

## **Concession increases and changed housing design needed in wake of another extraordinary electricity price rise**

**The South Australian Council of Social Service responded to today's announcement of a 12% increase in the price of electricity by calling for immediate increases in government concessions for low income households, and long term changes in design requirements for new houses to build in higher energy efficiencies.**

SACOSS Executive Director, Ross Womersley said, "The astonishing 12% increase announced today will mean approximately \$140 a year extra on to the average power bill. That is in addition to the increase in July this year which added an average \$60 per annum to the average electricity bills. Put together with massive increases in the price of water and gas this is an exceptional increase to the family budget and one which will swamp anyone living on a low income.

"A \$140 per year price rise for electricity eclipses the \$30 per year increase in concessions for low income households announced earlier this year and underlies the importance of the calls SACOSS has been making for concession increases and for concessions to be indexed to price rises."

"We are alarmed that today's extraordinary rise is much more than the 7% figure flagged in the Essential Services Commission draft decision published in September this year. We do not believe this increase is justified."

"The pattern of rising prices is creating financial stress in the community and these price rises will push some people into energy poverty – the inability to pay for basic necessities like electricity."

"This is especially true for those with special needs. For instance, there are a range of medical conditions like Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease where heat intolerance is a major problem. Those people have little choice but to turn on their air-conditioners and run them for long periods at peak periods – spending an estimated 7 times more running air-conditioners than average South Australians. These price increases will hit those people, many of whom also struggle financially, very hard."

"The South Australian government must take action to help people facing rising electricity prices. Firstly, the government must increase the concessions available to cover these price rises and index the concessions to future electricity price rises. And secondly, as a longer term strategy, they need to look at the design regulations for new buildings to ensure greater levels of energy efficiency."

"Further help with retro-fitting existing houses and teaching people about lifestyle and energy usage patterns will also be important for decreasing energy bills in the long term."