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7 August 2008

Dear Sir/Madam,

Ministerial Council on Energy Standing Committee of Officials policy response paper on the National Energy Customer Framework

The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the National Energy Customer Framework.

VCOSS is the peak body of the social and community sector in Victoria. VCOSS works to ensure that all Victorians have access to and a fair share of the community's resources and services, through advocating for the development of a sustainable, fair and equitable society.

VCOSS members reflect a wide diversity, with members ranging from large charities, sector peak organisations, small community services, advocacy groups and individuals.

VCOSS is a member of the National Consumers Roundtable on Energy (the Roundtable) which is an informal coalition of advocates for consumers, particularly households and small business.

The Roundtable has provided extensive notes in the attached table and VCOSS strongly endorses these views. We would also like to highlight a number of issues which are of particular concern to VCOSS and its members.

1.16A Prepayment meter systems

VCOSS strongly opposes the use of prepayment meters and supports the Victorian Government's current ban on their use. However, given the national nature of the framework and the fact that prepayment meters are already used in some jurisdictions, we reluctantly support SCO's recommendation that a consumer's explicit informed consent is required to enter into a prepayment