

## Suggested next steps – May 2025 consumer and industry wānanga

Affordability was the key theme of this wānanga – discussions covered both immediate and longer-term challenges and solutions. Throughout the discussions across the day, attendees identified specific actions that they and others could take to support consumers to manage their energy costs now. They also identified future policy and market development opportunities.

We've recorded each of these suggestions below, along with a brief note of which party is best placed to lead the initiative and any obvious things we can do to support.

### Recommended follow up actions

The following were the key immediate suggested actions that came out of discussions.

1	<p><b>Lead:</b> Consumer and community advocates  <b>Support:</b> Electricity Authority (connections, introductions and facilitation if appropriate)</p> <p><b>Joint letter from consumer and community advocates to key policy agencies recommending the following policy changes</b></p> <p><b><i>Ministry of Housing and Urban Development</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require landlords to install smart meters</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Ministry of Social Development</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>End the requirement for benefit repayment for funding provided to avoid disconnections</li> <li>Recognise of electricity as an essential service</li> <li>Introduce a targeted approach to the winter energy payment</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Commerce Commission</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommend applying a broader interpretation of “energy efficiency” in section 54Q of the Act, to enable greater incentives for networks to invest in energy efficiency</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Electricity Authority</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address barriers to smart meter installation and disaggregated consumption data.</li> </ul> <p>The Electricity Authority will continue to discuss barriers to smart meter installation and the disaggregation of consumption data with consumers and community advocates.</p>
2	<p><b>Lead:</b> Retailers and community organisations  <b>Support:</b> Electricity Authority (connections, introductions and facilitation if appropriate)</p> <p><b>Increasing consumer trust - part one: connecting retailers and community support</b>  Community organisations have strong trust with consumers; retailers provide the information and service options that can help consumers better meet their needs.</p> <p>Closer collaboration can improve outcomes for vulnerable consumers. Smaller retailers</p>

	<p>expressed interest to connect with EECA and other support agencies to explore joint outreach and wrap-around support.</p> <p>While these action sits with retailers and community groups, the Electricity Authority is available to assist with connections and hosting planning forums as needed. Please contact <a href="mailto:engagement@ea.govt.nz">engagement@ea.govt.nz</a> for more information.</p>
3	<p><b>Lead:</b> Retailers and community organisations <b>Support:</b> Electricity Authority (collation and promotion)</p> <p><b>Increasing consumer trust - part two: sharing positive initiatives</b></p> <p>There is interest in developing a shared platform or process for retailers and consumer advocates to showcase initiatives that are making a difference to consumers wellbeing and other could adopt.</p> <p>If you have an example you'd like to highlight, feel free to contact us at <a href="mailto:engagement@ea.govt.nz">engagement@ea.govt.nz</a> and we'll explore how this could best to highlighted.</p>
4	<p><b>Lead:</b> Electricity Authority (policy development)</p> <p><b>Making bills and pricing easier to understand and compare</b></p> <p>As part of the recently released <a href="#">consumer mobility roadmap</a>, the Electricity Authority will be looking at options to standardise bill information to improve clarity, comparability and accessibility of electricity bills. This will make it easier for consumers to understand their electricity bills and help them compare plans and providers.</p> <p>We expect to consult on proposed changes later in 2025 and welcome feedback from wānanga participants.</p>
5	<p><b>Lead:</b> Electricity Authority (policy development)</p> <p><b>Ensuring consumers are on the best plan for their needs</b></p> <p>As part of the Consumer Care Obligations, retailers are required to provide advice about the most suitable plan for customer's household circumstances at sign up, upon request and when facing payment difficulty.</p> <p>There was interest to see this advice provided consistently, proactively and periodically to ensure consumers remain on optimal plans.</p> <p>As part of options to standardise bill information, the Electricity Authority is also considering a best plan requirement. We will include this as part of consultation on billing standardisation later in 2025.</p>
6	<p><b>Lead:</b> Electricity Authority (policy development)</p> <p><b>Continue developing multiple trader relationship (MTR) options</b></p> <p>Some attendees had engaged with the MTR trials and found these as a useful way to spread risk and cost and gain access to more favourable pricing and security of supply. They were keen to see the Electricity Authority continue to explore these options.</p> <p>The Electricity Authority has recently consulted on proposals to enable the uptake of MTRs and will make a final decision before the end of the year.</p>

## **General reflections**

Attendees valued the opportunity of gathering in-person, being able to exchange perspectives with people in other parts of the sector and hear some of the first-hand consumer experiences they are each encountering.

A recurring theme was that there are already underway many positive initiatives supporting consumer, but they seem to be happening in silos, limiting their ability to be adopted more widely.

We will continue to host these six-monthly wānanga, with our next event taking place in November 2025. In the meantime, we encourage attendees to continue the dialogue and contact us if you need any assistance to progressing any collaborative actions.

Thanks to all of those who joined us on the day – we look forward to continuing to work together towards improved outcomes for New Zealand households, businesses and communities.