



23 September 2020 meeting

The second meeting of the Western Australian Advocacy for Consumers of Energy (WA ACE) Forum was held on 23 September 2020. The following matters were discussed.

COVID-19 response and Electricity Disconnection Moratorium

WA ACE members welcomed the extension of the disconnection moratorium to 30 June 2021 and the intention to encourage customers experiencing hardship to contact their energy retailer. Industry participants shared experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and outlined intentions for greater engagement with the community as support measures roll off. Members raised concerns about debt accumulation and the ways that households who cannot afford their energy use are limiting their costs.

Distributed Energy Buyback Scheme

Following the announcement of the Distributed Energy Buyback Scheme, members indicated support for the scheme, noting that it looked to support the renewable energy transition, assist in promoting customers to actively engage with their energy use and moved towards balancing an inequity that exists between those who can install their own solar and those who cannot.

Family and domestic violence responses from the energy sector

Member feedback was sought on potential responses that industry participants could take to assist those impacted by family and domestic violence.

Members noted that responses needed to consider account security and debt management as priority issues, supported with trained staff who themselves have ongoing support and adequate access to referral services. Family and domestic violence extends across age and cultural spectrums and supports need to be considerate and responsive to those different needs.

Synergy's family and domestic violence response, which was developed in conjunction with the community sector, was noted as having been an effective policy to date. Work on including family and domestic violence provisions in the *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity to Small Use Customers* is currently being undertaken by the Economic Regulation Authority and industry participants are encouraged to consider their own response in advance of those changes.

WA ACE Grants

Members provided feedback on the WA ACE Grants guidelines and application process. An announcement of the successful applicants is expected on or around 22 October 2020.

About the WA ACE Forum

The WA ACE Forum brings to together consumer representative bodies from across Western Australia to provide consumer insights to the energy sector, supporting informed, valuable contributions to the energy debate in Western Australia. The WA ACE Forum meets five times a year.

The WA ACE Forum is not a decision-making body, nor is it required to form consensus. Accordingly, this Communique does not reflect the views of Energy Policy WA or any particular member organisation, rather it seeks to share the key areas of discussion by the Forum.

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