

ActewAGL Distribution (AAD) Energy Consumer Reference Council (ECRC)

Meeting 20 Minutes 11 October 2017, 09:30-12:30

ActewAGL Depot Greenway

Attendees

Allan Williams (Chairman)

Rick Lord	Council of the Ageing
Glenys Patulny	Tuggeranong Community Council
Kevin Cox	Gungahlin Community Council
Anna Evans	Engineers Australia, Canberra Division
Susan Helyar	ACT Council of Social Services

Guests

Simon Grice	Senior Manager, Utilities Technical Regulation, ACT Government
Vanessa Margules	Senior Project Officer, ACT Government
Daniel Harding	Manager Energy Policy, EPSDD, ACT Government

ActewAGL Distribution

Paul Walshe	Director, Marketing and Corporate Affairs
Peter Cunningham	Regulatory Manager, Asset Management
Emily Brown	Manager, Regulatory Pricing
Chris Bell	Manager, Electricity Networks Price Review
Michael Monck	Manager, Power of Choice Program
Ricky Martin	Manager, Account - Major Customer
Kosta Didimiotis	Manager, Sales and Business Development
Rowan McMurray	Principle Engineer Technical Regulation and Innovation
Helen Leayr	Consumer Engagement
Lina Blair	Consumer Engagement

Apologies

John Sullivan	Australian National University
Michael Hopkins	Master Builders Association
Ron Thompson	Canberra Business Chamber
Eileen Newmarch	Energised Consumers Project Officer
Edwina Robinson	Executive Officer, SEE-Change
Adina Cirson	Property Council of Australia, ACT

Papers distributed prior to the meeting:

- Agenda meeting #20
- Draft Minutes of meeting #19
- ECRC Survey Results

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chair, Allan Williams, welcomed Council members and Simon Grice, Vanessa Margules and Daniel Harding from the ACT Government. Apologies were noted.

Review and ratify minutes of meeting # 19

Minutes of meeting #19 were ratified.

All action items were completed. It was noted that guest speaker from QCOSS has not been invited at this stage. Suggested that Helen Leayr and Jo Fisher speak with QCOSS to share ideas around customer education.

2 Powerline Fire Safety Policy

Mr Simon Grice, ACT Government presented to the meeting on proposed changes to the vegetation management.

Proposed to transfer the inspection and rectification of powerlines on ACT Government owned urban land to ActewAGL from 1/7/18.

The requirements will be guided by the technical code which will specify clearance distances and accreditation requirements of workers.

ActewAGL Distribution are currently working with ACT Government on the technical regulations.

Discussion and feedback included:

- Customers will be interested in the vegetation clearance distances, particularly in areas with parklands and trees valued by the local community.
- It was noted that all lines are currently patrolled on an annual basis and this will continue.
- It was suggested that a collaborative approach with consultation was required. It was suggested that ACT Government engage with community groups that may be concerned as soon as possible, before Christmas and before the technical regulations are finalised.
- It was noted the cost pass-through to ActewAGL Distribution customers would be approximately \$10 per year. It was suggested the community would also be interested in what the ACT Government proposes to do with financial savings achieved by passing this role on to ActewAGL Distribution.

3 ECRC member updates

Mr Williams invited members to put forward matters for discussion and updates from previous meetings.

There were no updates provided.

Ms Glenys Patulny highlighted the importance of energy vouchers being promoted clearly. It was noted that information is available on ActewAGL Retail website.

4 Power of Choice

Mr Michael Monck, ActewAGL provided an update to the meeting on metering changes taking effect from 1 December 2017. They were working through three areas:

- Industry consultation and information – builders, developers, staff. It was noted that only new houses, or renovations are initially impacted due to the installation of new meters.
- Customer connections staff are being briefed to handle inquires and provide information on the change.
- Delivery – retailers being ready for installation.

Customers can now access their usage information through the Portal. Feedback from the ECRC members who participated in the trial was considered in finalising the Portal which was now being managed within the business as usual area.

Mr Daniel Harding, Manager Energy Policy, ACT Government briefed the meeting on the ACT Government plans for providing information to the community on the Power of Choice changes. This will largely be done through the website; on what is a smart meter, consumer protections, safety etc. Information will come out in mid-November and includes a Ministerial announcement and letterbox drop. Retailers have a responsibility to inform their customers.

It was noted that the ACT Government will be responsible for licencing and ensuring safety standards are met. Inspections will occur, particularly during the early stages of the new system; penalties include loss of electrical licence.

During faults and emergencies, ActewAGL Distribution will continue to be able to restore power, even if the problem is with the meter. Retailers have legislative timeframes to meet in terms of fixing the meter.

It was noted that vulnerable customers, including renters, may need assistance to ensure they have appropriate information around metering options and associated tariffs.

5 EvoEnergy

Mr Paul Walshe briefed the meeting on the new branding for ActewAGL Distribution as EvoEnergy. He noted it would be introduced from 1 January 2018 to meet new regulatory ring-fencing requirements.

All services remain the same, branding will gradually be introduced from late November.

6 Regulatory Matters

Ms Emily Brown, Regulatory Pricing Manager, ActewAGL, presented to the meeting on the Electricity Network Plan 2019-24. She provided the following:

- Tariff Structure Statement update
- Framework and Approach update
- Forecasts of customer numbers and energy volumes
- Consultation feedback to date

Tariff Structure Statement - continued movement towards more cost-reflective tariffs, the second Tariff Structure Statement will be submitted on 1 January 2018.

- Including a peak demand tariff as the basic option, which can be opted out back to a time of use tariff. It was noted that a customer concerned about costs of the peak demand tariff can have a retrospective replacement bill generated on the residential TOU tariff. This initiative was well-received by the meeting and seen as a positive approach to allowing customer time to adjust to more cost-reflective tariffs.
- It was suggested by the meeting, that information be provided to financial counsellors to help them explain the bill, including the option to have an alternative bill generated (TOU).

Framework and approach

An update on the framework and approach was presented noting that it was released by the AER in July 2017 and is available on their website.

Forecasts

Ms Emily Brown provided the meeting with a graph that showed draft forecast customer numbers and energy consumption. It was noted that even though customer numbers continue to increase, due to energy efficiency, total consumption does not increase as quickly.

Consumer engagement

Ms Emily Brown advised she is meeting with the Retailers in October. The Power Panel survey is currently underway.

Key preliminary feedback from customers to date included:

- 48% were comfortable with the current strategy around reliability and cost trade-off.
- Maintaining security of supply and understanding customer impacts are important with respect to new technology.
- 70% of customer are willing to shift due to price signals to get a saving on their bill.

7 Australian Energy Prices Presentation series

Mr Peter Cunningham, ActewAGL Distribution gave a presentation on the structure of the Australian energy market for the information of ECRC members. This is part of a broader series to ensure good understanding of the energy market by ECRC members.

The presentation covered the National Energy Market, the Regulatory environment and technical and pricing reviews.

8 ActewAGL SMS Demand Trial

Mr Rowan McMurray, ActewAGL provided a brief to the ECRC meeting on a customer trial on one of the Belconnen electricity network feeders to see if customers would respond to requests to reduce energy consumption (through SMS messages) and to see if consumption during peak hours could be impacted.

The results of the trial were promising but not conclusive due to low numbers participating and difficulties identifying actual impact on the feeder (due to the small numbers and relative energy consumption on the feeder).

ActewAGL Distribution is considering further trials in the future.

Members of the ECRC supported continued trials and expressed interest in receiving further information on any results.

9 ECRC survey

Ms Leayr updated the meeting on the results of the ECRC Survey which provided positive feedback on the operation of the ECRC as well as some suggested improvements. She thanked those members that participated.

10 Draft post meeting communique

The presentations were noted for inclusion in the Communique.

11 Next meeting

A proposed meeting schedule for 2018 was tabled. It will be discussed at the next meeting.

Next meeting – 6 December 2017

12 Meeting close

Mr Williams closed the meeting at 12:30pm