

TasCOSS National Electricity Market Consumer Advocacy Project (No. 211)

Second Project Report 2006-07, February 2007

This project, involving research and advocacy on national and jurisdictional electricity issues on behalf of Tasmanian domestic consumers (end users), commenced with funding from the Panel in July 2006. This report is the second report for the 2006-07 year, and covers the period November 2006 - February 2007.

Participation in the national NEM consumer advocacy network

TasCOSS has continued to play an active role, as the only Tasmanian participant, in the national network of electricity consumer advocates coordinated by the Consumer Action Law Centre. This has involved attendance at a national 'Roundtable' meeting in Melbourne in November, 2006, as well as participation in several national telephone hook-ups in the reporting period. It also involved collaboration on a joint submission to the Energy Reform Implementation Group (see below).

TasCOSS has also been involved in collaborative briefing of, and ongoing discussions with consumer representatives on national stakeholder consultative committees, specifically the Retail Policy Working Group's (RPWG) Stakeholder Reference Group, two of the Energy Reform Implementation Group's reference groups, and the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources Smart Meter Stakeholder Working Group.

Participation in national councils of social service energy policy meeting

TasCOSS attended a national meeting of councils of social service energy policy officers (coordinated by ACOSS) to discuss national energy market reform issues, the move to a national regulatory framework, and to identify intervention points in these processes that will maximize protection for low income and disadvantaged consumers.

Submission to the MCE Secretariat on the Retail Policy Working Group's *Working Paper No. 1 (December 2006)*

TasCOSS made a submission on the first *Working Paper* released by the RPWG, having judged that its subjects are of central importance to residential energy consumers in a competitive market situation. Although Tasmanian residential consumers have not yet experienced retail competition, it is likely that they will in several years time (expected in 2010, pending the outcome of a public interest test), and will therefore benefit, along with other consumers, from the inclusion of strong consumer protection measures in the national regulatory regime. The first *Working Paper* dealt with the following issues:

- Retailer obligation to supply small customers
- Retailer-small customer market contracts, and
- Retailer-small customer marketing.

See attached copy of submission.

Joint submission to the Energy Reform Implementation Group (ERIG) *Discussion Papers, November 2006 (December 2006)*

TasCOSS participated in a joint submission to the Energy Reform Implementation Group on its *Discussion Papers* on market structures, transmission and energy financial markets. The joint submission focuses on those issues raised in the *Discussion Papers* that are most likely to affect small consumers.

Other partners in the joint submission are consumer-focused advocacy organisations from each state, and include:

- Alternative Technology Association (Vic)
- Australian Council of Social Service (national)
- Centre for Consumer and Credit Law (Qld)
- Consumer Action Law Centre (Vic)
- Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre (Vic)
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre (NSW)
- Queensland Consumers Association (Qld)
- Total Environment Centre (NSW)
- Tenants Union of Victoria (Vic)
- South Australian Council of Social Service (SA)
- Unitingcare Wesley Adelaide (SA)
- WA Council of Social Service (WA)
- Kildonan Child and Family Services (Vic) and
- Victorian Council of Social Service (Vic).

See attached copy of joint submission.

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