and level. There was almost universal agreement from participants that the matrix provided a very valuable 'roadmap' toward better practice in each of the three fields. Participants saw the instrument (and particularly the matrix) as a communications process and a gauge of where their organisation sat in the engagement spectrum rather than a specific search for data.

The ancillary questions posed following the matrix were in two sections: firstly, an exposition of the 'drivers for action' by a business or agency and secondly, an exploration of the usefulness and value of the *Cultural Connections* Guidelines.¹¹

The 'drivers for action' section was adjusted early in the establishment following discussions with energy businesses to include a wider range of reasons for action not necessarily centred on regulatory compliance signoff. While this section of the instrument was not especially well completed by either energy businesses or agencies, regulatory compliance did not present as a major driver for action in those organisations that completed this section correctly.

The responses and subsequent conversations about the usefulness of the *Cultural Connections* Guidelines were interesting. Organisations who reviewed the Guidelines document in their work found sections of the document useful, especially the case study section. While energy organisations have a wide range of techniques that they use to engage and consult with their customers they are not necessarily experienced in the specific techniques that work with CALD consumers. In our communications with them they often wanted to undertake work within the CALD engagement area but did not have the knowledge or skills that were going to lead to successful and cost-effective projects. The case studies section of the existing Guidelines document goes some way to providing examples in this regard and there was wide agreement that an expanded case studies section would give organisations greater confidence that they could attempt their specific project with higher expectations of success. The other advice that particularly resonated with some organisations was to start small with a discrete and manageable project to identify where the strengths, resources and challenges were in their organisation.

There were some anomalies in completion of this section, largely attributable to staff change – in some cases there were indications that the Guidelines document was not known by the organisation as a resource in the second iteration although it was in the first, for example. These instances pointed to issues with staff handover of responsibilities following staff change and emphasises the necessity of managerial level and institutionalised commitment to engagement mechanisms.

This project has also facilitated a range of communication with sections of the industry that have been peripheral to active participation in the project by completion of the instrument.

¹¹ See <http://www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Advocacy/Guidelines.aspx>

For example:

- Consultations with NSW government agencies such as Service NSW about effective methods of information transfer to CALD consumers. We provided advice and guidance with their language adaptations to their website, the *Energy Switch* project and the more general *Cost of Living* services available online and at each NSW Service centre ¹²
- Discussions about CALD community access to projects within the NSW Department of Planning and Environment such as the NSW *Energy Savings Scheme* ¹³
- Consultation with University of Queensland on their *Building Australia's Energy Literacy* project ¹⁴
- Consultation with Monash University on their engagement strategy for the energy sector *Engaging Households Towards The Future Grid* project ¹⁵
- Consultation with AGL about the next stage in their Energy Literacy Grants process ¹⁶
- Consultation with Transgrid on their CALD engagement processes as part of the Transgrid *Powering Sydney's Future* project
- Detailed advice and guidance about CALD engagement to the Essential Services Commission of Victoria (ESCV) work arising from the Thwaites Review, the Payment Difficulties Framework (PDF) and their Family Violence initiatives¹⁷
- Advice/information/consultation with sections of agencies not directly related to the completion of the instrument such as CALD implications for the Advice on Life Support for retailers

¹² <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/services/concessions-rebates-and-assistance>

¹³ <https://www.ess.nsw.gov.au/Home>

¹⁴ Hogan, Pascale, Cetois and Ashworth, Building Australia's Energy Literacy, NERA UoQ 2019

¹⁵ Strengers, Nicholls, Glover, Arcari and Martin, Engaging Households Towards the Future Grid, An engagement strategy for the energy sector, Monash Emerging Technologies Research Lab, 2019 www.monash.edu/mada/emergingtechlab

¹⁶ See <https://thehub.agl.com.au/articles/2019/03/investing-to-help-energy-affordability>

¹⁷ <https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/electricity-and-gas>

Case Studies

In Section 4 of the original *Cultural Connections* document¹⁸ there are four practical examples of how organisations have engaged CALD communities. These studies are organised around five questions:

Why did we do it?

Who did we engage?

What did we do?

What were the results?

What approaches were used?

This approach will be continued in the updated Guidelines document with an expanded set of case studies and the additional question:

What lessons did we learn?

Links to the full exposition of the various projects within the updated Guidelines will provide more detailed information where needed.

¹⁸ see Section 4 of *Cultural Connections*
<http://www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Advocacy/Guidelines.aspx>

Jemena Gas Network (JGN)

*Deliberative forums with CALD domestic consumers of gas and focus groups with small/medium business users of gas in Sydney*¹⁹

Why did Jemena do it?

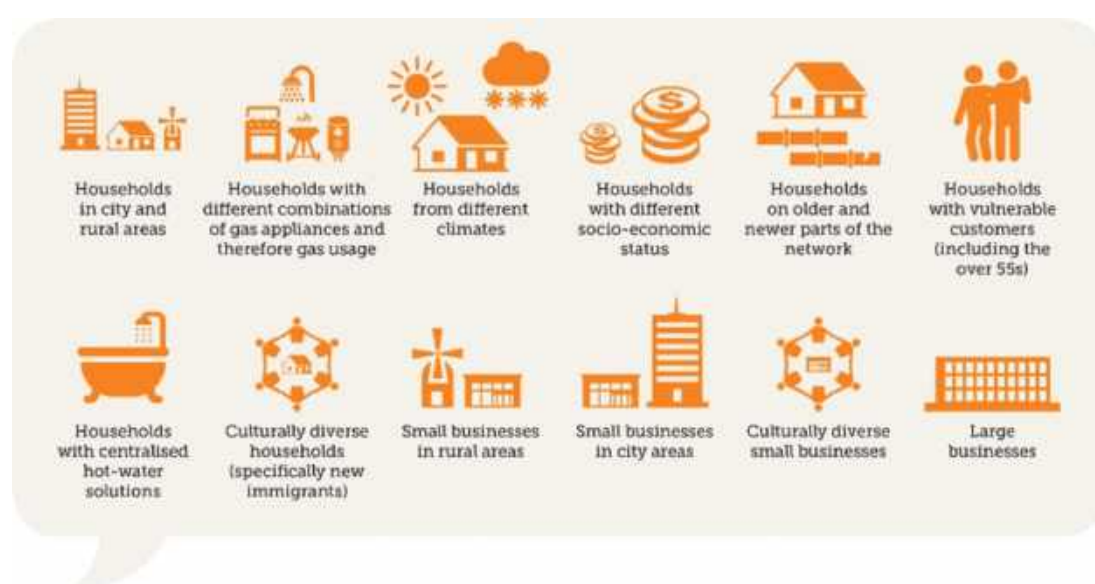
Jemena's vision is 'To be customers' first choice for world leading, sustainable and reliable energy.' Jemena therefore continuously work with customers to understand and meet their changing energy needs. Putting the customer at the heart of everything they do is part of Jemena's DNA.

This has led Jemena to embark on research and measurement programs which seek to better understand Jemena's customers (e.g. segmentation research), to understand how customers perceive their experience with Jemena Gas Networks (NSW) Ltd (JGN), and how Jemena can improve that (e.g. customer satisfaction surveys).

Developing Jemena's 2020 Plan presented them with a unique opportunity to expand the work they do with their customers and to allow them to shape the gas services that they provide over the short and long term. Taking a customer-led approach to the development of the 2020 Plan was a natural progression of Jemena's day to day work.

In preparing their 2020 Plan Jemena engaged with a wide range of customers and have tried to ensure that engagement captured the views from across the communities Jemena serves. Jemena did this through recruiting diverse customers for focus groups and forums and specifically engaged with hard-to-reach communities in sessions tailored to meet their needs.

Customer groups identified for face-to-face consultation



¹⁹ see <https://projectlink.eccns.w.org.au/JemenaDraftReport> and <https://projectlink.eccns.w.org.au/JemenaDetailedReport>

Who did Jemena engage?

To understand the diversity of experience Jemena wanted to engage with culturally diverse small businesses and residential customers. This case study focuses specifically on the work Jemena did with residential households.

Having set the objective of wanting to hear from and engage with culturally diverse groups Jemena engaged with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW (ECCNSW) to understand which groups to engage with and how.

Jemena decided to explicitly target migrant communities who had been in Australia for between three and six years, to understand their journey and their unique perspectives on gas, because these communities had recently experienced entering the Australian energy market and could speak from both recent experience in Australia but also compare and provide a perspective of how this differed from their homeland and what challenges that presented.

Jemena worked with the ECCNSW to identify an Arabic community in Fairfield and to facilitate three forums to be conducted in Arabic.

ECCNSW recruited 13 people, mostly Syrian and Iraqi refugees, who had been in Australia between 2-6 years reflecting a variety of age groups and demographics including families.

ECCNSW also conducted a range of one to one interviews with culturally diverse small businesses, which were conducted in Arabic, Hindi, Cantonese and Mandarin by bi-lingual educators from ECCNSW. These interviews focused on users of mains gas, primarily food businesses, catering operations and restaurants or takeaway services, located across Sydney. Suburbs targeted included Canley Heights, Auburn, Norwest, Campsie, Kogarah, Waitara, Asquith and Hornsby.

What did Jemena do?

Jemena's approach was informed by its Customer Council, key stakeholders such as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC), the AER's Consumer Challenge Panel representatives and, importantly, ECCNSW and the Council of the Ageing (COTA). These stakeholders were able to shape the process at all stages throughout the journey.

Jemena utilised the same structure from their broader consultation process, which they adapted to cater for the needs of the customers and the shorter timeframe they had for these forums.

The process followed the following format:

- **Forum 1** – Introduction and orientation to the gas industry and JGN, understanding initial customer preferences and exploring differences.
- **Forum 2** – Exploring issues that affect the gas network such as net-zero carbon policies, the costs of maintaining or growing the gas network, and understanding different perspectives of those in the room and other external parties.
- **Forum 3** – After Jemena's Draft 2020 Plan had been published they returned to share this with the customers and to ask them if Jemena had accurately reflected their views and preferences. Importantly they wanted to know if they thought their plan was in their long-term interests.

The Arabic consultation group met at a location in Fairfield where the community felt most comfortable - close to Settlement Services International and other programs they had visited. Jemena co-designed the engagement process with educators from ECCNSW and the focus group was run in-language. The Jemena team provided Arabic speaking and writing staff for the day to explain technical concepts and make the group feel more comfortable.

The groups followed a similar approach to other forums, exploring individual participants experience of gas, knowledge of Jemena, the gas distribution network and impacts of pricing. Concepts of fairness and the experience of participants before they came to Australia were also canvassed.

For small businesses Jemena ran face-to-face interviews with one educator so that they could take advantage of opportunities where the small business owners were available and had time to talk, rather than having to schedule time with these business owners for broader sessions.

What were the results?

- 1** Price is still the most important thing. Customers are very anxious about price and are feeling the impact of rapidly increasing energy prices acutely. Vulnerable customers are going to extreme lengths to manage and decrease their bills – some change retailers, renegotiating their contracts, every six to 12 months, for example. However, reliability and the importance of being able to access a service as and when it was needed, was still extremely important and customers struggled with the concept of declining reliability, even if it meant lower or no increases in their gas bill.
- 2** Customers expect Jemena to NOT compromise on safety. Safety is a primary concern, and most discussions about safety were split between those saying it absolutely had to be number one, and others saying it was so important it couldn't possibly be any other way and so therefore, customers didn't need to express it. Gas is recognised as volatile and potentially unsafe and customers do not want Jemena to do anything that jeopardises their or Jemena's staff safety and well-being.
- 3** Customers expect Jemena – and other parts of the energy industry – to be innovating and planning for the future. Despite the public narrative about the future for energy, customers are very clear – they expect energy companies to be investigating and investing in alternative energy futures. For customers it is not a question of 'whether' so much as a question of 'which' energy future to be investigating.
- 4** Customers appreciate the value of the assets that Jemena has and their long life; they think it is sensible for Jemena to seek ways to ensure that the network remains utilised. Customers had no problem with the concept of maintaining the value of the network asset and that by doing so, the model of Jemena slowly recouping costs over time could be fairly maintained (as opposed to a future where customers were rejecting gas, leaving those least able to choose left on an increasingly expensive system). They related this to their own long-term investment decisions and 'good business'.

- 5 Customers of CALD backgrounds find it very difficult to navigate the energy system. CALD customers tend to use established service and support organisations to introduce them to and help them understand the Australian system, and support to these organisations should be continued so they can, in turn, continue to provide a valuable service. Newly arrived migrants tended to find information about gas and electricity from each other, by comparing bills and deals, rather than accessing any publicly available information. Clearly this is because literacy and language barriers make other forms of information onerous and difficult.
- 6 Customers who are socially and economically disadvantaged find the complexity of the bills – language, format and content – as well as the complex retail environment for energy overwhelming and difficult to navigate. Importantly, very few individuals identified this; but it was evident from the conversations and assumptions they had that this was the case. Information needs to be clear, consistent and ideally available in formats other than digital, or through support organisations, to help these customers.
- 7 Customers want to be able to access information about energy easily. While there is widespread, mainstream media coverage about the pressures on prices, the challenges to gas and electricity production and transmission, customers said it was very hard to locate information that was relevant and when they did, it was very difficult to understand and navigate.
- 8 There is a strong loyalty to gas and customers struggle with the concept that gas is a choice. If they make the choice for gas they believe it is essential.
- 9 There remains confusion about Jemena's role in customer service because there is no 'visibility' of what Jemena does; but if there is a problem, Jemena fixes it. The vast majority of participants were unaware of Jemena or its role before this project; and were surprised to see Jemena identified on their bills in case of service faults, as they had not noticed this before. The majority of participants had never had any interaction with Jemena and, as their first point of call would be the retailer.

All of this information was fed into Jemena's 2020 Plan. When Jemena shared this plan with customers, and asked them for their views Jemena learnt:

Overall, they had been heard. Participants felt that Jemena had listened to them, and the plan had reflected their feedback.

- Participants were concerned about the pass-through of the hand-back. Although Jemena had lowered their prices by 19% for residential, they were concerned that the retailers might not pass this savings to consumers.
- Price path. Participants felt that Jemena have heard them in regard to price path and keeping it steady.
- General feedback was positive and optimistic. Participants thought the three workshops went very well.
- Future consultation and continuing the conversation. Participants have recommended Jemena's future engagements be through face-to-face.

What lessons did Jemena learn?

Participants most valued the explanations, that they were clear and that they had been listened to. They valued their feedback being taken on board, and the face-to-face time with Jemena employees. They would like to have future workshops that feature face-to-face engagement with the Jemena team and for customers to increase their understanding of the system in the future.

Their suggestions for changes in the future included involving schools and to continue having face to face session, not just at the time of preparing a 5 year plan.

Jemena are exploring opportunities to collaborate with other energy businesses via the Energy Charter to pool resources and share learnings to deliver energy literacy programs for culturally diverse customers.

Having conducted these sessions for the first time Jemena certainly learnt the value of having staff on board that could speak and interpret, and they would look to expand on that next time.

Jemena would also look to explore differences between other communities and again get staff involved. The impact internally of staff and their pride in having been involved in this engagement has been a tangible if unexpected benefit.

The small business interviews did not involve a Jemena staff member, and as a result have had less impact internally at Jemena, and the depth of the conversation was also limited as a result, so considering how Jemena could involve staff in this type of exercise is a consideration for the future.

*CALD Engagement 2017***Why did SA Power Networks do it?**

SA Power Networks (SAPN) was eager to engage with some of their customers who do not usually have a voice through their 'regular' engagement activities or other customer interactions. There is a reasonable-sized migrant community in South Australia and SAPN thought it was important to understand the priorities and challenges faced by some of these communities, as a first step in building an ongoing dialogue.

Who did SA Power Networks engage?

SAPN identified that during a series of broad 'Directions Workshops' held across South Australia in 2017, there was very little representation from Asian and South East Asian communities.

Given budgetary and time constraints it was agreed to focus on a few communities in depth, talking to at least one slightly more established community and at least one new community in South Australia (settled within the last 5 years), with priority being given to Asian populations. Working closely with their partners, the Australian Refugee Association and Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia, SAPN identified four communities to talk to which represented a mix of more established migrant communities (Chinese and Vietnamese communities) and newly arrived communities (Bhutanese and Burmese communities).

What did SA Power Networks do?

SAPN ran community focus groups with four CALD communities in South Australia. The focus groups used a range of methodologies, including plenary sessions, small group discussions and individual reflections to explore consumer priorities for SA Power Networks over the 2020-2025 period. Participants ranged in age from early 20s to 70s, and represented an even split between men and women. Focus groups were held in community venues that were familiar to people within the communities, with interpretation and community leadership assistance in designing and delivering the focus groups. In total 54 people participated in the groups.



²⁰ For a great deal more information see file:///C:/Users/morrij0/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/6DY7F68D/SAPN_report_FINAL_sm.pdf

²¹ See also https://www.talkingpower.com.au/phase-2/news_feed/chinese-community-workshop

What were the results?

A number of strong themes and opportunities emerged in common across the four focus groups for SA Power Networks to consider, as follows:

- The need to balance network reliability with affordability.
- The importance of clear and timely communication of issues or changes that impact on consumers.
- The opportunity to respond to customers under stress and seeking help.
- The opportunity to build support pathways for CALD communities.

What approaches were used?

The methodology for the focus groups was designed in discussion with community representatives, drawing on deliberative techniques and adapted as required to suit cultural sensitivities. All focus groups were designed to be co-facilitated in English and the community's first language. In designing the engagement methodology, reference was made to the guide developed by the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales, *Cultural Connections: Engaging CALD Energy Consumers*. Sessions were held at locations in the local community that were familiar to participants. Each session began with context setting about the purpose and intention for the engagement, followed by plenary input about SA Power Networks to ensure participants had an opportunity to deepen their own understanding of the electricity supply chain and SA Power Networks' unique role within that; participants could then pose questions to SA Power Networks staff. The focus group methodology went from divergent to convergent. Participants first shared stories of their experience during the state-wide blackout in September 2016 – something for which everyone had a story or memory to share.

SAPN continued to diverge by moving into broad reflections on participants' experiences as electricity consumers in South Australia, which allowed them to express any issue that was pertinent for them. On a large wall poster of the electricity chain, they captured comments and questions to identify which player in the chain they related to. This helped to further educate and inform participants of the role and remit of SA Power Networks in relation to other industry partners. Participants were then asked to take part in convergent thinking, focusing in on SA Power Networks' role in the supply chain and discussing the relative importance of a range of competing priorities facing SA Power Networks in the future. Participants were asked to rank these according to importance for them, and explain why.

What lessons did SA Power Networks learn?

SAPN felt the approach and process worked really well – they would just love to roll out the same approach more widely, with a broader range of CALD communities. It would also be excellent to be able to go back to the communities and tell them how their feedback influenced their plans.

Jemena Electricity and Gas (Victoria)

Power Changers Community Connections Project ²²

Why did Jemena do it?

On very hot days households can use three times more power than usual. This can place home energy bills and electricity networks under pressure.

Launched in late 2018, Jemena's *Power Changers Community Connections* program offers community members free and easy energy saving and efficiency advice to better understand and save on electricity bills and usage, while still staying cool and comfortable, over summer.

Who did Jemena engage?

Customers and community groups across Melbourne's north and north-west suburbs, with a strong focus on those from culturally and linguistically diverse and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

What did Jemena do?

- Partnered with community services organisation Uniting Vic.Tas to run a series of community information sessions, sharing energy efficiency and saving advice, industry and bill explainers, and details on other available support - all in easy English or where required in-language.
- Sessions held at a range of local community support centres, public shopping centres, private community group meetings and (multiculturally-focused) adult learning institutions
- Participants in need of additional support following sessions were also offered free one-on-one in-home energy appointments, delivered by a Uniting energy specialist and with translator support as needed.
- Provided various support materials including brochures with energy saving tips, information on claiming rebates or grants and how to track their energy usage data. Those receiving a home energy appointment also received advice tailored to their specific situation at session end.
- Shared a series of messages and short videos across social media to help simply and visually explain quick and easy energy saving tips with all customers and community members.

²² See more detail at *Power Changers Community Connections*

What were the results?

To date more than 150 people have benefited from the information sessions and over 50 have received a home energy appointment tailored to their needs. Of these, at least 20% of appointments were delivered with translator support.

Approaches used

- face to face
- printed information
- video, social media and website communications
- interpreter support offered where needed

Project length and timing

Initially held over the Summer 2018/19 period, the program is currently in its second round running from November 2019 – March 2020.

How was effectiveness/results measured?

Participant attendance numbers, engagement levels and feedback at information sessions, as well as referral rates for subsequent home energy appointments.

Surveys taken post appointment to ascertain any improvements in level of energy efficiency understanding, as well as actions taken by the adviser to improve client outcomes (for example, successful application of concessions, relief grants or payment plans).

Legacy

The initial program round identified a continuing need for initiatives such as this. This led to a second round commencing in November 2019.

What did Jemena learn?

- Sessions held at community centres and with closed community groups generated the highest degree of engagement and appointment referrals, due to a higher trust factor with audiences.
- The use of a bi-lingual facilitator to provide information in-language at some sessions, including with a local Arabic speaking women's group, was well received.
- Reinforcing energy efficiency messages using interactive examples within some sessions helped participants to more easily understand and take home new easy, low cost and use energy habits.
- While information sessions were a good initial engagement tool, home appointments provided a valuable and truly tailored service to help clients address specific questions and issues they had.
- Success of the program is reflected in the requests for additional information sessions from participating educational institutions and community centres, and interest from other community organisations to collaborate on similar projects in future.

Australian Energy Regulator (AER)

Consumer hardship protections outreach strategy including translated materials

The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) is an independent statutory authority that works to make all Australian energy consumers better off, now and in the future. The AER is responsible for regulating the retail energy market in **South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania and the ACT**. We regulate electricity networks and covered gas pipelines, in all jurisdictions except Western Australia. We set the amount of revenue that network businesses can recover from customers for using these networks.

Why did AER do it?

Energy is an essential service that all Australians have a right to access. In recent years, increased energy prices, combined with stagnant incomes, has seen more Australian households struggling to pay their energy bills.

All retailers must have a hardship policy, outlining how they can help residential customers who are having difficulty paying their electricity and/or gas bills. The AER's market monitoring found that increasing unaffordability was resulting in more people entering hardship payment plans with their retailer, but also rising electricity disconnections and higher debt levels for customers not in these programs. As prices continue to increase, there was also a significant gap between the number of customers in hardship programs and the number that should have been anticipated to enter into hardship arrangements.²³

The AER's 2017 Hardship Review into the application of hardship policies found significant issues with the application of the hardship protections by retailers to customers experiencing payment difficulties. As a result customers most in need of assistance via a hardship program are not able to access assistance, or are not able to access assistance in a timely manner.²⁴

In 2019 the AER released a revised Customer Hardship Policy Guideline²⁵, which strengthened the protections for customers having trouble paying their energy bills due to hardship. The guideline was developed in consultation with a broad range of consumer stakeholder groups, including CALD community advocates.

The hardship guideline requires retailers to have hardship programs that are easily accessible to customers and places an onus on retailers to identify consumers who may need help. Customers in a hardship program and meeting its conditions cannot legally be disconnected.

While energy retailers have their own obligations to inform their customers about their hardship policies, the AER also has a responsibility to help build awareness for consumers about their rights under the new guideline. Research²⁶ around hardship programs in the

²³ Australian Energy Regulator, 2018, *Annual Report on Compliance and Performance of the Retail Energy Market 2017-18*

²⁴ Australian Energy Regulator, 2018, *Hardship Guideline Issues Paper*

²⁵ Australian Energy Regulator, 2019, *Customer Hardship Policy Guideline*

²⁶ South Australian Council of Social Service 2016, *Better Solutions for Helping Customers with Financial Difficulties: Energy and Water A cross-sector approach to supporting vulnerable consumers*

utilities sector indicated that many customers are not aware of the programs or believe there are barriers to accessing these programs.

Hardship can affect people of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and can occur at any time in life. Hardship can occur for a number of reasons, including but not limited to, changes in life circumstances such as unemployment or reduced earnings, illness or disability, domestic violence, relationship or business failure. Our work with stakeholders told us that new arrivals, refugees, and students (of which many are international students) were among a number of groups more likely to experience financial difficulty.

Research in the energy sector also showed an increase household disconnections where a language other than English is spoken at home²⁷ and that migrants had difficulty understanding their energy bills and communicating with utility companies, especially during their first years in Australia.²⁸

When people are in hardship, they are more likely to trust those they already have a relationship with and this is particularly true of CALD communities. With that in mind, the strategies rely on trusted messengers – that is, key intermediaries with well-established community networks – to help spread the message. AER wanted to make sure their hardship guideline outreach strategy was inclusive and that the message would reach the people that needed it most.

Who did AER engage?

The AER works closely with its Customer Consultative Group, which provides insight into the issues that energy consumers face, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances. Members include representatives from consumer advocacy and social welfare groups and the retail sector, and CALD representation (currently the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW). We used this consultative group to ensure we were targeting those in the community most likely to need assistance. The group provided guidance on the best method of communicating with these consumers and helped ensure the message and tone would resonate with our target audience.

AER contacted stakeholder groups across the relevant jurisdictions and asked them to share the message. CALD-specific groups included refugee advocacy organisations, State government departments, ethnic disability organisations, migrant resource and education centres and university and higher education student unions. AER's broader outreach to charities, mental health services, domestic violence services, seniors, women and family services was another potential way of reaching CALD consumers.

AER also attended the Financial Counselling Australia Conference and promoted the materials to financial counsellors, who are an important contact for people experiencing hardship.

²⁷ Public Interest Advocacy Centre NSW, 2013, *Cut Off III: The Social Impact of Utility Disconnection, Final Report*

²⁸ RMIT, 2014, *Changing Demand: Flexibility of Energy Practices in Households with Children (interim report)*

What did AER do?

AER knew many of our stakeholders were not for profit organisations that were likely to be resource constrained, so they needed to make it easy for them to share the AER message. They developed a range of materials that they could easily disseminate, aimed at increasing awareness of hardship programs and consumer rights among energy customers struggling to pay their energy bills due to hardship. The call to action for these customers was “Call your retailer and ask about their hardship program.”

The materials included hard copy flyers and a self-printed fact sheet for Ombudsman services, financial counsellors and other stakeholders to use when talking to clients, and newsletter inserts and social media assets that stakeholder groups could share. AER also shared the message via AER digital channels such as Twitter and its website.

The three-fold flyer was translated into five languages –Vietnamese, traditional Chinese, simplified Chinese, Arabic and Nepalese. The languages were chosen in consultation with ECCNSW, and were based on communities that are most likely to have reduced community support, lower levels of English and a stronger desire for translated items. ECCNSW also performed the translation work for the AER.

The most important step in the process, known as ‘ground truthing’, was ensuring that the translated materials were checked by native speakers of the language to ensure that translated materials made sense in language. This ground truthing was strongly advised by ECCNSW, to avoid potentially incorrect and embarrassing printed translated flyers. ECCNSW were able to assist with this and one of our staff members who was fluent in Arabic was



particularly helpful in working through the Arabic translated flyer. She was able to pick up nuances such as the word “commission” being translated to “company.”

Hardcopy printed items were incorporated in order to help reach less technologically-literate Australians, those without internet access and to accommodate the preferences of consumers who still appreciate hard copy documents.

What were the results?

The stakeholders AER worked with are very passionate about helping their constituents and as such, were very keen to help spread the message. AER received feedback that having access to translated materials was beneficial for CALD consumers. Of the 2,600 flyers that have been distributed, there has been a fairly even demand for all languages, with Arabic the most requested translated flyers. In terms of our broader outreach strategy, AER ran out of English brochures and needed to order a reprint.

What lessons did AER learn?

Working with CALD stakeholders enhanced AER’s hardship guideline outreach in many ways. Most importantly, it helped them to target a key group who were missing out on important information about consumer protections available to them in a way that met their particular needs.

For future projects, AER will ensure that we leave enough time for the “ground-truthing” and proofreading of the designed translated materials. One of the most challenging parts of the process was in copying translated text to a designed document. Some languages, such as Arabic and Chinese, can require expanded versions of fonts that non-specialist graphic designers do not have. Using translators that incorporate multilingual typesetting services in the future should save time and extra re-checking. In addition, we would look to ensure that the translators used were based in Australia, to avoid time differences and delays whenever changes were required.

AER would also look to engage a broader range of CALD stakeholders including ethnic media earlier in the process to ensure they were able to provide feedback and input into their strategy. This could include investing time in building relationships with ethnic media outlets and providing them with translated media releases, as well as looking into which social media channels are most used by sections of the CALD community, and creating tailored materials to share on those channels.

Finally, AER indicated it would be good to add a further step into the project, seeking feedback directly from the consumers themselves, to find out if the translated brochure was able to help them better understand the protections available to them.

Australian Energy Regulator (AER)

*Energy Made Easy website redevelopment includes dynamic translations*²⁹

Why did AER do it?

The AER operates Energy Made Easy (www.energymadeeasy.gov.au), the Australian government's primary tool for providing reliable and independent information on energy and comparable energy plans to households and small businesses in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

AER received government funding to undertake a major project to enhance the Energy Made Easy website so that it incorporated the broader range of products and services that had become available and continued to help Australians make informed energy choices.

The accessibility of Energy Made Easy was considered during the project so the service could be accessible to all users regardless of their ability and environment, and this included languages.

Prior to the project, Energy Made Easy provided one publication and some basic information about the website in other languages, as well as instructions on how to contact the Translation and Interpreting Service.

Through the project, AER sought to make Energy Made Easy truly multi-language and to do this dynamically, whereby every page of the website and the energy plan search could be translated automatically. This was in recognition of the fact that AER could do more for CALD consumers on Energy Made Easy and this was one way to boost engagement for those community members who may otherwise not have the ability to engage independently on energy-related matters.

Who did AER engage?

To understand how to best enhance Energy Made Easy, AER established three reference groups as their primary stakeholder engagement mechanism for the project. One of these groups, the Stakeholder Engagement Forum, comprised various consumer, small business and industry agency representatives, including the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia.

AER also invited all members of public to provide their feedback on the website's new features via a short survey when a Beta test version of the site was made publicly accessible.

²⁹ See www.energymadeeasy.gov.au

What did AER do?

AER wanted to learn from the experiences of other government agencies who had successfully used dynamic translations on their websites so they engaged with the Fair Work Ombudsman about its experience using the Microsoft Translator Text API.

AER looked at the languages the translator supported and what languages it had already used on Energy Made Easy, and decided to translate the website into 33 languages.

AER determined that custom dictionaries would be required for the translator to work best on Energy Made Easy. This is because there are many energy-specific technical terms that could be translated out of context and lose their meaning, so we sourced NAATI translators to create dictionaries that would be incorporated into the translator. AER engaged a third-party supplier and organised for about 70 energy-specific terms to be translated into the languages the site would support. AER then asked internal staff who spoke one of those languages to review the translated terms and ensure they were accurate within the energy context.

This entire process was discussed at AER's regular Stakeholder Engagement Forum meetings. This forum met five times during the course of the project to discuss the possible changes to the website, gather feedback, and share and validate ideas.

AER also invited all members of public to provide their feedback on the website's new features, including the translation feature, via a short survey when a Beta test version of the enhanced website was made publicly accessible in December 2019. This feedback survey was promoted on social media and via our three project reference groups, State Ombudsman staff and the AER's Consumer Consultative Group, of which the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW is a member.



What were the results?

The dynamic language translation function was included in the enhanced Energy Made Easy website which was released in April 2020.

Consumers and small businesses can now find a new energy plan or read about energy in 33 languages on Energy Made Easy. There is a language selector next to the search field in the top right-hand corner of every page on Energy Made Easy. It displays the language in use, with English as the default – or on a mobile device, it displays a common translation icon. When you click on the language selector, you can choose from the list of languages available, and all of the information on the website is then translated automatically. The languages in the list are presented ‘in language’ where applicable. Alternatively, if your web browser language is set to a language Energy Made Easy supports, then upon visiting the website you will be asked whether you would like to translate the site to your language or continue in English.

What approaches were used?

AER engaged with the identified stakeholders through face-to-face meetings, a feedback survey, social media, website communications, emails and telephone calls.

What lessons did AER learn?

The importance of ensuring that CALD consumers have access to information about energy and energy plans in their preferred language was reinforced throughout this project and our various engagement activities, and AER is pleased to have this translation feature on its website.

Dynamic translation is not a perfect solution and testing the translated information with individual users would have been desirable but was beyond the scope of the project. Accordingly, their aims were primarily to improve access to information and increase understanding among CALD users of Energy Made Easy, rather than focus on precise and perfect translations. As the Microsoft software is used globally, the quality of its translations is improving over time as it learns from real-world use. AER is also revisiting their English language content, so that it can be translated more effectively. More thorough testing with real users may be revisited in the future but for now they are confident the feature is meeting their aims, and early user feedback has confirmed this.

Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON)

*Reaching out to the Earlwood CALD community*³⁰

Overview

The Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) held a Bring Your Bills Day in the inner west Sydney suburb of Earlwood on 2 October 2018. The event ran from 9am to 2:30pm. EWON's Bring Your Bills Days offer face-to-face support for customers, as well as access to a range of government and community services. They act as a one-stop-shop for consumers experiencing affordability issues. Our Bring Your Bills Day provide the opportunity to:

- offer practical supports directly to low income and vulnerable consumers in an accessible location
- deal with outstanding issues and resolve complaints on the day where possible by speaking directly to providers about matters of concern
- provide information and referrals to customers
- to network and build knowledge of other services.

Why did EWON do it?

EWON's Community Outreach Strategy identifies culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities as a key target group, owing to their potential vulnerability when dealing with energy and water issues. EWON looks for opportunities to reach out to these communities, and in this instance, the NSW State Member for Canterbury, Sophie Cotsis MP, requested EWON hold a Bring Your Bills Day in Earlwood for the Greek community. During the course of planning the event, other CALD communities were targeted – specifically Korean, Vietnamese and Arabic speaking residents.

EWON had previously collaborated with Ms Cotsis' office in 2018 to hold a Bring Your Bills Day in Campsie, which was very successful. We find that collaborating with entities such as Councils, Members of Parliament and organisations with strong community links to be key to the success of Bring Your Bills Days. Local partners tend to have strong networks, understand the most effective means of communicating with people in the area, and help establish trust in the event and the organisations involved.

Who did EWON engage?

EWON invited government and community agencies that assist low income and vulnerable communities to attend the event. They included: Centrelink, Revenue NSW, MetroAssist (a multicultural agency providing Energy Account Payment Assistance and financial counselling), Legal Aid NSW, LawAccess and Service NSW. We also asked agencies that assist seniors to attend such as the NSW Trustee and 2 Guardian. Sydney Water and Canterbury Bankstown City Council also attended to assist residents directly.

³⁰ See <https://www.ewon.com.au/page/media-center/video/bring-your-bills-days>

What did we do?

The event was held at the Canterbury Earlwood Caring Association, which provided a barbeque lunch and refreshments. Planning, organising and implementation Bring Your Bills Days require a significant amount of planning, coordination and promotion. Specific tasks involved in putting on this event are detailed below.

- Developing a plan for the event.
- Working with the MP's office to understand the needs of the local community.
- Organising other services to attend.
- Developing promotional resources.
- Having the event flyer into Arabic, Greek, Korean and Vietnamese – please see more detailed information in link below.³¹
- Organising interpreters to attend on the day.
- Promoting the event through EWON's and the MP's networks, social media, local media and on websites.
- Setting up and packing down exhibitor tables, chairs and signage on the day.
- Supporting exhibitors at the event.
- Managing the crowd and the needs of attendees.
- Assisting attendees with energy complaints and helping them understand their bills.
- Referring attendees to other agencies attending the event.
- Collecting feedback on the event.
- Completing the event evaluation.



Volunteers and service providers with Sophie Cotsis MP (centre) at the Earlwood event

³¹ See <https://www.ewon.com.au/page/customer-resources/factsheets>

What were the results?

Around 150 people attended the Bring Your Bills Day and EWON's Investigations Officers dealt with 69 complaints. Thirty-three of these customers were identified as being from a specific non-English speaking community. The majority were Greek, following by Chinese and we also saw Arabic, Spanish and Macedonian speakers. Two customers identified as Aboriginal. A more detailed overview is available via the link below.

What was the approach used?

EWON and other agencies provided face-to-face, individual consultations using an interpreter when necessary. EWON staff called energy providers to resolve complaints when necessary. Customers were also referred onto other services at the events to get assistance with related issues.

What lessons did EWON learn?

A larger venue would be sought as the one used was too small for the exhibitors and the number of attendees the event attracted. EWON would encourage energy retailers to attend. Four were invited but they all declined due to the area not being in an identified 'hardship' area. However, the event showed that this multicultural community needs support with its energy bills and other affordability issues. While EWON assisted these customers, the process is often streamlined when customers see their provider directly. Lunch was provided by the venue host Canterbury Earlwood Caring Centre.



*EWON staff and other services assisting attendees
Note: Consent has been obtained to use the images*

Ausgrid (NSW)

‘Ausgrid CALD community insights Storm & Powerline Safety Campaign’, a part of Ausgrid’s Public Electrical Safety Awareness Plan (PESAP) February-March 2019

Why did Ausgrid do it?

As part of Ausgrid’s work to create electrical safety awareness, they engaged specific local councils and an ethnically diverse audience. Their objective was to build awareness and understanding of how storms can create electrical hazards with fallen powerlines and damage to power poles. It was also important to communicate ‘what to do’ if there was a hazard in their area.

The focus was CALD communities who required an adapted approach when it comes to language and trust to communicate the impact of extreme weather conditions on the network and their communities during storm season (Autumn).

Who did Ausgrid engage?

CALD communities in Ausgrid’s network area can face language barriers as well as a potential knowledge gap associated with not necessarily growing up with Sydney and New South Wales’ weather patterns. Research has shown that CALD communities often need a more targeted and adapted approach. This meant that Ausgrid designed their campaign with both English speaking and CALD energy consumers in mind.

Ausgrid adapted the standard campaign to address language barriers and knowledge gaps by:

- using more targeted ethnic media
- language translation on promotional collateral
- using their community outreach presence to establish trust and professionalism.

Key audience focus:

- Ten Local Government Areas (LGAs), based on percentage population of top 4 languages in Ausgrid’s footprint
- Community groups and associations in CALD populations within Ausgrid’s footprint
- Direct awareness via targeted channels.

What did Ausgrid do?

The *Storm & Powerline Safety Campaign – March 2019* campaign ran from 4 February to 15 March 2019 and included a series of communication activities and community outreach or engagement activities.

What were the results?

- Ausgrid connected with over 30 LGAs in their network, prioritising communities that are ethnically diverse. LGA data shows a breakdown which informed their decision to focus on Chinese, Middle Eastern and Vietnamese communities:
 - Canterbury-Bankstown (33%)
 - Burwood (33%)
 - Georges River (28%)
 - Strathfield (22%)
 - Ryde (21%)
 - Willoughby (19%)
 - Canada Bay (14%)
 - Ku-Ring-Gai (14%)
 - Hornsby (11%)
 - Randwick (10%)
- Engaged with nine different community groups:
 - Chinese Cultural Association
 - Chinese Forum of NSW
 - Chinese Youth League of Australia
 - Australian Chinese Community Association of NSW
 - Australian Arabic Communities Council
 - Lebanese Community Council
 - Australian Lebanese Association of NSW
 - St George Lebanese Joint Committee
 - Vietnamese Community in Australia
- Targeted media distribution through radio reached the top three CALD communities in Ausgrid's network (Chinese, Middle Eastern and Vietnamese). Ausgrid ran roughly 700 spots on 10 different stations & reached just under 800 000 listeners on these stations:
 - 2ME Arabic - Sydney
 - 2MORO Arabic
 - 2AC Cantonese
 - 2CR Cantonese
 - 2AC - Mandarin
 - 2CR - Mandarin
 - 2OR - Mandarin
 - 2000 - Mandarin
 - 2000 - Vietnamese
 - 2VNT (NSW) - Vietnamese

What approaches were used?

Ausgrid designed a wholistic campaign to reach out during a specific time-period while optimising our budget. The campaign used a mix of mass media including TV, radio and posters, as well as the Ausgrid website and social media including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. They also used search engine optimisation (Google) and targeted streaming services with popular TV programs to spread materials and messages. Posters were translated from English to Vietnamese, Arabic and Chinese.

The theme was **'be prepared for a storm'**. Communications and engagement activities focused on:

- improving storm safety and driving awareness
- 'what to do' messaging, for example **'assume all fallen power lines are live'**
- encouraging community members to contact Ausgrid and/or visit our website.

Ausgrid engaged and collaborated with council and representative community groups, who saw value in this campaign and facilitated information flow through to their communities. For example, Ku-ring-Gai council's E-News featured the campaign and North Sydney Council re-tweeted our messages.

Ausgrid (NSW)

Ausgrid insights based on Newgate's 'Customers at the Centre Research Project'

Purpose

Ausgrid commissioned Newgate Australia, a respected market research firm, to help gain a better understanding of how to communicate and engage with CALD customers within Ausgrid's footprint. The objective was to gain deeper insights into specific behavioural habits and differences as compared with customers who speak English as their first language. They specifically looked at preferences in terms of access to electricity information, pricing and sentiment towards Ausgrid.

The scope of the research included:

- refining our understanding of CALD customers
- finding out what was important to CALD customers from an energy service provider
- finding out how CALD customers would like to be informed about energy eg written or verbal and the languages used
- analysing differences between CALD customers and those who speak English as a first language when it comes to interacting with Ausgrid, including preferences and habits of accessing information on electricity use and pricing options.

Who did Ausgrid engage?

Newgate used both quantitative and qualitative research techniques, sampling a total of 2,362 residential and business customers in Ausgrid's footprint in September 2017. The sampling was representative of the population we serve and included 497 CALD business and residential customers. This represents 21% of the total population as per Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 figures.

The research used the ABS definition to inform Ausgrid's definition of a CALD customer including:

- born in a country where English was not the main language
- those who speak a language other than English at home or with close family members.

It is important to note that though one in five of the total sample size qualified for the definition, respondents who were born in a country where English was not the main language, but spoke English at home, were not considered a CALD customer for the purpose of their research and subsequent analysis.

What did Ausgrid do?

Ausgrid commissioned the research and analysed the data to be actioned within our customer strategy division. The key insights are being used to inform improvements in customer service for CALD customers.

What were the results?

The research uncovered a number of customer insights that shape Ausgrid's approach to communicating and engaging with CALD customers. Ausgrid has narrowed this down to focus on four key results with their communications and engagement activities.

Compared to 'English as a first language' customers, their CALD customers are:

- more concerned about being able to afford to pay their power bills
- more likely to want proactive communication around Ausgrid's services, regular information on energy efficiency, new technologies and service developments in the energy sector. We found that 44% of CALD Customers who interacted with Ausgrid via social media (e.g. Facebook or Twitter) had a positive overall opinion of Ausgrid, compared with just 11% amongst those that had never had a social media interaction with us.
- more likely to have interacted with Ausgrid via digital channels than in any other way (phone, face-to-face, etc.)
- more likely to have or be considering new energy technologies. The results showed 20% of CALD customers have or are actively researching in-home technology and 20% have or are actively researching solar panels for their home.

What did Ausgrid do and what did they learn?

Ausgrid responded with the following actions.

- improved the Ausgrid website to allow for ease-of-use and non-technical language
- continuing to use real time communication with website and social media for engagement and pro-active communication activities
- recognised that CALD customers saw the approach to translation as useful but want English too as they see this as a critical first step in empowering their journey into learning the 'Australian way' in their homes and businesses
- continuing to provide fact sheets translated, in addition to English, for their CALD customers, particularly where it is a direct mail communication via post and/or e-mail.

The findings relating to interest in new technologies reveal a need to provide more information on solar and other new technology programs using identified channels for community participation.

One final insight from the research relates to breaking stereotypes often associated with CALD customers and communities. The stereotype being they are often from lower-socio-economic strata of society, with less access to the disposable income needed to pay electricity bills.

The demographic data of those surveyed (of whom 435 were residential customers and 62 were business customers) showed that the CALD customers were:

- well educated (43% had a bachelor's degree with most having at least a technical certificate or some form of post-secondary education)
- the majority (64%) owned their own home
- Over half (55%) earned over \$85,000 or more per annum
- 35% described themselves as either owning a business (14 total) or a director of a business (5) or were senior managers (16)
- Those who ran a business tended to rent their business premises
- the majority (56%) were working full-time with only 4% identifying as unemployed.

In summary, while the CALD customers surveyed may not speak English as their first language, they are keen to learn and communicate in English, preferably through digital channels and most particularly when it relates to using new technology to lower their electricity bills.

Ausgrid's approach to learning more about CALD customers has informed Ausgrid's role to empower CALD customers with information to help them access affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.

Ausgrid found that armed with information about how this consumer demographic wants to be engaged, they can adapt their strategy of communicating pro-actively. This will allow them to build positive, two-way communications as they work to satisfy customer needs when it comes to saving money on electricity bills, and/or discussing options to access renewable energy and reduce their overall bill.

Ausgrid (NSW)

'Ausgrid Life Support Customers – Communication Preferences' – Survey 2017

Purpose

To improve their understanding about life support customers' communication preferences during interruptions to power supply, Ausgrid surveyed a sample of retailer identified customers on life support. The survey was designed to incorporate CALD customers. To help better meet the communication needs and preferences of CALD customers during electricity disruptions, they compared the results from CALD life support customers to those of English 'as a first language'.

Who did Ausgrid engage?

The research was an e-mail survey undertaken over four weeks from September to October 2017 and advanced their insights into customers deemed 'vulnerable' when electricity supply is compromised through planned and/or unplanned outages. Though the survey was not necessarily representative, the consumer insights were valuable for informing their communications approach to customers on life support. Of the 1,659 respondents to the survey, 89 were CALD customers.

Ausgrid life support customers are self-identified and rely on medical equipment to support their health needs at home. Customers on life support are identified as vulnerable and have eligibility requirements relating to them requiring electricity to power:

- An oxygen concentrator
- A dialysis machine
- Chronic positive airways pressure respirator (CPAP)
- A phototherapy machine
- A ventilator for life support and/or
- any equipment that a registered medical practitioner certifies as required for life support.

It is important to note that as a network provider, or distributor, Ausgrid rely on the information from retailers to help us identify life support customers.

What did Ausgrid do?

Ausgrid advanced our understanding of preferred communication and engagement techniques for our CALD life support customers. One critical thing the life support customer research allowed them to do was update over 61% of their customer records with mobile phone data and verify existing records for accuracy. Additionally, their customer teams have a better understanding of the preferred mode of communication. The survey findings enabled them to improve the effectiveness of our communications with life support customers both English and non-English backgrounds.

What were the results?

Ausgrid found that CALD life support customers were less likely to have a back-up plan and required a modest adaptation to communication needs.

The survey revealed key insights for CALD life support customers:

- a greater representation in the age groups between 35-64 were more likely to be living in a couple with children or within an extended family household and working full time than the total sample of life support customers.
- 14% less likely to have a back-up plan with 74% of customers stating they do not have an emergency action plan in place in the event of a loss of power.
- the same expectations as the total life support group for Ausgrid to contact them immediately / within 2 hours of an unplanned loss of power.
- tended to rate an email or written communication as preferential to a phone call, whereas the English 'as a first language' life support customers preferred the verbal communication or phone call.
- SMS as the most acceptable method of contact for future planned outages, which was the same as the total sample of life support customers.
- consistent with previous research, of those who identified as speaking a language other than English at home, 86% prefer to read information in English.

Interestingly, CALD life support customers were younger and tended to be living in larger household groups, which meant they were not as isolated as the English 'as a first language' life support customers who tended to be older and living alone.

Following this review, all life support customers were mailed updated life support information in early February 2018. The mail out included a letter, life support brochure and magnet to encourage the development of a backup plan. The material was translated into Arabic, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), Filipino, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese.

What did Ausgrid learn?

Ausgrid's approach to evidence of the preferred mode of communication for CALD life support customers has allowed them to improve their information on customer needs and inform their approach to engaging with these customers during planned or unplanned outages. The survey showed that CALD customers appear to be not that dissimilar to English 'as a first language' life support customers, only younger, living in larger group households and more likely to be working. They prefer written over verbal communication and are open to more information when it comes to emergency preparedness in the event of a planned or unplanned outage.



Original Case Studies

1 – 4

Energy Australia in NSW

Energy workshops for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Energy Australia consumers (2009)

Why did we do it?

- To engage CALD communities in energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions and save \$\$ spent on their energy bills.
- To increase energy literacy for CALD consumers.

Who did we engage?

- Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Korean, Vietnamese and Spanish. Aged between 18 – 65 years.

What did we do?

- A series of 30 workshops focused on participatory knowledge-based peer learning and discussion, facilitated by the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW bilingual environmental educator team in appropriate community languages where possible.
- Field trips to the energy efficiency centre at Homebush.
- Train-the-trainer workshops for volunteers.
- Provision of translated brochures, thermometers, hot water timers and draught excluders supplied by Energy Australia NSW to each participant.

What were the results?

- 596 people attended the initial 30 workshops for CALD consumers.
- 247 people (average 16 people per tour) participated in field trips to Energy Australia's Energy Efficiency Centre at Homebush.
- An additional 9 energy efficiency workshops were attended by 122 people.
- Two train-the-trainer workshops for 47 volunteer members of the Tzu Chi community and one workshop for 12 multicultural workers.

Approaches used

- Written information
- Face to face
- CALD community leaders
- Bilingual educators
- Partnerships

Project details

Project length and timing

A partnership between Energy Australia and the Ethnic Communities Sustainable Living Project (an ECC NSW and NSW State Government partnership) initially conducted 30 workshops over the 2008 – 2009 financial year, along with nine further workshops and some train-the-trainer sessions.

How was effectiveness/results measured?

- Surveys were taken pre and post workshops to ascertain the level of understanding of energy efficiency measures and their current and future use.
- Barriers to changing habits and understanding were explored during the sessions and results recorded.

Legacy

The pilot identified a continuing need for initiatives such as this for target language groups conducted in-language by bi-lingual educators.

What did we learn?

- Attendance exceeded initial targets for participants in the program. success of the program is reflected in the requests for additional workshops for the target audience.
- Most of the participants were in rental accommodation and so were unable to make major changes to energy use by water heating systems, heating/cooling or by installing solar PV or hot water. Suggested small and effective changes to household energy use in the workshops were valued by participants and they indicated that they would use them to boost their energy efficiency.
- The use of bi-lingual educators to provide information in-language during the workshops and field trips was particularly effective.
- Participants received valuable information on energy use in the home in the workshops and field trips to the Energy Efficiency Centre.
- The effectiveness of energy saving kits and bi-lingual 'What you can do' brochures were boosted by the use of bi-lingual educators as they overcame a number of the barriers presented by poor written English literacy skills.
- Energy efficiency messages were reinforced at several points and with a variety of methods and activities during the workshops and field trips so participants could easily understand, remember and action easy, low cost efficiency measures.

Jemena's consultation in preparation for gas network price reset

Why did we do it?

- The Australian Energy Regulator has issued community engagement guidelines for network service providers to conduct community consultation.
- In preparation for the gas network price proposal to the regulator, Jemena conducted consultation to ensure the new price represents customers' long term interests.
- This provided an opportunity for Jemena to foster transparent decision making processes on business as usual issues.

Who did we engage?

- Residential, small and large business customers, making sure that they included proportional representation reflective of the broader CALD community.
- Retailers and other network users.
- Energy regulator and industry peak bodies.
- Customer Council comprising a broad spectrum of community representatives (including the ECC NSW) and industry stakeholders.

What did we do?

- Seven Customer Council meetings covering issues relevant to residential, small and large customers and the broader NSW community.
- A public forum attended by the energy regulator and advocacy groups including CALD community representatives.
- Three deliberative workshops in Sydney CBD, Parramatta and Orange, attended by 60 randomly selected participants. Care was taken to ensure that participants included representatives from our CALD customer communities.
- Four round table discussions with energy retailers.
- 14 one-on-one interviews with large industrial customers.
- A "Have Your Say" hub page – over 8,300 views within a 10 month period.

What were the results?

- Customer Council unanimously supported Jemena's preferred price path, which will assist customers to minimise price volatility and avoid bill shock.
- Jemena incorporated feedback from the engagement into its gas price proposal submitted to the Australian Energy Regulator.
- Jemena Customer Council members have seen significant improvements in customer-centric decision making.

Approaches used

- Written/online information
- Face to face
- CALD community leaders

Project details

Project length and timing

Three stages across 18 months including:

Stage 1: Establishing priorities

Stage 2: Engagement implementation

Stage 3: Communicating findings.

How was effectiveness/results measured?

- Customer Council members were surveyed at each meeting to evaluate effectiveness of engagement.
- Stakeholders and the community were made clear about objectives of engagement.
- Participants felt they were listened to and feedback from engagement was incorporated into Jemena's gas network price proposal.

Legacy

Jemena's community consultation has transitioned from network price reset engagement into business as usual engagement for transparent decision making processes.

What did we learn?

- It is more effective for Jemena to partner with multicultural service providers and community leaders to reach out to vulnerable customers.
- Engagement materials and publications should be accessible and written in plain English.
- Infographics are a good way to translate technical terms into visual images for the general community to understand.
- The community feels that they are engaged when their feedback has been included in decision making processes.
- Jemena has an important role to educate the community on the gas supply chain and support vulnerable energy consumers. This role can be achieved by community partnerships and ongoing consultation about issues that affect consumers' daily lives.

Business Programs in the ECC NSW

Business Energy Smart Tips

Why did we do it?

- There was a lack of information on energy efficiency for small business owners from culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Research by ECC NSW showed that businesses wanted information to save energy and costs.
- To engage owners and staff of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) in new strategies to save energy in their businesses.

Who did we engage?

- The majority of businesses had less than 6 employees and generally with a yearly turnover of less than \$400,000.
- 1240 owners and staff whose main language was Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Hazarghi, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hindi, Tamil and Thai.
- They were from convenience shops, restaurants, takeaway shops, bakeries, general retail, butchers, community organisations and temples in Sydney, regional NSW and Melbourne.
- A further 200 businesses were reached with information.
- Local government, National and local ethnic and mainstream media, as well as Chambers of Commerce and professional organisations.

What did we do?

- The BEST team found businesses by cold-calling in areas of culturally diverse small business.
- 840 businesses received a free energy assessment in their own time and language that included 3 visits, an energy assessment action plan for their business, follow-up support with information and advice.
- 360 businesses that did not have time for a full energy assessment were provided with a 10 minute Quick Tips assessment and an information package relevant to their business.
- A further 200 businesses were approached and provided with information only on a street by street approach called a Street Blitz.
- The information package consisted of translated business-based checklists, fact sheets and timers.

- Case studies, both written and video, were produced for each type of business and the businesses and owners promoted through ethnic media.
- A website in multiple languages was developed with links to project materials, case studies, links to SBS and other media.
- An evaluation that tracks the business changes over time was conducted.
- Partnered with local councils and community groups.

What were the results?

- Provided information face to face and translated information to 986 businesses in NSW and 214 in Victoria.
- Better understanding of business electricity usage, savings and costs.
- On average businesses are paying 29 cents/kWh for electricity.
- Around 10% savings have been identified by BEST assessments across all businesses if all recommendations were to be implemented. The energy assessments focused on low and no cost options rather than higher cost options.
- 50% of the identified savings are changes in lighting and a further 25% relate to refrigeration modifications rather than replacement.
- Business better able to manage and understand their electricity use.
- In NSW 52% of businesses surveyed did not know whether their business was charged a flat or variable rate for electricity. At the end of the project this was reduced to 21%
- Initially only 43% found reading their bill OK and by the end of the project this percentage had risen.
- At the end of the project businesses reported an increased understanding to implement no-cost and low-cost actions and that up-front costs were still a barrier.

Approaches used

- Written online information (web and social media) – not particularly effective
- Face to face
- Ethnic media (SBS particularly good)
- CALD community leaders
- Bilingual educators
- Partnerships

Project details

Project length and timing

BEST ran from May 2013 – May 2015 and was funded by the Department of Industry and Science.

How was effectiveness/results measured?

An evaluation plan was developed at the beginning go of the project that provided indicators for changes in the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour (KSAB) of the participating businesses. Each business provided information for a pre-survey (current KSAB), a mid-project survey (intentions) and a post-project survey (resulting actions and improvements on KSAB). These were asked face-to-face in their own language.

Legacy

The legacy for businesses is a greater understanding of their bill and use of power in their business so that they are able to respond positively and make change when they are able.

What did we learn?

- Small changes make a difference . Despite working long hours, when small businesses are provided with support to make changes they are able and willing to make no-cost and low-cost changes.
- Larger changes are possible if there is some financial support. Changes requiring larger capital outlays with longer payback periods are only really affordable by larger restaurants or supermarkets when they are remodelling. Businesses are willing to make larger changes, however there needs to be financial assistance.
- Small ethno-specific businesses are generally not in any associations and the best way to reach them is through cold-calling directly to their business.
- In small family businesses information is preferred in both their own language and English as often their are different levels of English proficiency in the family.

Business examples

Melek Supermarket & Pastry had been managed by Abu Yousif since 2007.

It is a family business. Abu Yousif stated that “generally speaking it has been difficult for small business to survive. I cannot pass the rising costs of my business to my customers as they will go somewhere else”.

Abu Yousif said “I have been practising lots of no-cost energy tips such as switching off all appliances before leaving the premises. Now I can analyse my energy bill and compare the energy consumption of my business to last years one”.

“I decided not to change the fluorescent lighting to LED due to the cost involved...”

Any help to small businesses is appreciated regardless how little or how big the outcomes are”.



Al Arja groceries is a family business run by four brothers since 1985.

Ahmed stated “I have been in this business with my brothers for 30 years. I have seen lots of changes. We were the only grocery shop in the area. Now we have many businesses around, as well as a shopping mall next door to us, where they sell what we sell, it is frustrating”.

Ahmed added “I have changed the fluorescent lightings couple of years ago for free through the Council. After the energy assessment I have consolidate goods and got rid of one fridge. Those changes might not be significant but had inspired me to move some shelves and tidy up; the place looks bigger and brighter now”.

Ahmed added “the energy assessment gave me an overview of the energy consumption of my business and how to go about making no-cost changes”.



K and Ms Eastern groceries is a family business, run by Saeed and his son-in-law for the last nine years.

Saeed said “the energy assessment helped me in making no cost changes such as installing timer to the drink fridge. I cannot afford major changes, but satisfied with little steps to lower the energy consumption. The bill is steady so far,” Saeed stated “to be informed is powerful and is an eye opener”.



Saving Water in Asian Restaurants

Why did we do it?

- To engage Asian restaurant owners and staff in new strategies to save water in their kitchens, specifically through installing waterless wok stoves.
- Initial consultant research showed high water use in restaurants and high potential to reduce this.

Who did we engage?

- Formed a Steering Committee with the President of the Chinese Chefs Association and other well-respected Chinese community leaders.
- Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai restaurant owners and staff.
- Worked through phone book survey, Council contacts, Thai Restaurants' Association, small business program (Government & Council) advice, wok suppliers to identify businesses.

What did we do?

- Written information in each language on actions to save water in kitchens and including calculated \$ savings; brochures on the waterless wok stove and a subsidy offer to owners to purchase waterless wok stoves.
- Worked through 6 bilingual educators; they communicated with owners and staff, visited all sites, explained rebates, liaised with suppliers, translated written materials, recorded data, monitored media.
- Organised recognition and celebration events with businesses in different languages with guest speakers/presenters; ethnic media at all events.
- Developed a DVD in five languages and a website.
- Waterless wok suppliers promoted the technology as did local councils and community groups.

What were the results?

- We engaged 848 restaurants over seven years and installed a total of 169 waterless wok stoves in their restaurants.
- The project delivered total water savings of approximately 212 ML per annum, an average of 78% reduction in water usage. Stand-alone restaurants saved much more compared to food courts or restaurants in clubs/pubs.
- The Bilingual educators were rated highly. They were preferred for all communication because not all staff/management spoke or read English; their knowledge of issues and support and communication were all rated highly.
- The project was entered in and won three State and National environmental awards; presented at conferences, to water authorities nationally, Councils, shopping centre managers and hospitality associations.
- There was much more uptake in Chinese media than Thai or Vietnamese.
- Water and \$\$ savings as well as links with upgrade plans drove the uptake of waterless wok stoves. Non replacement was driven by cost, timing, disinterest, and risk aversion.

Approaches used

- Written/online information
- Face to face
- CALD community leaders
- Ethnic media
- Bilingual educators
- Partnerships



Project details

Project length and timing

3 stages extending geographic area and language groups.

How was effectiveness/results measured?

- measured water use before and after project; revisited 30% of businesses 12 months later.
- Survey of participating restaurateurs at middle and end of project.
- Bilingual educators collected data, photos, informal feedback; also independent evaluator engaged to develop evaluation plan and undertake a telephone survey in language.

Legacy

Water savings for Sydney continue each year saving approximately two billion litres of water over 10 years.

Sustained bill savings for restaurants are hard to verify but all participants are still using the new wok stoves. There has been some disappointment with level of savings; project has boosted the market size and supply numbers for waterless wok stoves.

What did we learn?

- The managers and owners of the businesses were only receptive to the new technology when all of their issues and concerns were addressed by informed bilingual educators from their own culture. To demonstrate the benefits of the technology, a DVD was produced that showed other members of their business community speaking about the benefits of the technology and demonstrating its use.
- Wok stove manufacturers are now improving designs based on feedback from the program; this is boosting the market for these products.
- The project had to have different approaches; communities differed in organisation, cohesion, outreach.
- All preferred the information presented in language by bilingual educators.

Wider Conclusions

People who speak a language other than English at home make up slightly more than one fifth of the Australian population, rising to more than one quarter in NSW and Victoria and more than one half in sections of greater Sydney and Melbourne. While these communities are by no means homogeneous, they share structural and institutional challenges in negotiating the energy market. They are under-represented in a range of areas, from payment assistance programs, the use of Ombudsmen complaints and dispute resolution services as well as information, access and use of emerging new services and technology. ABS census statistics point to the over-representation of many CALD communities in the lowest two quintiles of the income spectrum. Often, they do not complain (or their complaints are not heard) and so they can safely be ignored unless specific mechanisms exist within the energy market to ensure that their interests are taken into account in business-as-usual practice.

The Cultural Connections Guidelines:

The *Cultural Connections Guidelines* document has been very useful as a conversation starter with businesses and agencies. Although some already knew of them, they provided a timely reminder of the possible strategies available.

When businesses and agencies are aware of the Guidelines they are used as a valued resource. Analysis of the participant data suggests that while they are useful the Guidelines are seen more as an ideas resource than a step-by-step manual.

The Case Studies section³³ is seen as a particularly useful part of the Guidelines, especially by those organisations who did not know where to start or what works/does not work. This feedback points to the value of an expanded Case Studies section to provide a wider range of case studies with links to a more detailed exposition of the various projects conducted.

Personal contact, being in the room and the way forward:

The three years of this project have seen a range of CALD consultations and engagement undertaken by energy businesses and agencies. In our analysis the single most important factor in helping to progress these projects has been the one-to-one conversations between ECCNSW and the businesses and agencies around CALD consultation and engagement. With some businesses and agencies ECCNSW has been able to provide various levels of support, including: bilingual facilitator support to a project; timely reminders of their CALD engagement and consultation; and with others, advice and guidance on better practice for CALD engagement and consultation.

It is within this context that important findings of this project are emphasised:

- The necessity of maintaining capacity for energy advocacy for CALD consumers
- Secure and ongoing financial support for wide CALD advocacy across the energy market

These two measures would contribute to helping ensure that CALD consumers and their advocates are part of the conversation and maintain continuity, innovation and consistency of action across the sector for CALD consumers.

³³ See Section 4 of Cultural Connections document at <http://www.eccnsw.org.au/What-we-do/Advocacy/Guidelines.aspx>

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Diversitat

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Survey instrument: energy networks and retailers ³⁴

LEVEL	STREAM					
	CUSTOMER FACING		INTERNAL PROCESSES		EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS	
1 NO ACTION 	- No differentiation between CALD and other customers/consumers - No relationships with CALD agencies - No relationships with CALD consumers	Choose a response	- Staff training does not include CALD perspectives - Resources not allocated for CALD needs eg interpreters, translated materials - Operational manuals do not include CALD aspects and perspectives - Organisational vision/mission/goals/aims do not include CALD needs specifically	Choose a response	- When talking to agencies, retailers, organisations, government CALD issues are not on the agenda - Our organisation does not put forward CALD issues to other organisations - CALD issues not referenced/recognised specifically in submissions and proposals	Choose a response
2 AWARENESS 	- Recognition of CALD diversity and their specific needs - Getting some input on CALD customer perspectives - Some recognition of different and differential needs of CALD customers	Choose a response	Some individuals are interested and aware of CALD issues and are promoting them internally	Choose a response	CALD issues occasionally discussed but limited outcomes	Choose a response
3 PLANNING AND STRATEGY 	- Commitment to active inclusion of CALD communication in any customer engagement strategies - Active engagement of CALD representative on Customer Council or equivalent - Research customer data specifically for CALD relevance - Develop plan for culturally appropriate consultation/information provision with CALD consumers and/or agencies	Choose a response	- Strategic organisational commitment to CALD area - Active and documented managerial level commitment to CALD strategies - Review of current practices and processes for CALD issues - CALD perspectives an internal agenda item in organisation - Role-specific training instituted in CALD issues and perspectives	Choose a response	Commitment at managerial level and below to regular interrogation of CALD issues in dealing with other agencies, organisations, businesses	Choose a response
4 EARLY IMPLEMENTATION 	- Research CALD customer needs in a culturally appropriate way - Institute appropriate CALD specific consultation - Provide information in CALD effective ways	Choose a response	- Budget allocation to staffing and resources for training in CALD issues, translation of materials - Institute monitoring of business approaches to CALD consultation and engagement - Development of appropriate staff training packages - Develop translated materials - Trial and refine translated materials - Review operational manuals	Choose a response	- Develop partnerships with retailers for CALD research, consultation and information transfer - CALD issues and perspectives begin to be included in submissions, proposals, revenue resets etc	Choose a response
5 CONSOLIDATION 	- Dedicated CALD phone access provisions with provisions to deal with all languages - Regular consultative processes in place with CALD groups and advocates - Use of a variety of dissemination methods and techniques for information transfer - Diverse CALD representation in decision-making forums re customer processes	Choose a response	- Regular monitoring and evaluation of CALD consultation and engagement mechanisms - Regular staff training in CALD perspectives and specific issues - Regular review of translated materials to reflect new language needs by CALD communities - Regular use of translated materials for all CALD communities - Operational manuals updated regularly for CALD issues	Choose a response	- Active partnerships with other agencies, retailers and businesses on phone access, customer service, translated materials, interpreter services etc - Detailed inclusion of CALD issues in submissions based on data review, dedicated research, specific CALD consultations etc	Choose a response
6 BEST PRACTICE BAU	CALD consumers access the same quality of customer experience as non-CALD consumers	Choose a response	Integration of CALD perspectives in all areas as BAU	Choose a response	Integration of CALD issues in meetings, forums, submissions, revenue resets etc as BAU	Choose a response

³⁴ For the full survey instruments and matrices see <https://projectlink.eccns.gov.au/BPMAgencies> and <https://projectlink.eccns.gov.au/BPMNetwork>

List of participants who provided data to the project

Energy Agencies, Regulators and Ombudsman Schemes

Australian Energy Regulator (AER)	https://www.aer.gov.au
Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC)	https://www.aemc.gov.au
Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON)	https://www.ewon.com.au
Energy Consumers Australia (ECA)	https://energyconsumersaustralia.com.au
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW (IPART)	https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home

Energy Distribution Networks (DNSPs)

NSW

Ausgrid	https://ausgrid.com.au
Essential Energy	https://essentialenergy.com.au
Jemena Gas Network (JGN)	https://jemena.com.au/gas

South Australia

SA Power Networks	https://sapowernetworks.com.au
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Victoria

Ausnet Services	https://ausnetservices.com.au
Citipower/Powercor	https://citipower.com.au
Jemena	https://jemena.com.au
United Energy/Multinet Gas Network now part of Citipower/Powercor and Australian Gas Network (AGN)	

Retailers

AGL	https://agl.com.au
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Others who provided input and consultation

Regulators:

Essential Services Commission Victoria (ESCVic)	https://www.esc.vic.gov.au/
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DNSPs:

Endeavour Energy	http://www.endeavourenergy.com.au/
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Retailers:

Energy Australia	https://www.energyaustralia.com.au/
Origin Energy	https://www.originenergy.com.au/
Red Energy	https://redenergy.com.au