



Grants at a Glance: Queensland

1. About Energy Consumers Australia

Energy Consumers Australia works with consumer advocates to be a strong and effective voice on energy issues that matter to communities.

Our Grants Program is a cornerstone to how we advance consumers' needs. This program funds high quality and innovative research and advocacy initiatives to benefit energy consumers and address pressing energy issues for households and small businesses.

We are proud to have supported a wide range of grants with the potential to fundamentally change the way Queenslanders engage with, and benefit from, the energy market. This document showcases some of our recent Queensland projects and their impact in three main themes::

- » **Consumers at the heart of the energy transition**
- » **Energy efficiency**
- » **Small businesses**



2. Consumers at the Heart of the Energy Transition

St Vincent de Paul Society:

Tariff tracking, energy price, and market analysis in the NEM post price resets

St Vincent de Paul Society is investigating how to make the energy market more transparent, particularly for consumers who can least afford to be locked into expensive energy deals. This project has been monitoring and reporting on changes to residential energy tariffs since 2010. National and state specific reports are released annually, providing new insights to consumers, advocates, and other stakeholders. These reports break down electricity, gas and solar price movements, market developments, such as new entrants and products, as well as policy changes.

This project has informed numerous regulatory and policy reviews, while consumer groups and other stakeholders use the reports to produce evidence-based submissions. It also encouraged ECA to establish its own tracking project aimed at business customers, the Small and Medium Enterprise Retail Tracker.

The latest Queensland Tariff Tracker report shows

- The Default Market Offer (DMO) bill increased by 11.3% for single rate and 12.5% for controlled load.
- The average electricity market offer has increased by \$855 or 44% compared to July 2021 and many retailers in QLD have actively encouraged customers to leave or ceased offering market offers all together.
- Gas bills have increased between 5% to 11% between July 2021 and July 2022.
- The average annual bill is \$900 less for solar households compared to non-solar households.



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Read the full report for more insights about changes in tariffs in Queensland by scanning the QR code.

The University of Queensland:

Charting farmers' experience of tariff switching and understanding of electricity tariffs to enable better decisions making

Network tariffs and retailers' offers can be complex and difficult to understand. According to our latest Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey (June 2022), over three quarters of Queensland households have not switched their energy companies or plans in the past year. For small businesses, a change in tariffs can either increase fixed costs or generate significant operational savings.

This grant has collected rich, qualitative first-hand accounts of tariff switching as experienced by Queensland farmers. This information will be used to understand how farmers can be better supported through targeted advocacy and tailored policies.

Queensland Farmers' Federation:

Articulating regional consumers' emerging energy market demand to enable innovative equitable integration of complex DERs in Queensland

Regional consumers are often those most disadvantaged by our energy system. This project will help drive an equitable energy transition for regional consumers by providing a comprehensive understanding of the drivers, opportunities, and challenges for the adoption of complex consumer energy resources in regional QLD communities.

By gaining new insights into regional consumer attitudes towards virtual power plants (VPPs), microgrids, and community batteries, this grant will propose policy and planning recommendations for these technologies in regional communities. These recommendations will be tailored for local and national industry and government decision makers to enable more equitable access to energy.

The University of Queensland:

Reclaimed PV panels market assessment

True to its Sunshine State label, the Australian PV Institute (2022) estimates that 42.7% of dwellings in QLD have solar PV panels installed, making it the nation's leader. As panels age and are replaced with newer ones, it's essential to consider how to minimise waste and promote a circular economy approach. The University of Queensland is exploring the end-of-life landscape for used PV panels. They are looking to understand the potential customers and value streams available for used PV panels, and to identify any market or policy barriers to reusing, repurposing, and recycling PV panels.

The project will provide new insights into consumer attitudes to solar panel reuse and propose recommendations to policy design and industry practice to enable access to solar for consumers who are locked out due to financial constraints.

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3. Energy Efficiency

As the cost of living and energy prices rise, home energy efficiency is an effective way to reduce energy consumption, improve thermal comfort, and avoid bill shock. The decision to raise energy efficiency standards in the National Construction Code from 6 to 7 stars for new homes is a major win for consumers. However, existing residences perform very poorly: 73% of existing homes are 3 stars or less, which means that, in Brisbane, the average annual home electricity costs (for heating and cooling only) are more than \$1,100. In comparison, a 7-star home in Brisbane would cost you less than \$400 per year to keep it thermally comfortable.

Advocating for all Australians to live in healthy and comfortable homes is a priority for Energy Consumers Australia, and we support grant projects that ensure all consumer voices are heard, especially the disadvantaged, in the transition to low-energy homes.

Energy Consumers Australia has funded a number of grants conducting advocacy and research to achieve minimum energy efficiency standards in rental properties. This is especially important for Queensland, given that one third of Queenslanders rent their homes, above the national average. Three energy efficiency grants who are active in Queensland that we are supporting are:

1. Energetic Communities: Liveable Homes for All, Effective advocacy to shift power and increase access to energy efficiency for renters
2. Queensland Council of Social Services: Including Energy Efficiency in Minimal Rental Housing Standards in Queensland
3. Better Renting: Healthy Homes for Renters

These grants have already generated wins such as:

- » Conducting community engagement and educational campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of energy efficiency minimal standards for rental properties in creating healthy, equitable and environmentally friendly homes.
- » The Queensland Government broadening its consultation about rental accommodation to allow more voices – including everyday consumers – to be heard.
- » The creation of a national collaboration of over 115 organisations to address the lack of energy efficiency standards for rental properties.
- » Empowering renters and equipping them with the tools to become advocates on this issue.



4. Small Businesses

Cotton Australia:

Irrigators and the flow on benefits of regionally embedded generation

This project investigated how to better align farmer and network business interests over energy generated on farms, as farmers face challenges connecting this energy to the grid. The project included partners such as the NSW Irrigators' Council, Queensland Farmers' Federation and the UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures and successfully created a conversation between farmers, and the two rural electricity distributors, in both Queensland and NSW.

The project conducted two key pieces of research. The first identified barriers for primary producers to connect consumer energy resources (CER) to distribution networks. The second investigated a process for farmers and networks to address technical barriers to connection. The project put forward several recommendations including: improving communication between networks and farmers, better sharing of information about opportunities for farmers to use CER to address local network constraints, and trialling projects to improve the understanding of key issues.

Business Australia:

Next steps for small businesses' energy policy

This project researches small businesses' relationship with five aspects of the energy market: advice, procurement, energy efficiency upgrades, renewables, and net carbon zero. It gauges small businesses' awareness of and take up of each and most critically, assesses the barriers to further uptake. This insight will then inform recommendations for policymakers regarding the future design of small business oriented energy policies. It expands on earlier small business oriented studies by looking beyond the energy bill to other aspects of small businesses' relationships with energy.

The outcomes will inform Government program design, and non-government organisations' delivery of energy advice and services to business. This will drive improvements to existing service offerings and potentially lead to the creation of new services to address missing pieces in the business energy information and service landscape.



5. Find Out More

Energy Consumers Australia proudly supports a wide range of influential and high-impact grants in Queensland and across Australia.



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Find out more about our grants program.



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Sign up to our newsletter here.

Stay up to date on the latest in energy news by joining our mailing list to hear more from Australia's leading voice for residential and small business consumers.





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