



## Terms of Reference for Advisory Group on Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme reforms

### Objective

The EAPA Scheme is designed to assist households who are financially disadvantaged and experience difficulty paying their home gas and/or electricity bills because of an emergency or crisis. The Scheme is aimed at helping people in such situations to stay connected to essential energy services.

The Scheme is intended to target households which are experiencing unusual or unexpected financial stress. It is not intended to offer ongoing income support. There are currently a range of rebate programs in place through the NSW Government to support eligible households on an ongoing basis.

In this context, the *Energy Accounts Payment Assistance Scheme Advisory Group's* overarching objective will be to provide advice to the Minister for Resources and Energy for options to strengthen and improve the delivery of Energy Accounts Payment Assistance vouchers.

### Terms of Reference

The EAPA Advisory Group will provide input into the prioritisation and development of the following initiatives:

1. clearer EAPA Guidelines for Community Welfare Organisations (CWOs);
2. an accreditation model for CWOs delivering EAPA;
3. more comprehensive education, training and support for CWOs in EAPA and other forms of assistance;
4. support delivery of better data management of the EAPA Scheme; and
5. develop models for the delivery of EAPA (or equivalent assistance) to particular customers including:
  - o LPG customers;
  - o customers of exempt suppliers (residential park residents, retirement villages, boarding houses); and
  - o customers who are currently limited in access to EAPA through CWOs due to an inability to visit a CWO (for reasons such as distance, lack of available transport, illness or disability or privacy concerns about approaching a CWO).

Options will need to be assessed against the following parameters:

- consistency with scheme objectives;
- administrative simplicity;
- robust delivery mechanisms including compliance;
- equity of access; and
- sound corporate governance.

This work will also take place within the existing EAPA budget of \$14.5 million. EAPA is a demand driven program and those most in need should continue to be able to access EAPA vouchers. It will therefore be important that robust cost/benefit analysis is undertaken in the consideration of each option, including sound quantifiable evidence.

NSW Trade & Investment, Division of Resources & Energy has also been allocated funding for the redevelopment of the EAPA database and will seek advice from the Advisory Group where appropriate.

In undertaking the work above, the EAPA Advisory Group will take into account the:

- Submissions to the Review of the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) Scheme;
- NSW Government's *Good Practice Guide to Grants Administration*; and
- NSW Government's report *Non-Government Organisation Red Tape Reduction*.

There are a wide range of issues for consideration and it is therefore proposed that a progress report and comprehensive work plan be provided to the Minister for Resources and Energy for consideration by **February 2012** to allow consideration of prioritisation of any areas of work.