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Strictly Embargoed Until 12:01am

Smart energy devices to empower consumers

On behalf of the Australian Government, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has today announced \$2.7 million in funding to Wattwatchers to develop a consumer-facing energy data hub, 'My Energy Marketplace', that will give greater visibility over household energy use.

Approximately 5,000 households and businesses, and 250 schools will be invited to have Wattwatchers smart energy devices installed, allowing consumer energy data to be monitored in real time, visualised in apps and shared through a cloud based platform in accordance with data rights.

ARENA's funding will contribute to offering the devices at a discount to customers across Australia. Participating customers can access their own data with mobile apps, and can choose to share their data as part of energy management schemes that pay consumers to participate, such as virtual power plants or demand response.

The project aims to provide sufficient scale to test business interest in customer electricity data. Customers will be able to opt-in to share their data with third party service providers in order to develop new consumer facing applications available through Wattwatchers' My Energy Marketplace.

The three year \$8 million project will combine energy data with Internet of Things (IoT) technologies and smart appliances into a consumer-friendly app store model. Participating customers will be able to easily access their own energy usage, take valuable data with them when they change energy providers, and decide for themselves whether to allow other companies to use it.

Wattwatchers' platform will also allow third parties such as the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSPs) to pay for access to consumer data to get better visibility of the state of the network, the impact of consumer behaviour and growth of Distributed Energy Resources (DER). Granular data also allows consumers to provide demand response during peak energy usage periods.

ARENA CEO Darren Miller said the Wattwatchers project aligned with ARENA's focus on integrating renewables into the electricity system.

"Whether it's rooftop solar, battery storage, energy efficiency, controlling electricity loads and appliances remotely, or the uptake of electric vehicles, we need better data to effectively run the future grid consisting of more and more decentralised consumer energy assets," Mr Miller said.

"The Wattwatchers project is designed to provide both the data and consumer participation needed to manage an increasingly decentralised electricity system. This also aligns strongly with other ARENA-funded initiatives for DER, demand response and new marketplaces."

Wattwatchers CEO Gavin Dietz said ARENA's support was vital to running the project as a fully-fledged commercial-scale demonstration, being deployed with community-based organisations, industry and corporate players, and innovative technology partners.

"With more and better data, consumers will be better informed to buy their energy. They can identify and take action on energy efficiency opportunities, both behavioural and appliance-driven, and use energy at times that suit them," Mr Dietz said.

"Network businesses and market operators currently have poor visibility of the low-voltage grid, which is connected to over 10 million Australian consumer sites, and face a mission critical challenge to both see and control DER as Australia moves to higher and higher penetration of renewable energy, especially small-scale solar."