

I am vehemently opposed to the proposed increase in fixed electricity charges under EPR0097.

Raising the fixed part of our bills would unjustly penalize households that consume less electricity, as well as those who have made the proactive choice to invest in rooftop solar and battery systems. These households are not just consumers; they are champions of a cleaner, more sustainable future, having significantly reduced their reliance on the grid through their investments. It is completely unfair for them to be punished for their commitment to a greener Australia.

By increasing fixed charges, we undermine the financial benefits that come from energy conservation. This not only saps the incentive for households to install solar panels, modernize outdated systems, add batteries, or adopt better energy efficiency practices, but also puts our shared goal of expanding distributed clean energy at risk. We must recognize how crucial this is, especially during peak demand periods in the day.

The impact of such changes would fall hardest on small households and those who use less energy. A pricing structure that burdens fixed charges most heavily hits pensioners, renters, apartment dwellers, and families who care deeply about their energy consumption. Moreover, there is a real danger that if these fixed charges keep climbing, even those who can afford solar panels and batteries might contemplate breaking away from the grid. This would shrink the customer base that currently contributes to shared network costs, leading to even steeper prices for those unable to disconnect. This scenario risks creating a two-tiered electricity system and jeopardizes the very notion of electricity as a vital public service.

Electricity networks are natural monopolies that provide an essential public good. Many Australians are already questioning whether privatization has led to lower prices or improved services. The ACCC itself has raised significant alarms regarding how privatized electricity has failed to meet consumer needs and uphold our economy. The aim of pricing reforms should be to build trust in the system, not to erode it.

Please, reject any changes that would increase fixed charges, compromising equity, efficiency, and the long-term resilience of our electricity grid.