



Media Release

Embargoed until 22 May 2023

Grants to empower renters to campaign for better energy outcomes and ensure consumers benefit from community battery roll out

A major campaign will be launched empowering renters to advocate for mandated minimum energy efficiency standards ahead of the Queensland state election, following a substantial grant from Energy Consumers Australia.

Energetic Communities Association, which represents the interests of households, communities, and not-for-profit organisations working to ensure affordability, equity and low emissions are prioritised in the energy transition, is seeking to persuade the Queensland Government of the benefits of greater energy performance ambition, including stronger and more equitable policies on energy efficiency.

It is among four successful applicants that will share in \$844,122 worth of grants awarded by the Board of Energy Consumers Australia.

Other successful applicants include the Australian National University, whose research project is focused on ensuring neighbourhood-scale community batteries meet consumer expectations, St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria's Tariff-Tracking project, and the National Energy Consumer Roundtable Network.

"The purpose of Energy Consumer Australia's Grants Program is to support researchers and advocates to build knowledge and capacity to influence energy policy development that is in the long-term interests of consumers," said Energy Consumer Australia's Interim Chief Executive Officer Jacqueline Crawshaw.

"Recent market developments, including upward pressure on retail energy prices, rising inflation, and a general spike in the cost of living, reminds us why the consumer must be front and centre of decision making and policies as we transition towards net zero.

"As the Vinnie's Tariff Tracking project has shown, consumers make better decisions about their energy usage and market engagement when they have access to current and relevant information.

"We know renters are often powerless when it comes to reducing their energy use. The Energetic Communities Association campaign will elevate the voices and perspectives of renters in regard to energy performance so they are increasingly heard and supported by government.

"Meanwhile, the work by the Australian National University will add to our understanding of ways to improve equity and access to neighbourhood-scale community batteries, which have the potential to become an important and essential community resource. It is important that the roll out is handled in such a way that consumers see the benefit.

"Energy Consumers Australia is pleased to support research and advocacy on behalf of all consumers to enable their participation in the energy system and energy transition."

Building a Coalition for Energy Efficiency Minimum Standards, Mandatory Disclosure and Equitable Energy Performance in Queensland – Energetic Communities Association – \$173,082

Energetic Communities Association has received funding to support its campaign for mandated energy efficiency minimum standards in rental properties ahead of the 2024 Queensland state election.

The push, which will bring together a coordinated network of state-based organisations, comes amid declining rental affordability over the past three years that has hit lower income and single income households the hardest.

As part of the campaign, a newly formed Residential Energy and Climate Advocacy Network (ReCAN) and Renter Advocacy Group (RAG) will seek to persuade the Queensland Government of the benefits of greater energy performance ambition, including stronger and more equitable policies on energy efficiency.

The funding will also support action on research initiatives to empower renters to engage in the campaign directly.

“This is an ambitious project which addresses the need for reforms that deliver better outcomes for tenants with regards to energy,” Ms Crawshaw said.

Keeping the community in community batteries – Australian National University – \$181,018

Previous research by the Australian National University has identified what consumers expect from neighbourhood-scale community batteries, including savings on their bills, fairness and transparency, and effective decarbonisation.

The project comes as more than 500 government-funded community batteries are in the process of being established across the country seeking to capitalise on the clean electricity being generated from rooftop solar.

This project is seeking to better understand how to get the best outcomes for consumers and communicate those findings in order to promote changes in the roll-out to ensure the benefits are actually realised.

“Our own data on consumer interests has recognised this issue,” Ms Crawshaw said.

“Our Energy Consumer Sentiment Survey conducted in 2021 found that 57 per cent of households would be interested in receiving energy from shared batteries in their local communities.

“With energy price increases and rising interest rates, that figure is likely to have grown substantially as consumers look for ways to mitigate their energy costs.”

Targeted research by the University will inform policy recommendations around the role of community batteries in minimising rooftop solar curtailment and increasing solar export limits for consumers; how to transparently share financial outcomes and ensure benefits are passed on to consumers; and battery trial tariffs that lead to the best outcomes for consumers.

Tariff-Tracking, energy price and market analysis post price resets in July 2023, 2024, and 2025 – St Vincent de Paul Society, Victoria – \$341,880

Continued support for the Tariff-Tracking project, which has accumulated 13 years of historical data so far, will extend the tariff analysis through to 2025.

This will include releasing periodic national and state-specific reports, providing consumers, consumer advocates and other stakeholders insights into energy price movements, market developments, as well as policy changes.

“Evidence, analysis and transparency around retail market and price changes and their impacts are key to effective consumer advocacy,” said Ms Crawshaw.

“There is significant value in continuing to monitor and analyse changes to prices and market developments to inform regulatory and policy processes, and to inform consumers.

“St Vincent de Paul Society, Victoria has demonstrated a strong record of effective communications and advocacy, actively proliferating the results of their analysis in the media and to key policy makers and regulatory stakeholders.

“The workbooks produced are publicly available, enabling many organisations to benefit from the data.”

Refreshing the National Energy Consumer Roundtable Network – South Australian Council of Social Service – \$148,142

The Roundtable is a coalition of energy consumer advocates primarily focused on policy development and strategic collaboration that was established in 2004.

At a crucial time for consumers with higher energy bills and interest rate rises causing increasing financial pressures, the Roundtable plays an important role in helping to build knowledge and capacity of energy consumer advocates in their efforts to respond to the energy system challenges facing consumers.

Ms Crawshaw said the energy market would benefit from an effective Roundtable to represent diverse consumer needs.

“We look forward to membership of this network growing and diversifying,” she said.

“Enhancing the ability of the roundtable to advocate for a broad range of consumer perspectives is integral to ensuring those perspectives are embedded into energy planning and decision making.”

About Energy Consumers Australia

Energy Consumers Australia is the independent, national voice for residential and small business energy consumers. We enable residential and small business energy consumers to have their voices heard.

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