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St Vincent de Paul Society supports NCOSS call for safeguards on electricity lease

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW supports the NSW Council for Social Services call for safeguards for energy consumers to be put in place if the proposed lease of electricity networks in NSW is to go ahead.

The Society shares the concerns of NCOSS highlighted in their new report *Consumer Power: The lease of the NSW Electricity Networks from an electricity consumer's perspective* that without safeguards put in place, energy customers risk having sale costs passed on to them down the track, putting people who are already struggling to pay their increasing bills on time further at risk of being disconnected.

Michael Perusco, CEO St Vincent de Paul Society NSW says that the Society is committed to ensuring energy customers, particularly low income customers are not disadvantaged through any potential changes to the energy market in NSW. Mr Perusco believes that creating an effective customer protection framework is vital to respond to current and future changes in the energy market across NSW.

"The Society is advocating a number of recommendations for a fairer energy system to the NSW Government including the review of the NSW energy customer protection framework; reforming the NSW energy concessions scheme and to establish a permanent fund to support proven energy efficiency programs for low income households," said Mr Perusco.

Over the past ten years the cost of electricity has risen at 4.6 times the rate of the Consumer Price Index and households are increasingly accruing large debts and are at threat of disconnection.

Ray Reynolds, President, St Vincent de Paul Society says that every day Society members are seeing the impact of unaffordable energy bills and that potential cost increases would push people further into poverty.

"In 2013-14 the Society distributed over \$4 million worth of energy assistance in NSW alone. Our members are stepping in as a last resort stopping people being cut off from their energy supply," said Mr Reynolds.

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