



Minutes

Meeting Title: Economic Regulation Authority Consumer Consultative Committee

Meeting Number: 01/2025

Date & Time: Tuesday, 22 July 2025 10:30am (AWST)

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams

Attendees: **Members**

Tay Alers	CCI WA	
Jasmine Kaur	Chamber of Minerals and Energy	
Rowan Kelly	Consumer Credit Legal Service	
Suresh Rajan	Independent advocate	
Dr Divya Sharma	Ethnic Communities Council	Apology
Leanne Berard	Financial Counsellors' Association of Western Australia (FCAWA)	
Daevid Anderson	Property Council of Australia (WA)	
Kitty Prodonovich	RCCI WA	
Graham Hansen	UnionsWA	
Sophie Hantz	WA Council of Social Service (WACOSS)	
John Hassell	WA Farmers Federation	Apology
Daniel Thomson	WA Local Government Association	

ERA

Steve Edwell (Chair), Jenness Gardner (CEO), Emily Robinson (A/Manager Strategy and Stakeholders), Alex Kroon (Assistant Director Monitoring and Licence Compliance), Elizabeth Walters (Assistant Director Electricity), Tyson Self (Assistant Director Gas Access), Clare Darragh (Minutes).

Observers

	Consumer Protection (DLGIRS)	Apology
Marcus Claridge	Energy and Water Ombudsman	Apology
Brent Savage	Energy Policy WA (DEED)	

1. Acknowledgement of Country

The meeting opened at 10:30am.

Jenness Gardner gave an Acknowledgement of Country.

2. Welcome

Steve Edwell, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Steve noted this first meeting for the ERACCC for 2025 is later in the year than planned.

The ERA has been very busy and Steve is keen to talk about ways the ERACCC can work more effectively in the future.

Current ERA work includes:

- Evaluating the capital cost of the ARC rail network.
- Monitoring the wholesale electricity market and investigations of breaches.
- Gas access arrangements.
- Licencing reviews.
- Alternative Electricity Services (AES).

3. Apologies

Steve noted the apologies.

4. Minutes of meeting 3/2024 held on Tuesday, 15 October 2024

Members approved the minutes of Meeting 3/2024 as a formal record of those events.

5. Update from ERACCC Chair

Steve discussed the recent reports and decisions published by the ERA.

6. Synergy – Centrepay overcharges

Presented by Alex Kroon, Assistant Director Monitoring and Licence Compliance.

The Economic Regulation Authority has issued Synergy with a compliance enforcement notice for breaching its obligations under the *Code of Conduct for the Supply of Electricity Customers 2022* (the Code).

Alex described Centrepay (a voluntary bill paying service offered to welfare recipients) and how deductions work.

Synergy's breach is for failing to notify customers of overcharges on closed accounts within 10 business days of becoming aware of those overcharges. Specifically, Synergy continued to accept Centrepay payments from 2,845 customers after they had closed their Synergy accounts and failed to notify customers of the overcharging under the Code's timeframes.

This type of breach wasn't covered by the Code until 2023. The enforcement notice issued by the ERA covers 459 customers owed a total of \$239,000.

Alex outlined actions being taken by both the ERA and Synergy:

- The ERA is monitoring Synergy's ongoing compliance with its responsibilities under the Code.
- Synergy has so far refunded approximately 30% of funds and is giving customers additional financial compensation.
- Synergy is working with Service Australia to contact customers affected.
- Synergy is implementing short term and longer term measures to stop such a breach occurring again.

ERACCC members discussed the ways Synergy was trying to contact these customers and compensation amounts offered. There were also discussions around how policy and regulation can be improved. Comments made included whether the current enforcement and penalty options available are sufficient and what can be done to stop similar breaches occurring again.

7. **Western Power AA5 – Second annual progress report**

Presented by Elizabeth Walters, Assistant Director Electricity.

The ERA has published the second annual report on Western Power's progress against the final decision on Western Power's fifth access arrangement (AA5).

We are closely monitoring Western Power's progress against the requirements of the access arrangement. This monitoring will help to inform preparations for the next access arrangement review (AA6).

These regular progress reports will help in improving Western Powers accountability and stakeholder understanding of each access arrangement.

The ERA welcomes ERACCC feedback on the report.

Steve discussed the use of new technologies can and factors such as climate change need to be considered when talking to Western Power about the new AA6 access arrangement. Rural reliability and improvements by Western Power were also discussed.

8. **Dampier Bunbury Pipeline Access Arrangement 2026-30 – draft decision**

Presented by Tyson Self, Assistant Director Gas Access.

The ERA has published a draft decision on Dampier Bunbury Pipeline's (DBP) proposal for the sixth access arrangement period (AA6) for the Dampier to Bunbury Natural Gas Pipeline (DBNGP).

Tyson took the ERACCC through the DBP access arrangement timeline and provided an overview of the key takeaways from the draft decision including a breakdown of the cost components in the draft decision. Tariffs and reasons for increases were also discussed.

Steve noted that there has been a debate in Australia around accelerated depreciation and with gas having a finite life. By 2050 with net zero, the demand for gas will clearly be significantly diminished. However, all the market information

suggests that in the medium term the demand for gas in WA will not reduce significantly from the current level.

Steve noted that the 33% increase in the T1 Tariff mainly affects large use customers (e.g. businesses and industry). Any increase for small use customers will be much lower.

9. ERACCC Planning

Presented by Jenness Gardner, CEO.

Jenness outlined a proposed change in approach to planning for future ERACCC meetings.

In the past ERACCC has been retrospective in reporting on completed projects. The ERA would like to be more proactive and Jenness proposed ERACCC meeting timings be more fluid and coincide with current consultations occurring at the ERA. She also suggested a quarterly email update to members about ERA projects.

The ERACCC discussed the need for advanced notice for meetings. Updates provided in simple terms and with specific focus questions would also be helpful, supporting ERACCC members to consult with their colleagues and constituents.

(Daevid Anderson left the meeting)

10. Members update

Leanne Berard, FCAWA, advised the group about the recent release of the Rank the Energy Retailer 2025 report and noted that Synergy was ranked number 1 (<https://fcvic.org.au/rank-the-energy-retailer-2025/>). She also discussed the recent two-day regional forum held in Newman and noted that BHP attended and was very engaged.

Sophie Hantz, WACOSS, discussed the WACOSS State budget submission and noted WACOSS spoke to members around the state to inform that submission. She also highlighted that financial stress is still growing and that people experiencing hardship for the first time often do not know how to access help. Possible scope for energy retailers to identify customers who may be in hardship before they accumulate debt (e.g. missed payments) was also discussed.

(Jasmine Kaur left the meeting)

Rowan Kelly, Consumer Credit Legal Service, discussed current ACCC complaints and consultations available on their website which may be of interest to ERACCC members (<https://www.accc.gov.au/public-registers/designated-complaints-register>).

11. Meeting closed at 11:59am

The ERA will be in contact with information on the next meeting.