

OTTER CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

MEETING NO. 2/2023 - THURSDAY 22 JUNE 2023

By MS Teams

10:00 am Meeting commenced

1. Welcome and apologies

Present

Mr Jack Gilding (Tasmanian Renewable Energy Alliance)
Ms Stacey Milbourne (Salvation Army)
Mr John Pauley (Council of the Ageing)
Mr James Doerner (Property Council of Australia - Tasmania Division)
Mr Ben Morris (Local Government Association of Tasmania)
Mr Geoff Fader (Tasmanian Small Business Council)
Mr Mark Keating (Aurora Energy)
Mr Giles Whitehouse (Aurora Energy)

In attendance

Mr Joe Dimasi (Tasmanian Economic Regulator)
Ms Kirstan Long (Director, OTTER)
Mr Glenn Bounds (Assistant Director, OTTER)
Mr Tristan Patterson (Acting Assistant Director, Regulatory Compliance and Performance, OTTER)
Mr David Richardson (Specialist Policy Analyst, OTTER)
Ms Estella Walker (Executive Officer, OTTER)

Apologies

Mr Michael Bailey (Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
Mr Stephen Durney (TasCOSS)
Mr Ray McKendrick (Ombudsman Tasmania)
Mr Charles Scarafiotti (Property Council of Australia - Tasmania Division)
Mr Robert Mallett (Tasmanian Small Business Council)

2. Ratify minutes from February 2023 meeting

The minutes from the meeting of 16 February 2023 were ratified.

3. Tasmanian Ombudsman Update

Due to the absence of Mr McKendrick, the Ombudsman's update was not presented

4. Approval of 2023-24 Standing Offer Prices and Determination of the Minimum Feed in Tariff Rate for 2023-24

Mr Richardson delivered a presentation on the Regulator's approval of Aurora's 2023-24 standing offer electricity prices and determination of the minimum feed-in tariff rate for 2023-24, which will commence from 1 July 2023.

The Regulator approved an average 9.51 per cent increase in standing offer prices for residential and small business customers and a 22.4 per cent increase in the minimum feed-in tariff. The increases were primarily due to a 24.9 per cent increase in the wholesale electricity price for 2023-24.

The Committee discussed the impact of green energy certificates on renewable generation and energy process. Mr Pauly requested that ReCFIT be invited to attend the next OCCC meeting to discuss this issue. The Committee also discussed Aurora's tariff rebalancing proposal.

The Committee discussed a customer's misapprehension that downloading the aurora+ app would result in a reduction in their energy costs, and whether Aurora could re-evaluate its advertising to ensure there was no confusion about the way that aurora+ could benefit customers. The Aurora representatives noted that Aurora have started an energy literacy program. Mr Pauley indicated that the Council of the Ageing (CotA) has discussed improving digital literacy rates and that there may be an opportunity for Aurora to utilise CotA and TasCOSS volunteers to help improve energy literacy.

Mr Pauly requested that ReCFIT be invited to attend the next OCCC meeting to discuss Green Stamps.

5. Aurora Energy - Your Energy Support Program

Mr Keating delivered a presentation on Aurora Energy's Your Energy Support Program, which provides assistance to customers that are experiencing financial vulnerability or hardship.

The Committee discussed the balance between the cost to administer the Customer Support Fund and the value of support provided to customers.

6. Tasmanian Gas Retail Code - Hardship and family violence provisions

Mr Patterson delivered a presentation on the Tasmanian Gas Retail Code hardship and family violence provisions that will commence on 1 July 2023. The new customer protections are broadly equivalent to those that apply to gas retailers in other jurisdictions and electricity retailers in Tasmania and other jurisdictions.

In response to a query regarding a cap on disconnection fees it was noted that OTTER do not regulate gas prices but is aware this has been discussed at a national level via the Utility Regulators Forum.

7. Water and Sewerage - Report on the State of the Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Industry 2021-22

Mr Patterson delivered a presentation on the *2021-22 Report on the State of the Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Industry*.

The Committee discussed TasWater's performance with regard to unaccounted for water.

8. Projects on the Go

No comments were made or issues raised.

9. Other Business

It was agreed that TasNetworks would be invited to a future OCCC meeting to discuss its fees for small business service supply upgrades to facilitate electric vehicle charging installations.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm.