

Consumer Advisory Committee

Background

On 7 December 2006, the *Electricity Act 1994* and *Gas Supply Act 2003* were amended to facilitate the introduction, from 1 July 2007, of full retail competition in the supply of electricity and gas.

These amendments set out the framework for the operation of full retail competition and confer administrative and regulatory roles on:

- the Queensland Competition Authority in relation to making, amending and enforcing industry codes, changes to notified retail electricity prices and provision of retail price information and comparisons; and
- the Energy and Water Ombudsman of Queensland in relation to small customer complaints and disputes.

Consumer Advisory Committee

An important element of the framework is the establishment of a Consumer Advisory Committee to advise the QCA on the performance of its functions under the Acts, including:

- (a) the making, or amendment, of an industry code; and
- (b) any other matter about the electricity supply industry or covered gas markets.

The Committee will report to the QCA on a regular basis, thereby allowing the representatives of small energy users access to the QCA to advise it on the interests of consumers in the developing competitive energy markets in Queensland.

Interpretation

In this Charter, unless the contrary intention appears:

- "QCA" means the Queensland Competition Authority.
- "Energy" means electricity or gas;
- "Presiding Officer" means the chairperson of the Consumer Advisory Committee; and
- "Small Customer" means residential and small business customers.

Objective of the Consumer Advisory Committee

The Consumer Advisory Committee is to act as a representative body on behalf of small customers and to advise the QCA on the interests of consumers in the exercise of the QCA's responsibilities under the *Electricity Act 1994* and *Gas Supply Act 2003*.

Terms of Reference

The Consumer Advisory Committee will:

- advise the QCA on the interests of consumers (primarily small customers) in the performance of its responsibilities under the *Electricity Act 1994* and *Gas Supply Act 2003*;
- advise the QCA on issues of interest to consumers in the competitive energy markets;
- advise the QCA on the practices of energy entities that are of note, by virtue of being either exemplary or deficient; and
- provide the QCA with an opinion in relation to any matter upon which the QCA may request advice from time to time.

Establishment of the Committee and Proceedings

The QCA will appoint Members to the Committee after consultation with groups who represent the interests of consumers. In general, the QCA will appoint organisations as Members rather than individuals. Where an organisation has been appointed, that organisation may choose one of its members to represent it.

The Presiding Officer of the Committee shall be appointed by the Chairperson of the QCA and will be a staff member of the QCA.

Should the Presiding Officer not be able to attend a Committee meeting, the Chief Executive of the QCA may nominate an alternative person to act as Presiding Officer.

The Committee will be comprised of the Presiding Officer and Members as appointed by the QCA.

The Presiding Officer may invite relevant Queensland Government representatives to attend Committee meetings as observers.

From time to time, industry participants, such as energy retailers and distributors, may be invited by the Presiding Officer to provide information to the Committee.

The QCA will appoint each Member of the Committee for a period of no greater than 12 months.

Upon the expiry of a Member's term of office, the QCA may re-appoint the Member for a further term.

The QCA may cancel the appointment of a Member at any time.

A quorum at a meeting of the Committee shall consist of the Presiding Officer and three Members.

The Committee is not a decision making body. However, the Committee can raise matters of concern to the QCA through the minutes of Committee meetings.

The Committee's Charter may only be amended by the QCA.

Remuneration

Members who are not employees of a government department or statutory authority shall be paid fees that are consistent with remuneration levels prescribed in *Remuneration of Part-time Chairs and Members of Government Boards, Committees and Statutory Committees* issued by the Queensland Department of Industrial Relations and shall be paid by the QCA.

Committee Support

The QCA will provide reasonable assistance for the Committee in the performance of its functions, including the preparation of agendas, the taking of minutes and the preparation of necessary correspondence.

The Committee must submit a written request to the QCA if it considers that additional resources are required to allow it to meet the Terms of Reference or other requirements of this Charter.

Confidentiality

Members are bound by the confidentiality provisions of the *Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997*.

Other Matters

Minutes of Committee meetings will be posted on the QCA's website.

Flavio Menezes
Chair
Queensland Competition Authority