



A non-profit, volunteer organisation, advocating to advance the interests of consumers in Queensland

Secretary:

Max Howard

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11 March 2007

Brian Parmenter
Chairman
Queensland Competition Authority
Level 19, 12 Creek Street
BRISBANE Q 4000

Cc John Hall, CEO, QCA

Dear Mr Parmenter

Comments on Draft Consumer Advisory Committee Charter

I refer to the draft charter for the QCA Consumer Advisory Committee released recently for comment.

The Queensland Consumers Association (the Association) welcomes the QCA's decision to seek comments on this draft and is pleased to comment below.

However, the Association wishes first emphasise the importance it attaches to the establishment of this committee and to it becoming an effective vehicle for customer consultation on the numerous and vitally important issues facing the Queensland energy industry and its customers.

Despite its extremely limited resources the Association has participated actively in the FRC consultation process run by the ECC during the last year and has continued to respond to the QCA's requests for submissions on several other matters. The Association has done this to emphasise the need for consumer involvement in consultation processes and the different and important perspectives this can bring to the development and implementation of policies on public issues. The Association is particularly pleased that that its recommendation to the ECC that the QCA establish a Consumer Advisory Committee was accepted and that this requirement was placed in the Electricity and Gas Supply Acts.

In general, the Association supports contents of the draft charter. However, the Association considers that:

- The Committee's Presiding Officer should be a member of the QCA **not** a staff member. The Association makes this suggestion because it is essential that the board and committee members have a direct communication channel and that the Committee is seen by the community to be important enough to justify having a board member as the

Presiding Officer. The Association understands that a member of the board chairs similar committees operated by the Victorian and South Australian regulators.

- The Tenants Union of Queensland should be added to the list of possible members of the Committee. The Association makes this suggestion because tenants are a very large and important sub set of energy consumers who often experience special problems securing reliable and affordable energy supplies. These problems could increase with the introduction of FRC. The Union has members throughout the state and would be able to address, and raise, issues of importance to tenants in a wide variety of situations. The Union's Coordinator is Penny Carr ph 32571411 email: coordinator@tuq.org.au
- For the first year of the Committee's operations, the Energy Ombudsman and the Office of Fair Trading should be invited to attend every committee meeting as observers and, in consultation with QCA, to provide members with relevant information on their activities.

The Association looks forward to the early establishment of the Committee and to being invited to be a member.

Please send all communications on this matter to the Association's Secretary.

Yours sincerely

Cherie Dalley
President
Queensland Consumers Association