

30 October 2019

Dr Wendy Craik AM
Chair
The Energy Charter Independent Accountability Panel

By email: submissions@theenergycharterpanel.com.au

Dear Wendy,

As Chair of the End User Consultative Group (EUCG), I am pleased to provide a submission based on members' feedback to me on the first public disclosures by the companies that are a part of the Energy Charter.

The members of the EUCG see The Energy Charter as a vehicle to work with companies in a much more open and productive way through a consumer outcomes-based framework to address the significant challenges households and businesses are facing around energy affordability as the sector undergoes significant change. There is broad agreement that new approaches are needed urgently to make real progress on fundamental issues around culture and fairness in a market for essential energy services – a service households and businesses cannot choose not to consume.

The EUCG, which includes representatives from a range of consumer and energy user groups, was invited in at an early stage by the companies to help draft the foundational principles that underpin The Energy Charter. That important step ensured the principles reflected agreed consumer outcomes. The companies have now made their first public disclosures (in written form supported by discussion) against these principles and this in itself is a significant development.

This submission to the Panel represents the EUCG's first comments and reflections on the disclosures, highlighting the strengths, as well as identifying major areas for improvement and suggesting a constructive way forward.

As Chair I am conscious that this is a new process, and it will take time for the full benefit of the Disclosure phase to emerge. To achieve sustained outcomes for consumers, EUCG will need time to further reflect and discuss the disclosures which are detailed documents. In a complex and rapidly changing market, a systematic response is needed to make the link between the new insights that is now being made available through The Energy Charter to deliver the sustained change needed.

This submission to the Panel is designed to reflect early observations and should be seen as the start of the next and critical phase of the dialogue with the companies about the changes that need to be made to deliver better outcomes for households and businesses.

The CEOs also provided significant new insights about their businesses and The Energy Charter in the meetings with the Independent Accountability Panel. As Chair of the EUCG I was invited to observe these meetings which occurred after the disclosures were lodged. In my view these public statements add substantially to the written disclosures, particularly in terms of the personal commitment senior leaders are making to change and how they are seeking to align their businesses with The Energy Charter. The EUCG as a whole will also need time to reflect on the statements and provide further feedback through The Energy Charter and directly to the companies in their individual capacities as consumer and user representatives.

We see a pathway for companies to work through The Energy Charter to make a real difference. Thank you for the opportunity to inform the Panel's evaluation process, please do not hesitate to contact me on chris.alexander@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au if you would like to discuss this submission.

Your Sincerely,

Chris Alexander
Chair
EUCG