

## Media Statement

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### **SMEs need better information to have ‘power over their power’**

A new national survey of small business energy users, released today by Energy Consumers Australia, has found that almost two-thirds (62%) think increasing energy costs are a big concern for their business.

Yet most small business owners (69%) did not recall seeing anything in the media or online in the last 12 months about how to reduce their energy costs or usage. Those who did recall seeing information found it irrelevant to their circumstances and not coming from sources that they trust.

Energy Consumers Australia CEO Brendan French said the research shows small business owners are keen for tailored information on how they can reduce their energy use, but the information they are receiving currently is not fit for purpose.

“This research shows that many SME consumers do not have the basic information they need to manage their energy use, and the absence of clear, trusted and practical advice is leaving them lacking the confidence to act and lacking trust in the energy market,” said Dr French.

“There is a huge diversity among small businesses in Australia. It is time to stop assuming that one size fits all when it comes to communicating with them about energy – or that small businesses just need the same communications as households. Small businesses want to see case studies of other businesses like them to learn how they can benefit from the energy transition.”

The research shows there are a number of ‘low hanging fruit’ that could help small business energy users reduce their bills. For example, just 5% of those surveyed had conducted an energy audit of their business premises – but 60% would be interested in this.

60% of small business owners said that government financial incentives would encourage them to reduce their energy use.

“Most of the small business owners we surveyed (60%) agreed that they need to act now to reduce the energy use of their business – they just need help to do so,” said Dr French.

At the same time as the release of the survey, Energy Consumers Australia has made public the findings of a series of interviews with small business representative organisations about where they see the barriers for small business participation in the energy market. The resulting report, *Power Over Their Power: Small Business Perspectives on Energy*, backs the findings of the survey.

The report identifies four main barriers that all small businesses share when it comes to decarbonising, engaging in and benefiting from government energy policies:

- **CHOICE:** Small businesses have less control over their energy choices than many households
- **COST:** The cost of doing business is tightening business profits
- **TIME:** Small businesses face time constraints when making significant changes
- **ACCESS TO INFORMATION:** There is a lack of suitable information for small businesses.

“Many small businesses are also either located in embedded networks, rent their premises or share them with others and these can be barriers to them reducing their energy use and to making the changes necessary for an all-electric energy efficient business,” said Dr French.

“Governments need to work more closely with small business representatives and organisations. If small businesses are not included in co-designing the economy wide transition process, they will be left behind.”

You can see both the SME Energy Information Research and the *Power Over Their Power* report on the ECA website: [www.energyconsumersaustralia.com.au](http://www.energyconsumersaustralia.com.au)

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