

Media Statement

7 December 2023

Consumer confidence falls to five-year low as energy bills bite

Consumer confidence in the energy market has slumped to a five-year low as soaring bills leave more Australians concerned about the cost of their gas and electricity services – both now and into the future.

The December 2023 Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey (ECSS), released today by Energy Consumers Australia, reveals confidence in the market declined 4 per cent over the past year for households and 6 per cent among small business owners. Confidence is the lowest it has been since 2018.

The survey, which is Australia's most comprehensive ongoing tracking study of attitudes and activities of residential and small business energy consumers, also revealed a drop in the number of consumers who felt they were getting value for money for their gas and electricity services.

Just 54 per cent of households viewed their electricity service as value for money, compared to 59 percent a year ago and 67 per cent 2 years ago.

“The latest ECSS shows that households and small businesses are increasingly struggling with rising energy bills and their confidence that the energy market can deliver a service that is good value for money has taken a hit,” said Energy Consumers Australia CEO Brendan French.

“The winter rebates and other supports were a relief for some, but rising energy bills and rising cost of living mean a broader range of people are experiencing financial stress and we need to help them too.

“If we don't provide that help, the energy divide will increase and things will continue to get worse for an increasing number of households. This should be a wake-up call for the entire industry.”

Dr French said the latest ECSS results underlined the need for a ‘one stop shop’ for energy information and support for consumers.

“Consumers do not have trust in the market, yet we need them to be engaged for the energy transition to be successful,” he said.

“It's not a lack of interest – other data of ours shows that 89 per cent of households are interested in learning more about ways to reduce their energy use and costs – but the information is coming at them from so many sources, many of which they simply don't trust, and it is so complex that they just switch off.

“Consumers need support and good information on energy to give them the confidence to engage with the energy market - and that need will only increase as we make the transition to net zero.

“A one stop shop for energy has worked in other parts of the world and can work here to hold consumers' hands through the transition and help them lower their bills.”

The ECSS, which canvassed the views of more than 2200 households and 500 small business owners nationwide, also found:

- Cost is a key area of concern for households, with the number of households satisfied with the cost of their gas bill falling 7 percentage points to 41 per cent.
- Consumer satisfaction with competition in the gas market fell 3 percentage points to 60 per cent.
- Confidence that technological advances will help to better manage energy supply and costs has fallen, particularly in the largest states where it is down 6 percentage points in NSW and 7 percentage points in Victoria.

- Consumer support for a full transition to 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030 has fallen slightly in favour of a transition by 2040.
- 'Affordable energy prices for all' was identified as the 'most important issue for the future energy system' by 54 per cent of respondents.

You can see the Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey on our website here:

<https://ecss.energyconsumersaustralia.com.au/sentiment-survey-dec-2023/>

About Energy Consumers Australia

Energy Consumers Australia is the independent, national voice for residential and small business energy consumers. We enable residential and small business energy consumers to have their voices heard.

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