

Board Communique: August 2022

The Energy Consumers Australia Board met in Sydney on 18 August 2022

The Board discussed a number of governance matters before focusing on the outcomes of significant grants projects, and two new applications for funding.

As it has in previous years, the Board invited three grant recipients to provide a presentation to the Board (on-line) on their projects and how their work is supporting change that benefits consumers.

Joel Dignam of Better Renting is the co-ordinator of the Healthy Homes for Renters, which is a national collaboration for minimum energy efficiency standards for rental homes, which now includes 115 organisations. The goal of the project is to address the lack of energy efficiency standards for rental properties resulting in poor energy performance. This leads to higher bills, worse health from exposure to unhealthy temperatures, and increased climate pollution from avoidable energy consumption. Relatedly, the project is working to address the lack of resources and coordination going into solving this problem. [Read more here.](#)

Dr Stephen Snow from the University of Queensland presented on his work on behalf of rural energy users, who typically experience more frequent power outages, have less choice over energy retailer, and can pay more for electricity per kWh than city users. The study fills a knowledge gap regarding farmers' adaptability to alternative tariff arrangements and motivations, as well as opportunities and barriers to energy efficiency. [Read more here.](#)

Simon Moore of Business NSW presented on their project, which stems from the experience of Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who face considerable challenges to getting good consumer outcomes in the energy sector. This project researches SMEs' relationship with five aspects of the energy market: advice, procurement, energy efficiency upgrades, renewables, and net carbon zero. It gauges SMEs' awareness of each, take up of each and most critically, assess the barriers to further take up. This insight will then inform recommendations for policymakers regarding the future design of SME-oriented energy policies. It expands on earlier SME-oriented studies by looking beyond the energy bill to other aspects of SMEs' relationships with energy. [Read more here.](#)

The Board was pleased to approve two new applications for funding.

Learning the hard way: energy practices of CALD International students living in private rental accommodation in Australia

University of Wollongong

\$187,456 ex GST

This project will raise awareness amongst the community and decision makers around the energy hardships faced by CALD students by building an evidence base on energy and temperature data of rental dwellings to support the implementation of minimum energy efficiency standards in these properties.

Articulating regional consumers' emerging energy market demand to enable innovative equitable integration of complex DERs in Queensland

Queensland Farmers Federation

\$93,405 ex GST

This project will provide new insights into consumer attitudes towards virtual power plants (VPPs), microgrids, and community batteries, in agricultural and regional communities, and propose recommendations to inform policy and regional planning for these technology projects in regional communities.

Applications now open

The Board offers its thanks to both the successful and unsuccessful applicants and reminds potential applicants that a new funding round is now open for Influence Grants until 1 September. We are also encouraging applications for smaller grants (up to \$15,000) at any time under our Participation Grants sub-program. We urge any interested parties to visit the Grants Program section of our [website](#) where they will find easy-to-use guidance about the program, eligibility guidelines and how to apply.