

# OTTER CUSTOMER CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

MEETING NO. 1/2023 - THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2023

By MS Teams

10:45 am Meeting commenced

### 1. Welcome and apologies

#### Present

Mr Michael Bailey (Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry)  
Mr Stephen Durney (TasCOSS)  
Mr Jack Gilding (Tasmanian Renewable Energy Alliance)  
Mr Robert Mallett (Tasmanian Small Business Council)  
Mr Ray McKendrick (Ombudsman Tasmania)  
Ms Kate Cox (Ombudsman Tasmania)  
Ms Stacey Milbourne (Salvation Army)  
Mr Charles Scarafiotti (Property Council of Australia - Tasmania Division)  
Mr John Pauley (Council of the Ageing)

#### In attendance

Ms Kirstan Long (Director, OTTER)  
Mr David Richardson (Specialist Policy Analyst, OTTER)  
Ms Julia Ma (Senior Research Officer, OTTER)  
Ms Estella Walker (Executive Officer, OTTER)  
Mr Finn Churchill (Assistant Research Officer, OTTER)  
Mr Gabriel Halton (Research Officer, OTTER)

#### Apologies

Mr Joe Dimasi (Tasmanian Economic Regulator)  
Mr Ben Morris (Local Government Association of Tasmania)  
Mr Geoff Fader (Tasmanian Small Business Council)  
Mr Glenn Bounds (Assistant Director, OTTER)  
Mr Tristan Patterson (Manager, Regulatory Compliance and Performance, OTTER)

## **2. Ratify minutes from September 2022 meeting**

The minutes from the meeting of 15 September 2022 were ratified.

## **3. Tasmanian Ombudsman Update**

Ms Cox provided an update on complaints received by the Ombudsman in relation to energy issues.

It was noted there had been a rise in people contacting the Ombudsman regarding bill increases and issues with Aurora Energy's app, aurora+.

The Retailer of Last Resort rollover event for Elysian Energy was completed with no major issues.

Unplanned outages increased in the second half of 2022 with severe weather events a contributing factor.

Ms Cox noted that complaints relating to electricity disconnections have decreased significantly.

## **4. Comparison of Electricity and Gas Prices Available to Small Customers Report 2022**

Ms Ma delivered a presentation on the Comparison of Electricity and Gas Prices Available to Small Customers Report 2022.

Following a question regarding the breakdown of the small business customers using Tariff 22 and Tariff 94, OTTER reported that the proportion of small business customers on General Use tariff, Tariff 22, had fallen from around 80 per cent to around 70 per cent and the proportion of customers on the Time of Use tariff, Tariff 94, had risen from 4.3 per cent to 14.4 per cent.

It was confirmed that the default tariff for new business connections is Time of Use 94.

Mr Mallett noted that some of the growth in small business customers on the Time of Use tariff may be due to new customers not being aware of their option to opt out of this tariff.

## **5. Energy Security Review 2021-22**

Ms Long delivered a presentation on the Energy Security Review 2021-22.

## **6. Energy in Tasmania 2021-22**

Ms Ma delivered a presentation on the Energy in Tasmania Report 2021-22.

It was noted that Tasmania was a net exporter of energy in the last financial year.

## **7. Water and Sewerage Inquiry - Sewerage and trade waste charging**

Mr Richardson delivered a presentation on the Water and Sewerage Inquiry - Sewerage and trade waste charging.

## 8. Projects on the Go

In response to a query regarding contingency plans for escalating numbers of customers repaying debt, it was noted that Aurora Energy have previously stated they are actively identifying and reaching out to customers. If requested, OTTER can invite Aurora to speak at a future meeting of the OCCC in relation to its policies and programs for managing customer debt.

Mr Pauley raised that he has previously emailed OTTER with questions regarding the Notional Maximum Revenue used by the Regulator in making Aurora Energy's price determination and the total revenue reported by Aurora in its Annual Report for 2021-22. Mr Pauley noted that the AER reconciles allowable revenue for transmission and distribution providers to actual revenue and queried if the Regulator intended to do a similar exercise for Aurora Energy and noted concerns that Aurora could use its regulated customer base to offset prices offered to non-regulated customers.

Ms Long noted that the Notional Maximum Revenue and total revenue raised by Aurora are very different things and not comparable. Ms Long further noted that Aurora is in the process of implementing regulatory accounts, which will provide the Regulator with greater oversight of its regulated costs and cost attribution for the next price determination.

The Committee asked for an update on Aurora's implementation of regulatory accounts at a future meeting.

Following a question from Mr Durney, OTTER confirmed that quarterly performance reports are received from all electricity retailers operating in Tasmania, however, the OCCC's Projects on the Go paper currently does not include suppliers with minimal customer numbers. OTTER confirmed that it would consider the inclusion of all retailers operating in the State in the Projects on the Go in the future, regardless of customer numbers.

It was noted that OTTER is considering amending the Tasmanian Gas Retail Code to provide protections to customers of Tasmanian gas retailers that are experiencing family violence and customer hardship. OTTER confirmed that it was be consulting publicly on the proposed amendments to the Code, with the date of consultation to be advised.

## 9. Other Business

Jack Gilding acknowledged Chris Lock's contribution to the OCCC.

The meeting closed at 12.37pm.