

TASCOSS DOMESTIC END USER ELECTRICITY TRAINING PROJECT
First Progress Report
15 April 2004

1. Background, planning and development work

The project began at TasCOSS at the end of January, 2004 with the appointment of the training coordinator, Kath McLean on a contract to work on the project 8 hours per week for 12 months. The early phase of the project involved planning a four part training program that would equip domestic end users and their advocates in Tasmania to participate in discussions, debates and consultations on electricity issues in general and on issues associated with the National Electricity Market (NEM). This involved reading, research and consultation with local electricity industry participants, the Tasmanian Energy Regulator, and with local and interstate community and industry groups.

Once a draft training program was devised (*see attached*), I contacted prospective trainers to canvas their interest and discuss their availability to participate; these included:

- the Office of the Tasmanian Energy Regulator (OTTER);
- Hydro Tasmania;
- Transend Networks;
- Aurora Energy;
- the Electricity Ombudsman;
- the ACCC;
- the state Office of Energy Planning and Conservation;
- the Tasmanian Conservation Trust;
- the Tasmanian Environment Centre; and
- the Consumer Law Centre Victoria.

At the same time, I promoted the training project within the community services industry throughout Tasmania and sent a flyer and letter (*see attached*) to more than 60 community-based organisations. I made contact with Housing Tasmania to publicise the project through their tenancy officers and service centres, and wrote several articles for newsletters and websites to promote the sessions.

I searched for appropriate materials to use in the training, and organised to get multiple copies of OTTER's *2003 Electricity Industry Performance Report* which provides a thorough and very accessible overview of Tasmanian electricity structures and issues. I also obtained multiple copies of NEMMCO's publication, *An Introduction to Australia's National Electricity Market*. In addition I compiled a glossary of electricity terms that participants could use as a reference tool throughout the four sessions (this was kindly read and corrected by staff from OTTER).

Since there was limited interest in the project from the north and north-west regions of the state I decided to offer the sessions only in the south and to use the money intended for travel to subsidise the travel costs (and accommodation costs, if necessary) of participants from other parts of the state.

2. The first session

The first of four training sessions was held in Hobart on Wednesday 7 April, 2004. The session ran from 9.30am to 4.45pm and was held at Hydro Tasmania's Hands On Energy Discovery Centre. There were eight attendees, all but one from the Hobart area; one came from Devonport in the state's north-west. Attendees represented organisations including Anglicare Tasmania, the University of Tasmania Student Union, Community Support for Refugees, and the Tasmanian Tenants Union.

It was a very successful session that feedback from participants indicated greatly increased their base knowledge of the electricity supply industry in Tasmania and of the NEM. All appeared keen to participate in further sessions.

See attached Session 1 Program.

The first session was generously supported by Hydro Tasmania which not only provided the very comfortable and interesting venue free of charge, but also provided ample morning and afternoon teas, and their staff to present aspects of the day's session. Hydro Tasmania also covered the costs of the independent energy consultant who presented in the afternoon session and provided each participant with a copy of their publication, *The Power of Nature: Tasmania's renewable energy from water and wind*.

The Office of the Tasmanian Energy Regulator also kindly supported the first session and is keen to maintain its involvement throughout the four sessions. The Regulator, Andrew Reeves presented a two hour session himself and joined us for lunch where participants were free to talk with him and to ask questions. Heather Cerutti and Tim Astley, also from OTTER presented in the afternoon session. All provided handouts of their presentations.

The session was attended by Natasha Leigh, coordinator of the national capacity building project run by the Consumer Law Centre Victoria. Natasha participated in the whole session and presented a very cogent overview of the NEM toward the end of the day. It was useful to have a national perspective presented to the group.

3. Future Plans

Plans are underway for the second session to be held on 30 June. Each session will be promoted both separately and as part of the whole, and participants may attend one or more of the sessions. A variety of venues will be used.

Although I was happy with the number of participants, I am keen to increase participation and am developing strategies to do that. I suspect that some sessions will be more 'popular' than others, particularly within the community services sector where retail issues loom large for many individuals. It will be a challenge to get more end users interested in some of the broader issues.

Attachments:

- o *Flyer promoting the project*
- o *Letter to community sector organisations and to individuals*
- o *Draft of the training program*
- o *Session 1 program*

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