



## Media Release

23 March 2010

### Consumers need clarity on smart meter roll out

The Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre (CUAC) welcomes the Victorian Government's decision to delay the introduction of "time of use" pricing as part of the roll out of smart electricity meters across Victoria.

Executive Officer, Jo Benvenuti said that "CUAC is concerned that consumers are confused about what this announcement means for them."

The installation of smart meters will continue. Every Victorian home and small business will be fitted with a smart meter between now and 2013. Costs for the meter roll out will be spread across all Victorian consumers over a number of years. The amount consumers will be charged is regulated by the Australian Energy Regulator and began to appear on consumer bills from 1 January 2010.

Smart meters will allow distribution businesses to read your meter remotely every half hour. This allows Victorian power companies to charge a "time of use" tariff that reflects the cost of supplying energy at peak times. The objective of the smart meters is to encourage consumers to reduce their demand for electricity at peak times when it is more expensive to supply. It is this approach to charging for energy that has been delayed by the Victorian Government in yesterday's announcement.

"I am encouraged that the Victorian Government has recognised legitimate consumer concerns about this program and taken steps to improve consumer protections and ensure the readiness of Victorians for this important change."

“I am also pleased that the Government has committed to examining the concessions framework in order to support vulnerable Victorian consumers manage the impact of these reforms to the retail market.”

“It is important that any change to concessions and customer protections ensures that consumers unable to reduce their peak electricity demand, such as pensioners, are adequately protected from unavoidable cost impacts of time of use tariffs.”

**For more information call Jo Benvenuti, Executive Officer, CUAC on 03 9639 7600.**