



Electricity Advocacy Worker Resource Development Project **Plan**

Executive Summary

The National Electricity Market (NEM) commenced trading on December 13 1998 as a part of the Australian Power Supply Industry's deregulation process. The NEM is intended to promote competition at each stage in the electricity generation and supply chain to allow end users maximum choice in their purchasing. The forming of this market has seen the advent of a number of complex bodies and organisations which in turn have raised a multitude of complex issues for consumers and advocacy workers. One of these issues is the affordability of electricity.

Affordability of electricity is essential to maintaining a decent standard of living in our community. This is clearly of particular relevance to people who live in low income households who may not be aware that they have access to the level of choice that is available in the National Electricity Market.

The primary purpose of this project is to enable end users of electricity to participate in the SACOSS policy development process through raising awareness of electricity issues and encouraging low income consumers to provide a strong and independent voice about their rights and needs in relation to electricity issues. This will be achieved through the development of a resource that frontline advocacy workers (such as financial counsellors and case workers) can use to build on their existing advocacy skills when dealing with individual or group advocacy situations.

The resource will significantly contribute to the development of electricity advocacy in South Australia and promote consumer voice within our state.

SACOSS has received funding from the National Consumers Advocacy Panel to undertake this project and it will run until 30 June 2007. SACOSS is the peak body for social service organisations in South Australia and believes in justice, opportunity and shared wealth for all South Australians. Our significant membership includes peak bodies in the community sector, service delivery agencies and concerned individuals who share our vision, values and purpose. SACOSS members offer such services as counselling, family support, emergency relief, emergency accommodation, advocacy, information and referral to people in crisis, people with

disabilities, migrants and refugees, youth, aged, people on low incomes and those otherwise disadvantaged.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this project is to enable end users to participate in the SACOSS policy development process in respect to electricity access and affordability for low income South Australians.

The project's outputs will strongly correlate with elements of the SACOSS Strategic Plan including our values of collaboration, inclusion and dignity as well as elements of our purpose such as harnessing the views of the community to achieve progressive improvement of the quality of life for those most in need.

Project Background

SACOSS has demonstrated previous capacity to undertake successful projects with Advocacy Panel funding. The establishment of the National Electricity Market in 1998 has presented consumers and advocates with a myriad of issues including building a community knowledge base about market issues and understanding effective advocacy techniques. As evidenced by previous projects undertaken with Advocacy Panel funding (such as the SACOSS ECAT Project) SACOSS remains particularly well positioned to provide support and advice to organisations who work with end users to resolve their electricity issues.

The output from this project will be a contemporary, flexible resource and a formal process to implement this resource in a way that is relevant and accessible for targeted end user groups. It is envisioned that it would be most effective to provide this resource in CD-ROM form to allow electronic storage of the initial information kit with the capacity for e-mail updates to be sent as the project material requires updating or the need for new materials is identified.

The project will continue to enhance SACOSS's role as an effective systems advocate in respect to electricity access and affordability for low income South Australians

Objectives

1. The primary objective is to increase the capacity of frontline workers and consumers in relation to their advocacy skills.
2. The secondary objective is to enhance SACOSS role as a systemic advocate for low income consumers in respect to electricity affordability and access

Strategic Context

SACOSS Goals	SACOSS Actions	Electricity Advocacy Worker Resource Development Project Actions
FAIR and JUST Public Policy	<i>Communication with community and member organisations</i> <i>Research and</i>	Consultation with consumers and workers will identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing procedure and

	<i>development by qualified and experienced people</i>	resources. Literature search of existing resources and discussion with workers and consumers will identify existing levels of knowledge and the need for development
A STRONG and CREDIBLE VOICE	<i>Working with organisations and individuals who share our vision</i> <i>Seeking advice from member organisations and key influencers</i> <i>Developing and implementing targeted communication strategies</i>	Development of resources relevant and appropriate to the sector Resources informed by the needs of and use by the sector Engaging workers and consumers to facilitate the research and development of the resource
A STRONG and COHESIVE SECTOR	<i>Coordinating and leading member responses to the community sector and public policy issues</i> <i>Facilitating discussions, good working relationships and alliances between organisations</i> <i>Building and strengthening advice and assistance to community service organisations in a way that increases the capacity of the sector and recognises its diversity</i>	Resources to provide information, skill development and tools for responding to specific and unique electricity issues. Collaboration with peak bodies to develop and apply resources to the respective part of the sector Workers will receive the resource and assistance with facilitating its implementation. They will develop capacity through the resource to respond to individual and group issues and contribute to their own development.

Project Overview

The overall approach to the project is as follows:

PROJECT PHASES

1. **Literature review** – this phase will encompass reviewing the current materials that are available to frontline workers to consult when assessing client need. This will be undertaken through assessing worker knowledge levels through a self assessment of skills survey, a review of worker reported

resources and research into currently available materials used on a national scale.

2. **Assessment of literature review** – this phase will involve reviewing the literature discovered, identifying the gaps and making sure that worker need and resource gaps are appropriately identified.
3. **Developing worker resource** – this phase will develop the resource.
4. **Identification of implementation methods** – this phase will identify how and when and in what form the resource will be able to be implemented.
5. **Implementation of the resource** – the phase will implement the resource into SACOSS member organisations where requested.

Project Delivery

Outcomes

- Strengthening relationships between SACOSS, its members and the community sector
- Facilitating collaborative working relationships amongst members and frontline workers to promote skill development and assist in the creation of new resources
- Forming targeted communication strategies with and among frontline workers, consumers, peak bodies and the sector
- Improving the capacity of consumers, workers and sector members generally to contribute to their own development
- Demonstrating best practice for the sector in developing new and innovative resources

Outputs

- A baseline survey of frontline workers which will provide information regarding the level that they feel their current skills are at
- Facilitation of meetings and forums where required to obtain information from workers and consumers as to their needs and requirements from an advocacy resource
- Development of an advocacy resource
- Continuing of the activities of the SACOSS Utilities Task Group
- Relaunching the SACOSS Utilities e-group formed during previous SACOSS energy projects
- Producing regular information and updates for SACOSS Policy Council as required or requested
- Engage the sector, advocacy workers and consumers in identifying gaps in frontline worker skills, knowledge and existing advocacy resources
- Develop a set of materials that can be updated and used as a resource by frontline workers for advocacy work with the target consumer groups.
- Facilitate the implementation of the resource into the sector and help support the application.

Scope

The scope for this project work includes:

- Reviewing existing resources available to the sector to complete a literature search of relevant available materials, particularly in the sector of developing client advocacy skills.
- Reviewing the results of the consultation with frontline workers to determine what their expectations would be for a developed resource
- Reviewing the results of the consultation with consumers to determine what their expectations would be of frontline workers after they have been trained with this new resource.
- Using targeted communication strategies, engaging the sector to further identify the issues and areas for improvement of existing resources.
- Encourage communication to develop future resources.
- Development of resources that are relevant, appropriate, and easy to apply and use appropriate technology.
- Building the capacity of frontline workers, consumers and the sector in general to deal with electricity issues
- Identifying trends in the challenges and issues encountered by the community sector and where possible, identify and scope a long term project plan for the continual development of these resources.

Not in scope

Not in scope in this project work is:

- Direct recruitment of consumers for consultation (this will be done primarily through SACOSS member organisations).

Stakeholders

The following stakeholders are either important to or have an interest in the success of this project:

Sector

1. SACOSS Staff, Board and Policy Council members
2. South Australian Financial Counsellors Association (SAFCA)
3. Council on the Ageing (COTA)
4. Carers SA
5. Anglicare
6. Shelter SA
7. Uniting Care Wesley
8. Aged and Community Services SA and NT
9. Westcare Program c/o Baptist Community Services
10. Centacare Catholic Family Services
11. Mission Australia
12. St Vincent de Paul Society
13. SACOSS Low Income Support Project Coordinators
14. *BreakEven* Gambling Network
15. Emergency relief providers

Regulatory Bodies

16. The National Consumers Electricity Advocacy Panel
17. Energy Consumers Council (ECC)
18. Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCoSA)
19. Australian Energy Regulator

Government

20. Department of Families and Communities (DFC)
 - a. Concessions
 - b. Anti poverty services
 - c. Emergency Electricity Payment Scheme (EEPS)
21. Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS)
22. Office of Consumer and Business Affairs
23. Commonwealth Department of Families Communities and Indigenous Affairs

Business / other

24. Printer / manufacturer of multiple CD-ROMs
25. Electricity retailers
26. National Electricity Market Company

Assumptions

- Frontline workers want / need additional resources to deal with consumer electricity needs and issues.
- Frontline workers are willing to commit to and implement a new training resource into their existing work patterns in this area.
- End users are willing to be involved in a consultation process.
- Frontline workers are willing to be involved in a consultation process.
- Availability of a skilled worker to create online materials, maintain updates to project participants and a CD-ROM of negotiated content.
- The funding given by the Advocacy Panel will cover the consultation process and the creation of materials in both hard copy and CD-ROM format.

Project Approach

Methodology

- Planning and preparation
 - Initial correspondence sent to a sample group of frontline workers explaining the project and calling for their interest in an initial consultation – as well as a request for further participants
 - Call for end users to tell their story and be involved in the consultation process
 - Written consultation process with frontline workers and other key stakeholders
- Implementation
 - Development of online presence (in the form of an e-group) to encourage participation between project participants
 - Collation of responses from consultation and analysis

- Development of resource
- Facilitation of implementation of resource
- Close, review and follow up
 - Invite project participants to conduct evaluation into the effectiveness of the project.
 - Project reports to SACOSS Policy Council, the National Consumers Advocacy Panel and project participants.
 - Follow up with updated material as necessary to participants (this will depend on participant need and will develop with the project)

Project Details

Organisation

The project officer will be responsible for liaison with frontline workers and end users and will report directly to the SACOSS Executive Director. The SACOSS Executive Director will assist in facilitating reporting to the National Consumers Advisory Panel and the SACOSS Policy Council where appropriate.

Project Responsibility

Role / Resource	Responsibilities
SACOSS Board and Policy Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Act as a reference point for the project – initial consultation ● Liaison with the Executive Director to ensure project meets goals of strategic plan ● Provide overall strategic direction
SACOSS Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supervision of Electricity Advocacy Worker Resource Development Project Officer. Oversee and monitor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Project plan ○ Project strategies ○ Project Evaluation and closure ○ Progress and final reports to key stakeholders, project participants and the Advocacy Panel
SACOSS Electricity Advocacy Worker Resource Development Project Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Run consultation process ● Collate responses and develop resource ● Facilitate implementation of resource ● Monitor e-group ● Establish long term update protocols and procedures ● Manage and control project resources generally ● Report to SACOSS Executive Director and stakeholders,

	including following up of the resource development
Frontline workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in the project including in the consultation and development of the resource
End users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate the project, including in the consultation and development of the resource

Performance

Performance Monitoring

Actual performance will be measured and monitored using the following comparisons with planned achievements and expenditure:

- Project hours: actual hours v. estimated hours
- Project costing: actual costs vs. budgeted costs
- Progress: via project schedule and project reports
- Risk management: the number and levels of risks identified and treated
- Issues: the number and level of issues identified and resolved
- Quality: satisfaction with service

Critical success factors

The following factors will determine the success of the project:

- Internal
 - Project objectives are achieved
 - Project phases / milestones are achieved and measured
 - Project is completed within specified timelines and budgets
 - Project contributes to the achievement of the SACOSS Strategic Plan 2004 – 2007
- External
 - Feedback and evaluation demonstrate the sector's satisfaction with outputs
 - Outcomes of the project contribute to the strengthening of a vibrant and strong community services sector
 - Outcomes of the project demonstrate best advice and practice in the area of client advocacy in the electricity area for and to the sector.

Project Schedule

Consultation Phase	17/1/07 – 24/1/07
Literature Review Phase	24/1/07 – 26/1/07
Assessment of Literature Review Phase	26/1/07 – 29/1/07
Developing Worker Resource	29/01/07 – 09/03/07
Identification of Implementation Methods	09/03/07 – 13/04/07
Implementation of the resource	13/04/07 – 04/05/07
Review, close and follow up	07/05/07 – 15/06/07

Communication Strategy

Stakeholder	Information Needs	Frequency	Medium	Progress / Notes
Consumer Law Action Centre	Final Report	At completion of project	Written report	
SACOSS Staff, Board and Policy Council Members	Progress Reports	As required	Written report	
Stakeholders #2 - #15 (see list on page 5)	General project information	Monthly	Written report	
National Consumers Advisory Panel	Formal Progress Reports and Final Report	As per reporting schedule	Written report	
Stakeholders #17 - #23 and #25 - #26 (see list on pages 5 and 6)	Final Report	At completion of project	Written report	

Risk Management

Risk	Risk Control	Risk Rating	Evaluation	Date to Review
Frontline workers do not wish / do not have time to participate in the project	Make sure sample population is wide enough to ensure that this does not occur	Medium		9/1/07
End users do not wish to participate in the project	As above	Medium		9/1/07
The Project timeline becomes unrealistic	Implement regular update meetings with Executive Director and Deputy Director to minimise this risk occurring	Medium		Ongoing
Funding for the project does not cover project	Liaise with Advocacy Panel and Executive	Low		Ongoing

requirements	Director regularly to minimise this risk			
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