

CUAC Annual Workplan 2011/12

Strategic planning period 2009-2012



ACN 100 188 752

Context

Following substantial internal organisational change in late 2008, CUAC's executive management and Board developed and the Board approved strategic priorities for CUAC for 2009-2012:

- Build a new, strong and expert team
- Maintain and enhance CUAC's focus and expertise on utility issues
- Strengthen CUAC's funding opportunities
- Increase CUAC's impact and influence with community stakeholders and develop a communications strategy
- Develop CUAC's governance framework

This is set out in full in CUAC's Strategic Plan 2009-2012 (approved by the Board on 29 June 2009).

CUAC developed an Annual Workplan for 2009-2012, which supported these strategic directions. CUAC reviews progress against these plans on an annual basis.

In reviewing CUAC's Annual Workplan for the financial year 2011-2012, CUAC held a number of planning forums including:

- CUAC Reference Group Strategic Planning Workshop 23 May 2011
- CUAC Strategic Planning Staff Workshops
- CUAC Board and Staff Strategic Planning Workshop (27 June 2011).

The Annual Workplan was approved by the Board by formal resolution on 26 September 2011.

Corporate Objectives

The objects of the CUAC are:

- (a) To facilitate and provide an independent, proactive and informed advocacy voice for Victorian utility consumers to effectively represent their interests in regulatory processes, and in the consultation processes of other relevant Utility sector stakeholders.
- (b) To facilitate and undertake the preparation and dissemination of independent research on consumer related utility issues to enable consumers to take full advantage of utility markets.
- (c) To monitor grass roots consumer utilities issues, with particular regard to low income, disadvantaged and rural consumers.
- (d) To undertake other activities which the Board considers are ancillary or incidental to the above objects.

| Role | Objective | Area | Priority action areas 2011-2012 |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Advocacy: impact and influence</p> <p>Provide policy and regulatory advice on utility issues</p> | <p>Improve Victorian Aboriginal access to affordable energy and water</p> | <p>Affordability/ access</p> | <p>Advocate on findings and recommendations of the Aboriginal Energy and Water Project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement second stage of Project* |
| | <p>Ensure the regulator and industry considers voice of consumers</p> | <p>Water Price Determination</p> | <p>Represent consumer interests in the Essential Services Commission 2013 Water Price Review with particular focus on consumer choice in tariff options and development of ESC principle based new customer contributions</p> |
| | <p>Improve the effectiveness of consumer participation in energy and water markets</p> | <p>Energy and water market reform</p> | <p>Influence key stakeholders on findings and recommendations resulting from CUAC research project "Supporting effective consumer participation in the competitive market for energy"</p> <p>Influence key stakeholders to resource consumer advocacy based on joint CUAC research "Making Energy Markets Work for Consumers"</p> <p>Advocate for consumer resourcing to participate in national urban water reform based on representations to and recommendations of the Productivity Commission</p> |
| | | <p>National energy reform including the National Energy Customer Framework implementation and any Victorian derogations.</p> | <p>Participate in Australian Energy Regulatory consultation processes in preparation for the Commonwealth's assumption of responsibility for retail energy markets and work towards enhancing customer understanding of energy prices.</p> <p>Influence government decisions on Victorian legislation/derogations.</p> |
| | <p>Improve the effectiveness of market design legislation/rules to deliver efficient consumer network charges</p> | <p>Rules and laws governing the determination of distribution network prices by the Australian Energy regulator</p> | <p>Influence key stakeholders on need for legislative reform to the merits review appeals based on CUAC research "Barriers to fair network prices"</p> |

| Role | Objective | Area | Priority action areas 2011-2012 |
|--|--|---|--|
| Research & monitoring | Analyse issues facing consumers of gas in Victoria including competition issues among others | Gas markets | Undertake research project into the effectiveness of Victoria's gas competition/pricing |
| | Investigate the experiences of rural water consumers in relation to price/access/affordability | Rural/regional-urban water | Undertake water pricing/needs of older Victorians (in partnership with La Trobe University) |
| | Monitor new and existing issues | Exempt energy sales | Investigate impact of exempt selling regulations on consumers |
| | | Australian Consumer Law | Investigate Australian Consumer Law provisions regarding status of electronic contracts |
| | | Marketing behaviour | Monitor market practices with a view to developing research project |
| * Note that CUAC's research plan needs to incorporate capacity to take account of emerging issues | | | |
| Sector leadership & community engagement | Effective participation of Victorian consumers in energy and water markets | Consumer education and awareness | Implement education and awareness project to assist Victorian consumers to build energy literacy and increase effective participation in the energy market, in particular in relation to changing technology such as smart meter |
| | | Capacity building (water) | Host a forum to build non-government sector understanding of water pricing ahead of ESC 2013 Water Price Review determination. |
| *Note that the Aboriginal Project incorporates a number of sector leadership initiatives including engaging with energy and water businesses | | | |
| Sound governance | Ensure sound governance principles are embodied in our internal structures and processes. | Maximise effectiveness & accountability of CUAC | Review effectiveness of CUAC organisational structure |
| | | Improve the relevance and effectiveness of the CUAC Reference Groups. | Review the role and effectiveness of the Reference Groups and develop a discussion paper outlining options and provide an opportunity for the Reference Group to provide feedback to the CUAC Board. |

| Role | Objective | Area | Priority action areas 2011-2012 |
|------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| | | Retention of CUAC staff/skills | Review CUAC's Human Resources policy |
| | Effective planning | Review against past learning | Evaluate CUAC's performance against its 3 year Strategic Plan 2009-2012 and develop a Strategic Plan for 2012-2015 |