

CONSUMER CONSULTATION IN THE AUSTRALIAN ENERGY SECTOR

A report to Energy Consumers Australia

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1 October 2015.

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CONSUMER CONSULTATION IN THE AUSTRALIAN ENERGY SECTOR

• EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Energy Regulator's requirement for industry to demonstrate consultation with consumers in 5-year price reviews, combined with greater emphasis on consumer consultation by other regulators including the Australian Energy Market Commission has increased demands on all consumer advocates.

Many other national and state level review processes exacerbate these demands, and no reduction in the many calls on advocates time and energy is in sight.

Consultation modes are diverse. Consumer consultative forums are important (and may be growing in use), but other mechanisms -- websites, surveys, focus groups, town hall meetings, and deliberative forums -- are also used by industry, policy makers, and regulators. At the moment, there seems a greater danger of too much ineffective consultation rather than too little consumer consultation.

Consumer advocates are stretched very thin, suffer resource constraints which sometimes detract from the quality of their submissions, and are compelled to make hard decisions about where to focus their energy and attention.

Consumer advocates sometimes feel that their views are ignored by regulators or overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data supplied to regulators by industry.

Regulatory processes are complex, adversarial in nature, and provide limited scope for finding common ground between industry and consumer advocates. Most stakeholders believe the regulatory processes are unnecessarily complex.

Regulators and industry say the most effective advocates possess experience, combined with in-depth knowledge of the energy market and its technologies. But these attributes are hard for under resourced consumer agencies to obtain, and capacity development opportunities for advocates are few.

There is widespread goodwill among regulators, industry and consumer advocates towards Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) combined with expectations that it will both support consumer advocates and also articulate clear strategic consumer objectives for the energy sector.

ECA can make a difference and there are some key things it could do

1. Provide advocates with expertise or access to sources of expertise
2. Conduct annual technology/regulatory fore-sighting processes
3. Establish a central information/opinion sharing site
4. Implement a capacity building program for consumer advocates
5. Develop ways to identify where consumer advocates have had an impact
6. Develop processes to achieve recognised common ground on issues between industry and consumer advocates where feasible.

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THE TASK

The consultant, Mr Keith Besgrove, was engaged by Energy Consumers Australia (ECA) to interview a cross section of stakeholders, analyse the existing consumer consultative mechanisms in Australia, assess the effectiveness of these arrangements, and propose possible improvements.

THE APPROACH

The consultant used a combination of telephone and face-to-face interviews in Queensland, New South Wales, the ACT, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. This was combined with desk research and attendance at a one day ENA/CSIRO forum (on the Consumer Engagement Handbook).

Interviews were conducted with a total of 46 people in 34 organisations. A list of the interviewees is at Attachment One, along with the broad set of questions around which the conversations were framed.

The views expressed in this report are the consultant's, and reflect the conversations held with a wide range of stakeholders in many parts of the country. On many issues there appeared to be quite high levels of consensus between industry and consumer advocates and, to a lesser extent, regulators and policy makers. Where this consensus is described, it is referred to as "...the three elements of the market...". Where views were expressed by only a small number of people, this is explicitly mentioned.

Representatives of regulatory agencies and policy agencies are generally grouped together in this report. Where the term "regulators/policy makers" is not used, it means that only one or the other group expressed the view. But by and large the two groups views were sufficiently consistent to warrant describing them together.

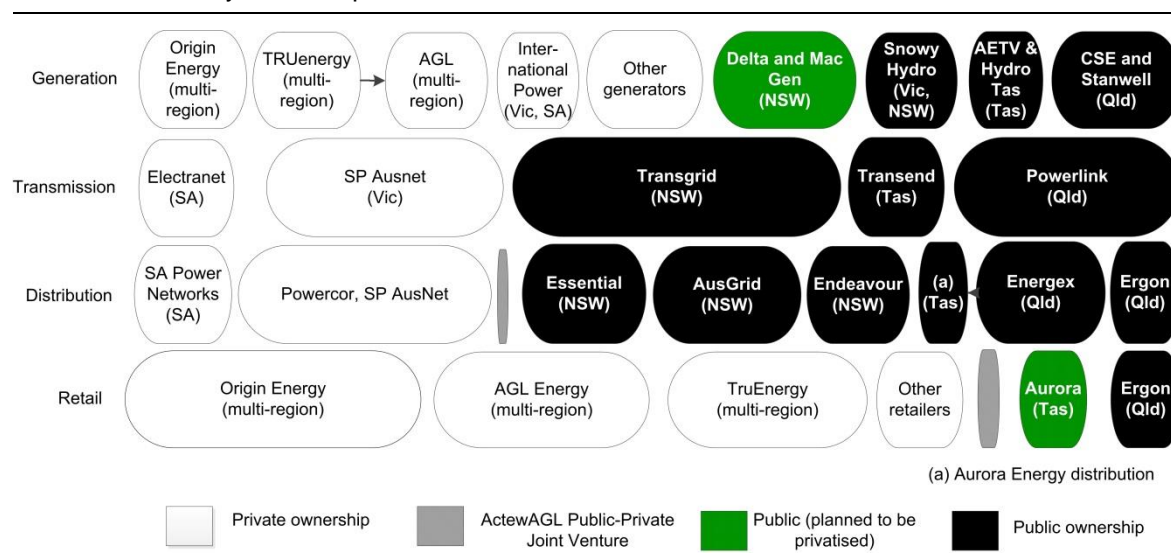
THE ENERGY SECTOR IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian energy sector comprises a complex mixture of public, public/private joint venture, and private entities. The chart below from the 2013 Productivity Commission report on the Electricity Sector, while a little dated, provides a high level summary of the structure of the electricity market. It reveals the mixed ownership arrangements in place.

In addition, there is also a range of national and state government, or state government funded, regulatory agencies involved in the electricity market. The

gas sector has a smaller number of players, and several of the major supply companies operate in both electricity and gas supply

Figure 4 Participants in the National Electricity Market
By ownership and market share



Data source: Queensland Commission of Audit (2013, figure 2, p. 13).

A LONG PROCESS OF REFORM

The Australian energy sector has been engaged in a lengthy process of COAG sponsored reform for several decades. Some of the key milestones include

- Establishment of the National Electricity Law in 1996 by participating jurisdictions, enabling the creation of the National Electricity Code
- The establishment of the National Energy Market in 1998
- The creation of the National Electricity Consumer Advocacy Panel in 2002, to support advocacy through a grants program
- The signing of the Australian Energy Market Agreement in 2005
- The establishment in 2005 of the Australian Energy Regulator to regulate energy markets and networks under national energy market legislation and rules
- The establishment in 2005 of the Australian Energy Market Commission with responsibility for rule making and market development in the electricity wholesale market and transmission regulation
- The broadening, in subsequent years, of these operations to incorporate gas transmission and markets
- The establishment of AEMO in 2009 to manage the NEM and gas markets
- The implementation in 2012 of the National Energy Retail Law, providing for the establishment of the National Energy Customer Framework, moving the final elements of the market to a national regulatory regime. All jurisdictions have progressively adopted it since, except Victoria.

- The establishment in 2015 of Energy Consumers Australia

MAIN FORMS OF CONSUMER CONSULTATION

There are two broad mechanisms employed

- Standing consumer consultative forums (CCFs), which are employed by both industry and regulators. These normally meet several times a year. They tend to have stable memberships, often have recurring agenda issues, and travel costs of consumer advocates are sometimes paid. In a relatively small number of cases, sitting fees are also paid. A small number of industry CCFs have been established in response to statutory requirements. There are also some regular, recurring consultations between government agencies and consumer advocates focussed on specific government programs, including hardship programs.
- One-off forums and other consultative processes, which are established on an as-needs basis to respond to the requirements of particular regulatory processes, or to augment market research. It is worth noting that some of these one-off processes can be quite lengthy, with durations of up to 18 months or more.

The more common approach across the sector is to employ one-off processes, although some parts of the industry have a greater, or growing emphasis on CCFs because they have found these forums to be useful. For example, one firm advised the consultant that it was likely to retain, and even expand its CCF to enable it use the forum as a platform for building a better understanding of the economics of its business, as a precursor to the next 5 year review process. Several other firms were in the process of establishing CCFs.

It is estimated that about one third of the network operators utilise some form of standing consultative forum.

A series of reform decisions by the COAG Energy Council and its predecessors has seen a growing emphasis on consumer consultation in recent years. The 2014 decision by the AER to compel energy suppliers to demonstrate that they had taken the views of consumers into account when submitting their 5 year price review submissions, combined with greater emphasis on consumer consultation by the Australian Energy Market Commission has caused a significant upsurge in the level, variety and intensity of consumer consultation in the Australian energy sector. However, the AER did not specify the form that this consultation should take, and consequently it has taken a growing number of different forms.

Many other national and state level review processes add to these demands, and no reduction in the many calls on advocates' time and energy is in sight.

Modes of consultation are diverse. While consumer consultative forums are important (and possibly growing in use), many other mechanisms, including websites, surveys, focus groups, town hall meetings, and deliberative forums are increasingly employed by industry and by some regulators and policy makers. It is also clear that firms are increasingly willing to experiment with new forms of consultation in order to try to elicit the views of individual consumers as well as of groups that may not form part of the usual consumer consultation processes. Examples include consumer information stalls in super markets and stalls at agricultural field days, although the first of these was found to be unsuccessful. There is also an apparently growing willingness to consider resource intensive approaches, such as deliberative forums, to enhance the quality and depth of consumer consultation processes.

The clear impression gained by the consultant was that advocates confront very large and apparently growing demands upon their time. There is clear scope for advocates to be overwhelmed by the scale, complexity and volume of review processes and attendant consultations. There is also clearly some duplication of effort going on between all these processes. (Some idea of the demands on advocates' time can be gauged from the list of forums attended by CUAC, which are listed at Attachment Two). The result of all this effort is that there appears to be a greater risk of too much ineffective consultation rather than too little consumer consultation.

ISSUES RAISED BY CONSUMER ADVOCATES

- The clear message from consumer advocates is they are stretched very thin.
- They are enmeshed (some would say trapped) in a lot of very resource-intensive consultation processes. Many of these are based around one-off events and seemingly overlapping inquiries initiated by different agencies and levels of government.
- The sheer volume, range, and complexity of these inquiries, combined with the normal processes of standing consultative committees, obliges many advocates to make tough choices about where to focus their attention.
- There is also a strong sense that different consumer groups are often re-inventing similar sets of data to respond, in different jurisdictions, to the same sets of issues in parallel inquiry or pricing re-set processes. One of the ways in which advocacy groups seek to manage this is to use mechanisms like the National Consumers Roundtable on Energy or NEMchat to prioritise their work programs, learn from each other, and seek to reduce duplication.
- Most advocates contend that they are obliged to prepare lengthy and resource-intensive submissions if they are to be taken as seriously as participants in regulatory processes.

- Despite these efforts, advocates often feel as if their views are not really taken into account by regulatory agencies whose thinking, and decisions, are dominated by judgements around the economic efficiency of pricing. One likened this to “shouting into the void”.
- Consumer advocates also sometimes feel that their views are ignored by regulators because their message is overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data supplied to regulators by industry.
- Advocates also complain that many industry players “go through the motions” of consumer consultation but then pay little or no attention to the views expressed. They make similar complaints about some regulators.
- Some advocates also saw this form of engagement with consumers as a substitute for action.
- Nevertheless, a majority of advocates felt that there had been notable improvements in the range and nature of consumer consultation by industry and by regulators over the past two years.
- They also point to improving performance in the manner and conduct of consumer consultation by a small but growing number of industry players.
- Advocates indicated that they had made a material impact in some processes. Examples cited were the development of the National Energy Customer Framework, and the AER’s *Better Regulation* program of work. But it was noted that it was often difficult to gauge the success and effectiveness of their engagements, and that more feedback from regulators would help here.
- But a major missing piece seems to be energy retailers. With a few conspicuous exceptions, even where these have consultative mechanisms in place, they don’t seem to have the internal structures in place to give effect to solutions to the issues raised by consumers
- Consumer advocates in regional and remote areas of Australia welcomed the growing use of webinars and video-conferencing as platforms for consultation since this eased the strain on them of long travel times for often short consultation meetings.
- Some consumer groups had also noted some increased focus on capacity building by some firms in the past 18 months.
- One national level advocacy group said that there is evidence that consumers in general remain unhappy with the process and progress of energy sector reform. The perceptions of the Commonwealth and State

governments is that the energy sector reforms of the past 20 years or more have been highly positive for consumers. But the lived experience of those consumers, as evidenced by the results of the CHOICE surveys would suggest otherwise, and indicate that there is still some distance to go in convincing consumers that they are receiving services that they value and that are in their best interests.

ISSUES RAISED BY INDUSTRY

- There is a wide range of consumer consultation practices across the industry.
- Many firms felt that they had been learning by doing when it came to consumer consultation and that they were getting better at it.
- Industry considers that the most effective consumer advocates are those who had developed an in-depth understanding of the economics of the energy markets and the technologies upon which this was based.
- A number of industry players stressed the long-term nature of their relationships with specific consumer advocates and the value of having partnerships with advocates
- One firm discussed work with an advocacy group where the two agencies are sharing their collective client data to build a better analytical picture of hardship clients as a basis for attempting to implement new solutions for these clients.
- Several firms talked about the growing importance of their consumer consultancy forums. They said that the changes in their management attitudes towards these forums are driven by external pressures and by the clear recognition within the company that, if it is to survive then it must more effectively engage with all stakeholders and build a positive reputation within the community.
- Several firms also said that having consumer consultative forums represents prudent risk management and enables them to develop and sustain deeper customer engagement.
- Very few firms appear to have any deliberate approach to capacity building of consumer advocates, although some have done some of this, and several discussed their efforts in helping to raise understanding of tariff reform.
- The general view appeared to be that consumer advocates would gain increased understanding of the market and the technologies through their involvement in consultative forums.

- Industry expressed some impatience with some advocacy groups, which were said to be distancing themselves, or failing to participate in the five-year review processes because they did not accept the legitimacy of the objectives of those processes.
- Industry also expressed some exasperation when solutions, which it felt it had developed in consultation with consumers and other stakeholders, were rejected by regulators. They felt they had done the right thing by consumers but were then told by regulators to go away and do a different kind of right thing.
- Several firms indicated concerns that, as new technologies and off-grid solutions are increasingly adopted by more affluent households, the costs of the traditional network will be increasingly borne by the less affluent consumers.

ISSUES RAISED BY REGULATORS AND POLICY MAKERS

- Most regulators/policy makers raised concerns about the quality and depth of evidence-based analysis which they see in many of the submissions from consumer advocates. A recurring comment was that the submissions often reflect the lack of resources advocates have to enable them to achieve the depth of economic analysis required.
- Most regulators/policy makers are conscious of the very high workload that regulatory processes are imposing upon a limited population of consumer advocates and the strain that this inevitably imposes.
- Some regulators have been conducting some capacity building in recent years to enhance the skill sets of the consumer advocates with whom they deal.
- Regulators/policy makers said that advocacy groups had, from time to time, demonstrated their value by raising issues which government had not appreciated were of concern. They had also then been instrumental in the development of responses to some of these. Issues relating to embedded networks in caravan parks was cited as a specific instance of this.
- Some regulators were concerned about the ambiguity of processes around consideration and response by firms to hardship cases and were looking to find mechanisms to reduce that ambiguity and to deliver better outcomes both for the hardship clients and retailers.
- Some expressed personal concerns that the consumer protection framework is broken and there were recurring comments that we need to get the consumer protection framework right at a national level.

- Some regulators also expressed a personal concern that some states may be turning inward and being less committed to the concept of a National Energy Market.
- One regulator believed that the current regulatory model had evolved into an adversarial process in which it had become difficult or even impossible for industry and consumers to develop common ground on tariff proposals or rule changes. It was suggested that mechanisms to develop more common ground could help to streamline processes and expedite outcomes.
- Several regulators voiced concern that consumer advocates who spend long periods in their roles and become expert in the process, also become captured by those processes and may not see the value of alternate approaches.

FEARS ABOUT ECA

Most of the people who were interviewed for this project were broadly positive about ECA and its potential to add benefit for consumers (and for industry) in improving consumer consultation in the energy sector. The main misgivings about ECA were:

- A concern that it may spend too much of its time and resources focussed on hardship issues at one end of the market, and also upon new technologies and their implications for wealthier individual consumers at the other end of the market, while failing to focus on the broad bulk of consumers in the middle. ECA is alive to this danger, and has stressed on many occasions that its focus is on all consumers.
- A concern by a small number of interviewees that ECA may not continue to provide ongoing funding for some advocacy groups which had previously received such funding from the panel.
- Some regulators and industry representatives were concerned that if ECA sought to develop a strong “single voice” for consumers, then there was some danger that the diversity of views, reflective of regional/geographical differences in energy markets may be lost.
- A related concern was that consumer advocates in regional areas worried that their views would be overlooked or forgotten in the drive to achieve a national perspective.

HOPES FOR ECA

- It is clear that many stakeholders see considerable value in ECA's access to the COAG Energy Council.
- Most of the people interviewed for this project are looking for ECA to develop and articulate a clear strategic consumer framework, which sets out the desirable directions -- and validates the processes -- for change to deliver better outcomes for consumers.
- There is widespread hope in the sector that ECA will be able to strongly reinforce the quality, timeliness and strength of argument of consumer advocates through providing a stronger technical, economic and legal resource base.
- The three elements of the market also believe that ECA should have a strong focus on capacity building in the advocacy sector but should also directly advocate in its own right. ECA should have its own voice as well as supporting the voices of others. As part of this, ECA needs a large enough in-house level of expertise to be able to maintain continuity of that expertise.
- Some interviewees hoped that ECA might be able to challenge ideas and initiatives discussed by the COAG Energy Council, to ensure that consumer outcomes were more clearly in the council's mind when making decisions.
- Others saw a clear role for ECA in challenging the rules and finding ways to ensure that decision makers are more transparent in their decision making.
- The three elements of the market believe that ECA should adopt a more strategic role in determining what research proposals it supports – in contrast to the demand-driven approach of the CAP.
- The establishment of ECA should enable the sustained funding of groups within its mandate of promoting the long term interests of consumers.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a lot of consumer consultation going on in the Australian energy sector today, using a lot of different approaches. But the current arrangements are not particularly efficient – there is clearly duplication of process and effort. There is only limited evidence that the consultation is effective in achieving beneficial change for consumers. There is a widespread concern that much of the current effort is wasted.

Many energy companies are starting from a low base in consumer consultation. Nevertheless, it is clear that many are making significant efforts to increase engagement with consumers generally and with consumer advocates in particular. In the process, some are finding real value in that engagement, and a few companies are developing effective partnerships with consumer advocates.

Regulators and policy makers appear to value engagement with consumer advocates, but worry about the increasing demands they are placing on a limited advocacy population. They are also concerned about the quality and depth of evidence-based analysis in the submissions from consumer advocates, which they would like to see improved. Some of them are making efforts at capacity building for advocates.

Some of the more experienced and knowledgeable consumer advocates appear to be effective at influencing some of the decisions of industry and regulators. They do this via trusted personal relationships which lead them to being routinely consulted, often in advance of issues being made public. These advocates are able to quote instances where they have had an impact.

Many other advocates tell a different story – one that is marked by large and rising volumes of complex work where they have to make hard choices about where to focus, and where it is often hard to see that they are having an appreciable impact on the decisions of industry and regulators.

There are high levels of goodwill towards ECA across the sector, and a strong expectation that ECA will raise the weight and quality of argument, and the skill set of consumer advocacy in the energy sector. ECA clearly has opportunities to improve the situation for consumer advocates in this sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS --THINGS THAT ECA SHOULD DO

There is clear support for the concept of ECA to play a structured, central role in support of consumer advocacy participants in the various states and territories. Several clear roles have been identified which appear to enjoy varying, but widespread, levels of support amongst consumer advocates, regulators, and industry.

1. Provide Expertise Or Access To Sources Of Expertise

ECA should provide access to expertise that would normally be beyond the resource constraints of the consumer groups themselves. A current example is ECA's decision to fund PIAC's legal expenses in the Australian Competition Tribunal's limited merits review of the AER pricing decision for the NSW networks. Other areas where such expertise may be useful include briefings on new technologies or more complex issues to do with network standards or rules of operation. It could also encompass access to expert economic analysis.

Pursuing this activity will require some balance in approach since ECA will need some in-house expertise of its own, but should also draw upon the expertise of others in the market. In most cases this probably requires ECA to have in place mechanisms which enable such expertise to be on-call or to be developed through collaborative partnerships through targeting of ECA's funding for research.

2. Conduct An Annual Fore-sighting Exercise

It is clear that there exists duplication of issue and effort between agencies and jurisdictions. It is also clear that advocates and regulators agree that the consumer advocates' submissions to regulatory and other review processes would benefit from greater access to expert technical, legal, and economic research data.

Consumer advocates are resource constrained. Were possible it makes sense to have an issue researched once, and a common set of principles or common data sets developed which can then be employed in multiple jurisdictions.

Many consumer groups, regulators, and some industry players, believe that there would be real value in ECA staging an annual fore-sighting discussion which would articulate the known issues and processes which were looming on the horizon for the coming 12-24 months. It could then identify the groups of players (drawn from consumer advocates, academics, industry and/or regulators) who are best suited to focus on each issue, so as to develop some common research/policy development processes, supported by targeted research. This should enable scarce resources to be directed efficiently and to reduce the degree of duplication of effort that many feel characterises existing consumer consultation processes. The fore-sighting process could also serve as a clear

entry point to the development of areas of common ground on issues between industry and consumer advocacy groups.

This fore-sighting process would probably best follow on from meetings of the COAG Energy Council, whose decisions could inform judgements about priorities, but should not be limited only to those priorities. It could also clearly be informed by other existing processes, including annual forums conducted by regulatory agencies, as well as by those issues which emerge from the National Consumer Roundtable on Energy. A number of industry players indicated a strong interest in ECA taking this idea forward, and for providing opportunities for industry and regulators to participate in the process.

With regard to the fore-sighting proposal, it is important to note that what is being proposed here is NOT an annual conference. Rather it is proposed to be an annual event which creates a series of problem-solving teams and related research projects.

3. Establish A Central Information/Opinion Sharing Site

As ECA grows in capability and reputation, it will become an important repository of information and a clearing house for ideas. Its research program, its links with tertiary institutions, and its overseas connections can all be developed to provide a rich repository and access point for consumer advocates in all parts of Australia. This should serve to make their lives easier and to add weight to their advocacy.

To make access to its information and its policy development processes easy and effective, ECA needs to embrace all forms of communications including social media and wikis. It should make use of webinars routine.

4. Develop and implement a program of capacity building for consumer advocates

Industry frequently remarked that the best consumer advocates were those who had been able to acquire deep technical knowledge and a comprehensive overview of how energy markets work in Australia. But there is no easily accessible source of this knowledge and there appear to be only very limited capacity building initiatives undertaken by some regulators and some firms. This begs the question then of how consumer advocates are to acquire this depth of technical, legal and market based knowledge which is clearly valued by industry and regulators alike.

Clearly, ECA could and should play a leading/coordinating role here. This would be best done in collaboration with some of the more experienced consumer advocates, as well as with industry, since the suppliers of energy will often have the requisite knowledge, together with a vested interest in being able to engage with consumer advocates who are arguing from a base of knowledge.

An additional element of this capacity building could also include international experience via short-term scholarships. ECA is already establishing connections with equivalent organisations in other countries and there may be scope to establish opportunities for Australian consumer advocates to gain short term placements with similar organisation overseas.

5. Develop ways to identify where consumer advocates have had an impact

Many consumer advocates were unclear as to how often they were having an impact. While some could point to specific areas where they had been able to achieve positive outcomes for consumers, all were concerned that progress was often difficult to discern.

There appears to be a useful role here for ECA to work with regulators to find ways to more clearly identify and report back on instances where consumer advocates have had an impact, together with improved feedback on issues where consumers did not have an impact and why.

6. Develop Mechanisms For Establishing Common Ground Between Consumer Advocates And Industry

One regulator believed that the current regulatory model had evolved into an adversarial process in which it had become difficult or even impossible for industry and consumers to develop common ground on tariff proposals or rule changes. The same regulator suggested that mechanisms to develop more common ground could help to stream line processes and expedite outcomes, without either side losing anything.

For its part, industry also expressed some exasperation when solutions, which it felt it had developed in consultation with consumers and other stakeholders, were rejected by regulators -- because of a lack of sufficient evidence of consumer support for things being proposed.

Several of the more experienced consumer advocates already do some of this, and made reference to “sorting things out in advance before they went public”, and the importance of using trusted personal relationships to get agreement on approaches to contentious issues.

There seems to be clear scope for doing more of this, and developing mechanisms to tease out the common ground between consumer advocates and industry in developing submissions for regulatory processes, and finding ways to enable regulators to accept the common ground elements of submissions as being genuine.

The proposed fore-sighting process can clearly play an important part in identifying areas of potentially common ground, and also in then delineating the boundaries of consensus, where they can be achieved.

In the first instance, it may be appropriate for ECA to conduct a workshop to better develop this proposal, prior to the first fore-sighting workshops.

List of Organisations and People Interviewed Attachment One

Powercorp
Transgrid
Australian Energy Markets Commission (AEMC)
CHOICE
Office of New South Wales Energy and Water Ombudsman (EWON)
Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)
Energy Networks Association of Australia (ENA)
St Vincent de Paul Society
South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS)
SA Energy and Water Ombudsman (EWOSA)
SA Power Networks
Energex
Business South Australia (South Australia Chamber of Commerce & Industry)
Department of State Development SA
Essential Services Commission of SA (ESCOSA)
Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TASCOSS)
Energy Users Association of Australia (EUAA)
Energy Retailers Association of Australia (ERAA)
Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC)
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW (IPART)
TEC
Financial and Consumer Rights Council (FCRC)
Jemena
AGL
Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre (CUAC)
Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC)
Kildonan Uniting Care
Council of the Aging (COTA)
Essential Services Commission of Victoria
CME
Australian Energy Regulator (AER)
NSW Department of Industry
Far North Queensland Energy Users Network (FNQ)
Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO)

ECA Consumer Consultation Project Questions Used In Interviews

- A. Role of your organisation
- B. Which regulatory/industry/policy processes do you engage with consumers/regulators/industry?
- C. Are these regular or one off/issues-based?
- D. Are the consultation mechanisms statutorily-based?
- E. Have these changed in recent years?
- F. What are the more effective ways of engaging...forums, submissions, focus groups....?
- G. How do the most effective consumer advocates engage in the process?
- H. Is the resource cost worth the consumer benefit?
- I. Have you developed, or been involved in any training, feedback, capacity building.....to assist in building effective consumer engagement?
- J. What changes would you make, if any in the existing consumer consultative arrangements?
- K. What are your hopes and fears for ECA?

Attachment Two

CUAC is on or attend the following ongoing groups:

Jemena Electricity Customer Council

United Energy Customer Consultative Committee

AER EDPR Consultative Group

AEMO Consumer Forum

AEMO Retail Market Consultative Forum (sometimes)

AEMO NEM Wholesale Consultative Forum (sometimes)

AEMO Gas Retail Consultative Forum (sometimes)

AEMO Gas Wholesale Consultative Forum (sometimes)

AEMC Consumer Priorities Forums

AER Customer Consultative Group

EWOV Community Consultation Group

AMI MAC (though group hasn't met since Minister's appointment)

ERAA affordability working group on energy hardship fact sheet

CAV Working Together Forum

Plus lots more for specific projects or processes.