

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Consumer group welcomes government's new initiatives on smart meters**

The Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre (CUAC) welcomes today's announcement by the Minister for Energy and Resources, Mr Michael O'Brien MP, that the government will continue with the roll-out of smart meters across Victoria.

Despite the huge cost burden this roll-out has placed on Victorian consumers, CUAC believes that proceeding with the roll-out will come at a lower cost to consumers than the alternative. The decision includes provision for products and services that will enable consumers to better manage consumption and costs in an environment of rising energy prices, while building in some key consumer protections.

"Overall, this shows that the government has been listening to the concerns of the community and consumer groups" said Jo Benvenuti, Executive Officer of the Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre.

Smart meters will enable the introduction of "time-of-use" tariffs, whereby the price of electricity is different at different times of the day. But in a win for consumers, the government has said that consumers will be able to choose to stay on a flat rate tariff if they prefer.

"Many consumers will be able to save money by choosing a time of use tariff, but for others, staying on a flat tariff may be a better option. The important thing is that consumers are able to make a choice to suit their circumstances" said Ms Benvenuti.

CUAC also welcomes the government's decision to make simple in-home devices available at low or no cost to many consumers through the Energy Saver Incentive. These devices will enable consumers to access the data from their smart meters to better understand and manage their consumption. "Consumers are already footing the bill for the roll out, so they shouldn't have to pay again to be able access their metering data. This is especially important for consumers on low incomes." said Ms Benvenuti.

**For more information call Jo Benvenuti, Executive Officer, CUAC on 0429 069 036**