



Government of Western Australia
Energy Policy WA

Western Australian Advocacy for Consumers of Energy Forum

Terms of Reference 2020-21

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Energy Policy WA

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Abbreviations

The following table provides a list of abbreviations and acronyms used throughout this document. Defined terms are identified in this document by capitals.

Term	Definition
EPWA	Energy Policy WA
WA ACE Forum	Western Australian Advocacy for Consumers of Energy Forum
WA ACE Grants	Western Australian Advocacy for Consumers of Energy Grants

1. Background

The energy sector in Western Australia exists to provide electricity and gas to consumers. It is central to energy production and delivery that the long-term interests of energy consumers are served.

Whilst some large energy consumers have the capacity to influence policy and infrastructure investment decisions, smaller consumers face greater barriers to inclusion in informed, constructive debate about energy use. Given the critical role and impact energy has on households and small businesses, overcoming these barriers to enable the views of consumers to be heard is essential to improving and maintaining an effective energy sector.

In response to this need, a State Budget allocation has been made towards supporting consumer advocacy in the energy sector.

A portion of this funding has been directed to support a three-year, full time position with Energy Policy WA (EPWA) to co-ordinate and support consumer advocacy within government policy priorities.

The Western Australian Advocacy for Consumers of Energy Forum (WA ACE Forum) has been established to provide broad based representation of consumer views in a central forum, allowing issues to be raised and for consumers to share in the development of products and solutions for the energy sector. The WA ACE Forum is supported by the State Budget funding allocation.

To further support consumer advocacy and research, the Western Australian Advocacy for Consumers of Energy Grants (WA ACE Grants) have been established to distribute the remaining allocated funds.

These Terms of Reference provide information about the intent, structure and processes associated with the WA ACE Forum.

2. Purpose and role

The WA ACE Forum brings together a range of representative bodies from across Western Australia to streamline the process of providing consumer input into energy sector consultations.

The purpose of the WA ACE Forum is to provide a mechanism for consumer advocates to be supported in making valuable contributions to the energy debate in Western Australia.

The WA ACE Forum will serve to:

- Inform consumer advocates about energy sector related matters, increasing their understanding of the sector.
- Streamline consultation processes by bringing several relevant parties together, reducing the burden of consultation on both advocates and the sector.
- Allow for sharing of feedback on energy sector matters throughout projects, allowing the consumer view to be captured and incorporated at critical stages of development.
- Allow for the collation of consumer concerns, increasing the strength with which those views can be delivered.
- Allow for sharing of ideas and intended projects between advocates to avoid duplication and support consistency, increasing the efficiency of advocacy undertaken.
- Highlight the priority issues for consumers that need to be further investigated, supporting the relevance of the WA ACE Grants program.
- Provide for informed co-design opportunities, supporting industry in developing balanced policies and products.
- Support representatives in advocating to industry, improving the effectiveness of advocacy undertaken.

The role of the WA ACE Forum is advisory in nature, providing insights on the views of consumers to energy sector representatives. WA ACE Forum attendees also play a critical role in disseminating energy sector information to their representative base, when appropriate.

The WA ACE Forum is not a decision-making forum and is not expected to form consensus.

From time to time, sector representatives may seek follow up consultations with advocate organisations.

Neither the WA ACE Forum, nor its members, will be involved in the WA ACE Grants assessment process.

The WA ACE Forum does not constitute a Government Board or Committee.

2.1 Meetings

Meetings will be scheduled in advance five times per year, however special meetings may be called if required. Each meeting will be allocated up to three hours, subject to the agenda.

The WA ACE Forum will be chaired by the Coordinator of Energy and secretariat support will be provided by EPWA.

The meeting will be held at the EPWA office, unless advised otherwise. Video and telephone conferencing facilities will be made available.

3. Membership

WA ACE Forum members are to be organisations established to represent the views of a group of consumers, who have a Western Australian base and can share insights as to the needs of those energy consumers in the State.

The WA ACE Forum will have a maximum of 20 consumer advocate participants. Representation of the Western Australian community is to be as broad as possible.

Potential members can nominate an interest in attending the Forum or be invited by the Coordinator of Energy to attend. Nominations for initial appointment will be assessed on the basis of the contribution of the organisation to energy policy to date, their interest and capability in advocating on energy matters and the range of members on the WA ACE Forum at that time. For subsequent appointment, members' contribution in WA ACE Forum meetings and out of session participation will also be taken into consideration.

3.1 Term of appointment

Members will be appointed by the Coordinator of Energy for a term of one year.

Ad-hoc attendance will also be supported when relevant circumstances arise, such as when a topic for consideration is relevant to a particular group of consumers who are otherwise not represented on the WA ACE Forum.

3.2 Membership requirements

Members will be required to nominate a key representative; however, an alternative delegate may attend on behalf of the consumer group provided prior notice is given to the secretariat. All attendees must have completed the WA ACE Training Package.

Members may be required to participate in discussion or contribute to matters out of session from time to time.

3.2.1 Confidentiality and conflicts of interest

Members may have access to information that is confidential. Members must treat this material as strictly confidential and will be required to sign a declaration to this effect. Each instance of confidentiality will be clearly identified.

Members and representatives will also be required to declare actual or perceived conflicts of interest as and when they arise.

3.3 Remuneration

Member organisations will be remunerated for their attendance at meetings and time spent supporting their input, unless otherwise agreed.

A grant agreement (including conditions) will be used to formalise the remuneration arrangement. Grants will apply for the financial year and must not constitute the entire financial base of the member organisation.

Members seeking remuneration must complete the WA ACE Forum Grant package and return it no later than 30 days following the date of the first meeting.

The rates of remuneration will be as follows:

- Core meeting attendance – \$2,500 per year
- Special meeting additional fee – \$500

All funding is drawn from the allocation made in the 2019-20 State Budget for supporting energy consumer advocacy.

Members will be required to attend at least four core meetings each year in order to be remunerated for their attendance. A payment of \$500 per meeting will be made to the member organisation following the meeting.

3.4 Observers

The WA ACE Forum may be attended by representatives from the following offices as observers:

- The Office of the Minister for Energy
- The Energy and Water Ombudsman
- The Economic Regulation Authority
- Energy Consumers Australia
- EPWA

Sector participants may also attend to present information and receive feedback. Other government entities or presenters may also attend from time to time to observe or present as appropriate. Attendance of these groups will be by approval of the Chair.

4. Administration and reporting

EPWA provides secretariat support to the WA ACE Forum, which comprises the following duties:

- Confirm and advise members of meeting dates, including a future meeting plan.
- Call for agenda items, using an agreed format, with supporting information due at least two weeks in advance.
- Prepare and distribute the agenda and supporting papers for each meeting at least one week prior to the meeting.
- Record the meeting outcomes and distribute minutes to members.
- Compile advice to the Minister for Energy.
- Compile a communique for inclusion on the EPWA website.
- Coordinate and facilitate completion of actions to ensure the maximum effectiveness of subsequent meetings. Such actions may include, but are not limited to, collating feedback and providing this to industry participants or other government agencies on behalf of Forum attendees.
- Report back to the WA ACE Forum on the progress of actions.
- Maintain communication networks with industry participants to ensure relevant content and effectiveness of the WA ACE Forum.
- Manage the membership of the WA ACE Forum, including appointment of members and oversight of the completion of the WA ACE Training Package by attendees.
- Manage remuneration of attendees.
- Manage any relevant updates to the WA ACE Grants Guidelines.

5. Review

The WA ACE Forum will be reviewed annually by EPWA. The review will consider the objectives of the forum, the effectiveness of any outcomes and the value to consumers of energy.

The WA ACE Forum may make recommendations to EPWA for changes to the Terms of Reference.

The Minister may revise the Terms of Reference on recommendation by EPWA.

The ongoing funding of the WA ACE Forum will be subject to future State Budget deliberations. EPWA will provide advice into the budget process based on the review undertaken.