

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 subject to minor change without notice.

DAY ONE: Wednesday, 4 March 2026

8:00am

Registration Open

9:00am

Welcome to Country

Forum Open

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

Chair Address

Dr Michael Schaper | Chair, Energy Consumers Australia

Chief Executive Welcome

Dr Brendan French | Chief Executive Officer, Energy Consumers Australia

9:30am

Risks and Opportunities to Consumers from AI and Data Centres

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, Data Centres Australia
- 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**

- 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, Energy Networks Australia
- Lotte Wolff | Executive Manager, Advocacy & Policy, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)

11:00am**Morning Tea and Networking Break**

11:30am

Interactive Session: Postcards from 2050

- Kerry Connors | General Manager - Community, Energy Consumers Australia
- Patrick Veyret | General Manager - Public Affairs & Strategy Energy Consumers Australia

11:50am

Debate: Given the speed and importance of the energy transition, energy market governance should be left only in the hands of government

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.

- Adam Berry | Deputy Director & Professor, UTS Human Technology Institute
- Ruchika Deora | General Manager - Consumer Energy Solutions, SEC
- Elizabeth Molyneux | Deputy Secretary (Energy), Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, VIC
- Craig Reucassel | Forum MC, Australian writer, comedian and broadcaster (Chair)
- Erin Turner | Chief Executive Officer, Consumer Policy Research Centre

12:40pm

Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change

- Douglas McCloskey | Program Director - Water & Energy Consumer Advocacy Program, Justice and Equity Centre
- Adam Collins | Executive Manager - Advocacy & Policy, Energy Consumers Australia

12:50pm

Gill Owen Scholarship Presentation

The Gill Owen Scholarship supports an individual to travel internationally to research innovative ideas and initiatives that can support better outcomes for Australian consumers.

- Gill Owen 2026 Scholarship Recipient
- Alexandra Bishop | Executive Manager – Grants, Energy Consumers Australia
- Rob McLeod | Senior Advisor – Policy and Research, Energy Efficiency Council Inc.

1:00pm

Lunch and Networking Break

2:00pm

Maintaining the Momentum of the Energy Transition in a Cost-of-Living Crisis

Professor Robert Gross | Executive Director, UK Energy Research Centre

2:20pm

Keynote Presentation Discussion

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.

- Professor Robert Gross | Executive Director, UK Energy Research Centre
- Clare Savage | Chair, Australian Energy Regulator
- Brian Spak | General Manager – Advocacy & Policy, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)

2:50pm

Is the Energy System Balancing Public and Private Good?

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.

- Prof Lachlan Blackhall | Independent Chair, National Energy Public Key Infrastructure

	• John Cleland Chief Executive Officer, Essential Energy • Chris Miller Chief Executive Officer, SEC • Leah Tucker Senior Policy Manager – Energy and Infrastructure, Business NSW • Ashley Bradshaw Executive Manager – Analysis & Advocacy, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)
3:30pm	Reflections from the Front: How Ombudsmen are Driving Change • Stephanie Sail Head of Energy Transition, Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW • Catherine Wolthuizen Ombudsman & Chief Executive, Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria • Jane Pires Ombudsman, Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland
3:45pm	Afternoon Tea and Networking Break
4:15pm	Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change • Lauren Mellor Clean Energy Communities Program Director, Original Power • Glen Wingfield Consumer Advocate
4:25pm	Kelvin Trimper Scholarship Presentation 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	Energy Hypothetical: A Future World Scenario Tim Jordan Commissioner, Australian Energy Market Commission
5:25pm	Day 1 Wrap Up
5:30pm	Networking Function

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 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)
- Vanessa Davis | Senior Researcher, Tangentyere Aboriginal Council

	• Trina Jones NSW Rental Commissioner, NSW Government • Lauren Mellor Clean Energy Community Coordinator, Original Power • Caitlin Perry Policy Officer, Northern Territory Council of Social Service • Brendon Radford Policy Manager, National Seniors
10:30am	Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change • Jimmy Frank Jupurrurla, Chief Cultural Officer, Jupurrurla Wilya Janta • Simon Quilty Chief Operating Officer, Wilya Janta
10:40am	Morning Tea and Networking Break
11:10am	Fireside Chat: Consumer Duty and Better Customer Outcomes - Lessons from the Banking Sector • The Hon Anna Bligh AC Former Qld Premier & Past Chief Executive Officer, Australian Banking Association • Dr Brendan French Chief Executive Officer, Energy Consumers Australia
11:40am	Reflections from the Front: How Advocates are Driving Change James Seymour Principal Consultant, Apten Advisory
11:50am	Interactive Session: Headlines from the Future • Kerry Connors General Manager - Community, Energy Consumers Australia • Patrick Veyret General Manager - Public Affairs & Strategy Energy Consumers Australia
12:30pm	Closing Remarks Dr Brendan French Chief Executive Officer, Energy Consumers Australia
12:45pm	Lunch and Networking Break

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