

Gill Owen Scholarship 2027

The Gill Owen Scholarship supports an individual to travel internationally to research innovative ideas and initiatives that will be relevant to improving outcomes for consumers in the Australian energy market.

Who was Dr Gill Owen?

Dr Gill Owen was an inaugural Director of the Energy Consumers Australia Board. Dr Owen was a respected policy advocate, who brought her considerable expertise and insights to energy consumer issues in both Australia and the UK.

Reflecting her international experience, Dr Owen provided a unique perspective on Australian policy and program development, supported by her enduring commitment to social justice and better consumer outcomes. Her contribution saw improvements to the Australian regulatory framework, including in the creation of the Australian Energy Regulator's Consumer Challenge Panel. She was a guiding voice in the establishment of Energy Consumers Australia, and our early days as an organisation.

Dr Owen passed away in August 2016. Energy Consumers Australia created an annual scholarship to honour her memory.

About the scholarship

Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) sees great value in continuing the exchange of ideas and experience that Gill Owen exemplified.

Applications are invited for a grant of **up to \$20,000** to research innovation, policies and programs that will be relevant to achieving improved consumer outcomes in a dynamic and changing Australian energy market.

Examples of such innovation internationally include:

- The Spanish response to extreme heat events in the context of critical challenges to energy systems through a wide range of responses and activities to help its population adapt to extreme heat events
- policy initiatives, such as the US Green Button scheme – an industry-led initiative that helps consumers access their information and provide it to others
- alternative approaches to market regulation, such as the UK Competition and Market Authority's work on digital comparison tools, or lessons from the UK smart meter rollout
- how research is informing policy and regulation – for example, how relevant learnings from the European Union's Empowering partnership on consumer behaviour and bills is helping define best practice

Activities supported through the scholarship

The Gill Owen scholar will engage with leading thinkers in other countries and report on new insights and knowledge to apply to problems faced by small energy consumers in Australia. The range of overseas activities would typically encompass:

- visits to one or more countries to learn from energy consumer activities and experiences
- meetings with relevant individuals and organisations in the selected country
- speaking engagements at conferences and similar events.
- Energy Consumers Australia could suggest potential contacts from its network and will provide a letter of introduction.

Deliverables

Following completion of the scholarship,

- To achieve impact, a range of activities are expected upon return to Australia, including:
- a webinar to communicate the learnings from the project, particularly how Australia can benefit from the insights
- meetings with consumer groups/energy companies/government officials to promote the learnings.

Who can apply?

Applications are welcome from individuals or organisations that meet one of these criterias:

- Australian citizens or permanent residents at least 18 years of age
- A registered charity in Australia: or
- A not-for-profit organisation within Australia; or
- A registered “for purpose” organisation in Australia
- Consumer advocacy groups (that meet the above criteria).

Ineligible applicants include representatives from local councils, government agencies, unincorporated associations, or overseas organisations.

Criteria

Successful applicants should be able to demonstrate most of the following attributes

1. Relevance and a timely problem for Australian energy consumers
2. Aligns with ECA's 3-year plan targets

3. Likely to be influential for the long-term interests of residential and/or small business energy consumers in Australia.
4. The proposed research and international insights are likely to bring new perspectives on the issue
5. The project has identified appropriate stakeholders to provide insights and obtain knowledge from to address the issue
6. Experience and skills that will likely make the project successful.
7. Experience in evidence-based research or advocacy relating to energy consumer issues

How to apply

Applicants can submit an application and will be asked to provide information on the following:

- What is the problem for Australian energy consumers you want to investigate? Why now?
- Who are you intending to influence with this project?
- Why is it critical for you to travel overseas to undertake this research?
- How will your project improve long-term outcomes for residential and/or small business energy consumers in Australia?
- Who will you engage with to develop insights and knowledge?
- What are your skills and experience that will make your project successful?
- What is your proposed budget?

Please note that funding agreements will be between Energy Consumers Australia and the Applicant's organisation.