

Board Communique: August 2019

The Energy Consumers Australia Board met in Sydney on 15 & 16 August 2019

Board Stakeholder Forum, 15 August 2019

The Board met with consumer advocates, researchers, energy company representatives, regulators, and officials from the NSW Government to discuss priority matters for household and small business energy consumers.

Rosemary Sinclair, CEO, Energy Consumers Australia, opened discussions with a brief update on current issues and ECA's priorities.

A diverse panel of ECA grant recipients then had a lively discussion on the theme *Today's consumers defining tomorrow's opportunities*:

- Liuanga Palu and Thuy Nguyen - *Voices for Power* - Sydney Alliance
- Robyn Robinson - *Systemic training for energy advocates* - Council on the Ageing (COTA)
- Peter Strong - *Future proofing energy bills for small business* - Council of Small Business Associations of Australia (COSBOA)
- Mark Byrne - *Distributed energy resources (DER) in equitable decarbonisation of the NEM* - Total Environment Centre (TEC)
- Yolande Strengers - *Our Grid: Engaging energy consumers towards the Future Grid* - Emerging Technologies Research Lab, Monash University (joint project with Centre for Urban Research, RMIT University).

Link through for more information and the outputs of each grant. These grant projects are among a large number that have achieved significant influence or impact.

Both [COTA](#) and [Sydney Alliance](#) are supporting stronger consumer advocacy by bringing forward new voices. COTA has built a national network of skilled advocates working together to promote the interests of older energy consumers. Sydney Alliance is using an innovative approach of 'community organising' to engage with the energy concerns of hundreds of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Sydney. These consumers are building an effective voice for their concerns and creating local advocacy for better energy outcomes.

[COSBOA](#) worked nationally in collaboration with other small business organisations to bring forward further evidence about why high energy prices are so challenging for small businesses. They are now using that research to advocate on what small businesses say they need to better address those challenges.

[TEC](#) is developing a concept of 'energy citizens' to facilitate changes to policy and regulation so the energy system is more consumer-focused. This recognises the growing number of consumers using distributed energy but has gone beyond that to giving consumers more control through a new [demand response](#) mechanism. The [Monash University project](#), is also aimed at the energy system having a greater focus on consumers. This research has contributed strong evidence on how industry can support and encourage consumers to take up new products and services for greater shared benefit.

The Board and audience continued the discussion in a question and answer session with a focus on the learnings from each project and opportunities for further collaboration by stakeholders.

Board Meeting, 16 August 2019

The Board commenced the meeting by reflecting on the discussion at the [Stakeholder Forum](#), noting the value of engagement at these events and the opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas and collaboration.

The five grant project teams presented to the Board on their work and discussed the action research program that each used to create greater understanding, influence and impact to benefit house hold and small business energy consumers.