



# Foresighting Forum 2026

Flick the switch!



## Forum Program

Shangri-La, Sydney  
4-5 March 2026

## Foresighting Forum 2026: Flick the Switch!

---

**The Foresighting Forum is the only national energy forum centred on the people whose decisions matter most to Australia's energy future: households and small businesses. The everyday choices they make about how they use, save, generate and pay for energy will shape the success of the energy transition.**

At the Foresighting Forum in March 2026, participants will focus on accelerating the shift to an energy system that is affordable, clean and reliable, and aligned with the values and expectations of all Australians. Grounded in consumer experience, the Forum brings together policymakers, regulators, industry leaders, researchers and consumer advocates to drive practical, outcome focused discussion.

The 2026 program focuses on three critical dimensions of the energy transition:

- How can consumer trust and confidence be maintained during the energy transition, particularly amid ongoing cost of living pressures?
- Are we asking the right questions as artificial intelligence and rapid growth in data centre demand add complexity to the energy market?
- How can the sector work together to ensure the experiences of all households and small businesses are visible to decision makers and adequately reflected in policy, regulation and support?

Together these discussions will examine how the energy system can better protect consumers and support a fair, inclusive energy transition.

The Foresighting Forum is a space for focused debate and collaboration, with consumer perspectives at the centre of shaping Australia's energy future.

## Keynote Speakers

---



Luis Gonzalez

**Chief Data & AI Officer | AboitizPower**  
**Chief Operating Officer - Power & Research |**  
**Aboitiz Data Innovation**

---

Luis has more than 25 years' experience working at the intersection of artificial intelligence, digital systems and energy infrastructure. He has advised on energy market contestability and smart metering programs across North America, Asia and the Middle East, and worked with more than 50 utilities and industrial organisations globally. His work focuses on building trustworthy, resilient and scalable AI for the power sector, with expertise spanning grid forecasting, energy markets, sustainability, data governance and consumer-centred energy transitions.



Professor Robert Gross

**Director | UK Energy Research Centre**

---

Robert has extensive experience advising government, regulators and industry on energy policy, markets and system reform. His roles include advising DESNZ, Ofgem and National Grid, and contributing to major national reviews of electricity market arrangements and network regulation. He has acted as a specialist advisor to parliamentary inquiries and served on national infrastructure advisory panels. His work spans policy development, market design and international engagement with organisations such as the IEA, World Bank and UNDP.

## Keynote Speakers (continued)

---



Professor Harriet Thomson

**Professor | Energy, Sustainability and Inequality,  
University of Glasgow**

**Associate Director | Glasgow Centre for Sustainable  
Energy**

---

Harriet's work focuses on how public policy shapes energy systems and the unequal distribution of housing, clean energy, and energy affordability. Her research examines the links between energy poverty, health and wellbeing, and the indicators used to measure lived experience. She has supported national and European policy initiatives, including co-founding the EU Energy Poverty Observatory and helping design the Social Climate Fund. She currently leads a major European research project exploring structural drivers of energy inequality.

## Forum Program

---

The following program is provisional in nature and subject to change. Visit the ECA website and follow our social channels for the latest updates.

### DAY ONE: Wednesday, 4 March 2026

8:00am	<b>Registration Open</b>
9:00am	<b>Welcome to Country</b>
	<b>Forum Open</b> Craig Reucassel   Forum MC, Australian writer, comedian and broadcaster
	<b>Chair Address</b> Dr Michael Schaper   Chair, Energy Consumers Australia
	<b>Chief Executive Welcome</b> Dr Brendan French   Chief Executive Officer, Energy Consumers Australia
9:30am	<b>Risks and Opportunities to Consumers from AI and Data Centres</b> Luis Gonzalez   Chief Data & AI Officer, AboitizPower & Chief Operating Officer Power & Research, Aboitiz Data Innovation

9:50am

### Keynote Presentation Discussion

A panel discussion responding to the keynote, interrogating the consumer risks and opportunities emerging from the rapid rise of data centres and artificial intelligence, and what this shift means for Australia's energy market.

- Belinda Dennett | Chief Executive Officer, National Data Centre
- Luis Gonzalez | Chief Data & AI Officer, AboitizPower & Chief Operating Officer Power & Research, Aboitiz Data Innovation
- Tim Jarratt | Group Executive, Market Development & Strategy, Ausgrid
- Dr Brendan French | Chief Executive Officer, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)

10:20am

### Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change

- Rosie Thomas | Advocate and Consultant
- Stephanie Tonkin | Chief Executive Officer, Consumer Action Law Centre

10:30am

### In a Net Zero Energy Market, What is Industry's Role?

A panel examining the evolving roles and responsibilities of networks and retailers in a net zero energy market, and how emerging technologies and business models are reshaping consumer outcomes, costs and regulation.

- Mark Collette | Chief Executive Officer, Energy Australia
- Dominique van den Berg | Chief Executive Officer, Energy Networks Australia
- Lotte Wolff | Executive Manager, Advocacy & Policy, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)

11:00am

### Morning Tea and Networking Break

11:30am	<b>Interactive Session: Postcards from 2050</b>
11:50am	<b>Debate</b> In an entertaining and thought provoking debate, energy and AI experts will ask whether we truly understand the implications of the transition, and challenge us to consider whether we're doing enough to consider consumers' interests. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adam Berry   Deputy Director &amp; Professor, UTS Human Technology Institute</li><li>• Ruchika Deora   General Manager - Consumer Energy Solutions, SEC Victoria</li><li>• Elizabeth Molyneux   Deputy Secretary (Energy), Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning VIC</li><li>• Craig Reucassel   Forum MC, Australian writer, comedian and broadcaster (Chair)</li><li>• Erin Turner   Chief Executive Officer, Consumer Policy Research Centre</li></ul>
12:40pm	<b>Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Douglas McCloskey   Program Director - Water &amp; Energy Consumer Advocacy Program, Justice and Equity Centre</li><li>• Adam Collins   Executive Manager - Advocacy &amp; Policy, Energy Consumers Australia</li></ul>
12:50pm	<b>Gill Owen Scholarship Presentation</b> The Gill Owen Scholarship supports an individual to travel internationally to research innovative ideas and initiatives that can support better outcomes for Australian consumers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• David Green OBE</li><li>• Gill Owen 2026 Scholarship Recipient</li><li>• Alexandra Bishop   Executive Manager - Grants, Energy Consumers Australia</li></ul>



1:00pm	<b>Lunch and Networking Break</b>
2:00pm	<b>Maintaining the Momentum of the Energy Transition in a Cost-of-Living Crisis</b> Professor Robert Gross   Executive Director, UK Energy Research Centre
2:20pm	<b>Keynote Presentation Discussion</b> Following the keynote, the panel will explore lessons from Australia and overseas on maintaining momentum in the energy transition during a cost of living crisis, and what this means for regulator, industry and consumers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Professor Robert Gross   Executive Director, UK Energy Research Centre</li><li>• Clare Savage   Chair, Australian Energy Regulator</li><li>• Brian Spak   General Manager - Advocacy &amp; Policy, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)</li></ul>
2:50pm	<b>Is the Energy System Balancing Public and Private Good?</b> This discussion will examine the trade-offs the system is making between public and private benefits, exploring how fairly consumers are rewarded for their investments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prof Lachlan Blackhall   Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Australian National University</li><li>• John Cleland   Chief Executive Officer, Essential Energy</li><li>• Chris Miller   Chief Executive Officer, SEC Victoria</li><li>• Leah Tucker   Senior Policy Manager – Energy and Infrastructure, Business NSW</li><li>• Ashley Bradshaw   Executive Manager - Analysis &amp; Advocacy, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)</li></ul>



3:30pm	<b>Reflections from the Front: How Ombudsmen are Driving Change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jane Pires   Ombudsman, Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland</li><li>• Stephanie Saill   Head of Energy Transition, Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW</li><li>• Catherine Wolthuizen   Ombudsman &amp; Chief Executive, Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria</li></ul>
3:45pm	<b>Afternoon Tea and Networking Break</b>
4:15pm	<b>Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change</b>
4:25pm	<b>Kelvin Trimper Scholarship Presentation</b> The Kelvin Trimper Scholarship is a consumer advocacy scholarship which supports an individual to build their knowledge, or to research innovative ideas that will improve outcomes for consumers.
4:35pm	<b>Energy Hypothetical: A Future World Scenario</b> Tim Jordan   Commissioner, Australian Energy Market Commission
5:25pm	<b>Day 1 Wrap Up</b>
5:30pm	<b>Networking Function</b>

## DAY TWO: Thursday, 5 March 2026

9:00am

### Day 2 Open

Craig Reucassel | Forum MC, Australian writer, comedian and broadcaster

9:05am

### Lessons from the EU on Alleviating Energy Hardship

Professor Harriet Thomson | Professor, Energy, Sustainability & Inequality, University of Glasgow and Associate Director, Glasgow Centre for Sustainable Energy

9:25am

### Is Australia's Institutional Architecture Strong Enough?

Policymakers promise that that no-one will be left behind. Is Australia's institutional architecture strong enough to deliver that promise?

- Travers McLeod | Chief Executive Officer, Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Professor Harriet Thomson | Professor, Energy, Sustainability & Inequality, University of Glasgow and Associate Director, Glasgow Centre for Sustainable Energy
- Dr Caroline Valente | Executive Manager - Advocacy & Policy, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)

9:50am

### All Australians Should Enjoy Critical Consumer Protections; Why Don't They?

A panel examining why critical consumer protections are not reaching all Australians, highlighting the experiences of those locked out of safeguards and the reforms needed to deliver fair and consistent protections across the energy system.

- Kerry Connors | General Manager - Community, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vanessa Davies   Senior Researcher, Tangentyere Aboriginal Council</li><li>• Trina Jones   NSW Rental Commissioner, NSW Government</li><li>• Lauren Mellor   Clean Energy Community Coordinator, Original Power</li><li>• Caitlin Perry   Policy Officer, Northern Territory Council of Social Service</li><li>• Brendan Radford   Policy Manager, National Seniors</li></ul>
10:30am	<b>Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change</b>
10:40am	<b>Morning Tea and Networking Break</b>
11:10am	<b>Fireside Chat: Consumer Duty and Better Customer Outcomes - Lessons from the Banking Sector</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Hon Anna Bligh AC   Former Qld Premier &amp; Past Chief Executive Officer, Australian Banking Association</li><li>• Dr Brendan French   Chief Executive Officer, Energy Consumers Australia</li></ul>
11:40am	<b>Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change</b>
11:50am	<b>Interactive Session: Postcards from 2050</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kerry Connors   General Manager - Community, Energy Consumers Australia</li><li>• Patrick Veyret   General Manager - Public Affairs &amp; Strategy Energy Consumers Australia</li></ul>
12:50pm	<b>Closing Remarks</b> Dr Brendan French   Chief Executive Officer, Energy Consumers Australia
1:00pm	<b>Lunch and Networking Break</b>

## With thanks to our sponsors

---

Research Showcase Sponsor

---



Consumer Advocate Sponsor

---



Keynote Speaker Sponsor

---



Networking Function Sponsor

---



Coffee Cart Sponsor

---



