



Media Release

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New grant removes cultural barriers and empowers Sydney's migrant communities to engage in the energy transition

Migrant communities in Sydney's west are taking control of their energy use, driving down bills and embracing renewable energy technology thanks to an Energy Consumers Australia-supported initiative that is removing cultural and language barriers to participation in the energy transition.

The Voices for Power project, led by Sydney Community Forum, is among three new grants totalling more than \$800,000 approved by the Board of Energy Consumers Australia this month.

The initiative has so far trained around 50 community leaders to run information sessions in their own languages and communities – reaching an estimated 2500 community members in the past year. The new funding will expand the number of community leaders who are ready and able to engage on energy transition issues and advocate for the needs of their communities, including with industry and key decision makers.

Energy Consumers Australia Interim Chief Executive Officer, Jacqueline Crawshaw, said the project provided valuable insight into unique barriers to participation at a critical time in the energy transition.

“All consumers should be able to access the essential knowledge required to make informed decisions about the best way to power their homes and businesses, and the impact of energy changes for them,” Ms Crawshaw said.

“Understanding and removing any barriers to that access, like those experienced by the large population of culturally diverse communities in Sydney's west and south-west, is critical to ensuring an equitable energy transition.”

Sydney Community Forum Executive Officer, Asha Ramzan, said specialised training and education levelled the playing field for typically marginalised migrant communities, which often faced cultural and language barriers to accessing information about renewable energy.

Ms Ramzan said by better understanding the energy market, struggling families had been able to create more energy efficient homes, providing immediate relief to their rising energy bills.

“These are families with multi-generation households, struggling to pay their energy bills, and many simply didn't know what was available to them, such as the low-income solar scheme,” Ms Ramzan said.

“There is an obstacle course for migrant communities to access information, including a lack of trust in institutions. We address those barriers by building trust through listening and providing training in community languages which allows them to participate in the transition and understand the economic benefits of renewable energy.

“It's exciting to have continued support from Energy Consumers Australia to deepen our reach in these communities and build their capacity to navigate the energy landscape and importantly to speak for themselves.”

Other successful applications include a project to better integrate energy and health policies to ensure consumers don't suffer health consequences related to energy use, and research that will strengthen Australia's distribution network planning for electrification.

Successful applicants to receive funding include:

Sydney Community Forum – Voices for Power CALD Community Engagement in Energy Transition – \$150,000

Communities and small businesses from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds face significant barriers to engaging in the renewable energy transition. This project aims to educate and engage migrant communities in Western and South-Western Sydney, ensuring they have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to actively participate in, and benefit from, renewable energy. This includes providing training resources on the energy transition in plain English and community languages, delivered through a calendar of 'Train the Trainer' workshops for a broad cross-section of communities over the next 12 months.

Victorian Council of Social Service – Ending the damaging energy hardship-health nexus – \$359,422

Australians living in hardship – living in cold, hot, or damp homes – are more likely to suffer physical and mental illness.

Overcoming this link between health outcomes and energy access is challenging and underexplored in policy landscapes.

This project aims to explore systemic changes within Victoria that could better integrate energy and health policies and programs and help energy consumers who are experiencing disadvantage at the right time.

The research, to be conducted over two years, seeks to provide a model for other Australian jurisdictions, ultimately building new pathways for support and referral for Australians who need help to ensure their homes are heated or cooled to a safe and healthy level.

Centre for New Energy Technologies Ltd (C4NET) – Enhanced System Planning - Victoria – \$300,000

Australia's understanding of a better and smarter energy future is hampered by gaps in the electricity system-planning that are yet to address the evolution of distribution networks.

This collaborative project brings together several universities with industry, policy makers and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) to develop the foundations and fit-for-purpose modelling frameworks that will inform post-2030 electricity system planning. It seeks to fill a significant knowledge gap that currently prevents these stakeholders from pursuing a common vision for the energy transformation.

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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 by the sector by working with other consumer groups to gather evidence-based research with a national perspective, distil it to key viewpoints, and feed it back to the market to influence outcomes.