

# Challenges, Perceptions and Changing Lives

**Presentation to the Country Women's Association 2014  
State Conference**

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Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre

Thursday 28 May, 2014  
Geelong

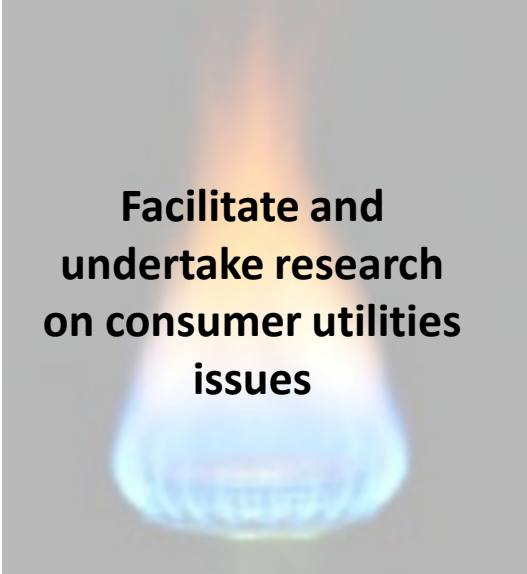


# About CUAC

Established in 2002 to:



**Represent all Victorian energy and water consumers in policy and regulatory processes**



**Facilitate and undertake research on consumer utilities issues**



**Monitor grassroots consumer utilities issues with particular regard for low-income, disadvantaged and rural consumers**

# CWA and CUAC

CUAC's Reference Group provides advice to the CUAC Board about:

- issues impacting on their clients and members
- strategic priorities for research and advocacy
- CWA represented by Maria Vassallo, Social Justice Chairman

# CUAC Reference Group

- Alternative Technology Association
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Consumer Action Law Centre
- Community Information and Support Victoria
- Council on the Ageing
- Council of Single Mothers and their Children, Inc
- Country Women's Association of Victoria Inc
- Financial and Consumer Rights Council
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service
- Kildonan UnitingCare
- National Seniors Australia
- Regional Information & Advocacy Council Inc.
- Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau
- Victorian Council of Social Service
- Victorian Farmers Federation
- Women's Health Goulburn North East Inc

# Change through research and advocacy

CUAC undertakes **proactive research** into current issues:

- Door to door sales
- Aboriginal experiences of energy and water
- Comparator and switching sites
- Smart meters – what do consumers need to know?
- How can consumers participate effectively in the energy market?
- Meaningful and genuine consumer engagement –
- Understanding changes in the gas market – price rises
- Tariff switching and older Victorians
- Women in domestic violence: interactions with utilities

# Advocacy strategies

## CUAC:

- **advocacy on research recommendations**
- **25 government, regulatory, industry and consumer committees**
- **30 submissions year**
- **25 presentations**
- **direct advocacy**

# Research – advocacy – changing lives

CUAC:

- Research with community agencies identifies information needs and delivery methods
- proposal to Minister for Energy and Resources
- create community network to advise Department
- develop website to support sharing of information and tools



# Energy Information Fund

- On 22 May 2014 Minister The Hon. Russell Northe announced 15 successful applicants for \$1m fund
- CUAC will support funded agencies and plug any gaps, delivering participatory education
- Over 50% to community visits to be in rural and regional Victoria



# Energy Information Fund recipients

- Alternative Technology Association
- Association of Hazaras in Victoria
- Baw Baw Sustainability Network
- Bendigo Sustainability Group
- Carers Victoria Inc
- Community Information and Support Victoria (CISVic )
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- Geelong Ethnic Communities Council Inc (Diversitat)
- Gouldburn Valley FamilyCare
- Kensington Neighbourhood House
- Korean Welfare Association Victoria Inc
- Northern Region Indian Senior Association Vic
- Scope (Vic) Ltd
- Yarra Energy Foundation
- Yarraville Community Centre

# **CUAC's simple messages: Three ways to save money**

- 1. Choose a better deal**
- 2. Get any government concessions (discounts) you are eligible for**
- 3. Save energy**

# Older people and switching

We have available for you today copies of the:

- guide for community organisations, assisting older people with energy costs
- three ways to save on energy bills
- [www.energyinfohub.org.au](http://www.energyinfohub.org.au)
- [www.cuac.org.au](http://www.cuac.org.au)

# Questions?