



National Irrigators' Council

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Consumers Arc up as SA Power Networks Pushes for Higher Electricity Prices

National Irrigators' Council (NIC), appearing before the Hon. Justice Middleton at the Australian Competition Tribunal (the Tribunal) in Adelaide today during community consultations, said the Tribunal should reject the SA Power Networks appeal of the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) Electricity Network Determination as consumers could not afford yet another massive rise in electricity costs.

NIC CEO, Tom Chesson said price hikes across Australia's National Electricity Market have one thing in common; they are grossly inflated and unwarranted.

"All consumer representatives at today's hearing, from business to the social sector, gave evidence in support of their respective cases, against any increase in electricity prices and clearly highlighted the major impact on their members.

"Electricity prices are now so high, the flow on effect is costing jobs, undermining business and resulting in industries being globally uncompetitive."

Mr Chesson said South Australians have been hit hard by out of control electricity prices and whilst the AER's Network Charges Determination for SA Power Networks did not go far enough, it did provide SA electricity consumers some relief from out of control electricity prices.

"Not content with generating massive profits at the expense of South Australian jobs, SA Power Networks are now asking for more from the regulator while industries across South Australia are being hammered by increasing input costs and a shrinking manufacturing sector."

Mr Chesson said all South Australians expected the SA Government to join the fight and act on the SA Energy Minister's comments in 2014 that "*..... it is unacceptable for a regulated company like SA Power Networks to make super profits from its customers.*"

"We are tired of being told by politicians across all parties and levels of government that power prices are too high yet no-one appears willing to take the necessary action to change the current electricity market regime. Consumers across the country are arcing up and saying 'enough is enough'.

"The irrigated agriculture sector is not immune from high electricity prices. Once you start lifting water and pressurising it in pipes, the cost of energy escalates. The water efficiency vs energy efficiency conundrum is very real."

Mr Chesson said he hoped that the combined weight of the organisations representing consumers at the hearing would convince the Tribunal that accepting SA Power Networks' push for higher electricity prices was against the interests of consumers and the nation.

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