

AusNet response to COTA recommendations

Recommendation	Responsibility	AusNet's response
1. Develop a dedicated web and phone hub that can provide general and personalised practical information and advice to older people on all energy transition matters. This should be jointly funded and informed by government and the energy industry but remain independent of both, and managed in conjunction with an organisation representing the interests of older people. The hub should include information targeted to older people going through common life transitions like retirement, downsizing home, coping with living alone after death of spouse, and include real life stories of older people making change. Focus should be on reducing uncertainty and hesitation throughout the decision-making and change process.	Victorian Government and energy distribution companies to resource and deliver with community sector partner/s.	AusNet is open to discussing how we can support government with a project of this nature. Note Energy Consumers Australia is also advocating for governments to create centralised hubs for the general population.
2. Support local community education initiatives to help older people better understand and respond to the energy transition. Activities should be auspiced by trusted community agencies, or local government, and use older peers and intergenerational dialogue, with energy companies providing in-kind support and back-up in the form of speakers and technical information including a focus on energy reliability. Events should include hands on opportunities to experience new technologies and appliances (such as induction cooking), while there is the opportunity to support individual energy assessments by neutral parties. This should be supported through an annual grants program, with funding provided by government, distributors and retailers.	Victorian Government and energy distribution companies to resource, with community sector agencies or local government to deliver.	AusNet is committed to maintaining regular communication with our customers regarding energy-related matters, and we will increase our focus on ensuring that older Victorians are a priority in our messaging and design. We recognise the importance of aligning our messaging across the industry and with government bodies, and we are actively engaging in discussions to promote this alignment. Furthermore, we welcome the opportunity to explore how we can collaborate with other organisations and groups that provide support to our customers on energy-related issues, such as through energy education programs. We are open to offering in-kind support for these initiatives and would be pleased to discuss potential sponsorship or grant opportunities, as appropriate.
3. The Victorian Government to review and revise concessions, subsidies, rebates, and other financial tools to make them more accessible and easier to navigate for older people. This includes ensuring that these financial tools reach more vulnerable older consumers in the state and that they support and encourage shifts to cleaner energy use rather than prop up old inefficient sources and behaviours. Dedicated promotion and support should also be provided through trusted community sector agencies to help older people navigate programs such as the Victorian Energy Upgrades, building on the successful model used with the Victorian Energy Compare program. This includes	Victorian Government in consultation with energy companies and community sector peak bodies.	AusNet would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with government and provide assistance where appropriate, including offering customer insights and data to support the development of well-informed policy design. Additionally, we are pleased to offer our support to COTA in their advocacy efforts, should the need arise.

consideration of changes to the financial incentives to discourage perceived predatory approaches by providers. Effort should be made in these processes to ensure that older people used to receiving energy concessions do not feel they might be giving up something if they make changes to more efficient energy. Energy companies should also consider one-off financial incentives to older customers to overcome reluctance to go all electric.		
4. Provide additional support and incentives for landlords to upgrade energy connections and appliances, with particular targeting of older long-term renters in largely unrenovated properties and those renting homes as part of independent living arrangements for older people. Government regulations should support this action by disallowing rent rises for at least 12 months following significant energy upgrades. This should be included as part of the Victorian Government's efforts to deliver on the Victorian Housing Statement. Older renters should be more actively engaged in identifying opportunities for, and making choices about, upgrades that respond to their changing needs as they age and to improve affordability of power bills. A complementary initiative should be introduced to support/encourage landlords to check on long standing older tenants regarding the efficiency of the appliances they use and their willingness and preferences to shift energy sources.	Victorian Government to lead in consultation with community housing and ageing sector peak bodies.	AusNet is open to collaborating with government and providing assistance where appropriate, including sharing customer insights and data to contribute to well-informed policy design. AusNet is also pleased to offer support to COTA in their advocacy efforts, should the need arise.
5. Enhanced collection and sharing of intelligence on the role and impact of the energy transition on ageing to inform government and sector responses. This includes conducting regular statewide surveys, building on this study and AusNet's Energy Sentiment Tracker, to monitor progress in addressing the issues identified. Findings should be shared more widely and used to stimulate ongoing discussion between industry and community sector agencies about the needs and experiences of older customers. This should be informed by enhanced channels for feedback from older consumers, including through "listening post" events in local communities. Energy retailers and distributors should also use their own data on the energy network to proactively build confidence and comfort among older customers in response to particular concerns, especially regarding the security of electricity supply and evidence of financial benefits to customers of making changes.	Energy distribution companies and retailers; community sector agencies.	AusNet is committed to building upon its work with COTA to better understand the unique needs and opportunities of older Victorians. We will continue to invest in customer insights and engagement to maintain a current understanding of our older customers, ensuring their inclusion and representation in decisions that affect them. In addition, we will continue to share our insights with government, the broader energy sector, and customer advocacy groups to directly promote the interests of older Victorians and support the advocacy efforts of others.