

 <p>QUEENSLAND CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION</p>	<p>A non-profit, volunteer organisation, advocating to advance the interests of consumers in Queensland</p> <p>Secretary:</p> <p>Max Howard 33 Dracon Street Regents Park Q 4118</p> <p>Telephone: 0419 678 395</p>
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19 December 2006

SUBMISSION TO MCE RE 2006 LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

BACKGROUND

The Queensland Consumers' Association (the Association) is the peak body for consumer groups in Queensland. The Association's members work in a voluntary capacity. The Association is a member of the Consumers' Federation of Australia, the peak body for Australian consumer groups, and participates in the activities of the National Consumers Roundtable on Energy.

The Association is particularly interested in the Advocacy Panel provisions in the 2006 Legislative Package.

The Association considers the Advocacy Panel has a vital role to play in assisting household consumers to undertake efficient and effective research and advocacy on national energy issues, including the needs etc of consumers in individual jurisdictions. Accordingly, despite its limited resources, the Association has made previous submissions to the AEMC and the Advocacy Panel on a variety of issues related to the Advocacy Panel.

The Association's comments are presented below.

COMMENTS

In general, the Association supports the provisions in the Bill relating the Advocacy Panel.

However, the Association shares the concerns about several aspects of the Bill regarding the Panel contained in the CALC/CUAC, PIAC, and TEC submissions, especially the possibility that the definition of small to medium consumers by annual energy consumption, which may be adopted by regulation, could include consumers with very large energy bills.

The Association emphasises the importance of meaningful consultations with consumers and other stakeholders on the regulations and on key operational matters including; guidelines for the allocation of grants, guidelines to assist applicants, preparation of annual budget, and the functions of the Executive Director and other staff.

The Association also notes that this is a time of rapid and great change in many aspects of the energy industry and in community interest and political attitudes towards energy issues. Accordingly, the Panel must be able and willing to provide grants for a wide range of research and advocacy projects of benefit to consumers, not just those involving consultations initiated by the MCE, AEMC, AER, etc.

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