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Energy reform to put consumers in driver's seat, but must be extended to households

The Australian Energy Market Commission's draft rule change will see industrial consumers paid to lower energy use at peak times and signaled an important pivot to value the role of consumers and their flexible use of energy in the National Electricity Market.

Energy Consumers Australia CEO Rosemary Sinclair said consumers have been telling us for some time that they want greater control and lower bills and this reform has the potential to deliver on both those outcomes.

"Our research shows more than half of all consumers are willing to lower their energy use at peak times and even more are prepared to act with a financial incentive," Ms Sinclair said.

"Paying business consumers to lower energy use at peak times will help optimise the existing energy system and bring prices down and to that extent it provides cost savings to all consumers.

"But we also need to empower individual household consumers to participate in demand response services and bring down their energy costs.

"We understand the need for consumer protections but look forward to quick progress by the AEMC in settling these issues so that households and small businesses can benefit directly."

The rule change is historic because it was put forward by representatives of consumers and Ms Sinclair said more of these consumer generated reforms would drive lower costs.

"For too long, we've reached for the same expensive options to handle periods of high electricity demand such as big investments in the poles and wires or simply generating more electricity at very high cost.

"Paying consumers to lower demand at peak times will help us transition to a system which is far more flexible, working with consumers to get the best outcome at lowest cost.

"Introducing a new class of service provider to enable consumers to participate in this reform is smart, inserting new competition and innovation."

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