

Draft Board Communique: July 2023

The Energy Consumers Australia Board met in Hobart on 20 July 2023

Board Site Visits – 19 July

The Board met with advisors from Minister Barnett's office and with the TasNetworks executive team and Customer Council, all of whom generously shared their knowledge and insights. TasNetworks owns, operates, and maintains the electricity transmission and distribution network across the state and facilitates large-scale renewable energy generation connections to the network. The Board would like to thank TasNetworks for providing Energy Consumers Australia for hosting ECA and providing us with a tour of its control room.

During their engagements, the Board heard about a number of issues affecting Tasmanian consumers including the need for an increase in energy efficient housing stock, the impacts of the recent increase in power bills for low-income and other households as well as small business and the need for more EV charging infrastructure to meet demand.

It was encouraging to hear about the range of support that the Tasmanian Government is providing for Tasmanian households and small businesses facing energy hardship. The Board urged the Tasmanian Government to continue to do everything within its power to ensure that no one is left behind as Tasmanians, like Australians across the country, grapple with this cost-of-living crisis.

Board Governance Meeting

The 20 July 2023 Board Governance Meeting focused on several governance and operational matters. The Board discussed planning for Energy Consumers Australia's flagship event, Foresighting Forum 2024. The Board also heard an update on the Consumer Energy Resources Research Project and approved a new budget for this work.

With substantial energy price increases coming into effect from 1 July, the Board examined the advice for consumers that ECA is providing, which will help them take what actions they can to lower their energy use and improve their bills.

The Board recognises that the price increases are well beyond the expectations of consumers, who are concerned that prices are unaffordable and will continue to rise into the future. ECA will work with the ACCC to examine retailer behaviour. Consumers need to see greater transparency about why this level of price rise is necessary and justifiable to avoid further undermining consumer trust in the market. They are looking to governments to protect their interests and to provide clarity on future prices.