

Board Communique: October 2019

The Energy Consumers Australia Board met on 14 October 2019

This was the 20th meeting at which the Board considered grant funding applications since Energy Consumers Australia was established in January 2015. In that time the Board has approved 184 grants with total funding of \$11.8 million for important work on affordability outcomes and research to support advocacy directed to improving the experience of Australian households in a transitioning market.

Energy Consumers Australia first consulted with stakeholders on its approach to its grants function in September 2015, and in March 2016 implemented the current Grants Program.

In this context the Board agreed to the scope of a Grants Program Review to be undertaken in 2019-20. The Grants Program Review will seek the views of stakeholders on potential improvements to ensure the Grants Program is achieving its intended impact, and how impact could be measured.

This review follows the recent Review of Energy Consumers Australia which made recommendations about the Grants Program. The review included in its terms of reference an assessment of *“the effectiveness of grant allocation functions in delivering tangible benefits for energy consumers.”*

In this first round for the 2019-20 financial year, the Board approved funding for the following grants.

- AP 985 – Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), for the second-year funding for the *Equitable, Affordable Inclusive Energy Transition Advocacy Project* (\$200,171).
- AP 1051 – Renew – *Strengthening Consumer Advocacy for Low Energy Homes* (\$74,500).
- AP 1052 – Renew, *Empowering Consumers in a Changing World: Securing Consumer Benefits in the Transforming Energy Market* (\$91,355).
- AP 1053 – Queensland Council of Social Service, *Consumer Engagement and Advocacy on Regulated Prices* (\$127,520).
- AP 1055 – Total Environment Centre, *The role of distributed energy resources (DER) in the equitable decarbonisation of the NEM* (\$155,366).

The common themes across these projects are advocacy for empowering consumers to manage their energy use and take control of their bills, in the context of technological change, new models for pricing regulation and to ensure that no-one is left behind – including those in poor quality housing, and those living in regional Australia.

In addition, the Board approved other variations to funding for two existing projects.

- AP 865 – Sydney Alliance, *Voices For Power* (\$53,100).
- AP 1006 – Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Consumer input into the 2020 regulatory reset for Victorian electricity networks* (\$25,000).

In a highly competitive Grants Program, 14 grants were not approved.

The Board thanks all applicants for the effort in preparing their applications.