

## **Energy Consumers Australia Board Meeting Communique**

**13 February 2015**

ECA formally began its operations as of January 30 2015. Its Constitution is available on the website.

Board members took up their positions as of that date - see the biographies elsewhere on the ECA website.

As its first priority, the meeting of the Board of ECA on February 13 tackled a range of important initial establishment considerations, including:

### **Establishment Matters**

- acceptance of the drafts of a range of governance, operational and financial policies and procedures, and ongoing processes for their further development;
- the establishment of a sub-committee to interview potential auditors;
- authorisations for bank accounts, insurances, and processes to investigate and quickly decide upon matters such as accounting and financial systems;
- approval of initial IT providers;
- approval for initial temporary staff to provide administrative support and continuity for grant holders;
- seeking support from the regulatory and related organisations for staff who can be deployed on secondment to support ECA.

### **Recruitment of CEO**

Crucial to ECA's ability to perform effectively, the Board resolved to advertise immediately for the organisation's CEO and to leave open the location of the ECA offices (with the caveat that the office needs to be within the NEM). See the ad on the ECA website.

### **Grants**

The Board discussed at some length the transition from the Consumer Advocacy Panel to ECA, and noted its commitment to the grants process and the importance for grant recipients to be given transition clarity and continuity while ECA considers its priorities for its grants process. ECA has taken over the Panel's current grants with their existing terms and

conditions, and a decision was taken to rebrand relevant forms (applications and so on), in the interim, with the ECA logo.

The Board has commenced preparations to seek proposals for grant allocations for 2015/16 and will publish details later in March. [www.energyconsumersaustralia.com](http://www.energyconsumersaustralia.com)

### **Strategic Priorities**

Shortly after its formal establishment on January 30 2015, a wide range of stakeholders - consumer and business peak bodies, regulators, ombudsman offices, a range of welfare and community groups as well as the Commonwealth and state jurisdictions - were contacted to provide input into the Board's consideration of ECA Strategic Priorities for 2015. The Board was very grateful for these submissions and the detail provided for its consideration. The creation of the Strategy - which will form the basis for an ongoing and living document for ECA - remains a priority task for the Board.

### **Stakeholder Contact**

A major function of ECA is to maintain a wide range of stakeholder relationships both in the development of its priorities and work programs, and in the development of its policy and advocacy positions. The priorities for stakeholder liaison were considered; bearing in mind the absence of a CEO at this point, the Board agreed that the constitutional emphasis on residential consumers and small business should guide its initial meetings schedules with stakeholders. As the organisation is established, a wider outreach can be pursued.

The Board also noted that it would seek to facilitate its outreach with stakeholders when holding its meetings; wherever feasible, ECA would hold its Board meetings in geographic locations that would enable access to the Board by consumer, community and small business representatives in their home state.

### **Policy Matters**

The Board agreed that in the absence of a CEO and policy staff, it would take some time for ECA to establish its strong presence in the market as an advocate for energy consumers. Nevertheless, it noted the important current matter before the AER in respect of the NSW and ACT network businesses. The Board resolved to send a letter conveying its views to the AER in relation to this matter. See the letter elsewhere on the ECA website.

### **Reference Committee**

The Board noted the constitutional requirement to establish a Reference Committee and welcomed the opportunity to create a body which could serve as not only a sounding board and forum for stakeholder views, but also an avenue for deliberation and advice from its constituency. The Board placed on high priority the task of completing the establishment of the Reference Committee and selection of initial membership and set a goal to hold the initial Reference Committee meeting in conjunction with a Board meeting.