

Creating fairer energy & water markets for all



Thank you for participating in the Energy + Water Consumers' Advocacy Program Competition & Consumers Conference.

Date and Times:

Wednesday 9 October 2013. Attendees are asked to arrive and register between 9.15am and 9.45am for a 9.45 am start and a 4.45pm finish.

Venue:

University of New South Wales
Sydney CBD Campus
Level 6, 1 O'Connell Street
Sydney CBD
The venue is wheelchair accessible.

Public transport:

O'Connell Street is a five-minute walk up Loftus Street from Circular Quay Railway Station.

Parking:

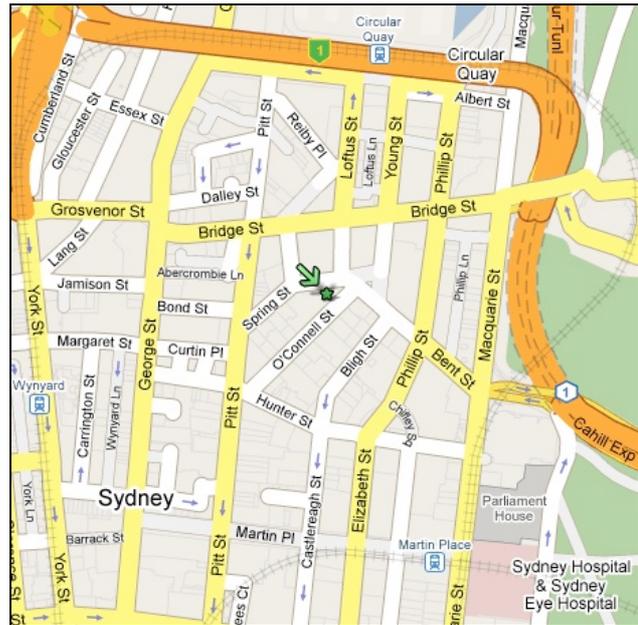
CBD Campus guests' can receive a discounted rate for parking at **Wilson Parking Station at Australia Square, entry via Bond Street** for a \$43 flat-rate until 5pm and flat rate evening parking after 5pm for \$19. Tickets need to be validated by CBD Camus reception to obtain this rate. Wilson parking also offers an early bird parking rate at Australia Square with entry between 6:00am and 9:30am and exit between 3:30pm and 7:30pm with no ticket validation necessary.

Refreshments:

Coffee and tea will be available on registration, afternoon tea and lunch are provided. Tea and coffee will be available throughout the day.

Contact:

Please call Carolyn Hodge on 02 8898 6520 if you have any questions in the lead up to the event or on 0414 975 942 on the day of the conference.



Draft Conference program

Time	Session
9.30	<i>Arrival and registration</i>
9.50	Welcome to country
10.00	Outline of today's proceedings , Edward Santow, Public Interest Advocacy Centre
10.15	Keynote address Dr Richard Denniss , Executive Director of the Australia Institute
11.15	Panel: Social policy to the rescue? Can social policy deliver equity to utility markets and what role do energy and water businesses have to play on keeping utilities accessible? <i>5 minute presentation from each followed by Q&A</i> Kerry Edgecombe , Manager of Pricing and Policy at Sydney Water, presenting on Sydney Water's Bill Assist Program. Alison Peters , Director of the Council of Social Service NSW (NCOSS), speaking about how NSW social services and their clients are impacted by rising utility prices. Carolyn Hodge , PIAC Senior Policy Officer Energy & Water, discussing why consistency is important in delivering assistance to energy and water consumers.
12.15	<i>Lunch</i>
1.15	Cut Off Carolyn Hodge , PIAC Senior Policy Officer Energy & Water, will present PIAC's recent research on the social impact of electricity, water and gas disconnections. This session will explore recommendations to map out a safety net that is better able to assist consumers facing disconnection.
2.00	Deregulating the Victorian energy market: was it good for you? , will include discussions by two leading Victorian energy advocates speaking about how consumers fare in an energy market without price regulation. Gavin Dufty , Manager Policy and Research at the St Vincent de Paul Society will speak about deregulated prices, what people are paying for and ways consumers can benefit by exploring energy offers. Jo Benvenuti , Executive Officer at the Consumer Utilities Advocacy Centre, will share her experience of the deregulation of the Victorian energy market focussing on the tools needed for consumers to get the best from what is on offer.
3.00	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>
3.30	Panel: Which safeguards are needed to build energy and water markets that protect and deliver benefits to consumers <i>5 minute presentation from each followed by Q&A</i> Alan Kirkland , CEO of Choice, will discuss energy offers and ways to deliver simplicity in a complex environment. Oliver Derum , PIAC Policy Officer Energy and Water, speaks about monitoring utility markets to encourage best consumer outcomes and minimise disadvantage. <i>Other panel members to be confirmed.</i>
4.30	Close conference

Keynote Presenter

Dr Richard Denniss – Executive Director of the Australia Institute

An economist by training, Richard has worked for the past 20 years in a variety of policy and political roles. In recent years he has been at the forefront of the national policy debates surrounding climate change policy and the Australian mining boom. He is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Crawford School of Economics and Government at the Australian National University.

Prior to taking up his current position Richard was the Strategy Adviser to the Leader of the Australian Greens, Senator Bob Brown, was Chief of Staff to the then Leader of the Australian

Democrats, Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, and held teaching and research jobs at Australian universities.

He has been appointed to a number of government advisory bodies, including the current review of Australia's retirement income system. He is known for his ability to translate economics issues into everyday language. Richard has published extensively in academic journals, has a fortnightly column in *The Canberra Times* and *Australian Financial Review* and was the co-author of the best selling *Affluenza* (with Dr Clive Hamilton) and *An Introduction to Australian Public Policy: Theory and Practice* (with Dr Sarah Maddison).

Conference Organiser

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre:

The Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) is an independent, non-profit law and policy organisation that works for a fair, just and democratic society, empowering citizens, consumers and communities by taking strategic action on public interest issues.

PIAC identifies public interest issues and, where possible and appropriate, works co-operatively with other organisations to advocate for individuals and groups affected. PIAC seeks to:

- expose and redress unjust or unsafe practices, deficient laws or policies;
- promote accountable, transparent and responsive government;
- encourage, influence and inform public debate on issues affecting legal and democratic rights;
- promote the development of law that reflects the public interest;
- develop and assist community organisations with a public interest focus to pursue the interests of the communities they represent;
- develop models to respond to unmet legal need; and
- maintain an effective and sustainable organisation.

Established in July 1982 as an initiative of the Law Foundation of New South Wales, with support from the NSW Legal Aid Commission, PIAC was the first, and remains the only broadly based public interest legal centre in Australia. Financial support for PIAC comes primarily from the NSW Public Purpose Fund and the Commonwealth and State Community Legal Services Program. PIAC also receives funding from the NSW Government Department of Trade and Investment for its work on utilities, and from Allens for its Indigenous Justice Program. PIAC also generates income from project and case grants, seminars, consultancy fees, donations and recovery of costs in legal actions.

The Energy and Water Consumers' Advocacy Program (EWCAP)

This Program was established at PIAC as the Utilities Consumers' Advocacy Program in 1998 with NSW Government funding. The aim of the Program is to develop policy and advocate in the interests of low income and other residential consumers in the NSW energy and water markets. PIAC receives policy input to the Program from a community-based reference group whose members include:

- Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS);
- St Vincent de Paul Society;
- Retirement Village Residents' Association;
- Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW (CPSA);
- Park and Village Service;
- Affiliated Residential Park Residents Association (ARPRA);
- Ethnic Communities Council NSW;
- Rural and remote consumers; and
- Physical Disability Council NSW (PDCN)