

## **Board Communique: November 2020**

**The Energy Consumers Australia Board met via video conference on 12 November 2020**

### **Priorities and Emerging Consumer Issues**

The Board discussed Energy Consumers Australia's second major submission to the Energy Security Board's (ESB) Post 2025 Market Design project.

Reflecting on the Summer Bushfires, and COVID-19, the Board underscored the central point of the submission, which was that new market designs had to be sensitive to the pressure consumers are under, while also being supported by practical plans to give households and small businesses real choice and control. The Board discussed the strong case for a major effort by the sector and governments to unlock the value of smart storage in Australian homes and businesses, and in the community, as a first step on a roadmap to a more flexible and equitable future energy system.

Recognising that consumer protection frameworks will need to be fit-for-purpose for the new services that are emerging in the market, the Board was pleased to see the full determination from the Australian Competition Tribunal on the New Energy Tech Consumers Code (NETCC) which relied on the evidence from Energy Consumers Australia in recognising the need for the Code to address concerns in the market. The Board agreed that the NETCC should serve as a critical first step towards more future, principles-based consumer protection frameworks.

### **Latest research and engagement insights**

The Board noted early findings of the most recent Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey indicated that while customers' general perceptions of the market (satisfaction with services, value for money and confidence in reliability) were trending upwards, there is still room for improvement. The survey also indicated increasing levels of concern about consumers' capacity to pay energy bills. The Board welcomed the extension to March 2021 of the obligations on energy companies, outlined in the Australian Energy Regulator's updated Statement of Expectations, to ensure consumers are given the assistance they need to stay connected.

There are two transitions underway in the energy system, with the shift from fossil fuels to renewables and storage in the bulk power supply system and in the 10 million homes and businesses as they use technology to be flexible in their energy use, generation, and more local storage. We continue to interview consumers and engage with them to tell their story, and this month we are featuring consumers who are both producing and managing their electricity use.

This month Louise Sylvan, Chair and Lynne Gallagher, Interim CEO met with the NSW Minister for Energy and the Environment, Hon Matt Kean MP ahead of the public release of the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap and the SA Minister for Energy and Mining, the Hon Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP. It was an opportunity for Energy Consumers Australia to discuss the two energy transitions underway, and how the security, affordability and emissions challenges come together to meet consumers expectations of the future energy system.

### **Annual General Meeting, 12 November 2020**

Energy Consumers Australia also held its Annual General Meeting, attended by Energy Consumer Australia's Member, Hon Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP, the South Australian Minister for Energy and Mining. The main focus of the meeting was centred on the contents of our 2019-20 Annual Report; stepping through our work in over the last year on bringing prices down, consumer agency, building trust in the National Energy Market, how we are tackling the big question of transition as well as our work on amplifying the consumers' voice and the important governance work we are undertaking. The meeting also considered the 2020 Annual Report Grants Supplement, Directors Report and Audited Financial Statements.