

## **Board Communique: October 2021**

### **The Energy Consumers Australia Board met via video conference on 21 October 2021.**

#### **Grants Meeting**

As the Board meets, we note that nations and energy leaders will soon do likewise at the Conference of the Parties Summit (COP26) in Glasgow. Action on climate change, urgent and necessary as it is, cannot be separated from the remaking of our energy system. Both require all to play their part: To change behaviour, adapt thinking and grasp opportunities.

The best story Australia has to tell the world is about its households and small businesses. In a world-leading way they have rushed to embrace the possible -- whether through concern for the environment, a desire for independence, to save on energy costs or for a mixture of these reasons.

As a consumer organisation, ECA's role is to be a voice for these Australians. Their passion and enthusiasm have been the single greatest engine for change in our national decarbonisation effort. But as a Board, we note that ECA's remit and responsibility is also to ensure that all consumers can access the benefits offered by the transition to a future system in which energy is cleaner, cheaper, and more abundant.

With this in mind, we are pleased to approve funding for four high-impact projects under the Energy Consumers Australia Grants Program. Each contributes to removing barriers and assisting Australian consumers towards a future energy system that meets their values, needs and expectations.

This future system must be more inclusive and more networked -- harnessing and connecting local resources, infrastructure and people to create decentralised networks that are flexible, resilient and modern. We are confident these projects will move us further in that direction.

Projects approved for Grants funding included:

- Total Environment Centre – *Local Energy Futures* (\$160,306 ex GST)
- University of Wollongong - *SPREADING THE POWER: Identifying pathways to solar photovoltaic (PV) adoption for Australia's apartment owners* (\$19,572 ex GST).
- Business Australia - *Next steps for SME energy policy and support* (\$150,000 ex GST)

- *Renew - Consumer Energy Attitudes Research* (\$194,125 ex GST)

We offer our thanks to the successful and unsuccessful applicants who have shared their projects and ideas with us. And as we embark on a journey with these new recipients, we are pleased to see other impactful Grants Program projects nearing or reaching completion.

**The Australian Energy Foundation** (\$107,500 funded) carried out comprehensive surveys of life support customers, identifying their diverse needs. It has worked with networks, regulators and stakeholders to develop recommendations that can be used by networks to deliver tailored services to these customers.

**Better Renting** (\$117,924 funded) has engaged with Ministers and decision makers in every jurisdiction to implement minimum energy efficiency requirements for rental properties, helping unlock benefits for tenants in relation to energy affordability and better health outcomes.

**Total Environment Centre**, (\$165,428 funded) - in partnership with the Australian Council of Social Services – successfully initiated a change to the National Electricity Rules to integrate distributed energy resources to more fairly allocate costs and ensure solar owners are given a choice about how to use their solar and are rewarded for its benefits. TEC also convened a sectoral working group to address the regulatory hurdles facing community scale batteries, as well as publishing a discussion paper proposing a more democratic grid.