

July 11, 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

COTA Australia welcomes ACCC recommendations to improve consumer electricity market

COTA Australia is calling on the Federal Government to adopt a number of the recommendations outlined in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Retail Electricity Pricing Inquiry Report.

COTA Australia Chief Executive Ian Yates said the ACCC's report released today includes a series of important consumer focused recommendations that could reduce their cost of living pressures faced by older Australians.

"Energy prices are going up and up and older Australians, particularly retirees on age pensions, are struggling with the rising cost pressures forcing them to cut spending in other areas such as health.

"The ACCC report released today is a step in the right direction to ensuring the rights of older Australians in the electricity market are properly accounted for.

"The onus is now on the Government to quickly adopt the consumer-focused recommendations and to take decisive action in protecting and safeguarding the rights of older consumers," Mr Yates said.

COTA Australia welcomed the proposed nationally consistent mean-tested approach to concessions and the introduction of a hybrid fixed and percentage rate.

"The implementation of a hybrid fixed and percentage rate would ensure that concessions are better suited for low usage consumers like older Australians living alone and higher usage consumers like families.

COTA Australia also welcomes the ACCC's recommendations to improve comparability of energy prices and that the Government invest energy literacy programs amongst vulnerable populations, including older consumers.

"Older Australians are bombarded with various electricity plans and often don't know how to work out which plan is best for them – programs that ensure older Australians are equipped with the skills and resources to make an informed choice when it comes to their energy provider are greatly welcomed.

"We support the ACCC recommendation that any advertising of discounts by retailers be unconditional and referenced to the consistent default offer rate set by the Energy Regulator for all companies, a recommendation which if implemented will allow consumers to easily compare providers.

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COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through them over 500,000 older Australians.