



## Communique

# WA ACE Forum

*2 May 2023 meeting*

**Meeting 15 of the Western Australian Advocacy for Consumers of Energy (WA ACE) Forum was held on 2 May 2023.**

### **Briefing on the New Energy Tech Consumer Code**

Members were provided an overview of the Clean Energy Council's *New Energy Tech Consumer Code*. The Clean Energy Council outlined that the Code, which came into force on 1 February 2023, is a set of standards designed to protect consumers when purchasing new energy technologies. The Code has been introduced in recognition of the changing nature of energy use and range of products on the market, with batteries and electric vehicle chargers becoming more common.

### **Overview of Embedded Network Stakeholder Survey results**

Members were informed of the results of an Energy Policy WA (EPWA) survey of the operators of embedded networks and of households and businesses supplied electricity through an embedded network.

The survey found that 62 per cent of residential customer respondents reported paying less than the regulated residential A1/A2 tariffs for their electricity supplies, while 11 per cent of residential customer respondents were worse off. It also found that there was a lack of upfront information provided to residential customers, with four in ten customer respondents being unaware of the property being in an embedded network at the time of purchase or entering into a rental agreement.

The survey findings, along with wider consultation on embedded networks, are to inform the development of a new regulatory framework applicable to these electricity supply arrangements.

### **Western Power Rural 63 Amp Single Phase Trial update**

Western Power outlined previous updates to the WA Service Installation Requirements, with a 32 amp circuit breaker required at properties in rural areas following any major electrical works. As a result of industry and community feedback that the import limit may be insufficient for some household needs, Western Power investigated if the rural supply allocation could be increased. The preliminary review found that the electricity grid should be able to cope with an increased import limit for rural customers to 63 amps. Western Power subsequently completed a field trial across seven local government areas to test the review's findings, confirming no unforeseen issues with an increased import limit for the network.

Western Power has altered the WA Service Installation Requirements to allow a 63 import limit for single phase connections in rural and regional areas (to match the metropolitan standard), and introduced a \$250 rebate for households that may have installed a 32 amp circuit breaker from 1 August 2021 to 11 April 2023. Electrical contractors have been informed of the rebate and are being encouraged to contact impacted customers.

## **Western Power Access Arrangement 5 – Economic Regulation Authority Final Decision and use of Electricity Networks Access Code Environmental Objective in the determination**

The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) provided an overview of its Final Decision on Western Power Access Arrangement 5, noting the importance of the energy transition in Western Australia which is already influencing ERA decisions. The ERA has approved new network tariffs for electric vehicle charging and tariffs that better match electricity demand, and also supported Western Power's standalone power systems and advanced metering roll-out. The ERA noted the new Access Arrangement is occurring during a high interest rate environment and the Final Decision will allow Western Power to collect \$9 billion in revenue over five years to cover operating costs and expand the network.

The ERA outlined that the Final Decision included an emphasis on improving regional network reliability, with an allowance of \$88 million for Western Power to develop and implement a plan including identifying and trialling solutions in pilot areas.

### **Expert Consumer Panel update**

Expert Consumer Panel (ECP) members provided an overview of recent activities, including:

- A submission on the Electricity Industry (Alternative Electricity Services) Amendment Bill supporting the proposed legislation to allow for customer protection regulations for new and emerging electricity service business models.
- As part of the Electricity Industry (Distributed Energy Resources) Amendment Bill consultation providing a submission supporting the inclusion of energy services and an environmental objective in the State Electricity Objective.
- Meeting with Synergy to discuss its new 'Community Electricity Plan' tariff offering.
- Providing comments to Western Power on its draft 'Rural 63A Single Phase Trial' report.
- Continued representation on the Pilbara Advisory Committee and the Market Advisory Committee.
- Involvement in the review processes for the Wholesale Electricity Market Reserve Capacity Mechanism and Cost Allocation Methodology.

ECP members outlined that upcoming work activities include commentary on ATCO's Access Arrangement 6 Draft Plan.

### **Charge Up (Workplace EV Charger Grants) Program update**

EPWA overviewed the status of the 'Charge Up' Grant Program to encourage electric vehicle charger uptake by co-funding up to 50 per cent of the cost of electric vehicle charger installations by small and medium businesses, local governments and not for profit organisations.

### **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.