

Community Information Victoria Inc
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Neil Howes
Australian Competition & Consumer Commission
GPO Box 3131
Canberra ACT 2601

Thursday, 26 May 2011

Dear Mr Howes

Letter of Support for CUAC Submission dated 25 May, 2011 Energy Assured Limited applications for authorisation A91258 & A91259 – interested party consultation in relation to the amended application

Community Information Victoria (CIVic) is the peak body for the community information and support service. We provide operational support, sector development, representation and advocacy to our 62 member agencies. CIVic members are not-for-profit, independent organisations that offer a range of services to their local community including emergency relief, referral, advocacy, No Interest Loans, personal counselling, financial counselling and case management. Our agencies primarily support vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Our agencies provide support to clients who are in significant financial hardship, are information poor and lack the confidence or skills to advocate effectively for themselves. Professional paid staff and our 2000+ volunteers provide assistance to such clients on a daily basis. More commonly, we are assisting people with utility related issues; predominantly due to inadequate income to pay bills or who require referral to hardship programs but also to redress issues created but door-to-door sales.

Our experience is that door-to-door practices can be unconscionable and in breach of current regulations. Our clients with poor literacy and numeracy skills, from non-English speaking backgrounds and limited-to-no internet access are particularly vulnerable to such practices.

CIVic works with CUAC to advocate and represent vulnerable consumers and issues related to water, electricity and gas. We call on EAL to withdraw their amended applications and concur with CUAC's concerns around the need for genuine consultation and improving consumers protections related to door-to-door marketing.

We therefore write to provide our full support for the CUAC submission.

Should you require any further information, please feel free to contact me on the following: tel 03 9672 2001 or email kate@civ.org.au.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'kwheller', written in black ink.

Kate Wheller
Executive Officer