

This is the third edition of our e-newsletter designed to keep you updated on our inquiry into how energy companies assist customers facing financial difficulties to pay for their energy while remaining connected.



Chairperson's update

As most of you will be aware, the Commission last week released its draft report – *Supporting Customers, Avoiding Labels*. The Draft Report received broad media coverage in both the Age and the Herald Sun and regional papers have also shown an interest.

We have been encouraged by industry and consumer group forums held following the release of the Draft Report, which suggest that we have accurately diagnosed the problems with the current framework, and proposed a potentially workable solution.

Public forums around the State over the next month will give us further insight into the community's response to our proposals and we look forward to this feedback.

We look forward to receiving submissions on our draft report from all interested parties.

The details of our proposed framework now need to be developed. The Commission will be establishing technical working groups to help with this task, including developing:

- › draft guidelines that set out how the proposed framework would work in practice;
- › proposed changes to the Energy Retail Code;
- › service standards for energy management assistance at each stage of payment difficulty; and
- › how customer assistance should be integrated with other sources of advice and support.

We are planning to hold the first working group meetings in early October after submissions on the Draft Report have been received.

Further details of the working groups will be provided soon.

We look forward to working with you in this next phase of the Inquiry.

Dr Ron Ben-David

Chairperson

Submission Deadline extended

Due to the Government's announcement that October 2 will be a public holiday this year, we have extended the deadline for submissions to October 5.



Public Forums

The Commission has added a further public forum to be held in Colac in late September. The updated list of forums is provided below.

Date	Time	Location
September 15	2pm–4pm	Wangaratta
September 17	2pm–4pm	Horsham
September 18	10am–12pm	Bendigo
September 22	2pm–4pm	Traralgon
September 29	2pm–4pm	Colac

If you are interested in attending the public information sessions to learn more about the draft report and the preliminary findings, please register with the Commission by emailing energyhardshippreview@esc.vic.gov.au or phone **(03) 9032 1358**.

Developing the detail

The forums held since the release of the Draft Report have highlighted a range of issues that we will be working through as we prepare our Final Report.

These include ensuring that:

- › the proposed framework can be easily understood by retailers and consumers;
- › retailers will have the flexibility to provide additional assistance to individual customers;
- › it is clear how retailer performance will be monitored, reported and audited;
- › the measures of success of the proposed framework are clearly defined.

Developing the detail of the proposed framework will be a collaborative effort between the Commission, industry and the community sector.

If you would like to register your interest in participating in one or more of the working groups detailed earlier in this newsletter, please contact the Hardship Inquiry team at energyhardshippreview@esc.vic.gov.au.