

19 April 2018

Dr Alexa Shaw  
Assistant Director, Energy Data and Analysis  
Department of the Environment and Energy  
GPO Box 787  
Canberra ACT 2600  
alex.shaw@environment.gov.au

Dear Dr Shaw,

**RE: Facilitating access to consumer electricity data**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft report prepared at the request of the COAG Energy Council on facilitating access to consumer electricity data ('the draft report').

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) is the peak body of the social and community sector in Victoria. In addition to supporting the sector, we represent the interests of vulnerable and disadvantaged Victorians in policy debates, and advocate for a sustainable, fair and equitable society. VCOSS has a long-standing role as an energy policy advocate in Victoria, and contributes to federal energy policy consultations on occasion.

We would like to express our support for the submission made by the Consumer Action Law Centre in response to the draft report. We particularly support Consumer Action's overriding objectives to ensure consumers are protected from harm in the sharing of energy data, and to ensure the benefits of data access are shared equally across the community.

Energy data access can potentially help people lower their energy costs by optimising the energy offer they receive, and allowing them to participate in cost reduction measures offered by retailers and others. It may also allow government to better understand the prices actually being paid by households, including low-income households. At the same time, proper protections should be put in place to ensure people are not made vulnerable to higher prices or other harm as a result of third party access to consumer energy data.

Enclosed with this letter of support is VCOSS' 2016 submission to the Productivity Commission on data availability and use, prepared in collaboration with other Councils of Social Service. In preparing the final report, we request you consider our recommendations to:

- make data accessible and useable by the community sector
- prioritise consent to protect privacy

- improve consumer access and control over their own data.

Should you wish to discuss this letter, please contact Llewellyn Reynders, Policy Manager, at [Llewellyn.Reynders@vcoss.org.au](mailto:Llewellyn.Reynders@vcoss.org.au) or on 03 9235 1021.

Yours sincerely,

  
Emma King  
**Chief Executive Officer**