Customer Connections
Frequently Asked Questions
for ASP3s

The following document summarises frequently asked questions relating to upcoming proposed changes within Ausgrid Customer Connections, relating to the following initiatives:

1. Advancement of preconstruction meeting, and other system enhancements

2. Universal Connections Contract

3. Shared Performance Program for ASP1 and ASP3s.

Should you have any additional questions, please refer them to Connex@ausgrid.com.au

FAQs

Q. *What is changing?*

A. To address some of the identified customer, ASP and employee pain points captured over the last three years, and to start to work towards a more seamless connections experience, we are making a number of changes as part of a broader reform program. We will be:

1. Updating our pre-construction process and advancing the pre-construction meetings into the Design stage of the connections journey.

2. Introducing two project statuses, to facilitate the advancement of the pre-construction meeting – Ready for Tender (RFT) and Ready For Construction (RFC).

3. Digitising the pre-construction meeting request process, enabling the ASP1 project managers to request a pre-construction meeting via the Connections Portal.

4. Implementing automated email notifications to the customer and schedule auto-reminders to provide property related documentation to Ausgrid prior to electrification outages, reducing the risk of property-title related outage cancellations and last-minute scrambling.

5. Consolidating the multiple contracts and offers we currently provide to our customers across all connection types (pending AER approval).

6. Undertaking a discovery and design process to investigate the option to implement a Shared Performance Program, initially for ASP1s and ASP3s.

Q. *Why are we implementing these changes*

A. During market engagements conducted over the last three years, we have heard the pain points experienced by our ASP partners, contractors and customers, which have highlighted a range of challenges faced during the construction phase of a project.

The construction phase involves a number of parallel pathways utilising multiple systems, all working towards achieving energisation of the customer's project. These pathways are fragmented and necessitate continuous communication back and forth between Ausgrid, our ASP partners and our customers.

Currently, the median energisation time for contestable projects at Ausgrid is well above acceptable levels. Ausgrid cannot achieve reduction in median energisation timeframes without significant reform, with the ultimate goal to deliver a faster, easier and better value connections experience for our customers.

Q. *Will you be issuing a revised Connection Process Flowchart?*

A. Yes – this will be updated and released prior to the go live on 13 September.

Q. ***Will you be improving the portal and its navigation?***

A. We are undertaking a review of the Portal and will be looking to improve the interaction and user experience of it throughout FY25 and FY26. We are committed to improving this aspect of our customer and partner interface.

Q. *In some cases the ASP1 will request a design change to simplify the construction of a project. However sometimes these solutions don't comply to Ausgrid network standards. E.g. joints within 6m of a road crossing. This can add to the frustration of the ASP3 having to manage these change requests. Has Ausgrid got a plan to manage these requests to ensure the design certification is not delayed?*

A. Ausgrid will continue to work with the ASP3s and ASP1s to ensure all designs are compliant with network standards and where required, appropriate exemption pathways are followed. There is not expected to be a change in this process moving forward.

Q. *How long will a connection offer be valid for if it takes over a year to reach Ready For Tender?*

A. The design validity period, regardless of whether the design has been certified as Ready for Tender or Ready for Construction, will be 12 months from certification as Ready for Tender (or 24 months for complex projects). Construction phase milestones and validity are still under consideration as part of the new Universal Connection Contract Suite.

Q. *Would there be an expiry timeframe on Ready For Tender certified designs?*

A. As above, the design validity period, regardless of whether the design has been certified as Ready for Tender or Ready for Construction, will be 12 months from certification as Ready for Tender (or 24 months for complex projects).

For

Q. *What is the difference between a Ready For Tender (RFT) certified design and a Ready For Construction (RFC) certified design?*

A. Ready For Tender (RFT)

This stage is achieved when the design, which includes all necessary drawings, specifications, schedules, and other relevant materials, has undergone a desktop audit to the reasonable satisfaction of Ausgrid. However, it has not been physically inspected on-site by all relevant stakeholders, including ASP Level 1 and Ausgrid representatives. This status indicates that the design documents may be used for the tender process, allowing contractors to prepare and submit their bids, and for the design documents to be used as the basis of the pre-construction meeting. The design will be updated with a watermark indicating it has been certified as Ready for Tender.

Ready for Construction (RFC)

This stage is achieved when the design has been validated via an on-site physical inspection by all relevant stakeholders, including the ASP Level 3 design team, ASP Level 1, contractors, and Ausgrid representatives, and all necessary design-related approvals and permits have been obtained. This status indicates Ausgrid consents to the design being used for construction once all pre-requisites required by the Connection Contract have been met. Once certified as Ready For Construction, a Ready for Construction number will be appended to the design title block.

Q. *Can the tendering process start earlier or does it need to wait until the design is certified Ready For Tender?*

A. The tendering process can start at any stage. However, the design is not certified Ready For Tender (RFT) until Ausgrid certifies it as such based on a desktop audit.

Q. *Is Ausgrid trying to change the roles and responsibilities?*

A. There is no change to the current roles and responsibilities of any key stakeholders in the process:

• ASP3s will continue to be responsible for delivering a constructable design

• As the network constructor, ASP1s will continue to

  › Facilitate and attend the preconstruction meeting. This will contribute to the design being constructable based on an onsite assessment,

  › Discuss with the customer any potential staging or energisation-specific requirements that may impact the delivery time.

• Contestable Project Coordinators (CPCs) will continue to certify the ASP3s design and support the ASP3s with network standard and engineering related clarifications. Where required, they will attend the pre-construction meeting.

• Network Connection Coordinators (NCCs) will attend the pre-construction meetings and provide the ASP1s with support regarding operating and outage requirements.

If the design complies with network standards and is feasible to construct, it will be certified. If the ASP1 believes they can achieve the project at a lower cost using an alternative method, it is up to the customer and the ASPs to agree on the best approach.

Q. *What happens if the ASP3 disagrees with the ASP1 and Ausgrid officer?*

A. Aligned to the current design and construction process, the involved work groups together with the customer, will all work together to achieve a connection design that is both practical and constructible.

Q. *Won't moving the pre-construction meeting to prior to construction simply move the "pain points" from after certification to before certification?*

A. For our ASP3s who consistently create designs that are certifiable and constructible, this will be the same process. It is just taking place a little earlier in the process to ensure that everyone is aligned. It is only where constructability issues are detected, that a redesign will be required.

Q. *What will the Ready For Tender status and Ready For Construction status of the design look like?*

A. The design will be updated with a watermark indicating it has been certified as Ready for Tender.

Once certified as Ready For Construction, a Ready for Construction number will be appended to the design title block.

Q. *Will both the CPC and NCC be attending the pre-construction meeting? If the CPC is going to be attending the meeting - have you considered the CPC inspecting the site prior to certification to ensure constructability? Or possibly a design site meeting between the ASP3 and CPC?*

A. For the majority of instances, the Contestable Project Coordinator (CPC) and Network Compliance Coordinator (NCC) will be invited to the pre-construction meeting. This offers the entire design and construction team an opportunity to connect onsite and discuss the Ready For Tender design.

Q. *Is the pre-construction meeting mandatory for ASP3s?*

A. As per ES4 Accredited Service Provider Authorisation, the ASP3 or a suitable alternative representative of the ASP3 must attend the pre-construction meeting in person.