

Submission to AEMC: The pricing review: Electricity pricing for a consumer-driven future

As an older Australian who has retired after a 50- year working life and paying my fair share of taxation, I am now living on a very limited income. Without the benefits that are provided by the Australia government to its senior citizens, my future and those of my immediate dependents would be very bleak.

I write from the perspective of an 'ordinary retired citizen' facing increased living costs in the last phase of my life. My knowledge of the energy sector is limited to what public information exists at the present time, but it includes the facts and concerns around daily expenses related to energy costs in my budget.

My submission is simple and responds with a narrative to the three themes and six recommendations in the pricing review.

Theme 1: Harness competition to improve outcomes for ALL consumers.

The questions listed under this theme appear to assume that all Australian energy consumers are starting from the same baseline. This is a false assumption and has implications for tariff policy. I query what the so-called 'competition' in the energy market has achieved for the ordinary Australian consumer. I ask the following questions that appear anomalous to this theme:

- a. If competition in the energy sector is so beneficial, *why are the costs and expenses associated within the sector continuing to increase?* With the government subsidy on energy costs now being removed, it indicates that my annual costs for electricity consumption will continue to increase
- b. *Why are so many areas of Australia* (mainly outside the major metropolitan cities) *unable to choose their preferred electricity provider?* For example, for many years I resided in Townsville and other parts of North Qld and had only ONE provider- Ergon Energy.
- c. *What is the evidence that can be produced to suggest that 'competition' has actually benefitted ordinary consumers* rather than lined the balance sheets of an increasing number of 'retail providers'?
- d. When will the AEMC have a 'Gold Standard' rating system that gives consumers unbiased information on 'retail providers' that are failing to meet consumer standards for 'quality service'?

Theme 2: Make it easier for consumers to compare offers that suit them.

Having recently used existing tools like *Energy Made Easy* (and other private comparison tools) to 'compare the market offers' for electricity, I can only concur it offers very minimal assistance to an ordinary user. The issues seem to be around the transparency of information provided, the complexity of the different offers, and trying to 'compare apples with apples', and understand the whole raft of 'special conditions' that apply in the 'market-driven' system. In short, it is a complicated mess to try and make viable comparisons.

My questions are:

- a. How will older Australians, many who lack access to computers or the skills to use them, gain anything from existing or new tools about 'energy comparisons'?
- b. What evaluation has been undertaken by AEMC to suggest that the money already spent on 'comparison tools' is making any difference for consumers, before it commits further funding?

Theme 3: Reward consumers for activities in achieving a low-cost system and target a more equitable allocation of shared costs.

I am most concerned about this theme as the two aspects of the theme appear to be a paradox — total contraries to each other in an era where energy policies are still trying to navigate a way through the ideological debate over renewables and older power generation.

I agree with the notion of a ten-year time gap for innovation and reform in industry to have any effect highlights the paradox that the energy system now faces. Over 10 years ago, government policy pushed many consumers with subsidies to invest in solar arrays— and for a period that eased costs for energy and gave some early adopters an extra benefit in Feed-in-Tariffs (FIT). Now with such a massive solar array uptake, the benefits to consumers have gone, and FIT have disappeared—the unintended consequences of the innovation being too successful are now evident.

The latest government push into subsidised batteries looks likely to be going the same way— initial benefits to those who have the resources to afford such innovative technology in their homes or businesses. Incentives work so long as they are not disrupting the rest of the network infrastructure. It seems to be an example of 'innovation' working until it disrupts the status quo of older infrastructure that needs to be maintained and unintended 'costs' start to appear.

The recommendation suggesting 'amending the rules' for efficient tariff design for a 'fairer sharing' of costs amongst consumers sounds reasonable. However, the notion of developing a way to 'target a more equitable way of sharing costs' hides the paradox of what 'rewarding consumers' and 'cost sharing' will produce. My sense is this is especially going to have an impact on those who are less able to fund whatever new 'tariffs' are regulated in any 'rule changes'—for example, those who are trying to be conservative in energy use, or have limited income, or struggling with cost-of-living pressures, or aged persons on government pensions.

Submitted on 8th February 2026 by:

