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Energy White Paper sets course for Consumer Benefits

Customers stand to benefit from a smarter, fairer energy market if the Energy White Paper released by the Australian Government today is implemented.

Energy Networks Association (ENA) CEO, John Bradley, said the White Paper provided a sensible policy framework to enable consumers to take control of their energy use with new information, fairer pricing and emerging technologies.

"The Energy White Paper has rightly focused on the need to modernise Australia's outdated electricity tariff structures, to reward customers who use off-peak energy and avoid unnecessary investments," Mr Bradley said.

"We welcome the Government's commitment for the COAG Energy Council to deliver a concrete implementation plan for electricity tariff reform by the end of this year.

"Australia has seen multiple studies conclude that cost-reflective tariffs, enabled by smart meters, would benefit most consumers, including lowering the bills by up to 80% of customers in a hardship program," Mr Bradley said.

Mr Bradley said that further work would be required to ensure new metering rules delivered benefits not only to individual consumers but to *all* consumers who depend on efficient, reliable and safe network services.

He said the ENA supports the focus in the Energy White Paper on 'technology neutral' policy settings, recognition of the need for investment certainty, and the avoidance of unnecessary Government intervention in energy markets which increases costs to consumers.

"We welcome the Australian Government's support for the responsible development of the CSG industry, including the removal of unnecessary barriers to upstream supply without compromising robust environmental and planning regulation.

"Eastern Australia's wholesale gas markets are profoundly changing due to the development of the LNG sector. The announcement of an ACCC Inquiry into the upstream gas sector is an opportunity to ensure confidence in market transparency and price discovery.

"As the White Paper recognises, there are clear opportunities to enhance the COAG Energy Council work program, which has seen unnecessary delays in the Demand Management Incentive Scheme review and contradictory rule change proposals on tariff reform," Mr Bradley said.

Mr Bradley said energy network service providers looked forward to supporting the Government's implementation of its National Energy Productivity Plan.

"ENA endorses a holistic approach to assessing energy productivity which recognises the capital intensive nature of energy services and the combined economic cost to the community of supply and demand management measures in an integrated way.

"The Australian Government has delivered energy policy principles which support the modernisation of the Australian energy system in its White Paper," Mr Bradley said.

ENDS.

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ENA is the peak national body for Australia's energy networks; and represents gas distribution and electricity network businesses on economic, technical, environment and safety regulation as well as national energy policy issues.