

## PROGRESS REPORT

The Progress Report will be provided to the Board.

PROJECT OVERVIEW	
Grant recipient	ACTCOSS
Grant number	777
Project title	Energised consumers: Support for ACT low income domestic, non-government organisations and small business consumers to participate fully in consultations and decision making on energy issues
Date of progress report	May 2017
Reporting period	December 2016-May 2017

## PROJECT OUTCOMES – changes/impacts of your activities; what difference have your activities made?

Proposed outcomes	Actual outcomes	Did you meet your key success indicators?
<p>1. A clear advocacy agenda is developed, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. identifies the key energy issues that advocacy will be directed to</li> <li>b. outlines an advocacy strategy and</li> <li>c. specifies the preferred and achievable advocacy outcomes</li> </ul> <p>in respect of low income, small business and community sector consumers in the ACT</p>	<p>Continuing to work closely with ACT Energy Policy Consortium whose members represent a range of non-government organisations, small business, and vulnerable consumers. Discussed issues with individual members of consortium.</p> <p>Attended SACOSS Vulnerability and Hardship Conference where presentations were focused on key issues relating to low income and vulnerable consumers.</p> <p>Read A model for Effective Energy Advocacy: Issues Paper by Roberts Brown which defined energy advocacy as “any activity designed to persuade a third party to make a decision or a change that ameliorates or improves the market situation of consumers of energy, particularly small to medium consumers” .</p> <p>Attended Workshop to enhance capacity of consumer representatives to contribute to EN19 – the Submission from ActewAGL to AER regarding 2019-24 pricing</p> <p>Read a number of background papers – listed in Actual Activities and Outputs 1. Which identified key issues and areas to focus advocacy as: the rapid increase in energy prices in recent years and the impact on low income and vulnerable consumers including increasing numbers facing hardship and disconnection, the impact of climate change on low</p>	<p>At this stage issues to focus on for low income and vulnerable consumers have been identified. More work needs to be undertaken to engage with small business and the community sector to identify issues, but at this stage feedback from the small business member of the energy policy consortium is that energy does not feature highly in the concerns of small business.</p>

	income consumers, the barriers low income consumers face in accessing options to take up new technologies to improve energy efficiency and the risks that low income consumers will face increased costs as those more able take up new technologies.	
2. The nature and extent of identified key energy concerns and issues in the ACT is supported by an evidence base	<p>Began compiling ACT statistics from AER site and publications relating to ACT energy consumers including number of users, numbers of concession holders, rates of disconnection, numbers receiving hardship assistance and numbers receiving ACAT Energy and Water hardship assistance.</p> <p>Commenced establishment of a Consumer reference group to ensure views of consumers were being represented. Members of the group will be consulted, invited to participate in consultations and to contribute concerns and lived experiences in consultation forums regarding electricity and gas, and to contribute to submissions regarding electricity and gas pricing. The Consumer Reference Group currently has two members; we are aiming for around 10</p>	<p>Future work will include input from Consumer Reference Group including case studies of lived experiences.</p> <p>By next report I expect to have compiled a document of key ACT energy statistics and identified gaps in the data relating to the project target group.</p>
3. <b>The ACT Energy Policy Consortium, which includes ACTCOSS</b> , is recognized as an authority on the impact of energy policy and regulation on low income, small business and community sector consumers in the ACT	<p>Media Release and launching of role of Energy Consumer advocate by Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability Shane Rattenbury.</p> <p>Made submissions on behalf of the ACT Energy Policy Consortium – as listed in activities and outputs - to a range of enquiries. These submissions focused on the impact of energy policy on the target group.</p>	<p>The reporting period focus was partly driven by view that lodging submissions to key enquiries would increase the profile of the ACT Energy Policy Consortium and establish it as an authority on the low income, small business and community sector in the ACT. Also attending key roundtables has enabled contacts to be established with several organisations to enable building of working relationships over time</p>

	Attended	and understanding key common areas of interest.
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## PROJECT OUTPUTS – what tangible results has your project produced?

Proposed outputs	Actual activities and outputs	Explanation for any variation
<p>1. Development and documentation of the issues and energy policy positions for advocacy on behalf of priority household consumers, non-government organization and small businesses in the ACT</p>	<p>Read a range of energy background papers including:            Heat Or Eat: Households should not be forced to decide whether they heat or eat. Consumer Action Law Centre,            ACT Energy Prices July 2016 St Vincent De Paul            The NEM – A hazy retail maze St Vincent De Paul            Quantifying the costs of customers experiencing difficulties in paying energy bills KPMG Energy Consumers Australia            Supporting Vulnerable Customers Energy Networks Australia.</p> <p>Began compiling ACT statistics from AER site and publications relating to ACT energy consumers including number of users, numbers of concession holders, rates of disconnection, numbers receiving hardship assistance and numbers receiving ACAT Energy and Water hardship assistance.</p> <p>From readings and data found that ACT has lowest electricity prices in Australia, but gas prices are average, that around 20 percent of all consumers have a concession, that rates of disconnection are low for electricity but high for gas, that almost all</p>	

	consumers are with one retailer ActewAGL . Found that ACT had lowest rate of people receiving electricity hardship assistance, but that the numbers increase markedly if ACAT Energy Hardship Assistance is included.	
2. Development of an evidence base to support advocacy on behalf of priority household consumers, non-government organization and small businesses in the ACT	<p>Read background papers and started to assemble data at national and ACT level. Began compiling ACT statistics from AER site and publications relating to ACT energy consumers including number of users, numbers of concession holders, rates of disconnection, numbers receiving hardship assistance and numbers receiving ACAT Energy and Water hardship assistance.</p> <p>Undertook background research into issues and energy positions. Research indicated that much of the price rises were attributable to wholesale and distribution costs and that the ACT retail costs were lowest in the network. Some key finding of research show that the ACT had the lowest priced electricity and the lowest number of electricity disconnections. It also showed that ActewAGL has almost all the market, despite other providers now operating in the ACT and that many ACT residents could reduce electricity costs by moving from regulated to market offer tariffs.</p>	
3. Development of strategies to improve consumer engagement by working with those groups in output (1) above predominantly in ACT Government-	<p>Have had some initial meetings with ActewAGL to discuss new role and how this could add value to other customer engagement.</p> <p>Attended community forums on building a shared</p>	

<p>specific policy and regulatory processes, as well as relevant national policy and regulatory processes</p>	<p>vision for climate change mitigation in the ACT and ensured interests for low income consumers were represented.</p> <p>Circulated proposed submission responses to members of consultation group and Energy Policy Consortium for input.</p>	
<p>4. Participate in various energy policy, programs and regulatory processes including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC)'s annual retail electricity price determination</li> <li>• The Australian Energy Regulator's ACT electricity and gas network determinations and associated regulatory processes such as approval of ACT tariffs and jurisdictional costs</li> <li>• The ACT Government's energy policy and program consultation and development processes, such as but not limited to the annual review of priority household target for the Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme</li> <li>• Raising Awareness among ACTCOSS member organisations</li> </ul>	<p>Attended ActewAGL Energy Consumer Reference Council meetings as outlined in engagements.</p> <p>Lodged the following submissions on behalf of Energy Policy Consortium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finkel Review (March 2017)</li> <li>• in response to ICRC's Draft Report – Report No 1 of 2017, March 2017: Standing offer prices for the supply of electricity to small customers from 1 July 2017 and spoke at Public Hearing regarding the report</li> <li>• EPSDD regarding Priority Household Targets</li> <li>• Presented Oral Report to ICRC regarding Standing offer prices for the supply of electricity to small customers for 2017.</li> <li>• Australian Government's Climate Change Policies Discussion Paper</li> </ul> <p>I attended and participated in two Community and Stakeholder roundtables on ACT's climate strategy to 2050 organised by ACT Government Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate</p>	

and individuals of the ACT Government energy concessions and energy programs that encourage the efficient use of energy and assist ACT consumers, particularly priority households, to access information about services and programs that assist with reducing energy cost	(EPSDD).	
5. Development of key networks, including advocacy and community networks, as well as energy industry, departmental and government contacts	See engagement table below	

### List of attachments

– list copies of reports, submissions, media releases etc. produced through the reporting period in relation to this project

Date	Attachment
12 Jan 2017	Media release re the appointment of Energy Consumer Advocate
3 March 2017	Lodged ACT Energy Consumers Policy Consortium Submission regarding the Preliminary Report of the Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Market March 2017
27 April 17	Lodged Submission in response to ICRC's Draft Report – Report No 1 of 2017, March 2017: Standing offer prices for the supply of electricity to small customers from 1 July 2017 and spoke at Public Hearing regarding the report
3 May 2017	Lodged Submission to EPSDD regarding Priority Household Targets
3 May 2017	Presented Oral Report to ICRC regarding Standing offer prices for the supply of electricity to small customers for 2017.
9 May 2017	Lodged Submission to the Climate Change Policies Discussion Paper

<b>List of engagements during this reporting period</b> <b>– list any significant engagements, phone calls, meetings etc. that you have had in relation to this project</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Engagement</b>
2 Nov 2016	Attended SACOSS Vulnerability and Hardship Conference,
11 Nov 2016	Attended AEMO Consumer Forum Teleconference
29 Nov 2016	I and Susan Helyar ACTCOSS met with ActewAGL to discuss new role and how this can value add to other customer engagement. Meeting attended by Helen Leayr, Consumer Engagement, Peter Cunningham, Regulatory Manager, Asset Management , Chris Bell, Manager, Electricity Networks Price Review, and Emily Brown, Manager, Regulatory Pricing.
7 Dec 2016	Attended ActewAGL Energy Consumer Reference Council meeting
13 December	ACT Energy Policy Consortium meeting - introduced myself and members gave briefing of interest.
3 January 2017	Met with Vicki Wood, Community Development Educator ,Care Inc to discuss strategies to engage consumers.
10 January 2017	Met with Kate Roggeveen, Energy Policy Officer, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT Government and Susan Helyar prior to media launch of position
12 January 2017	Susan Helyar ACTCOSS, Rosemary Sinclair and I met with Shane Rattenbury Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability, and members of Environment, Planning and Sustainability Directorate to discuss new role, Meeting was followed by a Media Launch of the new role
20 January 2017	Attended ECA Finkel Review Teleconference
31 Jan 2017	Met with Liam Lilley, SEEChange Executive Officer to discuss role and role of SEEChange
31 January 2017	Met with Kate Roggeveen, Environment, Planning and Sustainability Directorate and Teleconference with Tina Wong ECA to discuss

	project
8 Feb 2017	Attended ActewAGL Energy Consumer Reference Council meeting
14 Feb 2017	Attended Workshop to enhance capacity of consumer representatives to contribute to EN19 – the Submission from ActewAGL to AER regarding 2019-24 pricing
16-17 Feb 2017	Attended Hobart Energy Consumers Roundtable
20-21 Feb 2017	Attended ECA Foresighting Forum in Sydney
27 Feb 2017	Participated in Community and stakeholder roundtable on ACT's climate strategy to Zero2050
28 Feb 2017	Spoke with Craig Memery ECA re organising visit to Canberra for Listening Visits
8 Mar 2017	Attended briefing at EPSDD re energy work attended by key areas of Directorate
5 Apr 2017	Attended ActewAGL Energy Consumer Reference Council meeting
18 Apr 2017	Attended Environment Exchange presentation: Climate Change: Getting to zero net emissions 2050
19 Apr 2017	Met with Susan Helyar to update work program
1 May 2017	Attended EPSDD Community and Stakeholder Roundtable 2 on ACTs Climate Strategy to Zero 2050
3 May 2017	Participated in ACOSS Webinar for input into ACOSS, BSL, TCI report on empowering vulnerable households through decarbonisation
3 May 2017	Presented Oral Report to ICRC regarding Standing offer prices for the supply of electricity to small customers for 2017.
17 May 2017	Participated in AEMO Consumer Forum by Teleconference
26 May 2017	Attended ACOSS organised Decarbonisation and Vulnerable Households - Canberra Stakeholder forum – with Consumer Advocates from throughout Australia and member of Department of The Environment and Energy
30 May 2017	Met with ACT Energy Policy Consortium
<b>Do you have any comments or</b>	At this stage much of the project time has been taken up working on Submissions to key enquiries. The future work plan will continue with this in the coming months. Current work includes Submissions to The Environment, Planning and Sustainability

<p><b>feedback about, or relating to, this project?</b></p>	<p>Directorate paper ACT EEIS Proposed Updates to Residential Savings Activities, and the AER Issues Paper Access to dispute resolution services for exempt customers. There are also in July and early August there is an AEMC System Security Briefing, input to the ActewAGL Consultation process regarding the Australian Energy Regulator on the Electricity networks price determination due in 2019. An EN19 discussion paper is imminent and consultations will take place on Wed 19<sup>th</sup> June, and and AEMO consumer forum on 4 August. It is also intended to undertake some advocacy work and make representations to the ACT Government re concessions for embedded network customers.</p> <p>There will be ongoing participation in ActewaGL’s Energy Consumer Reference Council and forums re the ACTs Climate Strategy to Zero 2050.</p> <p>Forward planning to end October includes exploring community education models in Queensland and South Australia with view to whether they could be adapted to ACT. And preparing a key Statistics Paper – (ABS releases in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of year include Household Expenditure Survey)</p> <p>There will also be further efforts to engage members of the Consumer Reference Group, should time permit.</p>