

ICRC Consumer Consultative Committee

28 April 2020 12.00-1:15pm
Online meeting

Meeting notes

Changes to Committee membership

Senior Commissioner Dimasi welcomed Emma Campbell, the new Chief Executive Officer of ACT Council of Social Services to the Committee.

The Tenancy Tribunal has ceased operations and is no longer a member of the Committee.

ICRC Strategic Plan

Annette Weier (ICRC) outlined the ICRC's 2020-24 strategic plan. The plan reflects the Commission's overall priorities for the next 4 years and specific priorities for 2019-20. Improving stakeholder engagement is a key focus, including by establishing the Consumer Consultative Committee, improving the Commission's website and publishing clearer reports that are written in plain English as much as possible. Each year the Commission will update its list of annual priorities.

The Commission's strategic plan is at: <https://www.icrc.act.gov.au/about-us>

Retail electricity price investigation

Patrick Hamshere (ICRC) gave an overview of the Commission's draft report on its retail electricity price investigation. The final report and price direction for the investigation will be released by 5 June 2020. Patrick's presentation explained the cost components and how they affect the retail price. On the information available at the time of finalising the draft report, the Commission expected a reduction in regulated retail prices for both residential and business customers. There was discussion of the draft recommendations for comparability and transparency and reference bills for different customers.

More information on the retail electricity price investigation is at:
<https://www.icrc.act.gov.au/energy/electricity/retail-electricity-prices-2020-24>

Water and sewerage services price regulation

Patrick Hamshere (ICRC) gave an overview of two projects related to water and sewerage services price regulation.

Annual water and sewerage services price reset: The Commission will update prices to account for changes in the Consumer Price Index, cost of debt, and water charges such as the ACT Government's Water Abstraction Charge. Prices for 2020-21 will be released in early June. More information on the water and sewerage price direction is at:
<https://www.icrc.act.gov.au/water-and-sewerage/regulated-water-and-sewerage-services-prices-201823>

Review of incentive mechanisms: The Commission is reviewing the incentive mechanisms it has adopted to encourage Icon Water to operate efficiently in delivering regulated water and sewerage services. The outcomes of the review will be taken into account in the next price investigation (for the price direction to apply from July 2023). The Commission intends to

release a draft report in early May. The Commission agreed to organise a workshop (expected to be in July) to inform CCC members and provide an opportunity for discussion and feedback. More information on this project is at:

<https://www.icrc.act.gov.au/projects/current-projects/incentive-mechanisms>

Competitive neutrality of public crematorium services pricing

Nathan Watt (ICRC) gave an overview of the March draft report for stage one of its advice to the Government on competitively neutral pricing principles for Canberra Cemeteries' new crematorium facility. Nathan described the 5 draft pricing principles.

More information on this project is at: <https://www.icrc.act.gov.au/competition-issues/public-crematorium-services-competitive-neutrality>

Recently completed inquiries: Consumer Protection Code review

Cath Collins (ICRC) summarised the findings of Consumer Protection Code review and the changes made to the Code. The new Code will come into effect from 1 July 2020.

More information on the review is at: <https://www.icrc.act.gov.au/projects/current-projects/consumer-protection-code-review>

ICRC Work in Progress

The summary of current and upcoming projects was circulated prior to the meeting and noted by attendees.

Other business

Working arrangements during COVID-19: The ICRC is operating as usual during the COVID-19 restrictions. However the office is closed and all staff are working from home until further notice. Meetings have been moved online.

Next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be advised.
