

Board Communique: April 2021

The Energy Consumers Australia Board met via video conference on 15 April 2021.

Grants Meeting

The Board was briefed on the progress of the review of the Energy Consumers Australia Grants Program. The Review was undertaken in response to the review of ECA for Energy Ministers by KPMG in 2019.

Building on stakeholder insights gleaned from over 70 one-on-one individual meetings, as well as the lessons learnt from ECA's management of the program since 2015, the Board endorsed an evolution of the Grants Program that will support advocates to deliver influential and impactful projects.

The Board noted that the next stage of the review will therefore be to engage with ECA stakeholders on the changes, with the aim of bringing their feedback to a final decision by the Board at its meeting in June 2021.

Related to the Review, the Board proposed that ECA develop a process for collaborative agenda-setting – to work with the sector to canvass opportunities for energy systems change, to identify where there was consensus on the evidence gap, what needs to be addressed, and to use that process to encourage grant applications. That process could also inform ECA's own business planning.

The Board considered 7 applications made in the current round and was of the view that none met the eligibility and/or selection criteria sufficiently to be funded. Board members were briefed on the factors leading to receipt of fewer applications compared to previous years, including that there were no revenue determinations scheduled in the next year or so, which usually account for around 25% of grants funding per annum, and that there is increased engagement at the jurisdictional level, which has been directly supported by energy companies and network businesses. The Board noted that the smaller number of eligible applications was evidence of the value of a review of the Grants Program.