

## **Board Communique: August 2020**

### **The Energy Consumers Australia Board met via video conference on 20 August 2020**

The Board discussed a number of governance matters before focusing on recent grants projects.

As it has in previous years, the Board invited three grant recipients to discuss their projects and, in particular, how their work has supported change that has benefited energy consumers.

Directors heard from three projects which have proved influential with decision-makers – and that demonstrate the different dimensions of the grants program – supporting advocacy, research and building infrastructure to support advocates. As two of the three projects were research, the Board also heard from a consumer advocate who had used the grant to support their advocacy.

Dr Iain MacGill briefed the Board on the Tariff Assessment Tool developed by the Centre for Energy and Environment Markets, University of NSW. The Tool enables advocates to assess the impact on different groups of consumers of options for network tariffs, including how tariffs may be reflected in retail prices. It has been used by advocates, as well as others in government and industry. Dean Lombard, Senior Policy Advisor at Renew, and a member of the project Reference Group, spoke of the value Renew had found in the Tool.

Prof Ross Gordon outlined his research project *Exploring the nexus of energy use, ageing, and health and wellbeing among older Australians* which used quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to understand the role energy plays in supporting the health and wellbeing of older Australians. Robyn Robinson, who coordinates an energy volunteer network within the Council on the Ageing (COTA), briefed the Board on how she and her colleagues had used the research to support their advocacy for older households.

Kellie Caught, from the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), briefed the Board on how ACOSS is working with a wide range of advocates to drive better outcomes for consumers in the transforming energy market. She focused particularly on the two of the five workstreams funded through the ECA grant – to improve energy performance standards of housing, and to ensure that vulnerable and low-income consumers are not left behind in a move to digitalized and decentralized markets. ACOSS reports to date can be seen [here](#).