

Consumer Advisory Committee

Minutes for meeting of 22 June 2020

Presiding officer: Charles Millsted (CEO, QCA)

Committee attendees: Ian Jarratt (Queensland Consumers Association), Robyn Robinson (Council on the Aging), Jon O'Mally (Financial Counsellors Association of Queensland) and Warren Males (Canegrowers)

Apologies: Energy Users Association of Australia, Queensland Council of Social Service, Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland

- (1) Confirmation of minutes from previous meeting (April 2019)
 - Approved
- (2) Regional Queensland retail electricity price determination 2020/21
 - Warren queried the implementation of new controlled load tariffs in regional Queensland; QCA staff responded that it was not possible to comment ahead of the final determination being released in late June 2020.
 - Warren also asked whether wholesale costs had been updated since the draft determination. QCA staff advised that the QCA is considering the latest information available on energy costs, including the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on energy costs.
 - Ian suggested the retail cost calculations and standing offer adjustment be revised for the next determination, and noted that the timing of AER decisions regarding the Default Market Offer (DMO) and the distributors' revenue determinations for 2020–25 created complexity for the notified prices determination.
 - Robyn acknowledged the work of the QCA staff for the notified prices determination. Robyn asked whether the comparison between the DMO and notified prices happened within or outside the notified price determination process. QCA staff advised that a worked comparison of the DMO and notified prices has been considered for the final determination.
 - The committee expressed a strong desire for the QCA to be issued with the annual delegation to determine notified prices earlier than has been the case in recent years, so as to allow stakeholders sufficient time to participate in the consultation processes that are part of the determination. The observer in attendance from the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy will convey the committee's view through the department to the Minister.
- (3) Solar feed-in tariffs (FiT) in regional and south-east Queensland
 - Robyn asked whether the QCA saw the possibility of a Time Varying FiT in future years. QCA staff indicated that QCA advice is not necessary for Ergon Energy to offer a T-FiT in regional Queensland.

- (4) South east Queensland retail electricity market monitoring
- Ian supports incentives and benefits being analysed in the QCA's market monitoring reports.
 - Robyn asked whether the market monitoring reports would address the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the SEQ retail electricity market. QCA staff indicated that it was likely that the annual market monitoring report would include commentary on the pandemic.
- (5) Origin Energy late payment fees
- Committee members noted the paper.
- (6) Advanced digital metering
- Warren asked whether customers or distributors would realise the release the benefits of deployment of smart meters in SEQ. QCA staff replied that the report states that, as SEQ is a competitive market, costs and benefits will be passed through to customers.
 - Robyn asked whether there had been any response/action from the government following the report; the department will provide a response to Robyn.
 - Ian noted the report demonstrated the complexity of cost/benefit analysis.
- (7) Maximum fees payable under schedule 8 of the Electricity Regulation
- Ian noted the schedule 8 issues relate to the 'move-in move-out' problem where premises are unnecessarily de-energised.
- (8) Guaranteed Service Levels scheme
- Ian supports annual reporting by the QCA
- (9) Forward work program
- Warren raised the need for timely issuance of delegations for the notified price determination. Warren added that the consultation paper should be released by the QCA earlier than late December each year.
 - Robyn noted the imposition on consumer advocates of the release of the consultation paper over the Christmas period.
- (10) Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland update
- EWOQ has experienced a decrease in complaint cases during the coronavirus pandemic.
 - EWOQ looking to expand its jurisdiction to cover embedded networks.

(11) Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy update

- Most retailers have submitted claims for funding to be provided for coronavirus assistance packages to allow payments to be made to customers.
- Regional Queensland customers received their rebates from Ergon Retail sooner than SEQ customers.

(12) General business

- The QCA intends to renew committee membership in July 2020.
- QCA staff will contact each organisation represented on the committee regarding membership for the next 12 months.