

Ausgrid Regulatory Reset – 2024-2029

Customer and stakeholder engagement report

Input to 2024-29 Draft Plan

Contents

List of tables	4
List of figures	4
Executive Summary	6
About this report	6
What customers said	7
Engagement journey	7
What we set out to do	10
Context	10
Objectives	10
Commitments	11
Approach	11
What we heard	13
Alignment on the big issues	13
Many and varied insights	13
Choices and debate	17
Valuing local solutions like community batteries	17
Ausgrid's net zero targets	18
Ausgrid's net zero investment	18
Two-way Tariffs	19
Cyber security	20
What we learned	21
How we engaged	23
Engagement design	23
Engaging residential customers	25
Voice of Community Panel	34
Engaging business customers	37
Engaging the energy sector	42
Conversation snapshots	44
Voice of Community Panel – recommendations	44
Lived Experience, CALD and small business customers	46
Indigenous engagement	48
Commercial and industrial customers	48

Councils	50
Energy supply chain	52
Evaluation and verification	53
Evaluation surveys	53
Evaluation workshop	53
Feedback validation	53
Where to find the response	56
Appendix	59
A. Ausgrid engagement framework	60
B. Voice of the Community Process Report	61
C. Community Resilience Focus Groups	62
D. Life Support Customers Survey Insights	63
E. Evaluation Surveys	64

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List of tables

Table 1 Customer insights.....	14
Table 2 Phase 1 Lived Experience Stakeholder Conversations.....	27
Table 3 Phase 1 Lived Experience Customer Conversations	28
Table 4 Phase 2 Lived Experience / SME Customer Conversations.....	32
Table 5 Top 10 LGAs within Ausgrid area that have the highest proportion of people that speak a language other than English at home	33
Table 6 CALD Customer Conversations	33
Table 7 Voice of Community Panel program.....	35
Table 8 Phase 1 SME Stakeholder Conversations	38
Table 9 Pricing Working Group Meetings.....	42
Table 10 Monthly retailer newsletter topics	42
Table 11 Voice of Community Panel Recommendations	44
Table 12 Lived Experience, CALD and SME Customer Insights.....	46
Table 13 Commercial and Industrial Customer Interview Insights.....	48
Table 14 Commercial and Industrial Customer Forum Insights.....	49
Table 15 Council Feedback - Vegetation Management.....	50
Table 16 Council Feedback - Innovation and Sustainability	50
Table 17 Council Feedback - Public Lighting	51
Table 18 Council Feedback – Resilience	52
Table 19 Customer Feedback - where to find the response.....	57

List of figures

Figure 1 The Reset engagement journey	8
Figure 2 Reset engagement channels.....	9
Figure 3 Customers reached.....	9
Figure 4 Engagement journey.....	12
Figure 5 Ausgrid's role in community batteries.....	17
Figure 6 Community sentiment on how to weight.....	18
Figure 7 Ausgrid's net zero targets	18
Figure 8 Ausgrid's net zero investment	19
Figure 9 Two-way tariffs	19
Figure 10 Investment in improving customer service	19
Figure 11 Investment in innovation.....	20
Figure 12 Cyber security	20
Figure 13 Managing reliability	20
Figure 14 Reset engagement themes	24
Figure 15 Reset customer streams	25
Figure 16 Customer engagement.....	26
Figure 17 Participating State MPs.....	30
Figure 18 Voice of Community Customer Composition.....	35
Figure 19 Main customer cohorts and themes	37
Figure 20 SME engagement	37
Figure 21 Participating Commercial and Industrial Customers.....	39
Figure 22 Participating Councils.....	41
Figure 23 Customer Data Validation Insights	54

Executive Summary

About this report

Ausgrid operates the poles, wires and streetlights delivering electricity to homes and businesses across Sydney, the Central Coast and Hunter region. Every five years it is required to submit a proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) that details proposed business operations and service delivery for the upcoming five-year period (the Reset). The next Reset will cover the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2029.

In August 2022, Ausgrid will publish and consult on a Draft Plan for this Reset period. Feedback on this Draft Plan will help the business prepare a final Regulatory Proposal that will be submitted to the AER in January 2023.

The AER expects Ausgrid and all Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSPs) to engage extensively with customers and stakeholders and show evidence that the Regulatory Proposal is in customers' long-term interests. These expectations are articulated in the AER's *Better Resets Handbook*. However, customer engagement is more than just a compliance issue for Ausgrid. It is the means through which the business derives its purpose, maintains its social licence, and makes critical operational and investment decisions.

Between November 2021 and June 2022, Ausgrid undertook a broad and ambitious engagement program to inform and shape the Draft Plan. This report documents Ausgrid's ambitions for the Reset engagement, the methodology used, the feedback received and the main themes that are expected to be addressed in the Draft Plan to respond to customer feedback. Ausgrid will engage on the Draft Plan in late 2022 as it further develops its regulatory proposals.

The report has been written by bd infrastructure, who have worked closely with the Ausgrid Reset team to advise on and support the customer engagement program. Specifically, bd infrastructure supported the co-design of the Engagement Framework and delivered the Lived Experience and Small Business engagement streams.

Ausgrid has been supported by several other specialist consultancies and organisations in the delivery of this engagement program:

- **MosaicLab** designed and delivered the Voice of Community Panel process
- **Gauge Consulting** facilitated the Engagement Framework co-design process and supported MosaicLab with the Panel
- **Ethnic Communities Council of NSW** delivered the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) engagement stream
- **Nous Group** supported the delivery of the event-affected customer engagement stream
- **Indigenous Energy Australia** are supporting with the delivery of Indigenous engagement stream
- **EdgeRed** helped with customer data analysis.



What customers said

The energy industry is going through a transition, with more and more customers actively participating in the generation and storage of electricity or making investment decisions that significantly impact their demand for electricity, for example changing from petrol to electric vehicles. While many customers are more empowered than ever before, this also creates complexity, and many other customers feel the sector is too complex and overwhelming to engage with or feel they are excluded in some way from participation in this transition. This could be due to a lack of information, lack of finances or other barriers such as being a renter or living in a high-rise apartment.

Despite the challenges the transition to net zero brings, there was an overwhelming positivity that the transition is the right thing to do, but customers of all sizes and shapes would challenge the government and industry to do more to ensure the transition is affordable and fair.

Of course, the transition to a net zero energy system is not the only thing on customers' minds. Customers also shared their views on their experiences when they interact with energy companies and Ausgrid in particular, their views on the reliability of the system, and factors such as climate change and cyber threats that could impact the reliability of the system.

Overwhelmingly, we heard that customers appreciated learning more about the industry and that they valued being asked to participate in future decision making.

Engagement journey

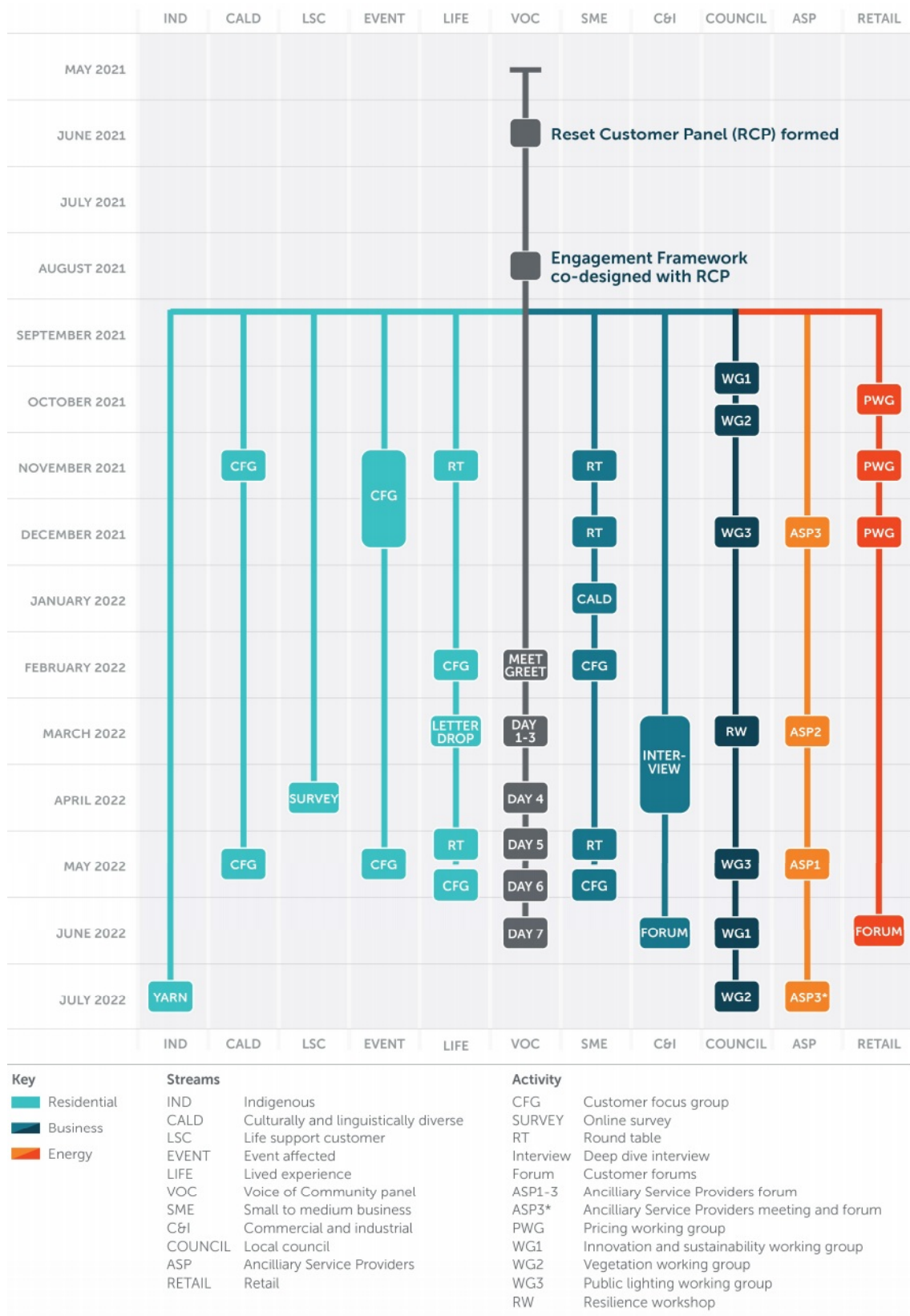
Ausgrid has undertaken a broad and ambitious engagement program that acknowledged the complexity of the energy transition and the challenges in enabling a diverse customer base to participate. The program comprised a series of workshops, focus groups, interviews and surveys that informed an extensive deliberative process to delve deep into the core trade-offs at the heart of the Reset.

These activities helped the organisation understand customers' aspirations for energy, the network and the organisation, and involve them in shaping and then balancing key decisions pertinent to the business's next five years.

The engagement process has been iterative, comprising early co-design of the engagement approach with customer advocates and then two engagement phases punctuated with an interim evaluation. Phase 3 will take place between 31 August and 15 October when Ausgrid seeks feedback on the Draft Plan.

The engagement journey is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The Reset engagement journey



The program comprised multiple channels reaching a wide range of customers and stakeholders as shown below.

Figure 2 Reset engagement channels

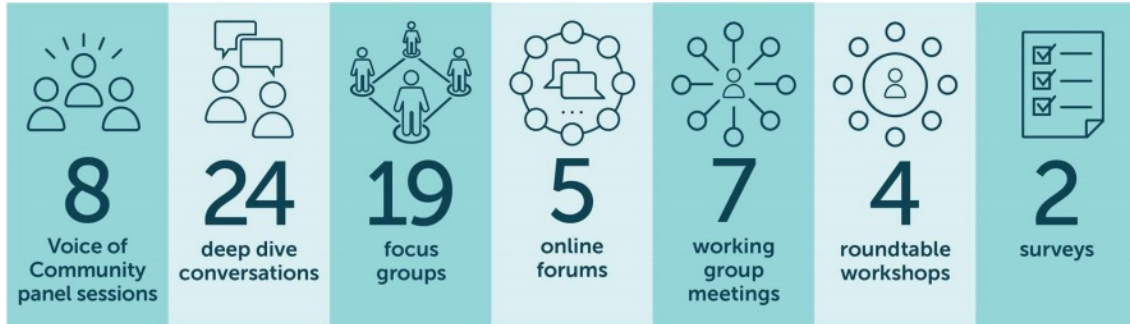
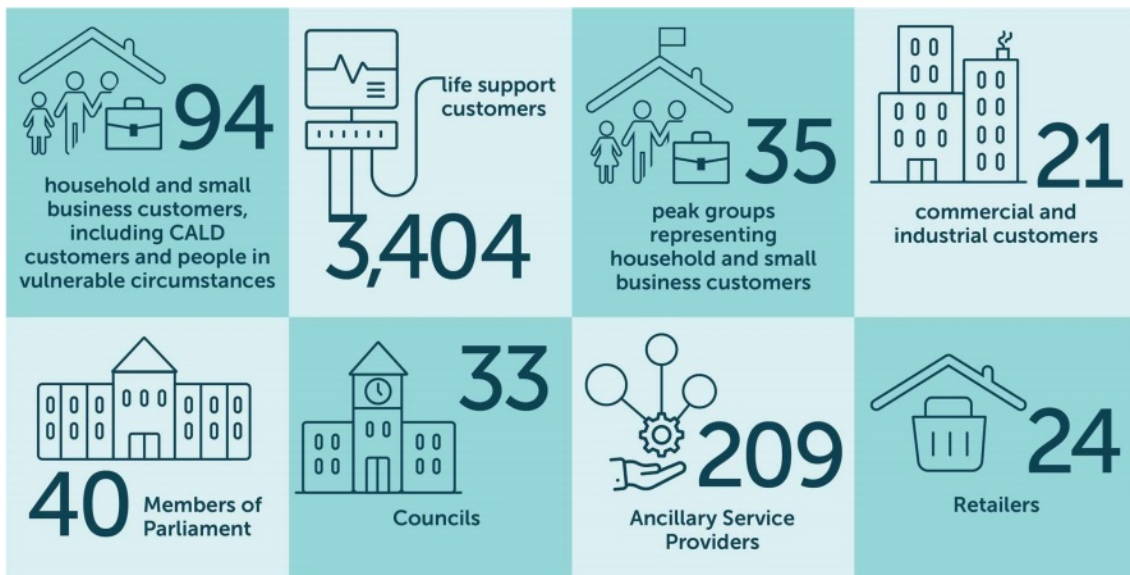


Figure 3 Customers reached



What we set out to do

Context

The 2014-19 regulatory period marked a turning point for Ausgrid. Both the AER and customer advocates had been critical of the efforts made by the NSW DNSPs to meaningfully engage consumers in the development of price proposals to that point, prompting the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) to conduct an evaluation of NSW DNSP consumer engagement for the following regulatory period of 2019-24. Overall PIAC saw a measurable improvement in the engagement quality during this Reset period but called for engagement programs to have greater influence on the proposals.

Since the 2019-24 Reset, Ausgrid has been doing much to transform its customer engagement, establishing the Customer Consultative Committee (CCC), Network Investment Advisory Committee (NIAC) and the Pricing Working Group (PWG) to guide decisions in customers' interests. Ausgrid has also established a successful Voice of Community research program to capture customer feedback and derive insight to inform business as usual activity.

Through this work, Ausgrid developed a deep understanding of customers' keen interest in ensuring energy prices are affordable and that the network is safe, smart, sustainable, and resilient. Yet, as Ausgrid started to work on developing the 2024-29 Draft Plan, it was clear that customers' interests and needs were changing as the energy sector underwent a fundamental transition.

The imperative for a low carbon future continues to increase. More extreme weather, including bushfires, flooding and storms affect the network, placing the issue of network resilience firmly on the energy agenda. The way energy is delivered is changing, with new technologies such as solar and batteries enabling homes and businesses to become both producers and consumers of energy. On a macro scale, large scale electricity generation is shifting from carbon intensive resources to renewables.

Patterns of use are also changing, as customers electrify everything and increasingly work from home. Good customer service remains critical with an ever-present expectation of individualised and personalised service and a varying acceptance of new technology. And, amid this rapidly changing environment, energy prices are set to increase significantly over the coming period, placing affordability firmly front of mind for all customers.

Objectives

Consumer engagement and advocacy is increasingly providing DNSPs a means to navigate the complexity and uncertainty of this changing environment and has become the kernel of regulatory proposal development. For this reason, Ausgrid has embraced the AER's ambition to see price proposals demonstrate long-term customer benefit, by evidencing informed customer influence in their development.

Through the 2024-29 Reset engagement, Ausgrid set out to:

Build trust and confidence: Ausgrid's ambition is for customers to have trust in the engagement process and understand the rationale behind decisions, even if all positions are not agreed to. Above all, the business strives to ensure customers have confidence that it has genuinely listened and that investment decisions are in the long-term interests of customers.

Reach diverse audiences: Ausgrid aimed to achieve a breadth and depth of views and allow customers to meaningfully contribute, hearing from all types of customers across the spectrum of experiences and using a variety of channels to ensure all customers had appropriate access to engagement. Through this, it seeks to gain an improved understanding of customers' preferences and have these shape the Draft Plan.

Drive cultural change: Ausgrid aimed to build organisational capability to deliver quality engagement and customer outcomes and understand customer needs and aspirations. They achieved this through extensive staff participation in both the preparation and delivery of engagement.

Be industry leading: Ausgrid aimed to deliver an engagement program that builds on successful industry practices and of which staff could be proud. They utilised the AER's Better Resets Handbook, the AER's note on

Resilience and the Consumer Challenge Panel (CCP) 17's evaluation of engagement, as well as extensive conversations with other DNSPs and even International utilities to understand what best practice engagement could be.

Commitments

The Reset engagement design was mindful of the needs and interests of customers and their ability and capacity to engage. Many of Ausgrid's customers face cultural, resource, knowledge or structural barriers to participate in engagement processes. Some customers are familiar with the energy sector, have the resources to participate and are confident to speak up. Others have a lower level of understanding of energy issues and are not even aware of Ausgrid's relevance to them. They can also be less confident to participate in traditional ways, or have limited time, may not speak English as a first language or have limited access to technology. To address these barriers, Ausgrid developed the following commitments.

Engage broadly: Our customer base is broad: from the 'citizen consumer' to the 'home user' to major businesses and industry. We will adopt a variety of approaches to reach them all. We will also respond to the diversity of our customers' culture, language, demographic and socio-economic status and work with third parties and trusted community leaders to help us reach the 'missing voices'.

Listen, ask and provide feedback: We will listen to what customers have to say about their values, aspirations and understanding before we launch into topics that we consider important. We will ask them how they want to engage with us and why they choose not to engage – it could be because they are satisfied with the current state. We will provide authentic feedback on how we've acted on what we've heard so that people feel that engaging with Ausgrid is worthwhile.

Commit resources to engage well: We will provide the funding, the people and the resources to make sure we engage broadly and deeply through the Reset process. We will engage in places and spaces, and through methods that suit our customers. We will hold events at the right time of day or week; and address customers' practical barriers to taking part – for example by arranging transport to take people to events, translating materials, contributing to childcare costs; providing mobile devices to those who don't have them, and giving incentives in return for time provided.

Offer "go to" and "come to" approaches: We will provide the space for people to engage to the best of their ability and capacity. 'Come to' approaches are generally more traditional and formal, and suited to groups with high levels of knowledge and capacity. 'Go to' approaches are more proactive on Ausgrid's part, less formal and happen in places and formats that are more familiar to the target stakeholder.

Provide clear and understandable information: Energy is a complex topic. We will build customers' energy literacy and understanding by providing clear, visually appealing and jargon-free information. In conjunction with our neighbouring network Endeavour, we will tailor language to the drivers and interests of consumers and translate key information into our network's three main languages: Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese.

Recognise the impacts of Covid-19: The pandemic has affected us all and caused stress and anxiety for many. We will recognise cumulative hardship and stress caused by lockdowns when we design our approaches and adapt our engagement approaches to take account of the need for digital and virtual engagement while public health orders are in place.

Approach

The program was designed to be delivered over three key phases linked to the overarching Reset program:

Phase 1 took place between October 2021 and February 2022 and sought to understand customers' values and aspirations relating to the future of energy and the energy network. It took the form of several conversations, focus groups and workshops with customers and their representatives and targeted the perspective of people in vulnerable circumstances and other 'missing voices'.

In particular, Phase 1 established the Lived Experience customer stream that aimed to reach 'outlying' customer interests that lie in the margins of common customer pain points and which Ausgrid must respond to these if it is to fulfil its role as an Essential Service Provider. The Lived Experience stream aimed to reach individuals that may be missed by other engagement approaches and build evidence for their representation in the cost allocation arising from the Draft Plan. During Phase 1, Ausgrid also engaged extensively with members of

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and with small and medium business owners and representatives.

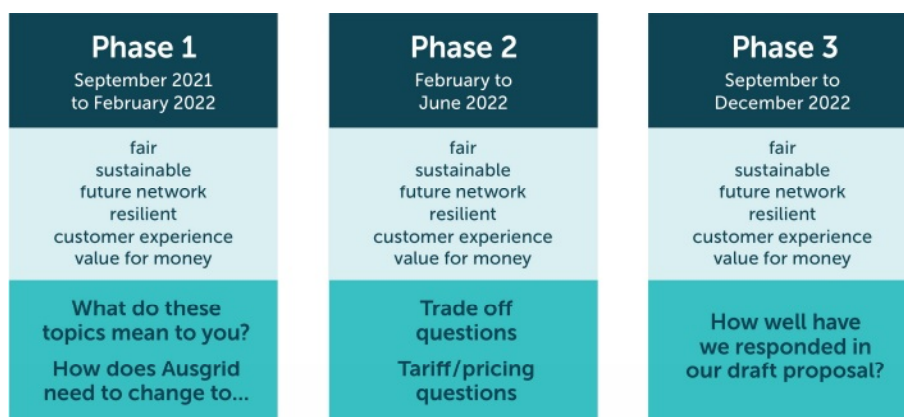
Phase 2 took place between February and June 2022 and comprised the Voice of Community Panel as the ‘deliberative core’ of the Reset engagement. The Panel was charged with considering how Ausgrid should “*plan for the future while being fair to customers today*” and, over the course of eight sessions, delved deeply into the trade-offs at the heart of the Reset. Ausgrid intertwined the Panel’s deliberations with the insights from the Phase 1 customers by first giving Panel members these customers’ perspectives at the start of the process, and then testing the Panel’s draft recommendations with the wider group of customers before concluding.

Throughout Phases 1 and 2, Ausgrid also engaged separately with commercial and industrial Customers, Councils, Retailers and Ancillary Service Providers (ASPs).

Phase 3 will begin with the publication of the Draft Plan. It will recall the Voice of Community Panel in a session convened by Ausgrid and the RCP to check back on how its recommendations have been incorporated with the Draft Plan. Phase 3 will also bring the Panel together with the wider group of customers so that its members and the RCP can hear their perspectives and not forget them as they negotiate the final Regulatory Proposal.

The final engagement journey is illustrated below.

Figure 4 Engagement journey



Assembling the team

The engagement program was ambitious and required expertise from within the Ausgrid business, from customer advocates, and from specialist suppliers. Ausgrid assembled a specialist team of engagement, energy and community experts to deliver the various streams of engagement.

The team comprised:

- **The Ausgrid Reset team**, who led the engagement bringing together the elements and ensuring the RCP provided challenge and advice on the design and implementation. Ausgrid also led engagement with commercial and industrial customers, Life Support Customers, Members of Parliament, Councils and the energy sector, utilising their existing Voice of Community (VoC) program.
- **bd infrastructure** supported the co-design of the Engagement Framework and delivered the Lived Experience and Small and Medium Business engagement streams.
- **MosaicLab** designed and delivered the Voice of Community Panel process
- **Gauge Consulting** facilitated the Engagement Framework co-design process and supported MosaicLab with the Panel
- **Ethnic Communities Council of NSW** delivered the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) engagement stream
- **Nous Group** supported the delivery of the event-affected customer engagement stream
- **Indigenous Energy Australia** are supporting with the delivery of the Indigenous engagement stream.
- **EdgeRed** helped with customer data analysis using artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse large volumes of data.

What we heard

Ausgrid engaged broadly on the Reset engagement topics, listening intently to what residential and business customers valued, needed and expected. The business also engaged deeply with the Voice of Community Panel, taking the issues they felt met the remit they were tasked with and delivering a set of key recommendations.

Across these approaches, a large degree of alignment stood out on the big issues facing energy customers. In addition, wide and varied views were offered that demonstrated a nuanced appreciation of the challenges facing Ausgrid and the energy sector.

Alignment on the big issues

In general, there was a high degree of alignment across all the customers Ausgrid spoke to on the critical 'big' issues.

Through the engagement Ausgrid found that customers want:

A speedy and smart progression to net zero: Despite the affordability challenges that many customers face, all customers want to see a faster progression towards achieving net zero and see Ausgrid, as their electricity network, as a key enabler of their own and the broader communities' efforts to get that transition right. The community considers the costs of not achieving net zero as the greater risk. This is not an ambition to achieve net zero at any cost, but a belief that through innovation and trials, through localised or community solutions there are efficient, fair and affordable ways to achieve the transition.

Localised responses to resilience: Customers showed a clear desire for community based and small-scale initiatives to improve the resilience of those that are likely to be worst impacted by climate change. Generally, the community would like more equitable access to a secure and reliable supply of electricity and see this as being increasingly critical as electricity powers more and more of our everyday lives.

A fair approach to charging for initiatives: Fairly costing and charging these initiatives is something the community would like to see evolve. They recognise that a system based on everyone paying the same, or postage-stamp based pricing, doesn't fairly distribute the cost of initiatives to those who benefit. Nor does it allow customers who are able to pay more to make a greater contribution to net zero and other initiatives they value, without putting the price up for those vulnerable customers that can't afford it.

This desire to be part of the solution was not limited to household customers, large commercial and industrial customers shared this view, and wanted to be partners in reducing the overall cost of network services, through their own investments in generation and storage, and recognised that their transition to net zero could help or hinder the affordability of energy, depending on where and when they made these investments.

Reliable energy supply: Finally, it was made clear to us that in considering what is value for money and in our efforts to meet all customers need for affordability we need to put ourselves in customers' shoes. For many customers the cost of an unreliable service is greater than an increase in price that delivers the reliability they need. Many customers of course invest in their own reliability solutions where the costs of losing power are high, but for some there are few cost-effective or practical solutions, and these customers value reliability highly.

Many and varied insights

On other issues, however, the breadth and depth of the conversations we had revealed many and varied insights. These are outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Customer insights

Customers told us that...	We heard this from	For our customers, this means...
Energy costs are difficult to manage, so energy needs to be more affordable	All customers. The criticality of affordable energy was heard consistently across all customer types.	A more affordable energy system in the long term.
Flexible two-way pricing provides for a fairer transition to net zero emissions	The Voice of Community Panel developed a recommendation on this after deliberating on the topic of fairness.	Export capable customers will receive a small charge in the middle of the day, and a reward in the late afternoon. Enhanced utilisation of the network to reduce investment requirements and support a more affordable energy system.
They want improved visibility of costs to consumers	Residential customers including the Voice of Community Panel.	Visibility of what is driving their bill, to allow customers to take targeted action in managing their costs and/or advocating for change.
There should be a way for those who can afford to, to contribute more without impacting those who cannot	Residential customers including our Lived Experience and CALD customers and representatives.	An energy system that delivers choice and helps community members support those in need, should they wish.
Ausgrid should be investing to reduce long term costs	The Voice of Community Panel developed a recommendation on this topic.	Customers experience a more reliable and resilient network, reducing the impacts of outages and managing costs over the longer term.
Outage information is crucial and Ausgrid need to enhance our communication and engagement	Lived experience, small business, commercial and industrial, the Voice of Community Panel and Council customers all raise this.	More reliable and useful information that is easily accessible.
Ausgrid should prioritise innovation	The Voice of Community Panel developed a recommendation on this topic.	New solutions identified to support a safer, more agile, localised, innovative grid ready to meet the impact of climate change into the future.
In relation to partnerships, we should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities for co-funding models; and • Promote a better balance between green cities and a safe and reliable network 	The Voice of Community Panel developed a recommendation on this topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local solutions to address the network and community impacts caused by specific geographical climate threats. • Reduction in outages caused by falling branches.

Customers told us that...	We heard this from	For our customers, this means...
Maintaining and improving emergency response is important	All customers. The criticality of responding well in key events was raised all customer types.	Better utilisation of generators and other support options during crisis.
In relation to investment priorities, we should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve reliability for those most impacted by extreme weather • Make upfront investments when confident in the impacts of climate change • Invest to reduce long term costs 	All customers except commercial and industrial customers, raised this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That for the worst impacts, declining reliability caused by increased frequency and severity of extreme weather caused by climate change. • A reduction in the impacts of extreme weather caused by climate change, for those communities most impacted. • Customers experience a more reliable and resilient network, reducing the impacts of outages and managing costs over the longer term.
Regulatory reform – for an innovative grid	The Voice of Community Panel developed a recommendation on this topic, it was also raised by our Lived Experience Peak Group.	Participate in the transition to net zero in partnership with Ausgrid, making participation easier and fairer for all.
Flexible two-way pricing provides for a fairer transition to net zero emissions	Voice of Community Panel.	Export capable customers will receive a small charge in the middle of the day, and a reward in the late afternoon. Enhanced utilisation of the network to reduce investment requirements and support a more affordable energy system.
There should be a way for those who can afford to, to contribute more without impacting those who cannot	Voice of Community Panel.	The gradual introduction of pricing options that reward or charge consumption and export depending on the time of use. The continued trialling of tariff innovations that align with the evolving ways customers are using our grid.
Proactively prepare the network for net zero	The Voice of Community Panel developed a recommendation on this topic	85 per cent of customers adding new solar, EV's or other equipment to the network will be free of network constraints.
The community is looking for a trusted partner to provide information and deliver localised solutions whose benefits go beyond company profits	Voice of Community Panel	Greater information and localised opportunities to engage in the delivery of community-based solutions.

Customers told us that...	We heard this from	For our customers, this means...
Improve cyber-security	The Voice of Community Panel developed a recommendation on this topic, and it was raised by commercial and industrial Customers .	Reduce risk, and improved mitigation of the consequences of cyber-attack through either network disruption or data interference.
Improved connection experience for customer funded contestable construction projects**	Commercial and industrial customers.	Reduced time and cost of customer funded contestable construction projects.
Speaking to a real person is important	Lived Experience and small business customers.	Someone to speak with in times of crisis for those that prefer to talk to a real person.
Services need to be simple and easy to engage with.	Lived Experience and small business customers.	Reduced time and cost of engaging with Ausgrid services.
Services need to be empathetic to individual and diverse needs	Lived Experience and small business customers.	Fairness in engaging with Ausgrid services regardless of individual circumstances.
Indigenous knowledge is a foundation to managing our impact on Country and we need to continue to strengthen our relationships with Indigenous communities as the first step towards reconciliation	Indigenous staff and advisors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing planning projects through the sharing of Indigenous knowledge to improve the management of Country. • Indigenous language and artwork on depot sites and other locations.
Maintain and improve emergency response	Voice of Community Panel.	Better utilisation of generators and other support options during crisis.
Resilience and reliability is key	Commercial and industrial customers.	General uplift in resilience across broader network areas which will result in an increase in reliability.

Choices and debate

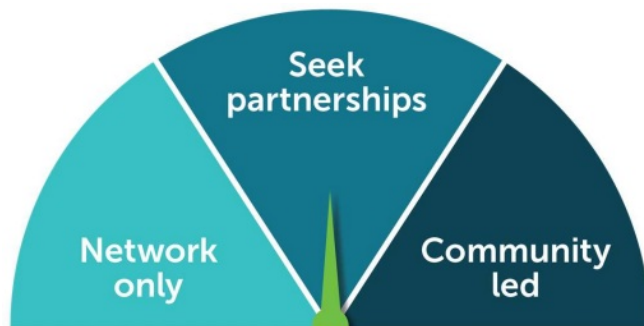
As the engagement progressed it was possible to discuss potential solutions with customers and seek their preferences. This was due to the capacity and knowledge the customers had obtained through the engagement process. Outlined below are some indicative key decisions. In presenting these options, customers were shown costs (where possible) and had a Ready Reckoner tool that allowed them to determine the bill impacts. Based on previous consultation, the dial (that is the dial in green) was set based on the preferences customers had expressed - we were however conscious about anchoring bias so made it additionally clear that customers did not need to agree with the starting position. The dial in yellow shows where customers moved the dial to if they felt the dial had been incorrectly placed.

Ausgrid's role in community batteries

The regulatory framework restricts the role Ausgrid, and other networks can play in the delivery of community batteries and other similar community-based solutions. Ausgrid is trialling community batteries currently and wanted to understand if the community valued this and saw a role for Ausgrid in the delivery of these solutions.

Based on early engagement, Ausgrid heard a desire for these community-based solutions, but also a clear direction that local councils and other community-based organisations were critical to partner with to ensure these were the right solutions for the local community.

Figure 5 Ausgrid's role in community batteries



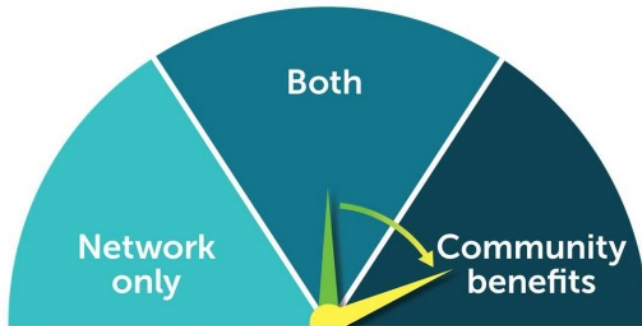
Valuing local solutions like community batteries

Part of the issue with network businesses investing in solutions like community batteries is how to decide which community batteries they should invest in:

- Only solutions that make sense economically from a network perspective, or
- Solutions that have some network benefit, but where the value to the community is also considered.

Customers thought Ausgrid should consider investing even if the value was weighted highly towards the community and the network benefit was small. This may present issues from a regulation point of view but does emphasise the degree to which communities are looking for local solutions. It also echoes the feedback that organisations should take a philanthropic, and not purely commercial view of customer outcomes.

Figure 6 Community sentiment on how to weight

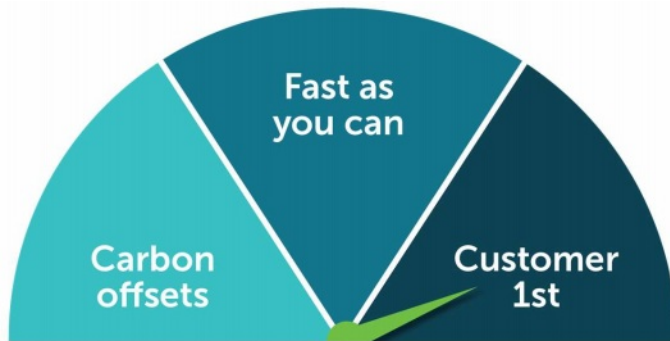


Ausgrid's net zero targets

There are different ways of achieving net zero. Ausgrid wanted to know how far it should pursue its own net zero plans, through the purchase of renewable energy for their buildings, transitioning their fleet of vehicles to electricity and other similar measures, versus focusing on making sure the network is ready and able to facilitate customers adding on solar, batteries or electric vehicles.

Customers were clear, net zero plans and targets are important, but the top priority for Ausgrid needs to be facilitating its customer's net zero ambitions.

Figure 7 Ausgrid's net zero targets



Ausgrid's net zero investment

In the light of the preference to support customer's net zero ambition, Ausgrid wanted to know how much it should invest, and to what extent it was acceptable for some customers not to be able to install solar or make other investments due to a lack of capacity in the network to support those investments.

Customers agreed the approach should be to proactively invest to avoid approximately 85% of customers being curtailed. They arrived at this decision having considered the extent to which they saw tariffs as a fair way to mitigate costs, having decided that a mandatory approach to export charging was unfair, they agreed a proactive approach to investment was required.

Figure 8 Ausgrid's net zero investment

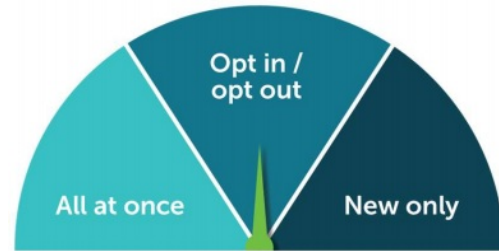


Two-way Tariffs

Having decided that two-way tariffs were necessary to manage the costs of the network, customers considered how tariffs should be implemented to ensure the fairest transition to net zero.

They decided that an opt-in or opt-out solution was fairest to begin with, but that ultimately all customers should have price signals that encourage or discourage use or export of electricity based on the time of day.

Figure 9 Two-way tariffs



Improving customer service

Customers were presented with a package of solutions at different cost levels. The Voice of Community Panel was clear that the value of the higher spend was not a priority for them, but other customer groups like commercial and industrial customers did value some of the solutions, in particular the introduction of API's (data sharing systems) to share outage information, and stakeholders like ASP's highly valued self-serve functionality and access to data.

Figure 10 Investment in improving customer service



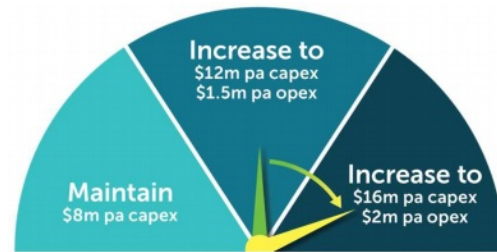
Innovation

Customers were very clear that they want networks like Ausgrid to be more innovative. They saw current regulations as a barrier to this but encouraged the use of trials and local solutions to enable a fairer and efficient path to net zero.

Ausgrid proposed to increase its innovation fund and expand the scope from net zero focused trials to resilience trials and to also include trials that utilise operation funds like community education campaigns.

Customers suggested Ausgrid should go further, highlighting the extent to which customers see trials and innovation as the way to ensure the future electricity network works for the community as a whole.

Figure 11 Investment in innovation



Cyber security

The increased threat of cyber-attacks has the potential to target customer and company data and the potential to cause disruption through outages. All customers had a strong desire for Ausgrid to do more and improve their cyber security program in light of the increasing risk.

There was a real split across all customer groups as to how far Ausgrid should go. Some customers expected Ausgrid to achieve best in class while others felt that improving to security standard SP2 was better value for money. This was the most contentious issue for both household and commercial and industrial customers.

Figure 12 Cyber security



Managing reliability in the face of climate change

Climate change is expected to bring more frequent and more extreme weather events, and with this longer and more frequent outages. This is expected to impact some communities more than others, and frequently communities that already experience a lower level of reliability than the average customer.

The challenge is, that when investing in solutions that impact one area, the cost is shared by all customers. Is that fair?

Ausgrid wanted to know both whether that approach was fair, and how much they should be investing.

Customers were clear that improving reliability for those worst impacted by climate change was fair, and they would like to see reliability improved for worst served customers more generally if it wasn't cost prohibitive.

Figure 13 Managing reliability



What we learned

Achieving real breadth and depth of engagement presents not only opportunities but challenges, particularly in times of pandemic lockdown and economic turmoil and in light of the increasingly complex energy environment.

Balancing planning and implementation:

Our strong focus on the early stages of the project in designing the Engagement Framework, make-up and remit of the Reset Customer Panel and ensuring each customer group had a 'home' created time pressures on the later stages. Upon reflection we could have spent more time focusing on depth and breadth of engagement and focused less on running multiple separate engagement streams given the common overlap of findings.

Tackling the breadth of engagement:

Conducting broad engagement in terms of the variety of perspectives sought and outlined in our co-designed framework presented challenges that Ausgrid and its engagement partners needed to resolve as we executed the engagement program.

The first of these was **do-ability**. The volume of engagement meant that we needed to prioritise. We therefore had to make some difficult decisions, such as deprioritising engagement with the transport sector. While the electrification of transport is a critical issue there is significant engagement through our day-to-day business operations.

There was also the challenge of how to **understand and prioritise the feedback** from such a wide variety of voices. This led to the approach of going backward and forward between the CALD and Lived Experience engagement streams and the VoC Panel, so that each engagement stream was hearing from the other, ensuring all perspectives were taken into account.

This did mean that the possibility of doing deliberative engagement with another group (over and above the VoC Panel) was challenging, as for this approach to be valid the engagement would have to be on a topic not considered by the Panel, and we had deliberately set the Panel's remit very broadly. Noting that the Panel was itself a diverse group with people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, no one required or requested translation services to support their involvement. This does not preclude the possibility of future deliberative engagement with the CALD groups.

Ausgrid's network area is considered to be the most diverse in Australia, given the wide range of language groups we have represented. Hearing from all language groups was therefore impossible, so we needed to prioritise. In consultation with Ethnic Communities Council NSW we agreed to engage with the:

- Mandarin community as the largest group in total across our network area, but a much more dispersed group, with significant numbers of Mandarin speakers in many of the Local Government Areas (LGAs).
- Arabic communities as one of the newer language groups with the most highly concentrated communities, with the vast majority residing in just one LGA within the network area.
- Vietnamese community as the second most densely populated group, and with the majority of the community residing in the same LGA as the Arabic communities.

Further, to get the most value from not just our network, but neighbouring network engagement we agreed that our neighbouring Distribution Network Service Provider, Endeavour would engage with the newer Vietnamese and Assyrian community. While we do have Vietnamese and Assyrian communities in our area, they are a major community for Endeavours' network area. This sharing of insights will happen at the conclusion of the Reset process.

Tackling the depth of engagement:

The energy industry is becoming more complex, meaning the time required for everyday people to consider and make recommendations is greater than ever before. Despite engaging with a Citizen's Jury process that involved 44 hours of face-to-face time, we found it hard to fit in everything we wanted to. Some of the trade-off

discussions we had hoped to have ahead of publishing this report will be continued as part of our Draft Plan consultation engagement.

The complexity of our environment also means that this deliberative approach is really essential to understanding the reasons and nuances behind customer preferences and decisions, and that approaches that provide customers with less time to consider things i.e. focus groups, while valuable provided high level and theme-based insights rather than enabling any real trade off conversations.

Engagement in lockdown:

As we embarked on the execution of the engagement framework in January 2022, NSW had just entered another phase of lockdowns because of new Covid-19 variants. While we have all become used to online calls, and their advantages in terms of convenience and removing the challenges of distance, there are also limitations. We found that small businesses were particularly challenging to connect with in this environment, as many were facing very difficult times due to ongoing closures and uncertainty about the future.

For many stakeholders the prospect of yet 'another zoom call' was just a step too far, resulting in low participation rates and higher than expected dropouts or last-minute cancellations. To overcome this, we validated our findings against our existing VoC program insights, and we held an insight sharing session through the Energy Networks Australia (ENA)s engagement working group. The purpose of this session was to validate what Ausgrid was hearing against other networks' insights – noting some networks were engaging as part of the same Reset cycle, and others shared from their ongoing customer insights programs.

We also tried to reach vulnerable customers by working in partnership with established community and advocacy organisations. This was to avoid the use of market research techniques to recruit customers, which we have observed often struggle to reach people in vulnerable circumstances and can attract people who attend paid engagement events merely to supplement income.

We found that it takes time (more than we had) to form partnerships that can, in turn, reach end use customers. This, together with the strains that the pandemic was placing on these organisations, meant that we didn't reach our intended audiences as effectively as we'd hoped.

How we engaged

Engagement design

Reset Customer Panel

Ausgrid's Reset engagement journey began with a co-design process with its Customer Consultative Committee (CCC) to develop a governance arrangement that would ensure breadth and depth of customer consideration in the development of the Draft Plan. The Co-design process was made up of two workshops facilitated by bd infrastructure and Gauge Consulting that resulted in the formation of the Reset Customer Panel (RCP) in June 2021. The RCP provides deep consideration of the Draft Plan and will deliver an independent report to Ausgrid as to how well the Draft Plan and Proposal have been shaped by the customer and community engagement.

The RCP members are:

- Tony Robinson (Chair)
- Louise Benjamin, independent consultant
- Gavin Dufty, St Vincent De Paul
- Mark Grenning, Energy Users Association Australia
- Jan Kucic-Riker / Douglas McCloskey, Public Interest Advisory Centre
- Iain Maitland, Ethnic Communities Council NSW
- Mike Swanston, independent consultant

Engagement Framework

One of the RCP's first activities was to co-design an Engagement Framework for the Reset development together with members of the CCC and Network Innovation Advisory Committee (NIAC). The framework was ambitious, setting out a multi strand approach that sought to involve customers across a spectrum of interests, needs and levels of understanding. It aimed to attain customer participation at the involve, collaborate, and empower levels of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum, by removing barriers to participation.

The co-design process took place between June and August 2021 and was facilitated by Gauge Consulting and bd infrastructure. The process comprised an internal workshop to align team thoughts, three online workshops to develop the building blocks of the framework (target customers, engagement barriers and evaluation), and off-line 'check-in' meetings on the engagement narrative and questions. The Engagement Framework was updated in February 2022 at the end of the first phase of engagement. A copy of this updated framework is contained in Appendix A.

Reset topics

The Engagement Framework sought to answer the question 'what do we need customer's perspectives and direction on' as well as 'who do we engage' and 'how do we engage'. The engagement topics and questions for the Reset engagement process were derived from existing customer insights, internal team discussions and extensive discussion with the RCP. As a result, the team identified six themes to guide the customer engagement process, outlined in Figure 4.

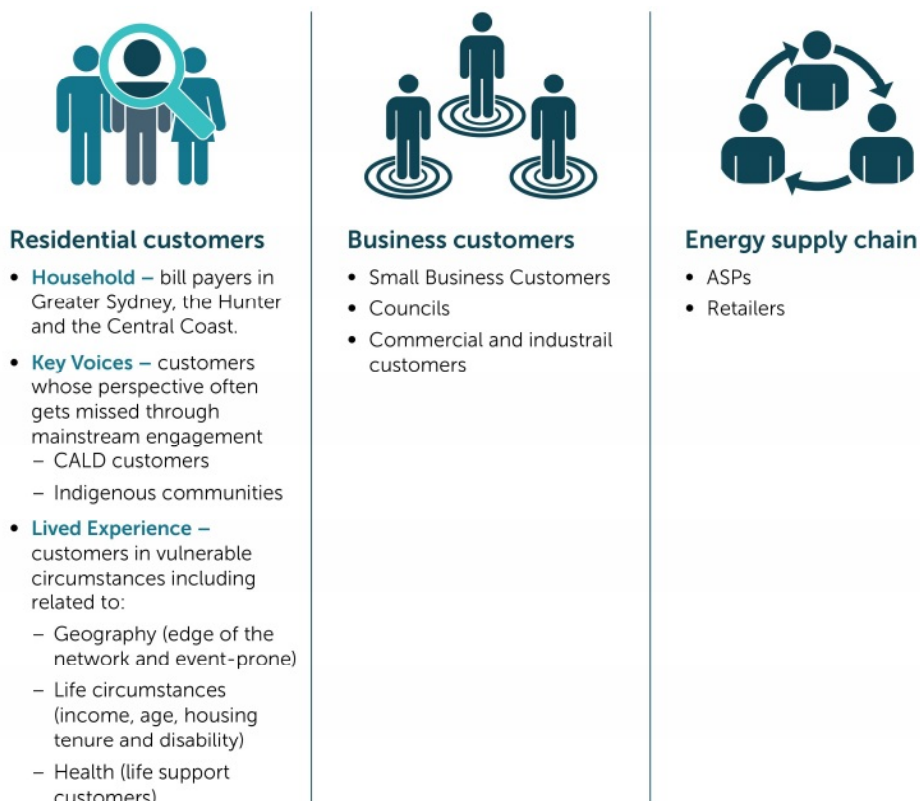
Figure 14 Reset engagement themes



Customer streams

The Engagement Framework grouped customers and stakeholders into several streams so that approaches could be formulated that would enable people to engage with Ausgrid through methods that suited them. As engagement got underway, these streams changed slightly in response to information and discussion. The streams that ultimately underpinned the engagement program are illustrated in Figure 15:

Figure 15 Reset customer streams



Engaging residential customers

Ausgrid’s residential customers are diverse, covering a broad range of geography, demography, and network reliability. Ausgrid knew, that a ‘one size fits all’ approach to engaging them would not help to understand the full breadth of perspectives and achieve the depth of consideration necessary to make truly customer-informed trade-offs and decisions.

Residential customer engagement was broken into three components.

- Lived Experience customers** which sought to understand the needs and interests of customers who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances brought about through:
 - Life circumstances** caused by income, housing tenure, age (older and younger customers) and disability
 - Geography** due to living at the edge of the network or in areas prone to floods, storms and bushfires
 - Health** particularly life support customers
- Key voices engagement** which sought to reach customers often missed by traditional engagement approaches. These included Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) customers, and Indigenous customers. The team also set out to engage young people as part of this stream but switched to involving youth voices in the Lived Experience stream.
- The Voice of Community Panel** which formed the ‘deliberative core’ of the engagement, bringing together a randomly selected group of customers to deliberate on the topic of *How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to today’s customers?*

The perspectives of the Key Voices and Lived Experience streams fed in and out of the Voice of Community Panel, ensuring the recommendations arising from the Panel’s deep deliberation were tested against the specific perspectives of people at the margins of the customer base.

In addition, an Engagement Hub was established to host material and surveys aimed at the broader community, and Members of Parliament were engaged as key representatives of customers.

Lived Experience customers

The Lived Experience stream was delivered by Ausgrid with support from bd infrastructure. The stream sought to understand the needs and interests of customers who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances brought about through:

- **Life circumstances** caused by income, housing tenure, age (older and younger customers) and disability
- **Geography** caused by being at the edge of network or in areas affecting by floods, storms and bushfires
- **Health** particularly life support customers

Through this stream, Ausgrid engaged:

Figure 16 Customer engagement



Designing the engagement

The team began by mining customer data, network outage information, and industry research to identify what was known about these customers and where the gaps were in our knowledge.

Through this the team learned that:

- concern about the cost of energy has become more intense since the pandemic,
- low-income households pay proportionally more for energy and are sensitive to price change,
- older people are feeling less financially secure or positive about the future than they were three years ago,
- young people and renters are feeling financial stress due to Covid, and face barriers to adopting Distributed Energy Resources (DER),
- low-income households have less information about DER and are less able to invest in these technologies,
- customers in southwest Sydney and the Upper Hunter live in some of Australia's most disadvantaged areas,
- customers at the edge of the network experience lower levels of reliability but also other vulnerabilities related to events, income and housing.

However, the team also realised:

- we needed to know more about young people's and renters experience of the energy network and outages, and their aspirations for a fair transition to net zero,
- our response to disruptive events, such as bush fire and floods, could benefit from talking more to communities that have direct experience,
- customers' vulnerabilities are multi-layered, so understanding how life, health and event-based circumstances intersect would help us better respond to their needs, and
- that we had very little information about the needs and expectations of our Indigenous customers

Informed by this research, and building upon the Engagement Framework, Ausgrid designed the Lived Experience engagement to be:

- **Relationship-based.** Reset engagement has traditionally, and rightly, relied on research techniques to reach and engage customers. However, the team decided to work through established and trusted networks for the Lived Experience Stream to reach customers in vulnerable circumstances. It was felt this approach would potentially build partnerships that would help Ausgrid service customers' interests over a longer term.
- **Geographically targeted.** The team decided to focus the Lived Experience engagement in the Upper Hunter and southeast Sydney where multiple vulnerabilities tended to overlap. Stakeholders operating in these areas and state-wide were mapped to develop a list of peak bodies, not for profit organisations and service providers. The aim was to engage these organisations to understand what they were hearing from their clients, and then work with them to reach their clients and invite them to customer discussions.
- **Focussed on key experiences.** The team decided to pull out separate engagement streams to understand the Lived Experience of two key groups of customers – those relying on life support equipment, and communities impacted by natural disasters or extreme weather events ('disruptive events').
- **Integrated with the Voice of Community Panel.** The team also aimed to integrate the Lived Experience and Voice of Community Panel processes by providing the initial Lived Experience engagement outputs to the Panel, and then testing the Panel's draft recommendations with the Lived Experience stakeholders and customers.

Phase 1

The purpose of our Phase 1 engagement was to understand the values and aspirations of people living in vulnerable circumstances as they related to the distributed energy network.

Stakeholder conversations

The team initially planned three 'roundtable' workshops with stakeholders advocating for low-income households, renters, older people, and younger people. The first workshop was aimed at State-wide organisations, the second at the Upper Hunter stakeholders and the third at stakeholders in Southeast Sydney.

Public health restrictions and lockdowns related to the Delta and Omicron Covid-19 variants meant there were challenges in recruiting participants to the third workshop. So, instead, deep dive conversations were carried out with stakeholders representing vulnerable customers in Southeast Sydney and tenants. We also met with organisations representing visual and hearing-impaired customers, to bring a disability perspective into our understanding of customer vulnerability.

Table 2 outlines the stakeholder engagement events delivered during Phase 1 of the Lived Experience stream.

Table 2 Phase 1 Lived Experience Stakeholder Conversations

Event	Date	Attendees
Roundtable 1 - State-wide	Monday 29 November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COTA NSW • Older Women's Network • Financial Counselling Australia • Financial Counselling Hunter Valley • Public Interest Advisory Centre • National Council of Social Services • Resilience NSW • Thriving Communities Partnership • Uniting Communities • Youth Action
Roundtable 2 – Upper Hunter	Tuesday 7 December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compass Housing • Muswellbrook Council • Upper Hunter Community Support
Deep dive conversations	Wednesday 19 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Eastern Community Support
	Thursday 27 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Australia

Event	Date	Attendees
	Tuesday 8 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deaf Australia
	Wednesday 9 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants Union of NSW

The Round Table conversations focussed on four of the Reset engagement themes: value for money, customer experience, resilience, and future network. The key engagement question was: ***What is the lived experience of customers who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances and how should Ausgrid respond to improve their experience?*** For each of the selected Reset engagement themes two questions were posed: ***What are you hearing about this topic? How should Ausgrid respond?***

The event was held on Microsoft Teams, and we used the online collaboration tool Mural to capture responses.

Customer conversations

Participants from the roundtables and deep dive conversations were asked for help in reaching and inviting clients to customer discussions. Initially two customer discussion groups were planned in each of the target areas: one with low-income groups and one with young people.

Stakeholders were sent communications about the discussion groups and asked to distribute the material through their information channels and social media. The information directed potential participants to sign up via an online form/screener survey. The team also asked stakeholders for contacts at other local organisations that would be able to help publicise and recruit participants for discussion groups. In this way, the team reached social housing clients through Mission Australia's tenant groups.

Due to the Pandemic, and because the engagement coincided with the lead up to Christmas, the response to the team's outreach was low. The team therefore pivoted to hold two cross-network groups with customers experiencing a range of vulnerabilities, and one with members of the Greater Sydney Youth Panel. These are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3 Phase 1 Lived Experience Customer Conversations

Discussion	Date	No of customers	About the customers
Customer discussion	Monday 7 February 2022	4	Of the four attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 were aged over 60 2 were social housing residents 3 earned less than \$530 per week 1 lived in the Hunter 1 was a registered life support customer (sleep apnoea)
Youth discussion	Tuesday 8 February 2022	3	Members of the Greater Sydney Commission's Youth Panel living within the Ausgrid network aged between 21 and 27.
Customer discussion	Thursday 10 February 2022	3	Of the three attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 was aged over 60 1 was a social housing resident 2 earned less than \$530 per week 2 lived in private rental accommodation 1 was in the Upper Hunter at the edge of the network

A customer discussion guide was used to ensure a consistent and structured approach to the Reset engagement, and online videos from ARENA and UNSW were used to explain key concepts such as net zero, DER and network resilience. The team worked to remove barriers to participation by helping with technology and providing gift card incentives as a thank you.

While participation numbers were not large, the quality of the discussion was high and reflected the diversity and complexity of Ausgrid's customer base. The team heard from customers in metropolitan Sydney and the Upper Hunter Region, sharing customer experiences from both highly urbanised and rural parts of Ausgrid's network. The low numbers reflected the challenges around engaging during lockdown and, in hindsight, more could have been done more to promote the events. However, the insights gained were validated against existing business as usual data sources.

Event-affected communities discussion

Supported by **Nous Group**, Ausgrid held four focus groups with people in communities affected by extreme events. The aim of these sessions was to understand the impact of disruptive events on these communities and identify opportunities for Ausgrid to support them in building resilience to these events in the future. A full report of this engagement is contained in Appendix C.

Two of these communities overlapped with the rest of the Lived Experience stream (Cessnock in the Upper Hunter and Canterbury Bankstown) but Ausgrid also spoke to people in Hornsby / Pennant Hills and Nelson Bay on the Central Coast.

For each session, a diverse mix of residential customers, commercial and industrial customers and first responders were recruited. This included older customers, customers from CALD backgrounds, and customers from low-income households. All participants reported lived experience of disruptive events. The four focus groups took place over a six-day period between Friday 26 November and Monday 13 December. Each focus group lasted 90 minutes and had a minimum of five participants.

The focus group participants comprised:

- 12 residential customers
- 3 small and medium size enterprise owners
- 2 hospital representatives
- 4 first responders

Life support customer survey

In August 2021, the Australian Energy Foundation (AEF) published the results of research funded by Energy Consumers Australia to identify ways Life Support Customers could be best supported by the energy industry they rely on.

To access the customer voice, AEF partnered with electricity distributors – including Ausgrid - to engage life support customers via online surveys. 4,000 Life Support Customers participated in an initial survey, of which 3,600 consented to have their responses analysed for this study. 550 participated in a follow-up survey, and 500 consented to analysis for the AEF study.

Ausgrid wanted to understand which of these eight recommendations were important to customers so that it could better plan our services now and into the future. To do this, the Ausgrid team surveyed about half of the life support customers in the network receiving 3,404 responses at a 17 per cent response rate.

The survey aimed to:

- Understand current drivers of satisfaction
- Understand current importance of key factors that drive satisfaction
- Understand resilience of Life Support Customers
- Investigate future initiatives that are aligned to customer needs

The full report of this research is contained in Appendix D.

MP engagement

Early in the engagement design, Ausgrid identified that local MPs are often the first port of call for customers experiencing difficulties in relation to the energy network. All Federal and State MPs in the network were surveyed in February 2022 resulting in responses from three Federal members, 37 from State members. 28 Members named their electorates which are illustrated in Figure 17.

Figure 17 Participating State MPs



Phase 2

The purpose of the Phase 2 engagement was to engage deeply with customers on the trade-offs at the heart of our Reset informed by the insights from the Phase 1 engagement.

Integration with the Voice of Community Panel

Phase 2 of the Lived Experience engagement took place following Day 4 of the Voice of Community Panel and focussed on providing feedback on the Panel's initial recommendations.

Ausgrid was asked to provide 'light touch' responses to these recommendations; customers in vulnerable circumstances, and those who advocated for them, were also asked to respond from their perspective of their experience of the energy network. In particular, they were asked to suggest what they thought the Panel should keep in mind as they explored these recommendations further. These conversations also incorporated people who had participated in Phase 1 of our CALD and small business engagement.

The Panel came up with eight initial recommendations though not all were put to this wider group of customers/stakeholders due to time constraints and the relevance of each recommendation.

Stakeholder roundtable

A second roundtable workshop was held on Wednesday 4 May to get feedback on the Panel's draft recommendations. The roundtable was held virtually on Teams and involved 15 organisations as follows:

- Australian Energy Foundation
- Business Hunter
- Business NSW
- Cessnock Council
- Compass Housing (UDIA Hunter)
- Financial Counselling Hunter Valley Project
- GSC Youth Panel
- Mona Vale Chamber of Commerce.
- Muswellbrook Council
- NCOSS
- Older Women's Network
- St Vincent De Paul Society
- Wesley Mission - Financial Counselling
- Customer Challenge Panel observer
- RCP observer

Some of these organisations were involved in the Small Business engagement stream but we thought it important that the Panel also receive a small business perspective on their ideas. All participants had been involved during the first phase of the Lived Experience engagement.

Participants were broken into small groups according to three customer perspectives – life circumstances, small business and regional communities. The groups were asked to consider each recommendation or group of recommendations, and outline what they thought the Panel should keep it in mind as they developed the recommendation further. The roundtable used the digital collaboration tool GroupMap to capture thoughts.

Customer discussions

During the week commencing 2 May 2022, discussions were held with 12 customers who participated in our Phase 1 Lived Experience and Small Business engagement activities.

These were initially planned as group discussions, but due to some participant's availability and the tight turn around to gather responses before Day 5 of the VoC Panel on 14 May 2022, two customers were engaged via one-on-one interviews. Table 4 provides an overview of these discussions.

A discussion guide was formed to ensure the conversations were held consistently. They dealt with the same recommendations as the roundtable and, with the aid of initial prompt questions, asked participants to suggest what they thought the Panel should keep in mind as they developed the recommendation further.

Table 4 Phase 2 Lived Experience / SME Customer Conversations

Date	Discussion format	No of participants	Participant overview
Wednesday 4 May	Group discussion	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 retired homeowner over 60 • 1 social housing tenant on a low income and over 60 • 1 renter under 30 • 4 customers impacted by network events, including one in the Hunter
Thursday 5 May	One-on-one interview	1	Low-income customer living in rental accommodation at the edge of the network in the Upper Hunter
Thursday 5 May	Group discussion	3	2 in Sydney, one in the Hunter
Friday 6 May	One-on-one interview	1	Homeowner under 30 in the Hunter

Key Voices

The key voices stream aims to reach customers whose perspective often gets missed through mainstream engagement. It has focussed on CALD customers who can face language barriers to accessing services, and Indigenous communities whose perspective is often overlooked in Ausgrid's business planning.

Ausgrid had initially planned to include young people in the Key Voices stream but, after establishing that young people face vulnerabilities relating to income and housing tenure, young people's voice was brought into the Lived Experience stream.

CALD customers

Ausgrid partnered with the **Ethnic Communities Council of NSW (ECC)** to deliver the CALD engagement.

Ausgrid's network area is considered the most diverse in Australia given the wide range of language groups we have represented. Hearing from all language groups was therefore impossible, so the business needed to prioritise. This engagement focussed on the three largest language groups in the Ausgrid network: Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Arabic. In consultation with ECC NSW Ausgrid agreed to engage with the:

- Mandarin community as the largest group in total across the network area, but a much more dispersed group, with significant numbers of Mandarin speakers in many of the Local Government Areas (LGA)s in the network.
- Arabic community as one of the newer groups with the most highly concentrated communities, with the vast majority residing in just one LGA within the network area.
- Vietnamese community as the second most densely populated group, with the majority of the community residing in the same LGA as the Arabic communities.

The below table shows the top 10 LGA's within Ausgrid area that have the highest proportion of people that speak a language other than English at home, these 10 LGA's account for 77% of Ausgrid's CALD customers. It also shows the top 6 languages other than English spoken in the Ausgrid area and how these communities are spread across these LGA's.

Table 5 Top 10 LGAs within Ausgrid area that have the highest proportion of people that speak a language other than English at home

LGA	CALD 6 population	Cantonese	Mandarin	Arabic	Greek	Italian	Vietnamese
Bayside	40,403 (42% total population)	5,935	10,477	9,127	11,011	2,386	1,467
Burwood	15,145 (41%)	3,169	7,454	1,351	933	1,612	626
Canterbury-Bankstown	140,122 (40%)	13,633	17,206	59,684	18,577	6,030	24,982
Georges River	51,715 (35%)	14,540	21,065	5,246	7,870	1,946	1,048
Strathfield	11,095 (28%)	2,803	4,033	2,022	602	754	881
Canada Bay	22,367 (25%)	3,466	8,657	1,505	1,948	6,207	584
Ryde	29,422 (25%)	8,160	14,731	1,995	1,176	2,589	771
Willoughby	16,359 (22%)	5,519	8,965	462	388	729	296
Sydney	34,983 (17%)	6,589	20,365	1,412	1,925	2,200	2,222
Randwick	22,409 (16%)	4,166	10,155	1,220	4,516	1,644	708

In November 2021 (Phase 1 of the engagement process), ECC ran focus groups in each of these languages that mirrored customer discussions held as part of the Phase 1 Lived Experience and Small Business streams. During Phase 2 of the engagement process, the ECC reconvened these customers to respond to the Voice of Community Panel draft recommendations. The CALD discussions are outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6 CALD Customer Conversations

Date	Language	No of participants	Participant profile
Phase 1			
6 November 10am – 11.40am	Vietnamese	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Bass Hill, North Ryde, Sefton, Russell Lea, Homebush and Kogarah
2 November 7pm-9.30pm	Arabic	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All from Canterbury Bankstown
10 November 7pm-9.30pm	Mandarin	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Burwood, Willoughby, Earlwood, Revesby, Sydney and Georges River
Phase 2			
4 May 7pm – 8.15pm	Vietnamese	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 male and 2 female From Canterbury Bankstown, Georges River, Inner West, and Ryde LGAs Aged between 30 and 50+ 2 homeowners and 3 renters

Date	Language	No of participants	Participant profile
5 May 4pm – 5.15pm	Arabic	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 male and 2 female • All from Canterbury Bankstown LGA • Aged between 40 and 60+ • All participants were renters
5 May 7.30pm- 8.40pm	Mandarin	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 couple, 1 male, 3 female • From Canterbury Bankstown, Burwood, Willoughby, and Georges River LGAs • Aged 30+, 40+ and 50+ • Four homeowners, and one renter

Indigenous communities

Energy is fundamental to a functioning society and economy, and therefore linked to most social and economic indicators. Indigenous communities throughout Australia – and throughout Ausgrid’s network - have significantly poorer social and economic outcomes compared to non-Indigenous populations.

By 2018, only two of the seven “Closing the Gap Targets”, which have been set to measure Indigenous progression, were on track. This indicates that current approaches to improving Indigenous outcomes - such as housing affordability and comfort, energy affordability and security, income, and education - are not working.

Early in the Reset development process, Ausgrid recognised that it could have a positive impact on Indigenous communities by leveraging the interconnected nature of its power and distribution assets and shifting its own cultural awareness of Country.

Supported by **Indigenous Energy Australia**, Ausgrid has started to identify how its services relate to the outcomes that communities are pursuing with a view to working backwards to understand how Ausgrid can support community, rather than seeing how the community can fit into Ausgrid’s strategy.

The steps to do this have included:

- Identifying which Aboriginal communities intersect with Ausgrid’s network
- Identifying the aspirations and challenges of these communities via desktop assessment of community challenges via Aboriginal Affairs community portraits and community engagement
- Selecting challenges based on impact and brainstorming potential solutions that Ausgrid could contribute to.

The team also engaged with our Indigenous employees about how Ausgrid could better recognise and acknowledge Country in business operations.

Ausgrid’s work in this area has only just begun and will continue throughout and beyond the next regulatory period. It has resulted in five key ideas that will need to be developed through community engagement. The next steps in the process are to:

- Select communities that will provide the most learnings about solving common community challenges
- Engage communities further and start refining or redeveloping solutions
- Identify quick wins
- Shortlist communities to be refined and executed collaboratively by communities and Ausgrid
- Begin solution development.

Voice of Community Panel

The Voice of Community (VoC) Panel was designed and delivered by MosaicLab with support from Gauge Consulting. It brought together 45 customers from three key parts of the Ausgrid Network – the Hunter, the Central Coast and Metropolitan Sydney.

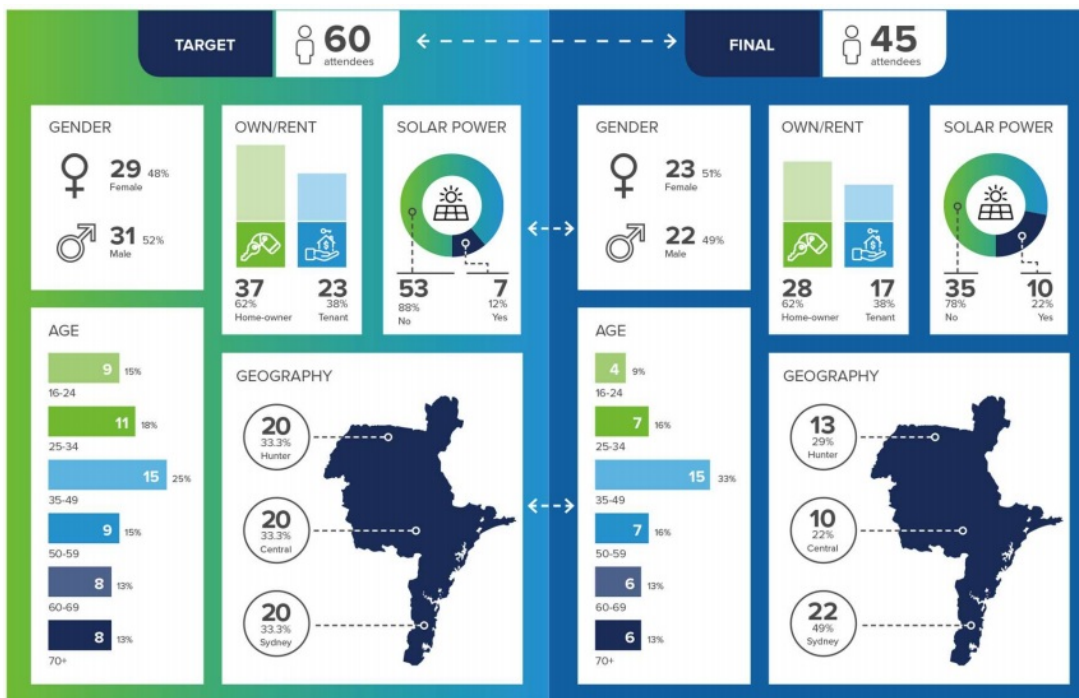
The Panel formed the ‘deliberative core’ of the engagement process, taking on board the insights from the wider customer streams, in addition to other expert views to consider and make recommendations on the question:

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community. The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to today’s customers?

Panel members were recruited through a random selection process to ensure they represented both men and women; a diverse range of ages; homeowners and renters; and solar and non-solar customers. These demographics reflected the make-up of Ausgrid’s customer base. The team over-recruited for the Panel knowing that dropouts were likely. The target number of participants was 60 and the final Panel numbered 45. The target and final composition of the Panel is outlined in Figure 18 below.

Figure 18 Voice of Community Customer Composition



The Panel met eight times over the course of three months, in regional groups and as a whole; and in online and in-person formats. A full outline of the methodology used is described in the Voice of Community Process Report in Appendix B. However, Table 7 below provides an overview of the Panel process and indicates through the gold stars ★ where the Panel interacted with the broader engagement.

Table 7 Voice of Community Panel program

Day and date	Objectives	Format
Meet and Greet 6pm-9pm Tues 22 February	An opportunity to connect, share concerns and clarify role, process and journey, and establish working together agreements. Meet the Ausgrid Board including Chairman Helen Nugent and CEO Richard Gross.	Together Online

Day and date	Objectives	Format
Day 1 9am – 5pm Sun 27 February	To hear from Ausgrid's chosen speakers and unpack the wider engagement report. Ausgrid's chosen speakers were selected to provide a variety of perspectives on a range of key issues, and included speakers from the AER, CSIRO, RCP, Department of Planning Infrastructure and Environment (DPIE), the Electric Vehicle (EV) Council and the Small Business Association of NSW amongst others. Request speakers for Day 2	Together ★ Online
Day 2 6pm – 9pm 14, 16, 17 March	Hear from the requested regional speakers, including local council representatives from Central Coast Council and the City of Sydney, experts on small scale community projects like Yackandandah, Ausgrid Community Battery experts and Macquarie University.	Regional groups Online
Day 3 6pm – 9pm 22, 23, 24 March	To unpack insights further from a regional perspective, deliberate around the themed issues and discuss insights. Understand what is different about each region and how that might impact on the recommendations the Panel makes to Ausgrid.	Regional groups Online
Day 4 9am – 5pm Sat 30 April	To share insights together, further deliberation and dialogue around the themes and begin drafting the Panel's initial ideas.	Together Face to face
Day 5 9m to 5pm, Saturday 14 May	Review a document from Ausgrid responding to the Panel's initial insights, explaining what Ausgrid takes those insights to mean and how or whether Ausgrid or others could action the insights. Consider the response from Ausgrid, as well as responses from other stakeholders and customers (specifically CALD and Lived Experience customers) and redraft them into stronger recommendations	Together ★ Face to face
Day 6 6pm – 9pm 24, 25, 26 May	To sense-check the draft recommendations at a regional level and review.	Regional groups Online
Day 7 9am – 5pm Saturday 4 June	Final Ausgrid response to drafted recommendations received. Review response and consider implications for the cost of electricity finalise recommendations via a walkthrough of the final report, and handover to Ausgrid Chairman and CEO.	Together Face to face

Engagement Hub

At the start of the engagement process, the team set up an online engagement platform at ausgrid.engagementhub.com.au. This was used to complement face to face engagement by hosting forums, surveys and event registrations. The hub also provided information on, and background to, the Reset.

The hub was used extensively for the Voice of Community Panel to store background information and capture off-line questions and discussions in a password-protected section. The platform is divided into segments aimed at the main customer cohorts and themes, namely:

Figure 19 Main customer cohorts and themes



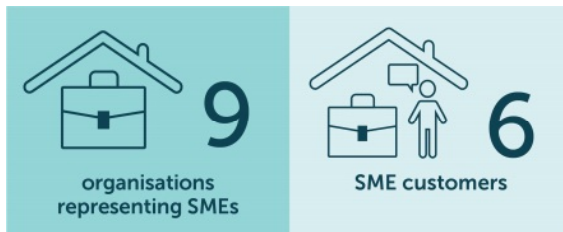
As of 6 June 2022, the online hub had received 2,895 visitors, the vast majority of those visiting the Household Customer section.

Engaging business customers

Small Business customers

Through this stream, we engaged:

Figure 20 SME engagement



Designing the engagement

In September 2021 Ausgrid started to plan how it would engage small businesses in the Reset process to understand their changing needs and views. The team began by reviewing Ausgrid's complaints data to see if it identified key 'pain points' being experienced by small businesses in the network. This identified relatively high numbers of complaints in three areas, and these formed the target areas for our SME engagement. These were:

- Inner West Local Government Area (LGA)
- Former Pittwater Area LGA
- Cessnock LGA.

The team planned to engage SME owners through focus groups to better understand their interests and aspirations for the energy sector. For each of these conversations, discussion guides were developed focusing on four engagement themes:

- Energy cost and affordability
- Network resilience and outages
- Customer service
- Becoming net zero.

Reaching SMEs through Peaks and business chambers

It was understood that engaging peak groups and local business chambers would help Ausgrid to reach small businesses in the target areas and more generally.

- **Peak groups.** A list of peak SME and industry organisations that provide policy advice and/or services to small and medium businesses was developed. 33 of these groups were approached between November 2021 and January 2022 with an invitation to a peak business round table discussion.

- **Business chambers.** Ausgrid worked with Business NSW and Hunter Business NSW to approach local chambers of commerce. With their assistance, the team identified 12 business chambers in the target locations. Business NSW and Hunter Business NSW approached some of these business chambers on Ausgrid's behalf to invite them to a regional roundtable discussion, though some were contacted by the Ausgrid team.

Outreach occurred during November and December 2021. Due to the Omicron outbreak and the lead up to Christmas, the response from peaks and business chambers was lower than anticipated. In total the team identified and reached out to more than 33 peak and local business organisations and held five deep dive conversations with nine state-wide and local organisations as a result. These are listed in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Phase 1 SME Stakeholder Conversations

Date	Type of meeting	Attendee
24 November 2021	Deep dive conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business NSW • Hunter Business
24 November 2021	Deep dive conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small business Association of Australia
30 November 2021	Deep dive conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Small Business Organisations Australia
1 December 2021	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mona Vale Chamber of Commerce • Inner West Council • Cessnock Council
21 December 2021	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small to Medium Size Business Australia • Small Business Association Australia

Reaching SMEs directly

Ultimately, Ausgrid wanted to talk to small businesses directly. To do this the team:

- profiled SME businesses in each of the target areas against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) categories to identify the most common industries.
- cross referenced these industries with the NSW COVID Safe Check-ins Data Set 2021 to generate a shortlist of target business address for each LGA.
- sent more than 2,300 postcards to the identified businesses which contained a QR code linked to a focus group survey / sign up page.
- posted on more than 35 Facebook SME community groups in the target locations
- sent information to business chambers and peak organisations to issue to their networks

Phase 1 discussions

Despite extensive efforts to publicise the discussion groups, provide gift card incentives and schedule the groups at times that suited business owners, discussion group numbers were small. This was largely due to the outbreak of the Omicron COVID-19 variant which impacted the capacity of small business owners to participate.

Fifty-five owners responded to the survey, mostly prompted through the Facebook posts, but many were found not to be in the Ausgrid network or did not respond to further contacts. As a result, the team spoke with five business owners across two focus groups in February 2022. These were:

- a medium-sized printing and manufacturing company located in Sydney's Inner West
- a sole-trade optometrist from Sydney's Inner West
- a medium-sized mechanic from Sydney
- a day surgery in Sydney's CBD
- a small agricultural business in the Hunter region

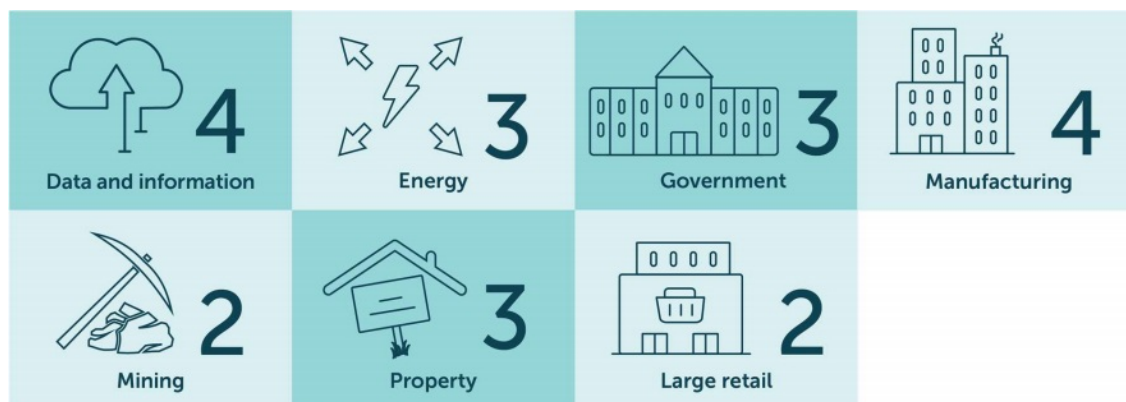
Phase 2 discussions

The team brought these customers together again in May 2022, to gauge their response to the Voice of Community Panel draft recommendations. These are outlined in Table 3 above.

Commercial and industrial customers

Through this stream, Ausgrid engaged a total of 21 commercial and industrial customers in following sectors

Figure 21 Participating Commercial and Industrial Customers



Designing the engagement

Ausgrid began this stream by mapping commercial and industrial segments to identify customers with a range of needs and business models. This resulted in the identification of six key sectors the team wanted to engage:

- Manufacturing
- Large retailers
- Government
- Telecommunication
- Renewable technology installers
- Food manufacturing

The team then conducted 12 interviews with commercial and industrial customers over March and April 2022. These helped to identify eight overarching topics that are being responded to. These were:

- Reliability is key
- Costs are difficult to manage
- Electrification is a challenge (for some)
- Outage information is critical
- Reduce emissions across the grid first
- Customers are partners in reducing network costs
- Improve connection times
- Provide escalation process

The team then organised two commercial and industrial forums in June 2022 to verify these themes and test options:

- **Reliability** - responding to climate change
- **Costs** – getting the tariff right
- **Outage information** – balancing cost and service level
- **Ancillary Network Service Fees** – fixed fees for cost certainty

These two forums were attended by 12 customer organisations.

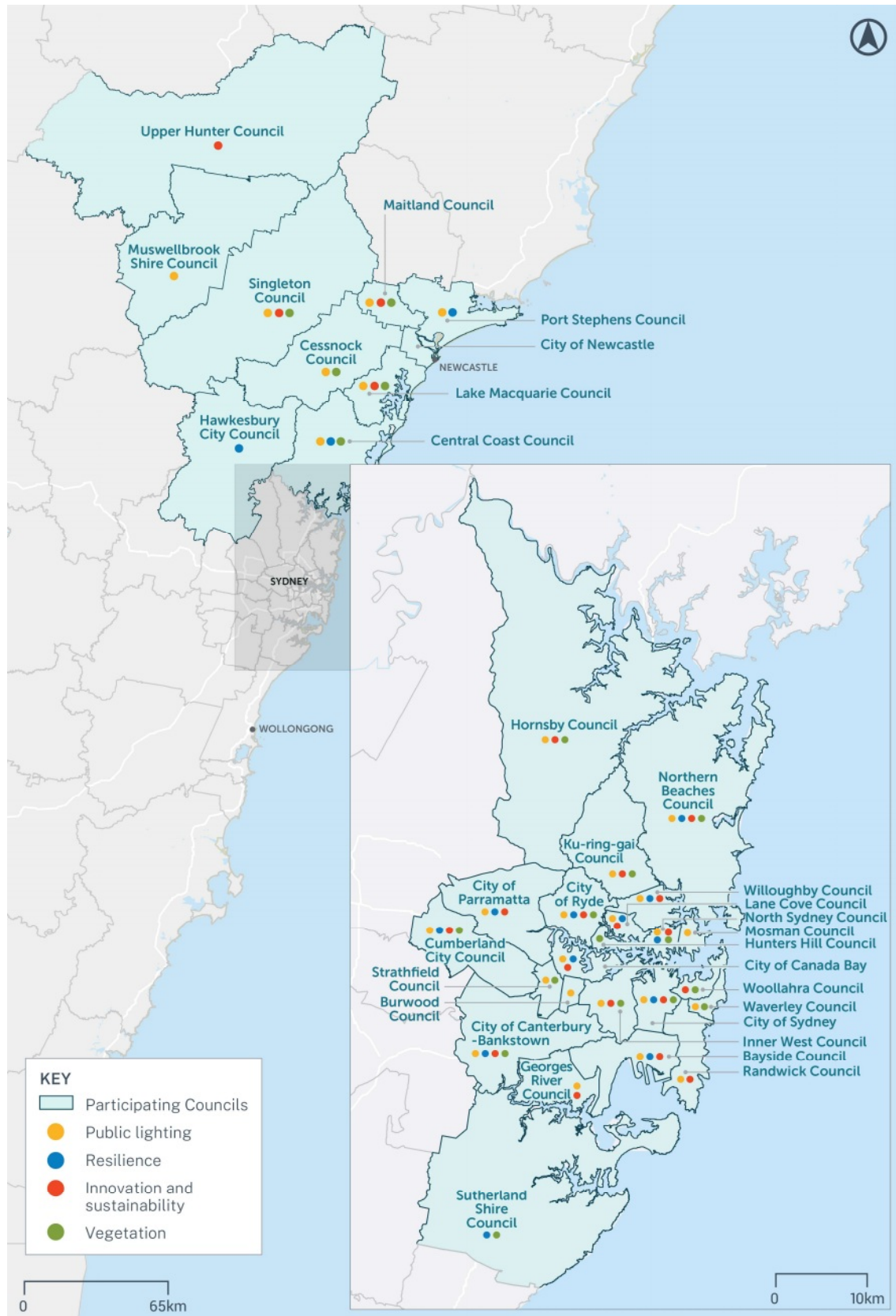
Engaging Councils

Ausgrid's network spans 33 Local Government Areas. Councils are themselves, large-use customers, partners in the provision of streetlighting and conduits to end use customers. The relationship with Councils is therefore central to Ausgrid's business operations.

Internal discussion at the start of the Reset process identified four topics that are particularly relevant to Councils: public lighting, network resilience, innovation and sustainability, and vegetation management. The team established Working Groups for three of these topics (which carried on from Ausgrid's ongoing council engagement) and partnered with Essential Energy, Endeavour Energy and Resilient Sydney to engage councils on the issue of resilience. All 33 Councils and 2 Regional Organisation of Councils (ROCs) attended at least one of these sessions

- The **Public Lighting Working Group** met on 7 December 2021 and 18 May 2022 and was attended by a total of 27 Councils and 2 ROCs.
- The **Innovation and Sustainability Working Group** met on 28 October 2021 and again on the 30 June 2022 and was attended by 22 Councils
- The **Vegetation Management Working Group** met on 14 October 2021 and was attended by 18 Councils, and again on the 18 July 2022.
- The **Resilience Workshop** was held on 16 March 2022 and was attended by 15 Councils and 1 ROC in Ausgrid's network.

Figure 22 Participating Councils



Engaging the energy sector

Ancillary Service Providers

Ancillary Service Providers are organisations licenced to perform works on the electricity network, they provide services such as connecting new customers and other electrical services that fall outside the scope of Ausgrid as a regulated distribution business.

On 9 December Ausgrid held a regular forum attended by 126 Level 3 Ancillary Service Providers (ASP) where information about the Regulatory Reset was provided. Some questions about the Reset were included in the post-forum survey, to which 17 responses were received.

On 2 March Ausgrid held a forum for Level 2 ASPs where 705 were invited and 57 attended. The main comments received related to the need for more consistency and information on pricing.

On 11 May 2022 a similar forum was held with Level 1 ASPs which was attended by 26 companies. Information about the Reset was also presented at this event.

Retailers

Through this stream Ausgrid has engaged six retailers.

Ausgrid reached out to all retailers to seek interest in engaging in the regulatory process and met with four retailers to discuss detailed engagement preferences. These were: Origin Energy, Red / Lumo Energy, Energy Australia and Nectr.

Ausgrid also engaged retailers through its Pricing Working Group (PWG) in October, November and December 2022. At these forums, the 2025 to 2029 Tariff Structure Statements and trials for new tariffs that became effective from 1 July 2022 were discussed.

In particular, discussion focussed on the Residential two-way tariff, Residential Flex Load Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging tariff and Community Battery tariff. Retailer attendance at the PWG meetings is detailed in Table 9 below.

Table 9 Pricing Working Group Meetings

Date	Participating Retailers	Number of participants
22-Oct-2021	Energy Australia, Origin Energy, Red Energy	9 people from 3 retailers.
24-Nov-2021	Energy Australia, Origin Energy, Red Energy	9 people from 3 retailers.
17-Dec-2021	AGL, Discover Energy, Energy Australia	4 people from 3 retailers.

A retailer forum took place on 20 June at which 18 retailers attended. The forum discussed:

- 1 July 2022 tariff changes
- Proposed tariff reforms for the pricing Directions Paper 2024-2029
- Updates on tariff trials
- Updates on controlled load trials

Following feedback, we have started a monthly newsletter to keep all retailers informed on tariff development and the Reset process.

Table 10 Monthly retailer newsletter topics

Month	Topic
March 2022	Ausgrid's Reset timeline and key consultation timeframes Approach to Resilience

April 2022	Upcoming retailer forum Smart metering information request Update on legacy metering
May 2022	Upcoming retailer forum Mobile data information request ANS fee change update CALD program information request Tariff trial update
June 2022	1 July Tariff changes Retailer forum feedback Controlled Load availability update

Conversation snapshots

Throughout the stream engagement Ausgrid captured what was heard in a series of conversation snapshots, which summarised customer and stakeholder views and aspirations against each of the engagement themes. These snapshots allowed the team to look across all customer streams to gauge where views aligned and differed and to understand the breadth of customers' views.

In addition, the Voice of Community Panel allowed Ausgrid to achieve a depth of understanding on the issues that a representative sample of customers felt were important and which wrestled directly with key business challenges and costed trade-offs.

The team aimed to ensure that the recommendations gained through the VoC Panel, were informed by insights arising from the broader engagement. This was done by briefing the VoC Panel on the outcomes of the broad residential and small business customer engagement, and then asking that wider group of customers and stakeholders to reflect on the Panel's draft recommendations midway through the Panel process.

The team also spoke with Councils - and found that many of their priorities and values in relation to the energy network accorded with those of residential and small business customers - and discussed issues of relevance with commercial and industrial customers, and energy partners.

Feedback from the Voice of Community Panel, residential and small business customer engagement (including our Lived Experience and Key Voices streams), commercial and industrial customers, councils and retailers and ASPs, is summarised in the following sections.

Voice of Community Panel – recommendations

The Voice of Community Panel delivered ten considered recommendations after seven days of deliberation where they heard from several energy experts. Some of their recommendations relate to issues that are beyond the current remit of Ausgrid. But many speak directly to the challenges facing the business as it transitions to net zero. The Voice of Community recommendations will materially influence Ausgrid's decisions over the next five years and are responded to in full in the Draft Plan.

Table 11 below summarises the Panel's recommendations.

Table 11 Voice of Community Panel Recommendations

Recommendation	Description
Advocate and lobby for reform to energy regulations to improve service to customers	The regulations by the Federal government, State government, AEMC (AER) NEM (any regulatory body) are too limiting to allow for Ausgrid to innovate resilience, affordability and to be fair. Ausgrid should establish what to advocate for in consultation with customers. We want Ausgrid to play a role in community benefits and network solutions. We also want Ausgrid to partner with local councils and technology providers to increase the uptake / implementation of community batteries, SAPS and solar gardens.
Incentivise the adoption of cost-effective renewable energy, balancing the speed and uptake of technologies, while leading by example	To head toward net zero Ausgrid should work with third party companies to help finance and support renewable energy alternatives. Ausgrid can work in cooperation with both local and federal governments in encouraging a controlled approach to the adoption of renewable technology. Ausgrid should continue their internal net zero efforts by adopting appropriate technology as it becomes economically feasible. Ausgrid should encourage retailers to work more with renewable energy suppliers. We need to consider the end-of-life of technology: disposal also has environmental impacts.
Enhanced community	Ausgrid, in partnership with Retailers, providing cost effective clear and simple explanations of the factors impacting customer charges and the reliability of electricity supply. This is at an individual consumer level as well as aggregated. For example, time of energy consumption, load used, surge, using smart meters if possible. Advocate for the rollout of smart meters and provide more information

Recommendation	Description
engagement and communication	on smart meters, and how to read existing meters. It needs to be highly relevant and targeted to them specifically, ideally using real-time information. Provide consumers with a description, in plain language, of what Ausgrid does and what it doesn't do, any large projects coming up and the costs and benefits of those projects to consumers, as well as overall performance of any plans Ausgrid has finished, as well as what retailers provide and don't provide. Use various communication channels to provide additional information on customer bills (e.g., via, email, SMS, website, letter drop, social media (e.g., local Facebook groups).)
Visibility of Ausgrid costs to customers	<p>Consumers to be able to get breakdown of the Ausgrid component of their bill via the Ausgrid website with granularity such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of Operations • Maintenance of existing • Investment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In existing – In future capability – At a consumer level in relation to their region. <p>Providing this breakdown is an initiative that Ausgrid can facilitate. Ausgrid to clearly communicate the location of the information through their social media, community media and programs. Ausgrid to continue to advocate to the AER/AEMC for increased visibility on customers' bills directly.</p>
Maintain and improve current emergency procedures	<p>Maintain and improve current emergency procedures by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in Ausgrid outage response and resilience program 2. Incremental improvement in communication to customers with local information 3. Keep the KPI's that measure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. effectiveness of service delivery/response times b. how easy it is to deal with planned outage c. how easy it is to get information about an unplanned outage.
Ausgrid to collaborate on research & innovation on emerging technologies and best practices	<p>INNOVATION</p> <p>Find the most cost-effective technologies and how to implement them.</p> <p>Allow proven financial benefits of NIAC to be recycled back into new initiatives in the following year (Rather than pass on benefits to customers directly).</p> <p>We want Ausgrid to move from the proposed increase in spend (\$12m pa capex + \$1.5m pa opex) to the higher increased spend (\$16m pa capex + \$2m pa opex) to achieve increased innovation *IF* the annual bill cost difference is not a lot. We understand this is a 30c per year difference for an average non-solar household.</p> <p>CYBER</p> <p>Investment of \$2.96/pa as a base, giving Ausgrid the option to go to the AER to shift up to greater investment (example \$3.30/pa) if Ausgrid can show that it's needed or there are more benefits to protecting the grid.</p>
Executing collaborative innovation and research	Work towards improving the network and net zero without being limited by legislation.
Investing in capital expenditure (Capex) to reduce future operational expenditure (Opex)	<p>Assets listed as Capex have long term benefits but are also investments. Ausgrid must balance these long-term investments with ongoing maintenance to ensure customers continue to receive reliable access to the network.</p> <p>We recommend Ausgrid spend at least \$5m pa Which is equivalent to \$1.72 pa for homes without solar and \$1.99 pa for homes with solar.</p> <p>If Ausgrid has a 75% or more confidence level in the data regarding occurrence of extreme weather, then we recommend Ausgrid make upfront investments.</p>
Influence customer behaviour with a flexible two-way	The challenge is that the cost of maintaining the distribution network is spread across all consumers in the network, regardless of their usage and feed in. The cost of network maintenance and improvement is impacted by imports/exports and needs to be fairly distributed.

Recommendation	Description
pricing mechanism to optimise electricity supply and demand, balancing time of use, time of feed-in, and reliability	<p>Ausgrid should charge retailers a time of day (or real-time network congestion based) tariff for customers who export power to the grid, in a manner that optimizes consumer pricing and network stability and cost i.e., solar exports are priced differently at different times of day depending on grid load/demand like the current time-of-use import tariff. This pricing mechanism should be opt-in based initially, with a view to transition to all-in as part of the next 5-year planning window.</p> <p>For example: A customer with existing solar & retail agreement should not be charged more than 25% of their existing export tariff.</p>
Review minimum level of reliability of supply	<p>By being bound to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW (IPART) minimum standards, reliability is lower than the average experience of consumers. Rural consumers have an even lower baseline level of reliability.</p> <p>Ausgrid should communicate (via retailers & to the general public) the minimum reliability standards that Ausgrid is committed to, and that the difference between urban and rural consumers is almost double.</p> <p>Look at redistribution of support to network areas (urban vs rural) to build resilience and address network issues (outages, supply etc.)</p>

Lived Experience, CALD and small business customers

Engagement with customers from the Lived Experience, CALD and small business streams revealed several common themes which indicated support for net zero and a clear desire for a fair transition. This engagement also revealed strong preferences for how customers want to be communicated to by Ausgrid. These insights were provided to the VoC Panel and formed part of their deliberations. They are outlined in Table 12 below.

Table 12 Lived Experience, CALD and SME Customer Insights

Customers told us		Themes		
Advice to reduce bills and consumption	Customer would like better information to help them understand and reduce their energy consumption and cost They suggest better bill information, bespoke advice and smart meters.	Customer Experience	Value for Money	
No should be one left behind in the transition	Customers believe that no-one should be left behind in the transition and everyone should benefit from renewables. The complexity and structure of the energy system can work against bringing everyone on	Fair	Future Network	Sustainable
Network ready and resilient	Customers expect Ausgrid to support the transition to renewables and ensure the network is prepared for more solar and a more volatile climate.	Future Network	Resilience	
Empathetic, personal contact	Customers expect empathy when they deal with Ausgrid. They want to be engaged, and to deal with real people when they need them on the issues that matter.	Customer Experience		
Targeted and timely information	Customers expect Information to be targeted, accurate, clear and timely. It needs to empower. Customer process should be simple and easy to follow.	Customer Experience		
Accessible information for all	Information needs to be accessible to the widest range of customers. It must be in a variety of languages, be accessible to people with a disability, and be provided in digital and hard copies.	Customer Experience		

Customers told us		Themes			
Support for net zero	Customers support the transition to net zero and want to see action on climate change. They support more renewables and DER and want to be part of the transition. They expect organisations to play their part.	Future Network	Resilience	Customer Experience	Sustainable
Transparency	Customers want Ausgrid to be transparent about its role, its contribution to energy prices, the rationale behind decisions and pipeline of investments to become net zero.	Customer Experience			
Responsiveness to the issues that matter	Customers want quick and respectful responses to their issues and enquiries.	Customer Experience			
The energy system must be fair	Customers want the energy system to be fair and to balance impacts and cost across generations, geography and life circumstance.	Fair			
Access to DER for all or the benefits it offers	Customers would like better access to DER and see it as an opportunity to reach net zero and reduce prices. But they face barriers associated with housing tenure and type, cost, and understanding the process	Fair	Future Network	Customer Experience	
Energy prices remain critical	Energy prices continue to be front of mind for customers. Cost pressures are going up for residential and small business customers	Value for Money			
Housing should not be a barrier	Customers believe that housing tenure and type is a barrier to making energy choices that allow customers to manage their energy cost or consumption.	Fair	Future Network		
Outage impact can be significant	The impacts of planned and unplanned outages can be significant, particularly for people in vulnerable circumstances. The impacts can be financial, health, and safety related.	Resilience			
Clear, prior and responsive outage information	Customers expect clear and prior information on planned outages, and responsive information on unplanned outages. This needs to be useful and provide advice on what to do, and where to go.	Resilience	Customer Experience		
Practical and personalised outage response	Customers expect practical and personalised responses to outages. This needs to be joined up across response organisations. Back-up generators and alternative power sources are often suggested	Resilience	Customer Experience		
Reliability remains critical	Reliability continues to be important, and customers are concerned about how this will be affected by the effects of extreme weather and the transition to renewables	Resilience			
Subsidies and rebates for those who lose out	Subsidies and rebates are often suggested by customers to overcome inequalities. Customers often think Ausgrid can issue subsidies.	Fair	Value for Money	Customer Experience	

Indigenous engagement

Ausgrid's engagement with indigenous communities is only just beginning and will be ongoing through and beyond the next price Reset. The aim is not to engage Indigenous communities on the issues that matter to the business, but instead seek to understand what the needs and aspirations are of those communities so that the business can respond in the ways that have an impact. This needs to begin however, with increasing the cultural awareness within Ausgrid.

The tasks for the Reset period will therefore be as follows:

- Implement a policy where Indigenous input is always taken for major capital projects and key corporate strategies
- Establish a cultural competency strategy that ingrains measurable culture into the workforce, achieving an 80% competent level
- Work with Indigenous communities to set an Indigenous workforce target that is at a minimum above the current industry standard, and that prioritises roles that are important to these communities.
- Map the Indigenous communities across the network and make this map available for Ausgrid employees.
- Include Indigenous naming on depot signage to reflect the Country on which they are situated.

Commercial and industrial customers

Initial engagement with commercial and industrial customers centred around the engagement themes. This gave rise to eight key insights as outlined in Table 13 below. These confirmed how important cost and reliability remain for large use customers and indicated a desire for a better customer service and a targeted approach to reaching net zero.

Table 13 Commercial and Industrial Customer Interview Insights

Customers told us	Details	Theme
Reliability is key	Many of Ausgrid's Large connection customers, or commercial and industrial (C&I) customers bear significant costs during power outages as backup power options can be prohibitively expensive or impractical. Others have both environmental and cost implications, particularly in relation to unplanned outages where the shutdown of machinery can't be managed in a controlled and efficient manner.	Resilience
Costs are difficult to manage	C&I customers are often exposed to the shift in wholesale generation costs long before it impacts household customers, the recent wholesale market increases, and other cost pressures mean the cost of electricity has become a key concern for many businesses.	Value for money
Electrification is a challenge (for some)	Depending on the nature of the business and its sector, the electrification of process and transport is an imminent if not ongoing project that delivers Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) benefits and potential costs savings. For these businesses the location, timing and payback of investment decisions are issues they would like Ausgrid to proactively assist them with. Not all businesses however are able to transform, particularly those with significant gas driven processes, and for some the transition will have only a minor impact on their business operations.	Future network
Reduce emissions across the grid first	All customers see the greater role that Ausgrid plays in enabling reductions of emissions by ensuring the network is not a barrier to its customers own net zero projects and ambitions. While supportive of Ausgrid pursuing its corporately stated net zero goals, this is seen as a lesser priority than ensuring the networks continues to support increased solar, EV's and other new technologies.	Future network

Customers told us	Details	Theme
Outage information is critical	Customers greatest frustration was the lack of information they receive when outages are scheduled or unforeseen. The nature of the information they want to see included information on the progress of restoration, pre-emptive information that enables them to shut down machinery in advance, localised information to better understand the nature and scope of an outage.	Customer experience
Customers are partners in reducing network costs	C&I customers understand that they and the broader community benefit when network costs are lower, and that the decisions they make in relation to new connections, increased load in specific areas of the network or installing their own generation has the potential to either add or reduce network investment requirements and therefore cost. They want to partner with Ausgrid as they transition to net zero, to plan and enable these decisions to be as efficient for both parties as possible.	Customer experience
Improve connection times	Infrastructure planning processes are complex, and Ausgrid is often a single but critical piece in a chain of events. C&I customers become frustrated when it takes a long time to schedule Ausgrid works, and when those works take longer than envisaged.	Customer experience
Provide escalation process	C&I customers dealing with outages want to have a way of escalating their concern within Ausgrid. Many deal with the general call centre during these events, and the call centre does not always understand the nature and implication to the business of an outage, nor have the detailed level of information the business is looking for.	Customer experience

At the customer forums, the team asked for feedback on key decisions that were emerging through the Reset development. The response indicated support for targeted network investment to respond to climate change, and for enhanced cyber security. There were mixed views on changing the tariff window. The results are in Table 14.

Table 14 Commercial and Industrial Customer Forum Insights

Forum question	Response
Improving resilience in the face of climate change	Most commercial and industrial customers said the business should invest to improve resilience in impacted locations and share the cost - even if that meant customers who had already invested to improve their reliability paid twice, and the investment carried some risk of redundancy.
Investing in response to the cyber threat	A slight majority of the customers spoken to supported enhanced cyber security. A few supported best-in-class security but many were unsure.
Investing in improved customer service	The majority of customers supported improvements in customer service ICT, with slightly more favouring incremental improvements over ambitious improvements.
Changing the tariff charging window	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half support shifting the peak period to one hour earlier • A third support making the peak period 7 days a week, a third don't support this and a third are unsure • Half are unsure about aligning shoulder and off-peak periods, a third don't support this idea, and few support it.
Ancillary Network Services – fixed v quoted fees	Most customers supported fixed ANS fees to create cost certainty, though several were unsure.

Councils

Engagement with Councils focused on the key issues of vegetation management, innovation and technology, public lighting and resilience. The feedback on some of these issues was very specific but a lot aligned with what other customers said around the transition to net zero. Feedback themes are outlined in Tables 15 to 18.

Table 15 Council Feedback - Vegetation Management

What Councils told Ausgrid		Theme
Tree pruning	<p>Tree pruning removes tree canopy and makes it harder for Councils to protect against extreme heat.</p> <p>Tree Cutting cycles were decreased in the last reg period to save money.</p> <p>Ausgrid should fund removal and replacement where inappropriate species are causing ongoing problems and keep getting severely pruned.</p> <p>Councils are unhappy with the way Ausgrid is pruning trees. Ausgrid's new contractors are being especially harsh.</p>	Resilient
Funding of ABC	<p>Upgrading LV bare wire to aerial bundled cabling (ABC) or undergrounded cables significantly reduces (or eliminates) the need for pruning. Currently all customer-initiated requests must be paid for by the customer.</p> <p>Council funding to upgrade Ausgrid assets has always been a hard sell, but Covid has really impacted Council budgets, so there is very little chance of financing these projects now.</p>	Value for money
Funding of ABC	<p>Co-funding should be equitable across the network, it should target protection of significant trees, communities that are vulnerable to heat, or exposed to bushfire or storm risk. Councils want a proportional contribution based on the age of the asset.</p>	Fair
Asset data	<p>Councils need access to asset location data to better inform their street tree masterplans.</p>	Future network

Table 16 Council Feedback - Innovation and Sustainability

What Councils told Ausgrid		Theme
Driving the vision	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> drive the vision for the future and not just facilitate what the community wants have clear, evidence-based climate ambitions, and offer innovative solutions that deliver community demands take on a role to ensure that community demands for renewables are delivered. 	Future network
Support for net zero	<p>Councils would like to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more flexibility for peer-to-peer energy sharing / trading community batteries access to reliable and easy to understand data EV charging infrastructure the LED rollout accelerated, with smart city functionality the grid designed to be more resilient and to operate with DER more infrastructure underground 	Future network
Ambition for sustainable technology	<p>Ausgrid's plans for sustainable technology should go further, becoming net zero asap, rolling out technology like community batteries, supporting the EV transition and supporting energy sharing.</p>	Future network
Transition to EVs	<p>Councils would like to see:</p>	

What Councils told Ausgrid	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to charging for those without off-street parking • methods to provide fast charging without passing the full cost to the charge point-developer (applying different tariffs) • more opportunities for energy sharing • no increase in off-peak pricing when EVs are being charged. 	Future network

Table 17 Council Feedback - Public Lighting

What Councils told Ausgrid	Theme
<p>Closing off pre-2009 assets (allowing Councils to pay off early, assets invested in pre-2009)</p> <p>Councils consulted were not in a position to answer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether pre-2009 assets should be closed off in the next regulatory period • What price increase would be acceptable if pre-2009 assets were closed off • Whether some councils paying slightly more and some slightly less was ok if the price list was rationalised by asset groups <p>Price change should be no more than 3% if prices were to be rationalised.</p> <p>Slightly more than half agreed we should group assets that have the same input costs and result in the same prices.</p> <p>Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) believes that each council should have the ability to decide, but that paying off pre-2009 residuals may be beneficial for some councils.</p>	Value for money
<p>How to transition to a new state-based pole regime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy from other jurisdictions. • Provide standard charges and processes. • Establish a facility access agreement. • Include SLI Program in developing charges. • Include SSROC in developing procedures on behalf of all councils. • Investigate multi-purpose poles. • Pre-approve ASP's. • Review PUMS application. 	Value for money
<p>Pricing</p> <p>Transparency of pricing, including any changes in pricing is essential.</p> <p>A pricing model/methodology should be approved so new prices can be created within the regulatory period outside of the AER annual pricing process.</p> <p>Simplified pricing is a good idea if newer and common lighting types are properly cost reflective.</p>	Value for money
<p>Meeting future needs of councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify approval processes, • Reduce time to install light poles, • Provide more transparency in pricing. 	Value for money
<p>Council ownership of street lighting</p> <p>Councils see advantages in owning and managing streetlights, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • choosing their own street lighting service provider increased flexibility, • faster adoption of new technology, • better defined service levels, • ability to hold suppliers to account and eliminate conflicts for limited DNSP resources. 	Value for money
<p>Street lighting procurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils want to be involved in all steps of the procurement process. They suggest Disclosure of Commercial Links / Conflicts Agreements to deal with conflicts relating to the consultants they chose to do this work. • Councils would like contestable market options where services are not provided by Ausgrid. 	Value for money

What Councils told Ausgrid		Theme
Public lighting code	The issue of excluding or not complex repairs from the Public Lighting Code is under review.	Value for money

Table 18 Council Feedback – Resilience

What Councils told Ausgrid		Theme
Communicating outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning and advisory materials that are tailored for communities – in languages and culturally relevant ways. Utilities could provide clear, consistent, and timely information for councils to disseminate to their communities on how best to respond to emergency situations or outages. In an energy emergency, people need accurate information, clear guidance, and well-co-ordinated efforts. People and organisations need accurate information about restoration times to make good decisions about safety and local continuity. 	Customer experience
Preparing for outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At a minimum, Ausgrid should provide staff to attend all Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) and Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC) meetings. This preparatory work is important to ensuring that efforts are well coordinated in an emergency. Ideally, Ausgrid would be committing resources to undertake joint planning and emergency simulation. Ausgrid should provide feedback into the local emergency management plan updates. Investing in microgrids and SAPS will improve resilience. 	Resilience
Responding to outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fallen power lines pose a direct threat to residents' safety. They can also delay efforts by emergency services to evacuate residents during events. Residents rely heavily on electronic devices to receive updates from emergency services and, where necessary, request assistance. Prolonged power outages can increase the hardship experienced by the community by preventing residents from accessing basic amenities. Prolonged power outages can delay a community's recovery from a disruptive event by preventing residents from accessing social and online networks. Residential customers expect Ausgrid to consider all options for cost-effective investment in resilient network assets. 	Resilience
Non-network investments / network investments with non-network benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausgrid should re-introduce a co-funding contribution to Aerial Bundled Cabling (ABC) to allow for greater urban canopy and protect the community from rising urban heat. Councils are interested in collaborating to identify opportunities to grow the network of community refuges and resilience hubs, there are opportunities for DNSP and council to share infrastructure (design & implementation considerations, learnings). 	Resilience

Energy supply chain

Retailers and ASPs

Retailers told the team that they want a no-surprises approach to being kept informed of changes in the business, and are particularly interested to understand developments in tariff charges

ASPs said they were not able to respond to questions of price as that was a customer consideration, however they would like to see certainty in fee quotes to avoid the final cost being much higher than that costed.

Evaluation and verification

Evaluation surveys

At the end of most of our engagement activities Ausgrid surveyed customers and stakeholders involved to gauge how they experienced their participation and to understand how we might make improvements.

Refer to Appendix E.

Evaluation workshop

On Friday 25 February, the Reset team held a workshop with members of the RCP and CCC and key Ausgrid staff to evaluate Phase 1 of the engagement program. As a result, three key changes of approach were agreed:

- **Take a new approach to small business:** The team discussed the challenges facing small businesses in the wake of the Covid pandemic and resolved to ensure that future small business engagement would take place face to face where possible. Phase 2 engagement with small business merely reconvened the SMEs we engaged in Phase 1. However, Phase 3 – which will involve the display of the Draft Plan – will involve a lot more face to face engagement with small business by going to business locations rather than inviting businesses to participate with us.
- **Prioritise important topics where customers can influence the 2024-2029 Draft Plan:** It was noted at the evaluation workshop that the team hadn't heard much regarding customer incentives and resilience responses. The team resolved to design 'back up' engagement approaches should customers not naturally raise these two issues. In the event, both issues have emerged through our Voice of Community Panel recommendations and our commercial and industrial engagement streams.
- **Drive cultural change:** The evaluation workshop resulted in an action to involve staff more in engagement activities to drive cultural change in customer service. The Voice of Community Panel process alone involved 25 staff, including six Executive team members and four Board members including the Chairman. Many more assisted with providing information and support services. More than 100 staff were involved in the RCP process and other engagement streams. Staff pride in the engagement conducted has been palpable with better customer outcomes delivered daily through ongoing initiatives to respond to customer feedback. Customer voices shaped the corporate strategy alongside staff and other stakeholders and there is a strong desire to demonstrate respect for what customers have said by responding meaningfully

Feedback validation

The evaluation workshop noted the high quality of discussions, but the small number of customers involved. The feedback was undoubtedly valid, but was it reliable? To test the validity of the feedback, the team resolved to undertake several validation exercises.

Customer feedback data validation

The team decided to examine three years' worth of Voice of Customer data to see whether our Phase 1 insights could be correlated with what had been heard from customers through other channels. This work aimed to validate Reset engagement insights against high volume data sources, and leverage ongoing business-as-usual engagement to deliver new insights

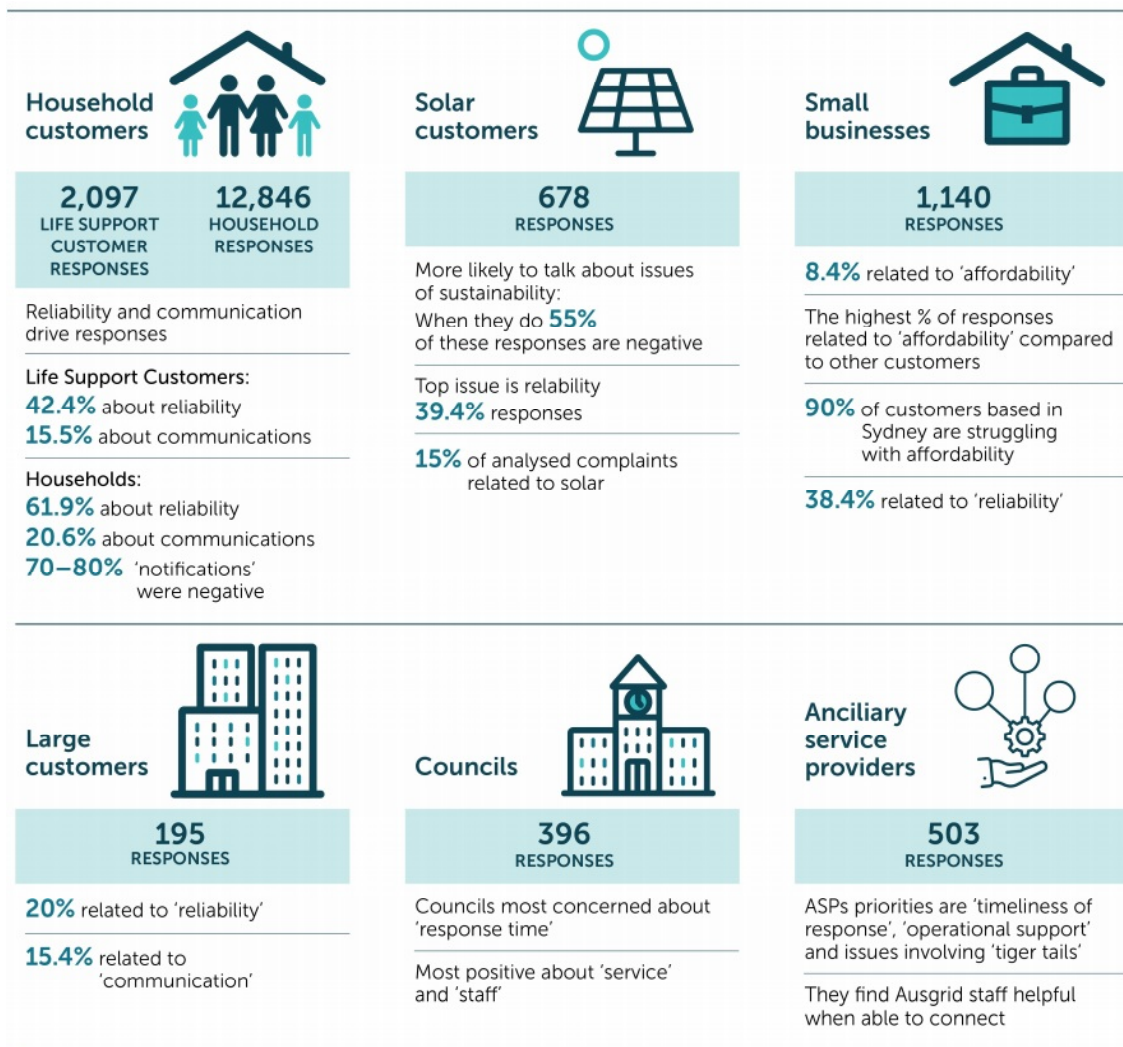
Ausgrid engaged Edge Red to use AI to analyse around 40,000 customer database records captured between 2019 and 2022, and more than 20,000 complaints including around 3,000 records that had recorded quotes from customers. This verified the following insights gained from our engagement activities:

- Reliability and customer communication is important for household customers and large use customers
- Affordability is a top concern for small businesses

- Response times are key issues for Councils and ASPs

A summary of the customer insights is outlined in Figure 23

Figure 23 Customer Data Validation Insights



Light touch response to the Voice for Community Panel draft recommendations

Ausgrid also decided to ask the wider group of customers to provide a 'light touch' response to the Voice of Community Panel draft recommendations as a means of correlating the outputs of our deep engagement with those of our broader engagement. This was successful, and the combined and correlated feedback garnered are presented in this report.

Check-in with energy sector colleagues

Finally, the team decided to check whether what it was hearing from customers also aligned with the feedback being received by counterparts in the energy sector. This was done by hosting a session of the Communications and Customer Engagement Working Group (CCEWG) run by Energy Networks Australia. This took place on Wednesday 11 May, was attended by 20 representatives of energy transmission and distribution companies from across Australia and facilitated by Ausgrid and bd infrastructure.

At this workshop Ausgrid used the online collaboration tool GroupMap to share some of the feedback received from our stakeholders and customers, and asked participants to 'like' comments they too had heard and add further comments outlining what they are hearing from their customers in each of our Reset topics.

The session demonstrated alignment across several of Ausgrid's insights, particularly:

- **Customer service:** alignment on targeted information, supporting vulnerable customers and ongoing engagement beyond the Reset
- **Future network:** alignment on growing customer interest in future network, but potential disengagement on how they can take part
- **Price and affordability:** alignment on this as a key concern
- **Resilience:** alignment on the need for proactive communications around outages, and the importance of reliability

Where to find the response

Much of what Ausgrid have heard will materially influence business delivery over the next five years, and Ausgrid's response to customer feedback can be found in the Draft Plan.

Some suggestions can be responded to immediately through our business as usual (BAU) operations while others are better responded through the Pricing Directions Paper, The Resilience Framework, Metering Services Paper, Ancillary Network Services Paper and Public Lighting Services Papers. Some suggestions deal with topics outside of Ausgrid's current remit, though the organisation can commit to advocating on behalf of our customers in relation to those topics during interactions with the energy sector.

Table 19 below has been prepared to help readers of this report navigate from what customers were asked during the engagement program to where a response can be found in the Draft Plan or other key business stream.

Table 19 Customer Feedback - where to find the response

Ausgrid talked to customers about....	Customers told Ausgrid...	Ausgrid heard this from						Find the response in Figure
		VoC Panel	Resi customers	SMEs	Large use customers	Councils	Staff	
Customer Experience	Proactively prepare the network for net zero	✓	✓			✓		4.0.2
Customer Experience	Enhance communication & engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓			4.0.3
Customer Experience	Improve visibility of costs to consumers	✓	✓					4.0.3
Customer Experience	Outage information is crucial		✓	✓		✓		4.0.3
Customer Experience	Customers are partners in reducing network costs				✓			4.0.3
Customer Experience	Provide escalation process				✓			4.0.3
Customer Experience	Improve connection times				✓			4.0.3
Customer Experience	Building relationships with Indigenous communities is the first step towards reconciliation						✓	4.0.3
Customer Experience	Measure the effectiveness of service delivery	✓						4.0.3
Customer Experience	Speaking to a real person is important		✓	✓				4.0.3
Customer Experience	Information needs to be accessible to the widest range of customers, in a variety of languages and be accessible		✓	✓				4.0.3
Fair	Flexible two-way pricing for a fairer transition	✓						4.0.4
Fair	There should be a way for those who can afford to, to contribute more without impacting those who can't		✓					4.0.2
Future Network	Indigenous knowledge is a foundation to managing our impact on country						✓	4.0.3

Ausgrid talked to customers about....	Customers told Ausgrid...	Ausgrid heard this from						Find the response in Figure
		VoC Panel	Resi customers	SMEs	Large use customers	Councils	Staff	
Future Network	Regulatory reform – for an innovative grid	✓						4.0.2
Future Network	Invest to reduce long term costs	✓						4.0.1/4.0.4
Future Network	Increase innovation	✓						4.0.2
Future Network	Partnership approach to innovation and trials	✓						4.0.2
Future Network	Peer to peer trading					✓		4.0.2
Resilient	Maintain and improve emergency response	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		4.0.1
Resilient	Improve cyber security	✓			✓			4.0.1
Resilient	Improve reliability for those impacted by extreme weather	✓	✓	✓		✓		4.0.1
Resilient	Reliability is key		✓	✓	✓			4.0.1
Resilient	Make upfront investments when confident in the impacts of climate change				✓			4.0.1
Sustainable	There needs to be a better balance between green cities and the management of trees for a safe and reliable network					✓		4.0.1
Sustainable	Street lighting is an essential safety service that can drive significant environmental impacts and costs for councils					✓		Public Lighting Paper
Sustainable	The community is looking for a trusted partner to provide information and deliver localised solutions whose benefits go beyond company profits		✓	✓		✓		4.0.2
Value for Money	Energy costs are difficult to manage		✓	✓	✓			4.0.4

Appendix

A. Ausgrid engagement framework



Ausgrid Engagement Framework

For our 2024-2029 Regulatory Proposal

July 2022

Contents



1 Engagement narrative	3	7 Program	23
		Individual customers.....	24
		– The deliberative core	24
		– Key voices.....	26
		Lived Experience.....	28
		Business customers and councils	31
		– Small business.....	31
		– Large connection customers	32
		– Transport.....	33
		– Councils	34
		Partners.....	35
		– Energy supply chain	35
		– Federal and State Government	36
		– Program at a glance.....	37
2 About the framework	5	8 Evaluation	38
About Ausgrid.....	5	Approach.....	38
Regulatory reset 2024-2029	5	Feedback capture.....	39
Why we need to engage	7	Evaluation.....	39
How we developed this plan	8		
IAP2 Spectrum and Core Values	8		
3 Principles and objectives	10	9 Engagement questions	40
Principles.....	10		
Objectives	11		
4 Governance	12		
5 Our customers and stakeholders	14		
Customer streams.....	15		
Customer groups.....	16		
6 Approach	18		
Engagement topics	18		
Removing barriers.....	20		
Phasing.....	21		
RCP sponsors	22		



Engagement narrative

Who is Ausgrid?

Ausgrid operates the poles, wires and streetlights delivering electricity to homes and businesses across Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter region. We strive to connect communities and empower lives through the services we provide.

Why do we want to engage?

We are now reviewing our strategy for the future, including a plan for 2024 to 2029.

We have been listening to our customers, who told us to focus on being affordable while being safe, smart, sustainable and resilient, and we have been listening. In responding to our customers need for affordability we delivered a 32 per cent reduction in our network charges since 2014.

But the energy industry is changing, and so are our customers.

Listening to you will help us understand the right balance to strike to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of our customers.

Why is the time now?

The imperative for a low carbon future continues to increase, with more extreme weather including bushfires, flooding and storms.

The way we deliver energy has to change, as homes and businesses change the way they use energy by adopting new technologies such as solar. The pattern of energy use, reflecting the changes in the way we work and live, is evolving. The way we generate energy through renewable sources and our energy policies will drive change in the way we operate.

Customer needs are also changing, with expectations of services becoming more individualised and the acceptance of new technology varying greatly. Within this rapidly changing environment the focus on energy affordability and good customer service remains critical.

Why should customers engage with us?

We are at a critical point, and we need to respond to ensure we continue to deliver for our customers and set ourselves up for long term success. We also need to ensure we remain inclusive, leaving no-one behind and improving outcomes for the most vulnerable in our communities.

We need your help to shape our future priorities. Without understanding your views and your needs, Ausgrid cannot continue to evolve and improve. We don't have all the answers, yet we need to make the best decisions for future generations.

We commit to listening to and reflecting on your views and priorities in our long-term strategy, including our plan for 2024 to 2029.

What's our goal?

Your participation will help us strive towards a future energy network that works for everyone; a network that is safe, smart, sustainable and resilient for generations to come.





About the framework

This document provides a framework for engaging Ausgrid's customers and stakeholders during the development of a draft price proposal for 2024–2029. It has been updated to reflect lessons learnt and changes of approach following the first phase of engagement which took place between October 2021 and February 2022.

About Ausgrid

We are the largest distributor of electricity on Australia's east coast, providing power to 1.8 million customers. Our network is made up of substations, powerlines, underground cables and power poles, spanning 22,275 square kilometres throughout Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter Valley. Our vision is to become a leading energy solutions provider, recognised both locally and globally and our purpose is to connect communities and empower lives with a focus on affordability, reliability and sustainability.

Regulatory reset 2024–2029

Every five years, Ausgrid is required to submit a proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) that details our proposed business operations and service delivery for the next five-year period.

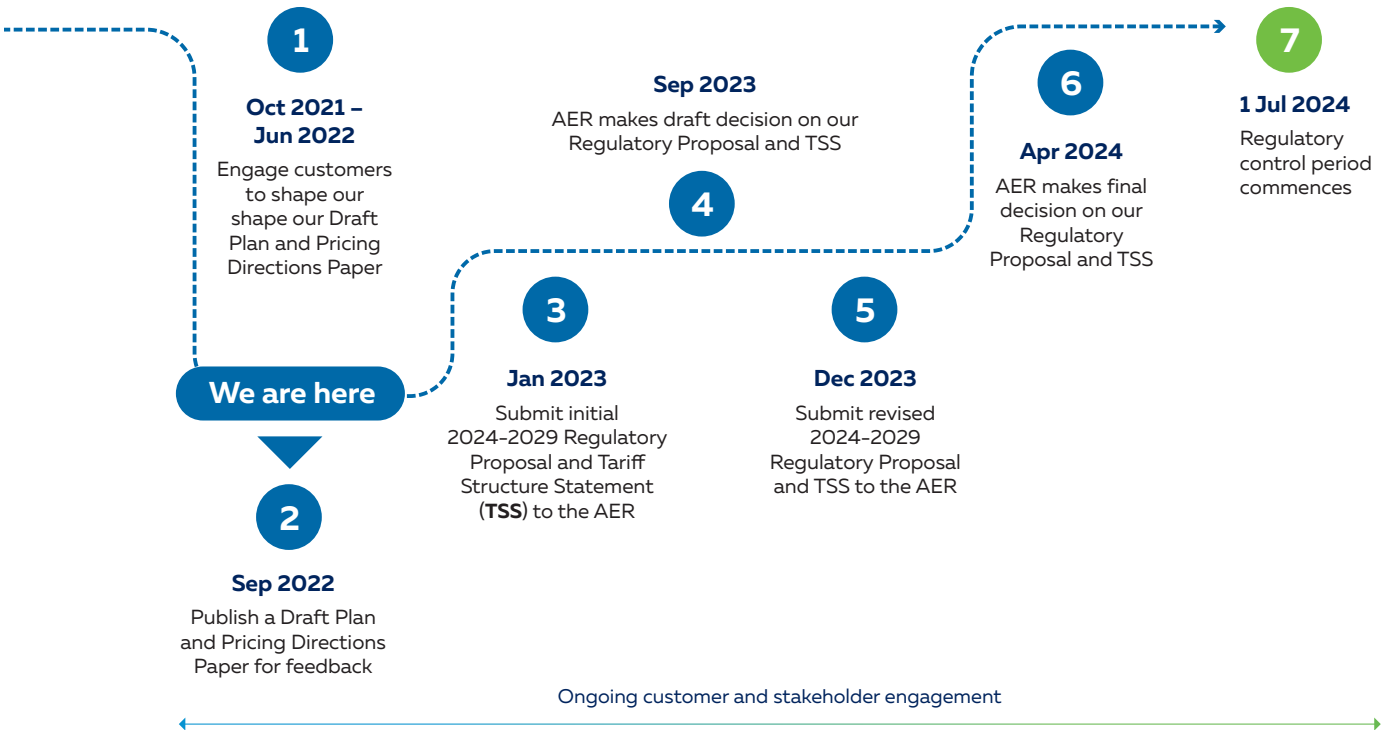
The reset proposal outlines:

- our ongoing commitment to customers and the community
- changes in our environment
- forecast expenditure
- asset base and depreciation
- revenue and tariffs
- customer price impacts.

The next reset will cover 2024 to 2029 and must be submitted to the AER by January 2023. The AER expects Ausgrid to engage extensively with its customers and stakeholders in the formation of the Draft Plan and final plans to make sure there is evidence that they are in customers' long-term interests.

A high-level program for the reset process is outlined below.

Ausgrid's 2024-2029 regulatory reset timeline



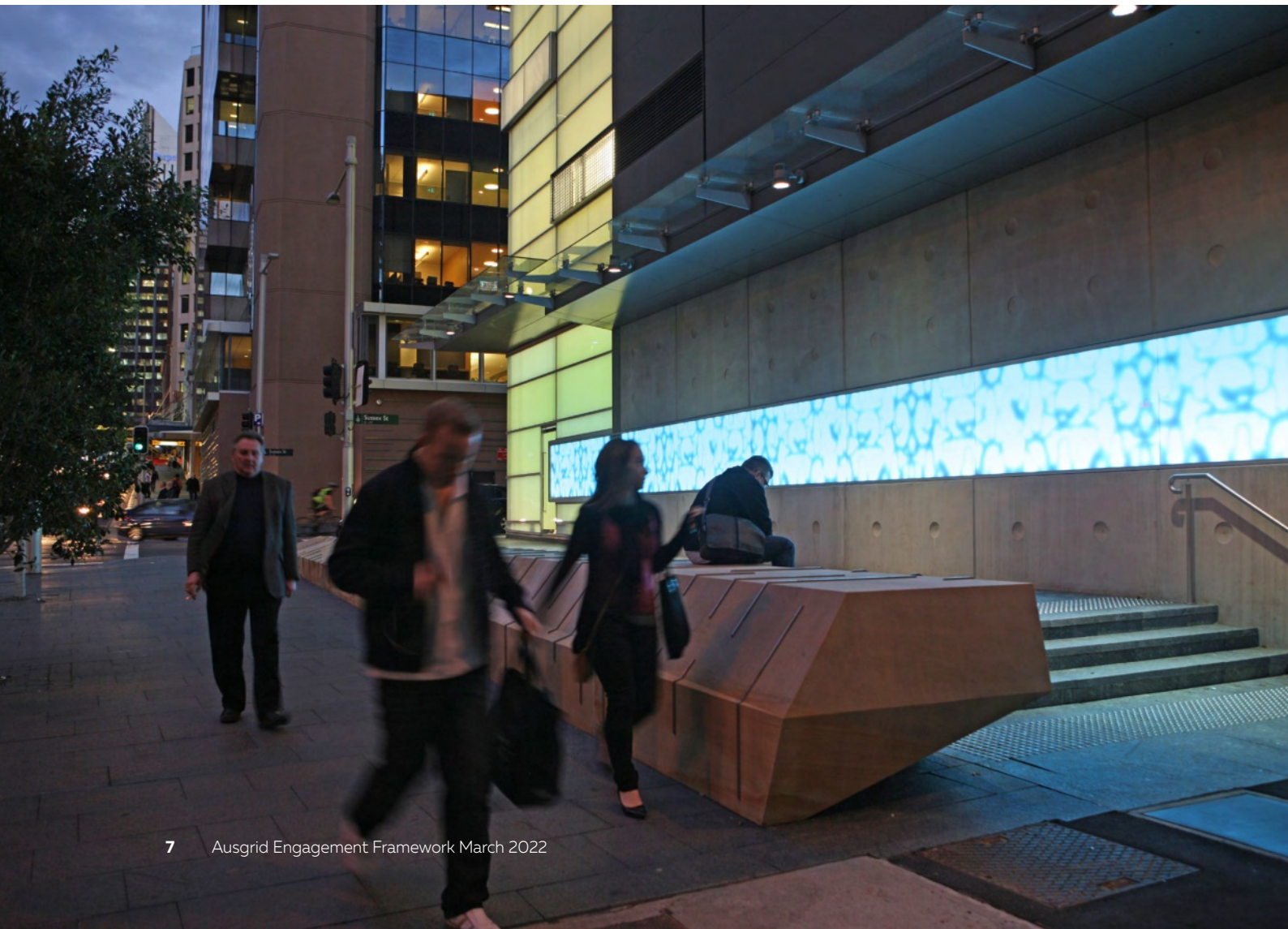
Why we need to engage

Consumer engagement and advocacy is playing an increasing role in shaping regulatory price proposals for DNSPs in the NEM. This trend is driven in part by improved international standards in consumer engagement by distribution businesses, and a desire by the AER to see price proposals which better demonstrate long-term customer benefit, by evidencing informed customer influence in their development.

In their recent Draft Decisions for the Victorian DNSPs the AER reference a new approach for assessing the impact on customer engagement of the regulatory proposal which highlights the need for tailored and supportive engagement, breadth and depth in the engagement topics, and clearly evidenced impact on the proposal. The AER has provided further guidance on this in their Better Resets Handbook. For Ausgrid these expectations provide a framework to support our journey towards industry leading customer engagement.

The 2014-19 regulatory period marked a turning point for Ausgrid with the AER and customer advocates critical of the efforts to meaningfully engage consumers in the development of price proposals, prompting the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) to conduct an evaluation of NSW DNSP consumer engagement for the following regulatory period of 2019-24. Overall PIAC saw a measurable improvement in the engagement quality but called for engagement programs to have greater influence on the proposals.

The 2024-29 regulatory reset proposal provides us with an opportunity to bed down a step change toward best practice consumer engagement. By involving customers in our decision making, we can strive for an energy network that works for everyone.



How we developed this plan

Ausgrid established the Reset Customer Panel (RCP) in June 2021 to provide independent challenge to the Reset process from a customer perspective. The RCP will observe Ausgrid's engagement and provide deep consideration of the draft regulatory proposal and deliver independent reports to Ausgrid.

This Framework has been developed to guide broad engagement with customers and stakeholders. It was developed through a co-design process with the RCP as well as members of Ausgrid's Customer Consultative Committee (CCC) and Network Innovation Advisory Committee (NIAC). The co-design process comprised three core online workshops to develop the structure of the framework, in addition to off-line 'check-in' meetings on the engagement narrative and questions.

In February 2022, we evaluated Phase 1 of our engagement program and amended the Framework to reflect lessons learned and changes in approach.

IAP2 Spectrum and Core Values


Spectrum

We have used the IAP2 Spectrum to guide the design of our engagement approaches. We need to attain an 'involve' level of participation as a minimum for all customer streams, and a 'collaborate' level across most customer streams. However, some engagement activities will achieve the 'inform' or 'consult' level, depending on the topic at hand, or as a step in the process towards a higher level of participation.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Core values

In addition, evaluation will use the seven IAP2 Core Values to guide the planning and delivery of our Reset engagement program. The Core Values are:

- 1 Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 2 Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- 3 Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- 4 Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- 5 Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- 6 Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- 7 Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.



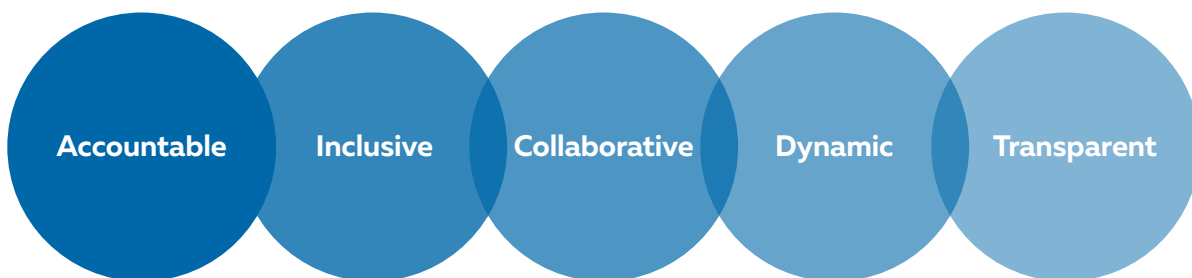


Principles and objectives

The engagement approach will be guided by principles and objectives developed in partnership with customer advocates.

Principles

Our engagement principles are:



Do what we say we will do and encourage customers and stakeholders to hold us to account.

Provide information for customers and stakeholders that considers their perspective, is convenient and timely.

Partner in the design of alternative options and the preferred outcome when possible

Be progressive, open to new ideas and prepared to change based on feedback from customers and stakeholders

Be as open as possible on the role of stakeholders and customers in the decision making process

Objectives

Our engagement objectives are:

Objective	Description
Builds trust and confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow open dialogue which challenges Ausgrid’s approach and practices. • Customers have trust in the process and rationale behind decisions, even if all positions are not agreed to. • Stakeholders and customers have confidence that Ausgrid has genuinely listened and that investment decisions are in the long-term interests of customers.
Reaches diverse audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement utilises approaches that enable diverse customers and stakeholders to meaningfully contribute. • Improved understanding of diverse customer preferences and how to address them through the regulatory reset process.
Understand customer aspirations and preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement identifies customer preferences and views on current and future energy services and enables customers to shape our strategy and Reset Proposal. • Customers views and preferences are seen to have impacted the Draft Plan and Reset Proposal. • The engagement will be designed to capture both breadth and depth of views.
Drives cultural change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds stronger internal Ausgrid capability to continually deliver quality engagement and customer outcomes. • Understanding customer needs and aspirations becomes a core competency and expectation for all Ausgrid employees.
Industry leading engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ausgrid staff are proud of the industry leading engagement. • Building on successful industry practices and evolving collaborative engagement.



| Governance

Strong Governance will ensure that what we hear from customers and stakeholders has a direct and tangible impact on decisions throughout the Regulatory Reset process. Our governance process provides clear roles for the Ausgrid Board, Executive, and Regulatory Team, and for our customer advocates.

A successful proposal must meet the needs and expectations of customers by delivering enhanced value, while also being capable of acceptance by the AER and Ausgrid's board. To ensure the success of the reset proposal and engagement program, we have established a governance framework. Starting with our Regulatory Reset Executive Committee (RREC), which has members of the Ausgrid Board and Executive and will have end-to-end oversight of the regulatory reset.

Board

The Ausgrid Board and CEO will receive updates from the RREC in board papers. The Board will have responsibility for endorsing the Reset Proposal before it is submitted to the AER and will consider key elements of the proposal during development.

Executive

Through the RREC the Ausgrid Executive collaborates with the Ausgrid Board ensuring alignment and transparency through all levels of Ausgrid management. The Executive will also have representation at meetings of the CCC and RCP throughout the development of the Reset Proposal.

Customer Consultative Committee

The CCC will assist Ausgrid by providing customer and external stakeholder views and input on Ausgrid's business activities, the environment and market within which Ausgrid operates, and Ausgrid's vision and aspirations for the future. The CCC will receive regular updates from the RCP on the progress of the Reset Proposal and has extensive representation on the RCP. This will ensure that the Reset Proposal is well aligned with customer values beyond 2029 and that the RP engagement is able to respond to issues and inputs from outside the regulatory reset.

Reset Customer Panel

The RCP will represent the long-term perspectives of our customers and challenge Ausgrid on key issues relating to the 2024-29 Regulatory Reset. The RCP will monitor the effectiveness of the customer and stakeholder engagement during the development of the Reset Proposal to ensure that each phase of engagement is informed by the customer feedback and values, and issues identified in the previous phase.

The RCP will act as observers to the reset engagement program by nominating 'sponsors' for each 'customer stream' and provide guidance on the topics and core questions to be addressed through the engagement. The RCP will meet monthly and as needed throughout the engagement program.

Pricing Working Group

The PWG plays an important role in overseeing the development of prices and tariffs and will need to consider the input of customers, as well as having oversight of tariff trials.

Network Innovation Advisory Committee

The NIAC was created following Ausgrid's 2019 - 2024 reset. They have oversight of the use of innovation funds to run new trials and deliver better customer outcomes.





Our customers and stakeholders



Our customers and stakeholders are diverse and wide-ranging. Some we know and hear from regularly, others we don't. This is either because their role and relationship to the energy network is changing or emerging, or because structural, social or resource barriers have prevented us from forming a relationship with them.

Customer streams

Stream	About this stream	Why we need to engage
 1 Individual consumers	<p>This stream reaches individual energy consumers and bill-payers to discuss issues of cost, connection, and reliability. It also tackles individuals' knowledge, interest or confusion over energy issues, and the choices that arise from the changing energy sector.</p>	<p>Individual consumers are at the heart of our customer base. Understanding what they value from the energy network, and what they are willing to pay for, is a fundamental part of the Reset.</p>
 2 Lived Experience	<p>The Lived Experience stream will help reach 'outlying' customer interests that lie in the margins of common customer pain points. Ausgrid must respond to these interests if it is to fulfil its role as an Essential Service Provider.</p>	<p>We must strive to identify and reach people that may be missed by other engagement approaches and build evidence for their representation in the cost allocation arising from the Draft Plan.</p>
 3 Business customers and Councils	<p>This stream will reach our business and organisational customers: from the large multi-national to the small corner shop. Councils, which are major consumers of energy, also fall in this category (while acknowledging they are also strategic partners).</p>	<p>Like individual customers, we need to understand the changing needs of businesses as energy consumers.</p>
 4 Partners	<p>This stream will reach the organisations that are shaping the energy sector. This includes the Federal and State Government departments that set policy, and the energy supply chain, which is changing the way we generate, distribute and store energy.</p>	<p>We need to work with partners to understand the changing nature and direction of the energy sector.</p>
 5 Internal	<p>Our Board, our people and our contractors are vitally important to delivering good customer outcomes.</p>	<p>Internal stakeholders know and drive our business and interact with customers every day. They are invested in the Reset and are an integral part of the journey.</p>

Customer groups

The image below summarises the key customer and stakeholder groups we are engaging during the reset. We knew we would need to test and adapt this approach as we heard from customers and our understanding of their interests, needs and aspirations deepened. It therefore reflects our learnings from the Phase 1 engagement.

Stream	Group	Subgroup
 <p>1 Household consumers</p>	Prosumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar customers • Battery customers • EV users
	Individual grid consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill payers • Renters • Low income customers • Home builders • Higher income customers • Non solar-eligible customers • Disinterested consumers • Export price opponents • Non-digital natives
	Regional, remote or rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bush fire affected consumers • Regional, remote or rural customers • Farmers
	Key voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CALD • Aboriginal • Youth
 <p>2 Lived Experience</p>	Community interest groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Groups • Local energy and environment groups • Sporting groups • Local activists
	Emergency services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RFS, SES, Ambulance • Flood / bushfire prone • Some embedded / intermittent connection
	Vulnerable customers	Renters / low income



Customer groups continued

Stream	Group	Subgroup
 <p>3 Business Customers and Councils</p>	Small business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner occupier • Renter • Rural and regional • High consumption • High dependence
	Large connection customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Societal (hospitals, universities, schools) • Commercial (Government agencies, property managers) • Industrial (factories, data centres, manufacturers)
	Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TfNSW Operations (train, bus, metro, light rail, P2P) • TfNSW strategy and policy • Retail oil companies • Haulage and freight industry • NRMA
	Councils	• Councillors
		• Officers
	Elected representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal • State
	State and Federal Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal policy makers • State policy makers • Emergency services (incl SES, RFS)
 <p>4 Partners</p>	Energy supply chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentailers • Retailers • Aggregators • Innovators • Embedded network providers • Solar installers • ASPs
	Regulators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AER • EWON • IPART • EPA
	Ausgrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ausgrid staff • Ausgrid contactors
 <p>5 Internal</p>		



| Approach







We will take a phased approach to engaging our customers during the Reset, set out meaningful topics clearly, and take care to overcome barriers to participation.

Engagement topics

Through internal discussion, and the co-design process with customer advocates, we identified six key topics that will define our business into the future, and which will be considered in depth during the Reset. The topics have been refined into a series of engagement questions that will be explored with customers throughout the Reset (set out on pages 41-46) were co-designed as an integral part of the engagement framework co-design, and have formed the foundation of engagement interview guides and processes. These questions will start at an exploratory and aspirational level, before drilling down to examine trade-offs between investment, services and costs; and the impact of these trade-offs on tariffs and bills.

Engagement topics continued

The topics and definitions are outlined below and the engagement questions are outlined in **Appendix A**. They are not intended to be used verbatim or prescriptively.

Fair		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational equity • No one left behind – access as well as pricing • Who pays? – cost allocation
Sustainable		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the value the community places on net zero • Cost vs net zero trade-offs • The role of Ausgrid and DNSPs in transition • Intergenerational equity • No one left behind – access as well as pricing • Who pays? – cost allocation
Future network		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing customer and community expectations • Build social licence and trust • Transparency of short- and long-term future network planning • Encouraging DER across different geographic customer segments • Understanding varying dependences on reliable supply and related consequences • Creating shared value in the community • The speed of Ausgrid’s transition to clean and distributed energy
Customer experience		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost vs service level trade-offs • Digitisation of services • Customer communications • Enhancing customer energy literacy • Quality of service and bespoke experiences and outcomes
Resilient		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community expectations around resilience vs reliability • Cost vs service level trade-offs • Cost vs risk trade-offs • Ausgrid’s role during outages and extreme events • Financial resilience • Long-term asset strategy • Cyber security
Value for money		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is ‘value’ from a customer and a DNSP perspective • Role of Ausgrid in power bills and raising customer awareness • Trade-offs between what customers would like and what represents value for money • Return on investment • Utilisation of assets • Contribution / benefit towards the transition to net zero • Valuing the benefits to communities of local solutions

Removing barriers

Our engagement approach is oriented around the needs, understanding and interests of customers and stakeholders and has been designed to build on each group's ability and capacity to engage.

Many of our customers and stakeholders may face cultural, resource, knowledge or structural barriers to participating in our engagement process. Some customers are familiar with the energy sector, have the resources to participate and will be confident to speak up. Others will have a lower level of understanding of energy issues and may not even be aware of Ausgrid's relevance to them. They may also be less confident to participate in traditional ways, or have limited time, may not speak English as a first language or have limited access to technology. To address these barriers, we have developed the following commitments.

Engage broadly

Our customer and stakeholder base is broad: from the 'citizen consumer' to the 'home user' to major businesses and industry. We will adopt a variety of approaches to reach them all. We will also respond to the diversity of our customers' culture, language, demographic and socio-economic status and work with third parties and trusted community leaders to help us reach the 'missing voices'.

Listen, ask and provide feedback

We will listen to what customers have to say about their values, aspirations and understanding before we launch into topics that we consider important. We will ask them how they want to engage with us and why they choose not to engage – it could be because they are satisfied with the current state. We will provide authentic feedback on how we've acted on what we've heard so that people feel that engaging with Ausgrid is worthwhile.

Commit resources to engage well

We will provide the funding, the people and the resources to make sure we engage broadly and deeply through the Reset process. We will engage in places and spaces, and through methods, that suit our customers. We will hold events at the right time of day or week; and address customers' practical barriers to taking part – for example by arranging Ubers to take people to events, translating materials, contributing to childcare costs; providing mobile devices to those who don't have them, and giving incentives in return for time provided.



Offer "go to" and "come to" approaches

We have developed 'come to' and 'go to' engagement approaches to ensure we provide the space for people to engage to the best of their ability and capacity. 'Come to' approaches are generally more traditional and formal, and suited to groups with high levels of knowledge and capacity. 'Go to' approaches are more proactive on Ausgrid's part, less formal and happen in places and formats that are more familiar to the target stakeholder.

Provide clear and understandable information




Energy is a complex topic. We will build customers' energy literacy and understanding by providing clear, visually appealing and jargon-free information. In conjunction with our neighbouring network Endeavour, we will tailor language to the drivers and interests of consumers and translate key information into our network's three main languages: Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese.

Recognise the impacts of Covid-19

The pandemic has affected us all and caused stress and anxiety for many. We will recognise cumulative hardship and stress caused by lockdowns when we design our approaches and adapt our engagement approaches to take account of the need for digital and virtual engagement while public health orders are in place.

Phasing

The Reset engagement will take place over three key phases, linked to the stages of the overarching program. Public health restrictions will be in place during Phase 1, so engagement will need to be delivered digitally, only transitioning to face to face if restrictions ease.

Phase	Timing	Engagement phase focuses on
 <p>1 Values and aspirations</p>	October 2021 to February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing customers with information and background to our key reset topics so they can contribute listening to customers to hear how they understand the topics gauging customer values and aspirations in relation to each topic asking customers how Ausgrid needs to change to meet their values and aspirations.
 <p>2 Developing trade-offs and prioritisation</p>	February to June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluating feedback from Phase 1 and modifying the onward engagement approach and questions, potentially moving to face to face engagement if restrictions ease gathering detailed feedback to shape the draft Plan holding in-depth discussions developing trade-offs and prioritisation related to each topic, and the tariff and bill impacts of these trade-offs.
 <p>3 Report back and refine trade-offs</p>	September to November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reporting back to customers and stakeholders on how their feedback has shaped the Draft Plan and getting feedback on how well customers felt their views were reflected, to help with discussions with the AER. provide additional information to further refine trade offs and prioritisation

RCP sponsors

Our draft regulatory proposal is more likely to represent the long-term interests of our customers if we seek the views of a **broad** cross section of the customer base; and get the **deep** consideration of knowledgeable and experienced customer advocates.

We will link breadth and depth through the allocation of an RCP sponsor to some customer groups. The sponsors will provide oversight and advice on engagement with their nominated customer group and attend engagement activities where possible.

The RCP sponsors are:

Individual customers

- **Deliberative core** – Mike Swanston
- **Regional customers** – Tony Robinson
- **Key voices** (CALD, Aboriginal, youth) – Iain Maitland
- **Prosumers** – Grant Stepa
- **Lived Experience** – Gavin Dufty

Business customers

- **Large connection customers** – Mark Grenning
- **Transport** – Pascal Labouze
- **Councils** – Tony Robinson
- **Small business** – Tony Robinson

Stakeholders

- **Government** – Louise Benjamin





I Program

Engagement activities have been tailored around customers' interests and capacity to engage and strive to attain an overarching participation level of involve or collaborate on the IAP2 spectrum.

Updates to the framework following an evaluation of Phase 1

A report of the Phase 1 engagement resulted in a "letter to the Voice of Community Panel" which documented our key findings. This letter was supported by a methodology report which outlined how we evolved and conducted the Phase 1 engagement process.

An evaluation of the Phase 1 engagement was conducted with the RCP on 25 February 2022. As a result of this evaluation, the following actions were agreed:

- To verify insights against data gathered by Ausgrid as part of its Voice of Community research program.
- To focus Phase 2 of the Lived Experience and SME engagement stream on receiving and providing a "light touch" response to the initial ideas emerging from the Voice of Community Deliberative Panel.
- To seek out external sources of validation for our insights, in particular by sharing insights with other DNSPs.
- To conduct any further engagement with small businesses on a one-on-one basis to increase reach.
- To prioritise engagement on the Customer Service Incentive Scheme.
- To involve more Ausgrid staff in engagement activities.

Individual customers

The deliberative core

The Voice of Community Panel forms the core spine of the engagement approach and will enable us to gain a good appreciation of how customers view the trade-offs inherent in the Reset process.

The Panel brings together 45 randomly selected customers in Hunter/Newcastle, Greater Sydney and the Central Coast. Participants are incentivised to attend through stipends and offered practical support to overcome participation barriers such as laptops and internet access.

The Panel will meet seven times prior to the finalisation of the Draft Plan, both in regional groups and all together.

The Panel Remit is:

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community. The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to today's customers?

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>Customer research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research aimed at gauging the knowledge of, and values in relation to, the reset topics from a broad range of individual customers. • Use research to recruit for, and as an input to, the deliberative forums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We analysed our own customer data and the outputs of research reports by several advocacy organisations. This identified focus areas for our broader engagement. • We used random selection, overseen by the Sortition Foundation, to recruit the Voice of Community Panel.
<p>1</p> <p>Online engagement: kitchen-table discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an online engagement site to provide background to the Reset engagement process. • Include a "kitchen-table" discussion pack to be used by community groups and to recruit for the deliberative process. • Market the engagement site through social media, direct contact such as phone calls and emails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have established an engagement portal. • Instead of kitchen table discussions, and social media, we used random selection to recruit for the Voice of Community Panel.



Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p data-bbox="272 763 344 831">2</p> <p data-bbox="229 846 384 931">Area-based deliberative forums</p>	<ul data-bbox="416 322 767 1368" style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold three deliberative forums in: <ul data-bbox="464 383 735 479" style="list-style-type: none"> – 1. Newcastle / Hunter – 2. Central Coast, and – 3. Greater Sydney. • The forums will bring together a cross section of individual consumers spanning geography, demography and knowledge of energy issues. The forums will provide the core of the Reset engagement. • The Forums would meet once during Phase 1 and then meet two to three times during Phase 2. Initial trade-off 'bill impacts' would be identified after Phase 1. • Forum participants will be able to seek advice from other engagement streams. • Participation would be incentivised by stipends. Additional payments and benefits may be needed to ensure participation. For example, contributions to child-care, catering, Broadband 'boosts', IT support and equipment. 	<ul data-bbox="826 322 1347 1048" style="list-style-type: none"> • We are running a Voice of Community Panel comprising 45 customers from Newcastle / Hunter, the Central Coast and Greater Sydney. • The Panel are meeting as a whole and in their regional groups. • The Panel will meet seven times: in regional groups and all together; and online and in person. • The remit was determined through internal discussions and the Panel met for the first time in February 2022. • Panel members will receive a stipend and be given IT support if needed. • At its outset, the Panel was briefed on the insights gained from wider engagement. • Initial ideas developed by the Panel will be presented to customers who participated in our other engagement streams to provide 'light touch' responses.
<p data-bbox="272 1491 344 1559">3</p> <p data-bbox="225 1574 392 1659">TBD: 21st Century Town Hall</p>	<ul data-bbox="416 1435 759 1715" style="list-style-type: none"> • During Phase 3, we may bring together representatives from across our individual customer engagement activities to participate in a wide-ranging Town Hall forum to provide feedback on the draft plan. 	<ul data-bbox="826 1420 1331 1682" style="list-style-type: none"> • The Voice of Community Panel will meet as part of a 'recall session' in around September 2022, to provide a response to the Draft Plan and to further refine trade offs and priorities. • We will also consult widely on the Draft Plan using the online platform and social media.
<p data-bbox="272 1787 344 1854">4</p> <p data-bbox="225 1870 392 1984">TBD: 21st Century Town Hall Phase 2</p>		<ul data-bbox="826 1794 1318 1977" style="list-style-type: none"> • We recognise the potential need to continue to seek customer feedback post our initial submission to the AER, due to the number of unknowns and changing variables that could impact customer priorities.



Key voices

Separate, engagement activities are running concurrently with the deliberative core to gain targeted insights from non-English speaking groups and Aboriginal communities (and potentially young people). Insights from these streams will feed into the deliberative process as information and views to be considered.

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>Prosumer research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission research into the values and aspirations of prosumers. This research could be conducted jointly with other DNSPs and could be used as an input to the deliberative forums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The prosumer engagement stream has been folded in with our engagement around export tariff structures. It will commence once scenarios on export levels have been completed. Export tariff trials begin Aug 2022.
<p>1</p> <p>In-language discussion circles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek specialist support to design in-language discussion circles with the two main language groups in our network: Arabic, and Mandarin, with a particular emphasis on small business owners. Endeavour Energy will lead conversations with the Vietnamese community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During Phase 1, we worked with the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW to conduct in-language discussions in Arabic, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. We will conduct another round of discussions with these CALD groups during Phase 2 to develop 'light touch' responses to the initial ideas of the Panel and, possibly again in Phase 3 to provide a response to the Draft Plan.
<p>2</p> <p>In-language discussion circles</p> <p>Phase 2</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconvene the Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese community groups to seek their community feedback on the Draft Plan ahead of the Town Hall event.
<p>2</p> <p>Yarns with Aboriginal leaders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek the advice of an aboriginal-owned business to help us build our knowledge of Country and cultural awareness. Talk to Aboriginal knowledge holders and Land Councils throughout our network to properly understand the impact of our assets on Country. Co-design approaches for Phases 2 and 3 to build energy awareness in Aboriginal communities and gain insights on the future of our network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have partnered with Indigenous Energy Australia (IEA) to lead discussions with Aboriginal communities about the future of our network. These will start in April/May 2022. We have mapped the Indigenous communities in the Ausgrid network area and their communities' key priorities.



Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>Youth questionnaire and outreach, and Youth Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a survey of young people to gauge their knowledge of, and values in relation to, our reset topics. This questionnaire would be distributed through student union members, social media and youth political groups. Through these outcomes we would identify participants for a cross-network Youth Forum that will meet during Phases 1 and 2. We will also explore opportunities to leverage existing youth forums as an alternative to a new one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early planning identified youth as a key vulnerability in relation to the energy network. We have therefore engaged youth advocates as part of the Lived Experience stream and will reconvene them to respond to key outputs of our Voice of Community Panel. We reached out to youth groups and student unions to participate in discussion groups. Feedback was mainly received from Youth Action and the Greater Sydney Commission Youth Panel.
<p>3</p> <p>21st Century Town Hall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from the Key Voices stream could be invited to the 21st Century Town Hall event. However, this would be subject to the outcomes of the first two engagement phases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite participants from Phases 1 and 2 to feedback sessions on the Draft Plan.



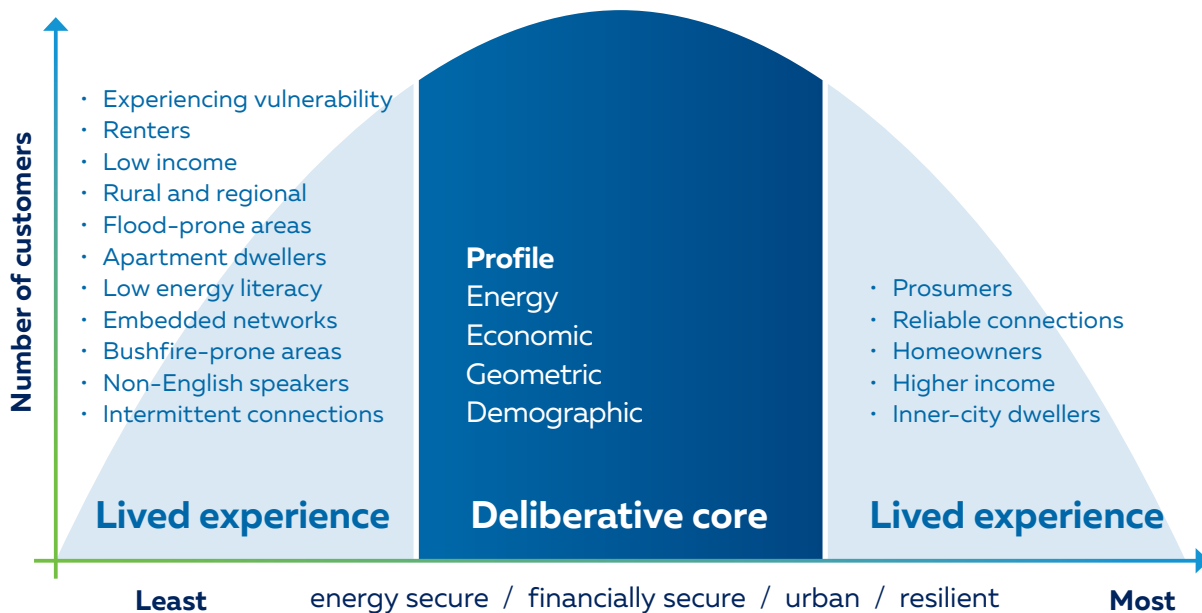
Lived Experience

The Lived Experience stream (referred to the Civil Society stream) will help reach 'outlying' customer interests that lie in the margins of common customer pain points. Ausgrid must respond to these interests if it is to fulfil its role as an Essential Service Provider.

The Lived Experience stream will provide a way of identifying and reaching individuals that may be missed by other engagement approaches and

build evidence of their needs and aspirations and willingness to pay for the initiatives outlines in the Draft Plan.

The diagram below illustrates where the stream sits in relation to the deliberative core (which will be assembled to represent our broad customer base) and the types of customers that might be targeted through this stream depending on the pain point they experience.



Approach

The stream will first mine customer data and front-line knowledge holders to understand where these pain points sit, before verifying this insight with community leaders (MPs and Councils), Not for Profit organisations, emergency services and care institutions.

We will then engage through the Reset online engagement portal to gain ideas on what Ausgrid could do to enhance its value proposition to more marginalised groups. Subject to what we hear, we may delve deeper during **Phase 2** to begin developing and designing these solutions.

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>Internal consultation and data collection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interrogate customer complaints and feedback to understand the nature and location of customer 'pain points'. Talk to our front-line staff and contractors to ask what issues they are witnessing and with whom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We analysed our own customer data and the outputs of research reports by several advocacy organisations. This identified focus areas for our broader engagement. We have involved Ausgrid staff in engagement events.
<p>1</p> <p>Structured interviews - key organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approach key umbrella and professional organisations representing broad-based alliances, Not for Profit organisations, community groups and the care industry. Conduct 'structured interviews' to garner insights into the energy challenges being faced, and opportunities being explored, by their members and constituents. Seek advice on how to reach their members and constituents during the Reset process. Invite organisations to partner with us to explore ways and methods that ensure communities and vulnerable groups are not 'left behind' in the energy transition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have involved representatives from more than 20 organisations that advocate for customers in vulnerable circumstances. This has been via round table and one-on-one discussions. We will reconvene these organisations to provide 'light touch' responses to the Voice of Community Panel ideas.
<p>1</p> <p>Initial outreach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will write to Councils and MPs (this could be combined with broader engagement on Reset issues) to verify our findings. We will also seek their support in sending information to communities asking for ideas on what Ausgrid could be doing to alleviate these issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have surveyed 74 MPs across our network and will survey them periodically through the Reset.
<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>Online engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will design a function on our online engagement platform outlining our known 'pain points' and asking for people's stories and ideas on how we could improve our service in these areas. The online engagement should be pushed out via social and traditional media in areas where we know these pain points are being experienced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have established an engagement portal. This contains areas for each customer stream and comprises discussion forums aligned with our engagement topics. We have used social media to reach young people. In Phase 3 we plan to use online engagement as a main component of our public consultation on the Draft Plan.



Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>2</p> <p>Spot engagements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice garnered from the structured interviews would shape "spot" engagements with a selection of community and vulnerable groups to provide indicative insight into energy issues. For example, these could include intercept surveys in flood-prone areas, with apartment dwellers, or in areas of intermittent connection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During Phase 1 we commissioned additional focus groups in communities affected by extreme events. We will reconvene these stakeholders to respond to the VoC Panel ideas. In Phase 2 we will survey Life Support Customers on how we can support them better.
<p>2</p> <p>Civil society energy forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to the advice gained in Phase 1, we would establish a civil society energy forum during the early part of Phase 2. The outputs of the Forum should be used as an information input to the customer deliberative approach outlined below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have involved representatives from more than 20 organisations that advocate for customers in vulnerable circumstances. This has been via round table and one-on-one discussions. We will reconvene these organisations to provide 'light touch' responses to the Voice of Community Panel ideas.
<p>3</p> <p>TBD: 21st Century Town Hall</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants from the Civil Society stream could be invited to the 21st Century Town Hall event. However, this would be subject to the outcomes of the first two engagement phases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite participants from Phases 1 and 2 to feedback sessions on the Draft Plan.



Business customers and councils

We will engage comprehensively with business customers and councils throughout the Reset through a series of one-on-one and group

engagement activities. Separate streams of activity have been designed for small business, large connection customers, the transport sector and councils.

Small business

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>Small business profile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will use internal information and data to profile typical small businesses in our network for example, a rural business that owns its premises, a tenant in a suburban shopping centre, an agricultural business, a retailer, a hospitality business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We examined customer data and ABS data to identify areas of the network to target for small business engagement.
<p>1</p> <p>Listening conversations with SMEs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will head out to meet a random selection of small businesses of varying kinds guided by our profiling. The purpose of these meetings is to listen to what small businesses are experiencing in relation to energy use, and use the feedback as input to subsequent engagement activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We held discussion groups with small business owners in Sydney and the Hunter region.
<p>1</p> <p>Structured interviews with industry organisations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition, we will approach industry organisations representing small business to conduct structured interviews. These could include the Small Business of Australia Association, and the Council of Small Business Associations Australia. Both organisations advocate around climate change and energy. We will undertake one-on-one conversations with these organisations to understand the key issues affecting their members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We held round table and one-on-one discussions with peak groups and business chambers in Sydney and the Hunter.
<p>2</p> <p>Spot engagements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice garnered from Phase 1 activities would shape further engagements with a selection of small businesses to provide indicative insight into energy issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite small business customers and stakeholders engaged during Phase 1 to provide 'light touch' responses to the initial ideas of the VoC Panel.
<p>2</p> <p>Reset topic forums</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite stakeholders to participate in a series of forums throughout Phase 2, structured around our reset topics and questions. 	
<p>3</p> <p>TBD: Energy Industry Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to how conversations with partners progress, during Phase 3, we may bring together representatives from across the industry and business stream to provide feedback on the Draft Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite participants from Phases 1 and 2 to feedback sessions on the Draft Plan.

Large connection customers

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>One-on-one deep-dive conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will undertake one-on-one conversations with our top 20 large-connection customers to gauge understanding and values in relation to our key topics, in addition to tailored questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We mapped our Commercial and Industrial customer segments to identify key customers with a range of needs and business models. We will conduct between 10-20 interviews over March and April 2022.
<p>2</p> <p>Reset topic forums</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite stakeholders to participate in a series of forums throughout Phase 2, structured around our reset topics and questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will identify key topics based on the insights gained through our interviews and test these through a series of large customer forums.
<p>3</p> <p>TBD: Energy Industry Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to how conversations with partners progress, during Phase 3, we may bring together representatives from across the industry and business stream to provide feedback on the Draft Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will hold one on one interviews with customers to seek their feedback on our Draft Plan.



Transport

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>Transport sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will conduct desktop research into lessons learnt on the introduction of EVs and Zero Emission transport in countries that are much more advanced than Australia. • We would hold a series of deep-dive conversations with industry segments within the Transport group during Phase 1. This will be informed by the desk top research exercise. • These would seek to understand the impacts of electrification on private-sector bus and rail operators, on the Point to Point industry and freight companies. It would also reach out to oil companies who may be transitioning their retail gas stations to charging hubs. • These conversations would seek the potential benefits of an Energy in Transport workshop during Stage 2 and could potentially be held in conjunction with other DNSPs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with the Transport industry is being conducted as part of Ausgrid's BAU activities. • Transport for NSW was identified as one of our key large connection customers, and was interviewed as part of the large customer engagement.
<p>2</p> <p>Energy in transport Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will invite stakeholders to participate in an Energy in Transport Forum. 	
<p>3</p> <p>TBD: Energy Industry Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to how conversations with partners progress, during Phase 3, we may bring together representatives from across the industry and business stream to provide feedback on the Draft Plan. 	



Councils

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>Council deep dive conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will have targeted conversations with Councils on key issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have conducted a total of 6 workshops with an average of 20 Councils attending each on the topics of Vegetation Management, Innovation and Sustainability, Public Lighting and Resilience.
<p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>Council subgroups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will conduct issue-specific working groups as identified during Phase 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be ongoing through the Reset.



Partners

This stream will reach the organisations that are shaping the energy sector. This includes the Federal and State Government departments that

set policy, and the energy supply chain, which is changing the way we generate, distribute and store energy.

Energy supply chain

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>One-on-one deep-dive conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will undertake one-on-one conversations with key partners in the energy sector to gauge understanding and values in relation to our key topics, in addition to tailored questions. The conversations will also gauge interest in reset topic forums in Phase 1 and 2. These conversations will be held separately with representatives from each supply chain category: gentailers, retailers, aggregators, innovators, embedded network providers, solar installers and ASPs. Conversations will be held one-on-one as some, for example gentailers, may not be willing to share information with other organisations in the room. Where possible, the conversations will be held jointly with other DNSPs as many are common across networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We held a forum for ASPs in Dec 2021, with approximately 100 ASPs attending. ASP engagement is ongoing. We reached out to all retailers to seek interest in engaging in our regulatory process, and as a result of this we met with 4 retailers to discuss detailed engagement preferences. Following feedback from retailers we have begun a monthly newsletter to keep them informed. We have engaged 2 retailers as part of our tariff trials. Solar installers are being engaged as part of our large customer engagement.
<p>2</p> <p>Reset topic working groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite stakeholders to participate in a series of working groups throughout Phase 2, structured around our reset topics and questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will hold a forum for retailers in June 2022 to share early Draft Plan insights.
<p>3</p> <p>TBD: Energy Industry feedback Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to how conversations with partners progress, during Phase 3, we may bring together representatives from across the industry and business streams to provide feedback on the Draft Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will hold a forum with retailers to seek their feedback on our Draft Plan. We will communicate our Draft Plan to ASPs (which may involve a forum). We will provide a mechanism for feedback via our online platform.

Federal and State Government

Phase	What we set out to do	What we've done / changed
<p>1</p> <p>Deep dive conversations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite Federal and State Government stakeholders to participate in a series of one-on-one conversations as part of ongoing programs of interviews with key stakeholders. These would take place throughout Phases 1 and 2 structured around our reset topics and questions. These conversations will include meetings with TfNSW, delivered as part of the Transport stream above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We communicated to 27 Federal members and 47 State members - 74 MPs in total.
<p>2</p> <p>Energy in transport Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will invite stakeholders to participate in a series of forums throughout Phase 2, structured around our reset topics and questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have engaged with the Committee for Sydney to work collaboratively on a joint plan for achieving a net zero Sydney.
<p>3</p> <p>Co-design Resilience Framework</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-design with RCP a Resilience Framework that provides additional expenditure governance.
<p>3</p> <p>TBD: Energy Industry Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to how conversations with government, industry, and business customer progress, during Phase 3, we may bring together representatives from across these stakeholder groups to provide feedback on the Draft Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will share our Draft Plan with MP's and provide a mechanism for them to provide feedback online.



Program at a glance

Engagement to shape the Draft Plan

Draft Plan

Group	RCP/CCC	Phase 1: September 2021 to February 2022				Phase 2: February to June 2022				June - August 2022	Phase 3: September - December 2022	
		Fair; sustainable; future network; customer experience; resilient; value for money What do these topics mean to you? How does Ausgrid need to change to.....				Fair; sustainable; future network; resilient; customer experience; value for money Develop trade-off questions Tariff / pricing questions					Fair; sustainable; future network; resilient; customer experience; value for money How well have we responded in our Draft Plan?	
INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMERS												
Prosumers	Grant Stepa	Planning	VoC Panel			Phase 1	VoC Panel			Phase 2	Voice of Community Panel - Recall session and Town Hall	
Individual consumers - grid	Mike Swanston				Voice of Community Panel - meet and greet		Voice of Community Panel Seven sessions - in regions and all together Online and face to face				Public consultation on draft proposal	
Regional, remote or rural	Tony Robinson											
Youth	Iain Maitland		Youth blended with Lived Experience Stream									
Key voices CALD			In-language focus groups									
Indigenous				Yarns	Yarns		Response to VoC ideas					
LIVED EXPERIENCE												
Community interest groups	Gavin Dufty	Internal consultation and data collection	Round table and deep dive conversations with peak groups and community groups			Phase 1	Round Table and customer discussion to gain 'light touch' response to VoC Panel initial ideas.			Phase 2		
Emergency services			MP survey	Community focus groups - disruptive events								
Customers in vulnerable circumstances					Discussion groups with customers							
BUSINESS CUSTOMERS												
Small business	Toby Robinson	Small business profiling	Structured interviews with Peak groups		Discussion groups with SMEs	Phase 1	Response to VoC Panel ideas		Phase 2	Town Hall	Public consultation	
Councils	Toby Robinson	Topic-based roundtables on vegetation and street lighting			Emergency response and resilience		Second round of roundtables			Stakeholder briefings		
Large connection customers	Mark Grenning	Stakeholder mapping			Interviews with 10-20 large customers		2 x large customer forums					
Transport	Pascale Labouze	Incorporated with BAU activities			Incorporated with BAU activities			One on one interviews				
PARTNERS												
Regulators	Louise Benjamin	Stakeholder mapping	Ongoing involvement with all customer streams			Phase 1	Ongoing involvement with all customer streams			Phase 2	Stakeholder briefings	
Federal and State	Louise Benjamin		MP surveys									
Energy supply chain	Mark Grenning		ASP forums		Aggregator forums		ASP forums					
INTERNAL												
Ausgrid	N/A	Extensive staff engagement across all engagement sessions										



Evaluation

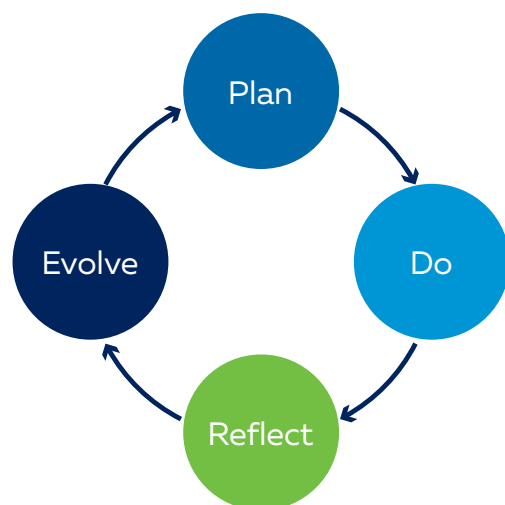
Capturing feedback accurately will ensure we identify themes and issues across our engagement topics and balance them with other considerations in the Reset process. Evaluation will help us continuously improve our engagement approach so that we are reaching the right voices and garnering the insights to shape our Draft Plan in our customers' interests.

Approach

Throughout this Reset process, we will adopt an iterative approach to refining and improving our stakeholder and customer engagement. This will be delivered through the four steps outlined to the right.

Our evaluation will be conducted by the Ausgrid team at every phase of the Reset process, and we will also build in external validation and critique to help us strive for continuous improvement.

Evaluation will focus on what we heard from stakeholders and how we are doing in terms of the quality of our engagement and meeting our commitments.



Feedback capture

Insights

At the end of **each engagement event**, or series of engagement events, the Ausgrid team will summarise feedback and insights in a template. This template will outline the engagement date, forum, venue and stakeholders; and summarise the Reset topics covered, and the feedback received.

Feedback

In addition, participants will be asked to complete a satisfaction survey comprising four consistent evaluation questions. These will be:

- **How would you rate the Ausgrid people who you dealt with?** Were they knowledgeable, approachable, clear, and friendly?
- **How would you rate the information that was provided to you?** Was it clear, understandable, in a language you understand?
- **How would you rate the way you were engaged?** Was it at a time and in a place that suited you? Were you given help to take part?
- **To what extent do you feel your feedback will be acted upon?** Do you feel you were heard? Do you trust Ausgrid to act?

Evaluation

At the end of **each engagement phase** (in February and June 2022, and December 2023) the Ausgrid team and RCP will undertake a Post Implementation Evaluation, using the summarised feedback to determine:

- what we have heard and how might we modify engagement questions for the next phase
- what cross-cutting themes are emerging across customer and stakeholder groups
- how we might begin to address key issues in the Draft Plan and
- what do customers think of our engagement, and how we might modify approaches for the next phase.



Engagement questions



Engagement questions

CCC/RCP		Fair	Place	Phase 1: Understanding values and aspirations (October – December 2021)	Understanding trade-offs	Verifying the next five years
CCC/ RCP		Fair	Personalised		Phase 2: (January – May 2022)	
Fair	Fair	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intergenerational equity No one left behind - access as well as pricing Who pays? - cost allocation <p>To note for design: Consistent tense and use of future time 'intervals' for common time horizon - note for approach</p>	<p>Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does fairness mean to you? What does vulnerability mean to you? What does "not leaving anyone behind" mean to you? What does fairness mean to you in relation to energy? What does energy vulnerability mean to you? What does "not leaving anyone behind" mean to you in the context of energy? Is vulnerability static, or does it change over time? How? <p>Values and aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a particular decision makes some people worse-off, but the community as a whole better off, is this fair? Is it fair to make people worse off today if it makes future generations better off (and vice versa)? If you are generally satisfied with your life, is it important to you to know if you are being treated fairly? There can be disparities in the way people access (engage with) electricity based on geography / technology / finances / living conditions or other factors. Do you think this is fair? Why/why not? If access to support measures was only improved for some vulnerable customers but not all, would this improve fairness in outcomes for the community? What would make the transition to renewables fairer? What would make a transition to EVs fair? <p>Roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think enough is being done in NSW to support vulnerable people and businesses? Who do you see as responsible for ensuring you are getting a fair deal for your electricity supply? What can be done to make access to a good energy deal fairer? What responsibilities should landlords have to tenants in relation to fairness in energy supply and heating/cooling including energy efficiency, access to solar/batteries, and home insulation? What if anything should Ausgrid change to make things fairer? How does this differ to other parties involved in supplying power to NSW communities? 	<p>Present options to address phase 1 feedback</p> <p>Trade offs</p> <p>We make long-term investments that impact current <i>and</i> future generations. How should we understand what future generations value? How do we balance this against the needs of current customers?</p> <p>Given the suggestions made last year to make energy fairer and considering how the cost of these is spread across many customers, would you consider paying more to make energy supply fairer for others in your community today?</p> <p>Would you consider paying more to make energy supply fairer for future generations?</p> <p>What should Ausgrid consider when investing in initiatives that might support vulnerable people?</p> <p>Is addressing fairness - by Ausgrid implementing these initiatives - more or less important than other changes Ausgrid could make?</p> <p>If we could offer a price reduction of 10%, should all of our customers receive the same 10% price reduction? Or are there circumstances where some should receive a greater reduction, meaning some get less of a reduction?</p> <p>Is "user-pays" always a fair approach to pricing? Should there ever be exceptions to the user-pays principle?</p> <p>In some cases, the service Ausgrid provides may vary from household to household or business to business. How can this be done fairly?</p> <p>Community batteries may become more prevalent in local neighbourhoods. What opportunities or risks do you see to community batteries improving fairness in energy supply for our communities?</p>	<p>Specific questions will be driven from phase 2A (understanding trade-offs) - but could be across the following topics for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solar export tariffs and rewards Public EV charging tariffs Tariff structures and transitional/complementary measures Connection policies Embedded networks Vulnerable customer initiatives Our role funding customer representatives (additional funding) Replacement/maintenance trade-offs Electronic vs written comms options (e.g. SMS for outages) Community energy - our role 	

Engagement questions

		CCC/RCP	Fair	Place	Phase 1: Understanding values and aspirations (October – December 2021)	Understanding trade-offs	Verifying the next five years
		CCC/ RCP	Fair	Personalised		Phase 2: (January – May 2022)	
Clean	Sustainable	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community values on net zero by 2050 Definitions of 'clean and sustainable' Cost vs net zero trade-offs The role of Ausgrid and DNSPs in transition. <p>To note for design</p> <p>Approach - need to provide context so customers make suggestions for Ausgrid actions that fit within the organisation's remit and capabilities</p>	<p>Intergenerational equity</p> <p>No one left behind Who pays?</p>	<p>One size does not fit all Treat cohorts in a continuum differently.</p>	<p>Definitions</p> <p>What does sustainable mean to you?</p> <p>What does net zero mean to you?</p> <p>What does energy sustainability mean to you?</p> <p>Values and aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is responding to climate change important to you? Do you think its importance to you has decreased/ increased/ stayed same over the past 10 years? What should determine how a business responds to climate change and how quickly? e.g. commercial priorities, community priorities, government priorities, shareholder priorities? Think about businesses looking to achieve net zero emissions ('the transition')? How quickly should they move? What actions should they take? What reporting should they provide? Some countries are starting to implement bans on the sale of petrol/ diesel cars. What do you think about this? Do you plan on installing solar panels or a battery soon? What factors influence your decision? Do you plan on buying an EV soon? What factors influence your decision? Is increased solar and batteries on the network good, even if not everyone can do it? <p>Roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you think Ausgrid should be doing in relation to sustainability and climate change in their business operation or in relation to the grid? And by when? What is the role of Ausgrid in driving social change? What is the role of Government (local, state and federal) vs the role of energy companies in responding to climate change? What could Ausgrid offer to customers to help them participate more greatly to net zero objectives? 	<p>Present options to address phase 1 feedback</p> <p>Trade offs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If some community members do not think that responding to climate change is particularly important, is it fair if they still pay for initiatives that respond to climate change? How much more are you willing to pay to decarbonise the energy system? What information do you need to make this decision? Is addressing net zero emissions - by Ausgrid implementing these initiatives - more or less important than other changes Ausgrid could make? Should the cost of the energy system's response to climate change be separately reported on customer bills? How do you balance more information with bill complexity? If there is a cost or a saving in 'the transition' Who should pay that price or reap the reward? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much should customers contribute or benefit - and how is it shared between customer cohorts? If there is an upfront cost for a longer-term saving, how should that be managed? How do we balance user pays and the ability/ capacity to respond/ participate in the market? How should we ensure the benefits of the transition are captured? 	<p>Specific questions will be driven from phase 2A (understanding trade-offs) - but could be across the following topics for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solar export tariffs and rewards Public EV charging tariffs Connection policies Community energy - our role Measures of success NSW electricity infrastructure roadmap Diversity and Inclusion programs First Nations Issues Tree Pruning and replacement programs Community initiatives and social enterprise Modern Slavery Public / community safety programs

Engagement questions

		CCC/RCP	Fair	Place	Phase 1: Understanding values and aspirations (October – December 2021)	Understanding trade-offs	Verifying the next five years	
		CCC/ RCP	Fair	Personalised		Phase 2: (January – May 2022)		
		CCC/ RCP	Intergenerational equity No one left behind Who pays?	One size does not fit all Treat cohorts in a continuum differently.				
None	Future network	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing customer and community expectations. • Building social licence and trust • Transparency of short- and long-term future network planning • Encouraging DER across different geographic customer segments • Understanding varying dependences on reliable supply and related consequences • Creating shared value in the community • The speed of Ausgrid’s transition to clean and distributed energy <p>To note in design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide people with support to visualise 2050 • Unpack the ‘Power of Choice’ 	<p>Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the phrase “electricity network” evoke in your mind? • What are the characteristics of businesses you trust? <p>Values and aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paint a series of alternative future customer scenarios - which future/s are appealing? What do you like or dislike about them? • How do you think you (or your children or grandchildren) will be living in 2030? What about 2050? • How do you think you might be using electricity in 2030? What about 2050? Do you think you will be generating your own electricity in 2030? What changes might there be to the appliances you have? • What does this mean for what electricity might look like at these points in time? • What industries do you think are leading and laggards when it comes to technological innovation? How would you rate your electricity service? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – And your Retailer? – And your network provider? • How do we meet customer expectations that networks will reasonably accommodate new technologies like solar, batteries, electric vehicles? • Do you see yourself benefiting from the transition to solar? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Does the transition to renewables suit your needs? – Are there people or business that benefit more than others? <p>Roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of a business in supporting the community? • What is the role of electricity networks in our community? • How should networks support the transition to more distributed energy sources? • Should Ausgrid change how it supports customers with different needs? • Should Ausgrid drive the vision for the future or should it simply facilitate what the community wants? • Does Ausgrid have a role in advocating for changes that our customers want even where we may have no direct influence or interest in the outcome? • Would you like Ausgrid to play a role in explaining the opportunities offered by new technologies, and in facilitating access to them? 	<p>Present options to address phase 1 feedback</p> <p>Trade offs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the future is uncertain, how should Ausgrid prioritise its investment in electricity services going forward? Should we plan to meet all futures (which could be more expensive)? Or try and pick winners (less expensive)? • Is preparing for the future more or less important than other changes Ausgrid could make? • What is an acceptable price to pay for future planning and modernisation of the grid? • As people diverge their use of electricity, how should that be reflected in the price they pay? • How should Ausgrid earn greater trust from the community? • How do the community’s aspirations align with the Power Of Choice aspirations and are all the relevant Power Of Choice aspirations still relevant some 10 years on? 	<p>Specific questions will be driven from phase 2A (understanding trade-offs) – but could be across the following topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grid modernisation expenditure • Two-way market facilitation – LUOS and peer to peer trading. • DER hosting expenditure • Solar export tariffs and rewards • Role of NIAC / innovation funding • Role of networks vs role of others. 			

Engagement questions

		CCC/RCP	Place	Phase 1: Understanding values and aspirations (October – December 2021)	Understanding trade-offs	Verifying the next five years
		Fair	Personalised		Phase 2: (January – May 2022)	
		CCC/ RCP	One size does not fit all Treat cohorts in a continuum differently.			
		Intergenerational equity No one left behind Who pays?				
Quality service	Customer experience	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost vs service level trade-offs • Digitisation of services • Customer communications • Enhancing customer energy literacy • Quality of service and bespoke experiences and outcomes 	<p>Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does good service mean to you? • Your views on 'good service' in general <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What are the features of good service? – How have your expectations of good service changed over the last 5 years? – What would good service look like in 5 years? <p>Values and aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you need from your electricity supply? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What, how and when? – Does Ausgrid deliver on its promises? – Do we keep our promises? – Do we keep you informed? • Your views on 'good service' from network businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What services do you expect from an electricity network? – When it comes to electricity what aspects of good service are important? – When do you need or expect the different aspects of service? – What services would you like from an electricity network? • How do your circumstances impact the level of service you'd like or expect? • What value do you place on having access to real time usage information? • Should we shape our services to respond to the needs of particular groups? If so how? • Should we increase energy literacy / people's ability to access a good energy deal or energy services? If so how? • Do you feel you have enough information about the energy market/ options available to you? • Do you think there is enough information available on electricity? • What if any information is not available or hard to get? <p>Roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whose responsibility is it to ensure people understand the energy services available to them? • Whose responsibility is it to ensure people understand the services DNSPs are required to provide? 	<p>Present options to address phase 1 feedback</p> <p>Trade offs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there some elements of your electricity supply experience which you think are out-dated and should be modernised? • Which of the options presented do you think Ausgrid should pursue? • Is improving customer service more or less important than other changes Ausgrid could make? • Over what period should the upfront costs of improved efficiency be paid back? <p>Refining priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your preference contact by phone or self-serve? • How do you want to receive service? • Personalised vs mass communications - where do we find the sweet spot? 	<p>Specific questions will be driven from phase 2A (understanding trade-offs) – but could be across the following topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSIS – approach and measures • Reporting • Improving experience/ease at specific touchpoints and potential implications for investment (e.g. digital solutions, battery during planned outages). 	

Engagement questions

		CCC/RCP	Fair	Place	Phase 1: Understanding values and aspirations (October – December 2021)	Understanding trade-offs	Verifying the next five years	
		CCC/ RCP	Fair	Personalised		Phase 2: (January – May 2022)		
		CCC/ RCP	Intergenerational equity No one left behind Who pays?	One size does not fit all Treat cohorts in a continuum differently.				
Resilient	Resilient				<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community expectations around resilience vs reliability Cost vs service level trade-offs Cost vs risk trade-offs Ausgrid’s role during outages and extreme events Financial resilience Long-term asset strategy Cybersecurity <p>To note in design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise the different starting lines for people’s understanding and views of resilience 	<p>Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does resilience mean to you? (Consider asking after discussing the impacts of outages) What impact does an electricity network’s resilience have on you? <p>Values and aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the features of a resilient community? How resilient do you think our communities are? How might their levels of resilience differ? Why do you think this is? How resilient is your household? What would a resilient electricity network look like? Your views on power outages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the impacts to you or your business of an outage (30min – 3 days - break down into smaller increments)? In what circumstances is an outage acceptable? (forced and planned etc.) Your understanding of resilience threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you think are the biggest threats to a stable electricity network? How do you think these threats will change over time? How much of a gap, if any, is there between your expectation of the network’s resilience when there is a loss of supply (i.e. due to extreme events) and the current reality? Including at what point (in loss of agency) should Ausgrid intervene? Should Ausgrid make the network more secure than it is today? <p>Roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who should be responsible for the resilience of our community to extreme weather and natural disasters (i.e. pre-emptive)? What do you expect of your distributor during natural disasters or other outages? What is Ausgrid’s role in making your community more resilient to extreme weather events? What is an appropriate level of understanding/education on new installations etc.? Is it Ausgrid’s role to educate customers about how Solar PV will operate in a daytime grid outage, how backup circuits operate and what it means to have a backup circuit, (how long it will last, what should I use it for etc)? 	<p>Present options to address phase 1 feedback</p> <p>Trade offs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should the networks have a role in providing basic services (hot meals, showers etc) to customers experiencing prolonged outages in extreme weather events? Would you be willing to pay more for Ausgrid to invest in making the network more resilient to extreme weather events? What would you expect Ausgrid to investigate and understand before spending more on the network to make it more resilient to extreme weather? Is making the network more resilient more or less important than other changes Ausgrid could make? What is better/the least disruptive for you: a planned outage of x long or an unplanned outage of Y long? In the event of an outage how should we prioritise reconnection of services - eg. Hospitals or rural properties - valuing the way energy companies respond? 	<p>Specific questions will be driven from phase 2A (understanding trade-offs) – but could be across the following topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost/risk trade-offs between upfront investment, maintenance, insurance, cost-pass through and reliability metrics. Cost/Value trade-off of targeted initiatives. What are the measures of success that Ausgrid should adopt?

Engagement questions

		CCC/RCP	Fair	Place	Phase 1: Understanding values and aspirations (October – December 2021)	Understanding trade-offs	Verifying the next five years	
		CCC/ RCP	Fair	Personalised		Phase 2: (January – May 2022)		
		CCC/ RCP	Intergenerational equity No one left behind Who pays?	One size does not fit all Treat cohorts in a continuum differently.				
Value for money	Value for money	<p>Description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is 'value' from a customer and a DNSP perspective • Role of Ausgrid in power bills and raising customer awareness • Trade-offs between what customers would like and what represents value for money • Return on investment • Utilisation of assets • Contribution / benefit towards the transition to net zero • Community sharing / storage <p>To note in design: Set context on price impacts, including interest rates, generation, rate of return, NSW Government roadmap etc. outside of Ausgrid's control (and, therefore, negotiation table) and focus on understanding priorities as well as particular price points</p>	<p>Definitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does "value for money" mean to you? • Your understanding of energy • Do you understand what services / benefits you get from energy? • Do you understand your bill and what you are paying for? • What proportion of your current bills / income does electricity currently account for? • To what extent are you able to adapt your behaviour to lower your energy bill? • How has the value for money of your electricity service changed for you over time? <p>Values and aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What services do you currently receive that represent good value for money? Why? What about poor value for money? • What services/ benefits do you expect to receive from x (retailer) and Y(network)? • How much have you spent/ are thinking of spending on appliances that will change your energy bill? • Are you happy to pay the amount you do for the contribution energy makes to your lifestyle? • What extra benefits should you be getting based on what you're currently paying? • What should the energy industry focus on to improve value for money into the future? • Are you prepared to / have you made changes to achieve better value for money? • Where would you want Ausgrid to invest more and/or less in the network? <p>Roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know who is involved in supplying your electricity? • Who do you hold accountable for the value for money of your electricity supply? 	<p>Present options to address phase 1 feedback</p> <p>Trade offs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there better ways to pay for electricity? • Are there any additional services or benefits you would expect to pay more for? • If you had \$100 where in the network would you spend that money? • What investment / expense on the network might deliver better value for money? <p>Refining priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you like to be able to do with energy that you can't currently do (e.g. gift it)? • Is it reasonable for Ausgrid to bring forward or defer price increases or decreases to ensure it maintains a level of financial sustainability? 	<p>Specific questions will be driven from phase 2A (understanding trade-offs) – but could be across the following topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall value for money in context of preferences across other topics • Value across segments and how value is derived. • Depreciation approach (financial sustainability) 			



Contact us

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B.Voice of the Community Process Report



AUSGRID REGULATORY RESET 2024 - 2029

VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY PANEL

Process Report

February - June 2022

LIMITATIONS OF USE

This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of Ausgrid.

The sole purpose of this report is to provide a report of the methodology and process undertaken for the Ausgrid Voice of Community Panel.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by the Voice of Community Panel project. Ausgrid can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a team of engagement practitioners and facilitators based in Victoria. We work with government agencies, community groups, industry and commercial organisations and support them to have meaningful conversations that lead to action. Our processes bring diverse people together to solve complex problems and make a positive difference to decision-making.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REMIT	1
INTRODUCTION	2
PROJECT BACKGROUND	3
CONTEXT	3
WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PANEL?	4
AUSGRID VOICE OF COMMUNITY PANEL	8
OVERVIEW	8
ROLES	10
RECRUITMENT	11
PROCESS ROADMAP	13
DETAILED PROCESS TIMELINE	14
INFORMATION INPUTS	18
SPEAKERS	19
WHAT THE PANEL ACHIEVED	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	22
PANEL MEMBER FEEDBACK	23
INVOLVEMENT IN CIVIC AFFAIRS	23
INFLUENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION	24
TRUST	25
COLLABORATION & OVERALL PROCESS AUTHENTICITY	26
CLEAR, USEFUL AND BALANCED INFORMATION	27
UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE	28
NEXT STEPS	35
APPENDIX 1 - bd INFRASTRUCTURE PREPARED 'LETTER' TO THE PANEL	36

REMIT

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community.

The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2021 - 2022, Ausgrid embarked upon a series of engagement activities to support the submission of their 2024 - 2029 Plan to the Australian Energy Regulator. This plan in turn informs Ausgrid's Regulatory Proposal.

The engagement process involved multiple phases, including the Voice of the Community Panel phase which began in February and concluded in June 2022. This report details this deliberative phase, where a panel of customers considered the following remit:

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

The project was initially activated in September 2021 by the Ausgrid team and bd infrastructure (with support from Gauge Consulting). bd infrastructure then brought in MosaicLab and Gauge Consulting to design and deliver the Voice of the Community Panel deliberative process.

The Voice of the Community Panel consisted of a randomly selected, diverse group of customers across three of Ausgrid's regions; greater Sydney, Central Coast and the Hunter Valley. The panel included people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and a range of ages. They came together to respond to the remit and consider a range of information on topics including energy distribution (Ausgrid's role in the supply chain), how Ausgrid operates, future planning and costs, and service levels that customers can expect. The panel met online and in person and were provided opportunities to listen to different customer perspectives and ideas, and hear from internal and external experts.

The panel agreed on 10 final recommendations that will be used to inform Ausgrid's 2024 - 2029 Plan and Regulatory Proposal. Ausgrid have committed to use the recommendations to the maximum extent possible and will clearly articulate where the panel's decisions have influenced the development of their final proposal. Where a decision or recommendation of the panel is not incorporated, Ausgrid will clearly explain why.

In total, the panel had 45 active participants. 60 people were originally randomly selected for the panel; however throughout the course of the panel a number of people were unable to participate (this is normal and expected, and generally due to changes in circumstance such as job or family arrangements), leaving a total of 45 participants.

Participants came together over eight sessions, commencing with the meet and greet via Zoom on 22 February 2022, and participated in seven panel days in the following four months. An additional short briefing was added after day one to support new panel members from the Central Coast region. Three of the panel days were run as separate regional sessions, and three full days were in person. At the conclusion of their final session on Saturday 4 June 2022, the panel handed over their report to the Ausgrid CEO Richard Gross and Chair of the Board Helen Nugent.

The report, authored by the panel, contained:

- a brief introduction
- a definition of fairness
- 10 recommendations that captured the title, description and rationale
- one minority report that outlined some further commentary that select members of the panel felt should be noted.

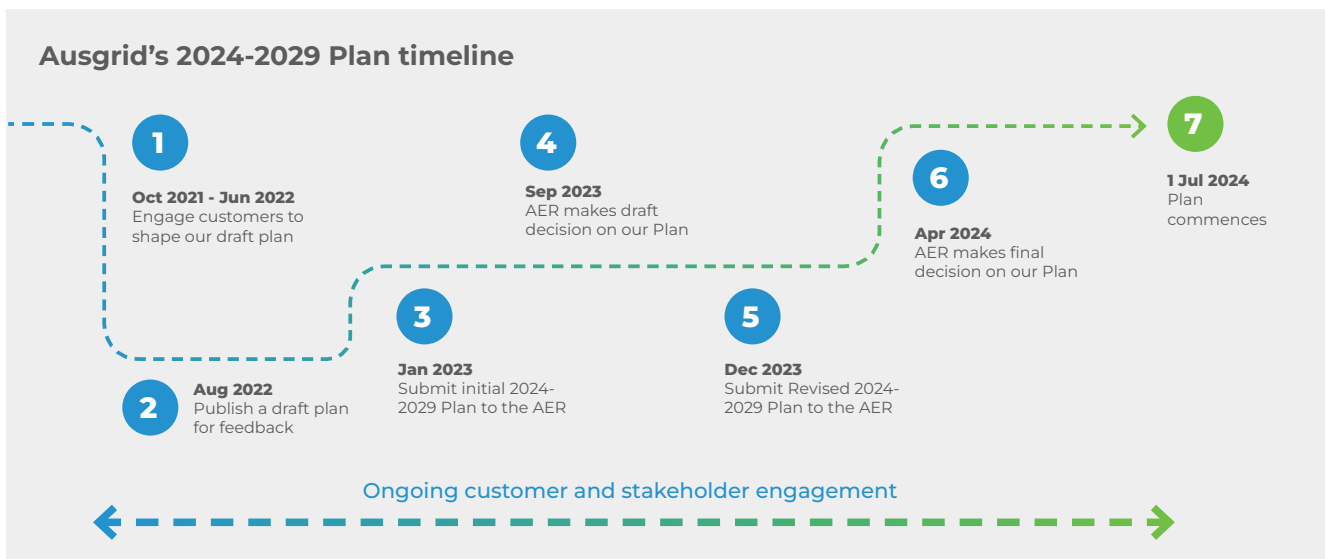
This report outlines the Voice of the Community Panel process. It summarises the design and implementation of the deliberative engagement process and includes the results of pre and post-deliberation surveys undertaken to collate feedback from panel members.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

Every five years, Ausgrid (NSW's largest energy distributor) is required to submit a five-year plan to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). AER is the independent regulator of the wholesale electricity and gas markets in Australia. The purpose of this submission is to set out the services Ausgrid will provide for customers and the funding required to deliver those services. This in turn determines the cost of Ausgrid's services to customers (or the price Ausgrid charges retailers).

The AER is interested in how Ausgrid's 2024 – 2029 plan reflects the views of customers and how it meets customers long-term interests. The plan includes capital expenditure, operational expenditure, incentive schemes and tariffs.



Prior to commencing the Voice of Community Panel process, Ausgrid worked with bd infrastructure to engage small business customers and residential customers in vulnerable circumstances. Ausgrid also held discussions with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) businesses and households, and communities impacted by disruptive events. In total these conversations included 33 organisations, 30 small business customers and 47 residential customers. The types and number of discussions held are listed below.

DISCUSSIONS WITH

- People who have experienced vulnerable circumstances
- Small businesses
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people and communities
- People and communities who have experienced natural disasters or disruptive events
- **LIVED EXPERIENCE:** 18 organisations and 11 residential customers.
- **SMALL BUSINESS:** nine organisations and six small business owners.
- **CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE:** 10 business owners and 18 CALD residential customers.
- **NATURAL DISASTERS:** Six organisations, three small business owners and 12 residential customers.

Summaries of what these customers told Ausgrid were provided to the Voice of Community Panel in the early stages of the deliberative process, and are included as Appendix 1: bd infrastructure prepared 'letter' to the panel.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PANEL?

A community panel is a name for a deliberative forum. These processes work on the premise that people can deliver smart, long-term decisions which earn public trust if they are given enough information and time to weigh up the pros and cons and consider the trade-offs associated with an issue.

Deliberation is built around several core principles which are listed below.

INFLUENTIAL

Deliberation requires decision makers to give weight to and implement the outcomes to the greatest extent possible. This forms a foundation for building trust with your community.

Deliberation isn't about asking people their opinion and then disregarding their views, which significantly reduces trust and results in poorly supported outcomes.



DELIBERATIVE

Deliberation goes beyond conversation and dialogue. It requires those deliberating to weigh up options and come to judgement on a problem.

Deliberation isn't about people giving you a wish list or a list of ideas. It results in clear direction for organisation decision makers.



INFORMATIVE

Deliberation requires that people have detailed, in-depth, and balanced information before they come to judgement. This includes hearing different perspectives, including the views of experts and interest groups.

Deliberation isn't about asking people for uninformed views. It allows you as organisation decision makers to know that the recommendations being provided to you are based on evidence and have considered all sides of the issue.





REPRESENTATIVE

Deliberation requires that the deliberating group is representative of the whole community. The group is usually selected using an independently conducted, random, stratified process.

Deliberation isn't about allowing anyone to turn up and people to 'self-select', like the participants at a public meeting. It allows you as decision makers to have a high level of comfort, because you know what everyday people who are broadly representative of your customers or community think is reasonable (once they are informed). This is more valuable than knowing only what interest groups and highly articulate and invested people are lobbying for.

TIME

Deliberation requires that the deliberating group is given sufficient time to become informed about the issues, weigh up options and come to judgement. Long form processes are usually 4-6 full days. An online (equivalent) process or a short process can be held over 2-3 days, if you are scaling down.

Deliberation isn't about holding a short workshop or evening meeting.



BLANK PAGE REPORT

Deliberation requires that participants respond to the remit by writing their own report. Starting with a blank page, they refine and agree on their final recommendations, then present their report directly to decision makers for consideration.

Deliberation isn't about providing options or a draft report. The organisation doesn't gather feedback on their own ideas. Instead, the organisation hears directly from their customers or community without any interpretation from consultants or staff.

CLEAR REMIT

Deliberation is about the deliberating group responding to a remit - or primary question - that goes to the core of the issue, shares the dilemma, and promotes open discussion. The remit question is clear and written in plain English.

Deliberation isn't about responding to easy issues. It allows the organisation to receive solutions to complex problems.



TRANSPARENT

Deliberation is a public process that seeks to build trust in democratic decision making and as such all aspects should be made public, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Members of the public should be able to observe the deliberating group in action and the report of the group should be made public immediately after it is handed to the key decision maker. All information considered by the group should be considered public and be on the project website. Communication activities such as sharing videos of the process and interviews with participants can also help to increase transparency.

Deliberation isn't about working behind closed doors. It allows the public to see that it has been a fair process.



INDEPENDENT FACILITATION

Deliberation is designed and facilitated by independent, professional facilitators with experience in deliberation. Facilitation enables individuals to work through a designed set of activities (conversations) to collectively and productively produce an outcome (recommendations). Facilitators ensure that all group members are given equal opportunity to participate.

Deliberation isn't about the group being led to a pre-determined result.



INCLUSIVE

Deliberation requires that barriers to participation are removed so that anyone feels they could participate in a deliberation. Some barriers are easily managed, for example, paying people an honorarium to cover the costs of their participation (travel, childcare etc). Also, support can be provided to people living with disabilities and meetings can be held in accessible venues. Other barriers, such as people not having the time or considering that this is, (ie. 'not for them') are harder to remove.

Deliberation isn't about excluding people and it ensures that the organisation hears from a true cross-section of its community.



Expert facilitation is a vital element to foster vibrant deliberative dialogue and a supportive, open environment. The table below summarises some of the key roles of facilitators in a deliberative process.



Design a process that is participatory and engaging, enables the group to meet their remit, and builds in key elements. These elements include relationship building, critical thinking, information sharing and group agreement.



Encourage participants to express themselves freely.



Encourage active participation from all group members.



Protect process integrity, transparency and independence.



Ensure no one individual dominates.



Keep the group moving through the process at an adequate pace in order to deliver a report during the time allocated.

AUSGRID VOICE OF COMMUNITY PANEL

OVERVIEW

This deliberative engagement process saw 45 randomly selected participants from Ausgrids customer base in Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter Valley come together to consider the question:

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community.

The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

The panel met via Zoom initially and then came together in person for three full Saturday sessions. Panellists shared their own stories and experiences, discussed different ideas and perspectives, and worked collaboratively using information from a range of sources including speakers, a background report and Ausgrid response documents (which responded to the panel's outputs and questions). The panel was asked to consider the information and work with each other to write a report that responded to their remit.

The panel focussed on developing a set of recommendations for Ausgrid's 2024 - 2029 Plan and regulatory reset. Each of these recommendations included:

- a title heading
- a description
- the rationale/reasoning behind the recommendation.

The recommendations were worked on across four of the panel days through a series of conversations and activities. All panel members had the opportunity to write and/or review and refine each recommendation. In the final decision making process on Day seven, 41 panel members agreed by supermajority (80% of the panellists or more) that they would accept all 10 of the recommendations.

One minority report was submitted by a small group of panel members encouraging Ausgrid to take further action on cyber security protection.

The process involved:



45 **randomly selected** participants that descriptively matched the Ausgrid customer base



a **clear question (remit)** to focus the deliberations



access to a broad range of **information** from a variety of sources relevant to the remit



conversations and Q&A with Ausgrid and panel identified **key speakers** (see information inputs section)



44 hours per person of **discussion and deliberations** across nine panel sessions (five evening sessions including the briefings, four full days)



support from facilitators experienced in delivering deliberative processes



an online portal that provided a central place for participants to access relevant information inputs as well as a discussion forum



group agreement, where a super majority (80% or more of the panel said they could live with it or better) was needed for a recommendation to be included in the final report



the development of **10 final recommendations** and **1 minority report**.

ROLES

Several groups were involved in this project, as outlined in the table below.

Panel members	<i>Randomly selected community members</i>	To work together to respond to a remit and provide recommendations to Ausgrid's plan.
Ausgrid	<i>Host</i>	To support the process, provide expertise and knowledge as requested by the panel, observe the process, answer specific questions directed to them, and respond to the panel's final report.
MosaicLab facilitators	<i>Independent facilitators</i>	To provide a supportive, inclusive and productive space that enabled panel members to deliberate, respond to their remit and make recommendations within the time available. To provide support as needed, to ensure panel members could participate in sessions.
Gauge Consulting	<i>Independent facilitator</i>	To provide a supportive, inclusive and productive space that enabled panel members to deliberate, respond to their remit and make recommendations within the time available. To provide support as needed, to ensure panel members could participate in sessions.
Sortition Foundation	<i>Independent recruiters</i>	To manage the recruitment process (including random selection and stratification) and to ensure it was fair and unbiased.
Expert speakers	<i>Content experts</i>	To provide expert knowledge into the process and answer questions from the panel members.
Observers	<i>Stakeholders and representatives of the host organisation</i>	To observe the panel deliberations, increase transparency of the process and follow the observer 'code of conduct'.
bd infrastructure	<i>Consultants overseeing the engagement process</i>	To oversee the entire engagement process and undertake the wider engagement process.

RECRUITMENT

Sortition Foundation managed the recruitment process for the panel via a random, stratified selection process. This ensured the selection of panellists was conducted independently of Ausgrid and the facilitation team.

An expressions of interest (EOI) period was conducted in November 2021 – January 2022 and respondents were asked to nominate their interest in the panel.

Sortition Foundation sent 24,000 invitations to randomly selected addresses across the Ausgrid network areas in the Hunter Valley, Newcastle, Central Coast and Greater Sydney. Everyone aged 16 years or over living or working at an address that received an invitation was invited to register interest, except for:

- current Ausgrid staff
- current Ausgrid board members.

The people who registered their interest were placed in a 'pool' which was randomly stratified by Sortition Foundation to select the final panel. This included randomly selecting 20 from the Hunter region, 20 from Central Coast and 20 from Greater Sydney to fulfill stratification goals.

Stratified selection against stratification goals ensured that the final panel selected was descriptively representative of the demographics of the overall service area population (i.e. forming a 'mini-public' of citizens). Stratification goals were based on demographic statistics for people aged 18 years and over in the municipality, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data.

The stratification goals for this process were based on:

- location (address)
- home-owner / renters
- solar or no solar
- age range
- gender.

Sortition Foundation used a digital stratification tool for the random stratification step, which limited human intervention in the selection process, adding further independence to the process.

Due to a need to ensure a good sample from the Central Coast region, a secondary selection process was undertaken. This regional area proved difficult in terms of getting adequate representation. Residents from this region were randomly selected from the EOI pool to match the demographics of, and replace, participants from that area who had been selected but withdrawn from the process.

60 people were initially recruited by Sortition Foundation to the Voice of the Community Panel. It is normal to over-recruit for a deliberation panel, as it is usual for numbers to reduce during the process for a range of reasons. Some of the 60 people selected were unable to commit to the process or dates as planned as their circumstances had changed since registering their interest, hence why the active panel members reduced to 45 people during the process. No-one left the panel process due to misgivings with the process, but instead due to other time commitments or life changes.



Ausgrid

About our
Community
Panel
participants

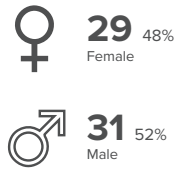
TARGET

60
attendees

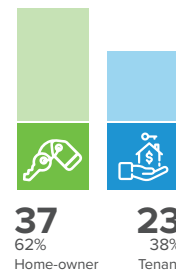
FINAL

45
attendees

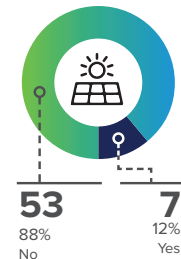
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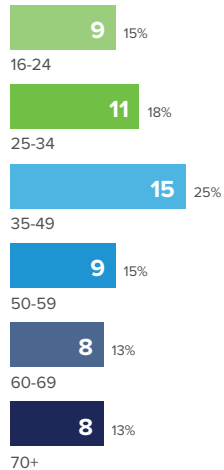
OWN/RENT



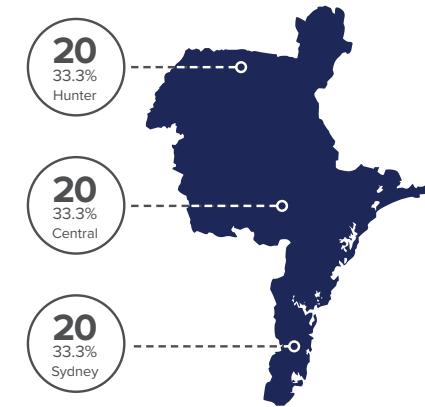
SOLAR POWER



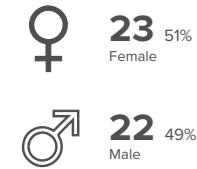
AGE



GEOGRAPHY



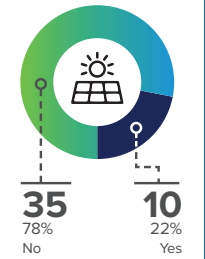
GENDER



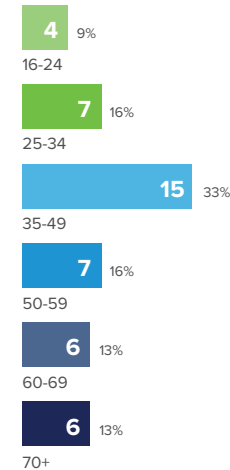
OWN/RENT



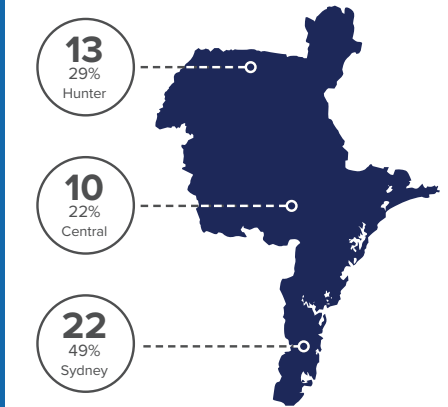
SOLAR POWER



AGE



GEOGRAPHY



PROCESS ROADMAP

The roadmap below provides an overview of the Voice of Community Panel process.

Meet and Greet 6-9pm	Day 1 9am-5pm		Day 2 6-9pm	Day 3 6-9pm	Day 4 9am-5pm	Day 5 9am-5pm	Day 6 6-9pm	Day 7 9am-5pm
Tues, Feb 22	Sat, Feb 27		March 15,16,17	March 22,23,24	Sat, April 30	Sat, May 14	May 24, 25, 26	Sat, June 4
An opportunity to connect, share concerns and clarify role, process and journey. Establish working together agreements.	To hear from Ausgrid's speakers and unpack the wider engagement report and request regional speakers.	Additional Briefing - Central Coast	To hear from regional speakers.	To unpack insights further from a regional perspective, deliberate around the themed issues.	To share insights together, further deliberation and dialogue around the themes and drafting initial ideas.	To receive a light touch Ausgrid and consumer response to drafted ideas, redrafting of ideas into stronger draft recommendations.	To sense-check the draft recommendations at a regional level and review.	Final Ausgrid response to drafted recommendations, finalise recommendations via a walkthrough of the final report, and handover to Ausgrid.
Full panel online	Full panel online		Regional online	Regional online	Full panel in-person	Full panel in-person	Regional online	Full panel in-person

DETAILED PROCESS TIMELINE



MEET AND GREET

22 February 2022 | 6pm – 9pm | 45 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Formal welcome and introduction from Helen Nugent, Ausgrid Board Chair.
- Learning about how the panel will operate (make decisions).
- Introduction to the context of this project and challenges for the panel to consider when looking at energy distribution – Rob Amphlett Lewis, Chief Customer Officer, Ausgrid.
- Overview of information inputs (inc. background report, panel handbook and online portal).
- Safety moment: Indoor electrical safety from Ausgrid.
- Understanding how to access the panel's online portal.
- Opportunity to become acquainted with fellow panel members.
- Opportunity to ask questions of Ausgrid.
- Setting agreements about how the panel work together.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to register on the online portal, say hello and introduce themselves. They read background information provided and completed a photo consent form and pre-deliberation survey.



PANEL DAY 1

Sunday 27 February | 9am – 5pm | 46 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Welcome to Country, Uncle Allan Murray.
- Learning about critical thinking.
- Overview of the electricity system and its context.
- Hearing from and questions for Ausgrid.
- Safety moment: video from Ausgrid safety reps.
- Delving into the background information.
- Speed dialogue with 12 guest speakers (curated by Ausgrid to bring a diverse set of views).
- Panel identifies their information gaps and speakers they want to hear from in regional groupings.

Online task between sessions:

Read answers to questions from Meet & Greet session and Panel Day 1.



EXTRA BRIEFING – CENTRAL COAST

Wednesday 9 March | 6 – 8.30pm | 6 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Formal welcome and introduction from Helen Nugent, Ausgrid Board Chair (video).
- Refining agreements about how the panel work together.
- Learning about how the panel will operate (make decisions).
- Introduction to the context of this project and challenges for the panel to consider when looking at energy distribution – Rob Amphlett Lewis, Chief Customer Officer, Ausgrid.
- Overview of information inputs (inc. background report, panel handbook and online portal).
- Opportunity to become acquainted with fellow panel members.



PANEL DAY 2

Tuesday 15, Wednesday 16 & Thursday 17 March | 6 – 9pm | Online

Participants: Hunter 13, Central Coast 11, Sydney 22

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Opportunity to get to know fellow regional panel members.
- Safety moment: Rap about zap.
- Speed dialogue with panel selected regional speakers.
- Discussion about insights and remaining information gaps.

Online task between sessions:

Read insights from Day 2 and consider “What is important for your regional context?”



PANEL DAY 3

Tuesday 22, Wednesday 23, Thursday 24 March | 6 – 9pm | Online

Participants: Hunter 12, Central Coast 9, Sydney 25

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: spot the hazard.
- Panel-led conversations on the topics and issues that are standing out to them.
- Continuing to create connections and understanding of the task through discussions on the remit and specific challenges.
- Panel-led matching of insights to the big challenges to be addressed in the remit.

Online task between sessions:

Read information gaps answered by Ausgrid.



PANEL DAY 4

Saturday 30 April | 9am – 5pm | 42 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Panel consideration and discussion of insights from all regional areas.
- Safety moment: safety equipment table in the room.
- Continuing to discuss the remit identifying and interrogating specifically what is hard in addressing it.
- Brainstorm of initial ideas to address remit.
- Drafting of initial recommendations and definition of fairness.
- Access to Ausgrid representatives who can speak to the costs and bill impacts of ideas.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to complete a 'levels of comfort' survey on initial draft recommendations and definition of fairness.

The initial, draft recommendations were shared with Ausgrid and stakeholder cohorts previously engaged with Ausgrid's process. Ausgrid prepared a response to the recommendations summarising what they understood the Panel to mean and things Ausgrid was wondering about. These were shared with the panel prior to Day 5.



PANEL DAY 5

Saturday 14 May | 9 – 5pm | 38 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: quiz.
- Presentation by Ausgrid of light response to draft recommendations.
- Panel consideration of 'levels of comfort' survey response, Ausgrid response and stakeholder reflections.
- Brainstorm around additions to recommendations and definition of fairness.
- Re-drafting definition and recommendations.
- 'Levels of comfort' survey conducted.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to complete a 'levels of comfort' survey on draft recommendations and definition of fairness. Results were shared with the panel prior to Day 6. Draft recommendations and definition were shared with Ausgrid for response prior to Day 7.



DAY 6

Tuesday 24, Wednesday 25, Thursday 26 May | Online

Participants: Hunter 11, Central Coast 9, Sydney 19 participants

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: Can't get no traction video.
- Discussion of unique, regional insights in relation to energy distribution.
- Reflection and discussion of the panel 'levels of comfort' survey.
- Deep-dive into specific trade-offs and discussion around clarity for recommendations where Ausgrid was unclear on meaning/intent.
- Capturing changes to recommendations from a regional perspective.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members provided Ausgrid response document for review prior to Day 7.



DAY 7

Saturday 4 June | 9 – 5pm | 41 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: panellist top safety advice.
- Presentation by Ausgrid on response to draft recommendations.
- Questions and answers with Ausgrid.
- In small groups panel members worked through feedback and regional insights and raised any clarifications needed with the panel.
- Ausgrid staff were available to support the panel to understand the impact of their recommendation on the customer bill as they reviewed and refined their recommendations.
- The panel made their final decision on their recommendations, definition of fairness and introduction.
- The panel finished their report and presented it to Ausgrid.
- Final reflections and closing circle.

INFORMATION INPUTS

The panel considered a wide variety of information inputs from a variety of different sources.

KEY INPUT	DESCRIPTION		
BACKGROUND REPORT	Prepared by Ausgrid to outline core information in relation to the challenges being discussed and the panel's remit. The document aimed to overview key contextual information and challenges, dilemmas and opportunities for the future of Ausgrid.		
Q&AS WITH AUSGRID REPRESENTATIVES	Ausgrid project representatives spoke to the panel about their remit, the process and the core issues being considered. The panel could also request that an Ausgrid staff member answer questions during panel sessions if needed.		
LETTER TO THE PANEL FROM BD INFRASTRUCTURE	bd infrastructure prepared a summary of prior customer engagement and customer recommendations passed on to Ausgrid.		
PRESENTATIONS	<p>Presentations were made to the panel by the following Ausgrid staff:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <p><i>Day 1 – Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation</p> <p><i>Extra Briefing- Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Kate Hawke Customer Engagement Manager</p> <p><i>Day 4 – fact checker and number crunchers available</i> Fiona McAnally Regulatory Analytics Manager Mark Ragusa Head of Asset Risk and Performance</p> </td> <td> <p><i>Day 5 – Ausgrid light response</i> Shannon Moffitt Regulatory Strategy Manager Jess Hui Director Strategic Projects</p> <p><i>Day 7 – Ausgrid response</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation</p> <p><i>Day 7 – number crunchers available</i> Junayd Hollis Executive General Manager – Asset Management</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><i>Day 1 – Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation</p> <p><i>Extra Briefing- Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Kate Hawke Customer Engagement Manager</p> <p><i>Day 4 – fact checker and number crunchers available</i> Fiona McAnally Regulatory Analytics Manager Mark Ragusa Head of Asset Risk and Performance</p>	<p><i>Day 5 – Ausgrid light response</i> Shannon Moffitt Regulatory Strategy Manager Jess Hui Director Strategic Projects</p> <p><i>Day 7 – Ausgrid response</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation</p> <p><i>Day 7 – number crunchers available</i> Junayd Hollis Executive General Manager – Asset Management</p>
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PANEL HANDBOOK	A handbook was prepared by Ausgrid with information about the panel task and logistics.		
AUSGRID ONLINE PORTAL	Panel members were able to access an online portal hosted by Ausgrid 'yoursay' engagement platform in between sessions to stay in touch with one another, access information, and ask questions.		
BILL READY RECKONER	The bill ready reckoner was designed to help panel members understand a range of revenue requirements and impact on an average bill of different customer types for Ausgrid. It was provided as an editable excel sheet as well as a static document.		
PARTICIPANT PACKS	<p>Ahead of the jury, participants received an online pack containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom cheat sheet. • Guide to working online. <p>They were also provided an opportunity to participate in a technical support session before the Meet and Greet.</p>		

SPEAKERS

Across the nine sessions there were two opportunities for speakers to discuss ideas with the panel members.

DAY 1 – EXPERT SPEAKERS

PERSPECTIVE	SPEAKER NAME	ORGANISATION AND ROLE
Ausgrid network	Fatima Bazzi	Ausgrid, Head of Portfolio Planning & Insights
Ausgrid business	Fiona McAnally	Ausgrid, Regulatory Analytics Manager
Regulator – Reset process	Adam Young	Australian Energy Regulator (AER), Assistant Director Distribution
Advocates - the role of the RCP - recommendations for focus areas for the panel	Mike Swanston	Reset Customer Panel (RCP), The Customer Advocate
Government policy - the Net Zero Roadmap	Sophia Vincent	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), Director of Energy Consumer Policy
Retailer relationship and interactions with networks	Travis Worstelling	Energy Australia, Regulatory Affairs Lead
Net zero and the impacts for networks	Dr John Gardner	CSIRO, Senior Research Scientist
Resilience, the impacts of climate change and implications for networks	Dor Son Tan	Energy Networks Australia (ENA), General Manager Networks (Acting)
Electric vehicles and considerations for networks	Ross De Rango	Electric Vehicle Council, Head of Energy and Infrastructure
Incentive schemes - the work AusNet did to design a customer service incentive scheme	Tony Robinson	RCP, Independent Chair of the RCP
Vulnerable customers and the experiences and perspectives the panel should consider	Gavin Dufty	RCP, GM Policy and Research St Vincent de Paul
Small business perspectives the panel should consider	Angela Vithoukas	Small Business Association, Creative Director & Executive Producer

DAY 2 – PANEL NOMINATED SPEAKERS

SYDNEY SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
Adam Young from AER who can talk about AusGrid getting funds from Government	Adam Young	Adam Young Assistant Director Australian Energy Regulator
Specialist on community batteries in metro (not from AusGrid) from overseas where this has been done - pro's, con's, practicalities, challenges, costs for implementation (e.g. rate of return)	We reached out to ANU, who have recently done interesting work in this space with Yarra Valley and Citipower / Powercor. When ANU hadn't responded we followed up directly with Citipower, who recommended Matthew, as a front runner in this space. Whilst Matthew isn't Metro or overseas, he is independent of Ausgrid and from a different region.	Matthew Charles Jones Founder Totally Renewable Yackandandah.
DER best practice from overseas - Dr Sara Fuller (panellist's contact)	Dr Sara Fuller	Dr Sara Fuller Associate Professor at Macquarie University
State/Federal Government members regarding planned policy and legislative effects on the future of the grid and individual tax	Gabrielle Upton: Parliamentary Secretary for the NSW Premier	Gabrielle Upton: could not attend at last minute.
Local council Yvette Andrews (e.g. Strata or rental representative) - are they looking at community DER initiatives etc.?	Yvette Andrews	Yvette Andrews Manager, Strategic Community Consultation at City of Sydney.

CENTRAL COAST SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
An expert with practical experience setting up this technology re: trials on northern beaches and Liverpool (understands the technical and cost viability)	Jonathan Dore	Jonathan Dore Distribution system operator services lead at AusGrid
CSIRO for impact of environmental conditions on Ausgrid assets	Dr John Gardner	Dr John Gardner Senior research scientist at CSIRO
Central Coast Council staff member re: central coast specific perspective around the energy issues and planning for the region (CEO or person heading development area)	Lynda Hurst (Central Coast Council) who recommended Jared Philips	Jared Philips Section manager, Centres planning & urban design, Central Coast Council
Not for profit organisation representatives	Rhiannon Cook	Rhiannon Cook Manager, policy and advocacy at St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW)
A speaker from another country with similar population spread and who had successfully and recently implemented new technology to improve their grid.	Reached out to contacts in Germany and at SSEN in the UK, but unable to secure an International speaker. Sara was recommended by a fellow panellist.	Dr Sarah Fuller Associate professor at Macquarie University

HUNTER SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
<p>Researcher from University of Newcastle (environmental scientist or engineer for example). Also could be from Tighsville TAFE</p>	<p>Newcastle University's Dr In-Young Yeo (on leave) recommended Dr Allen who we have not been able to get a response from. Newcastle TAFE co-ordinator didn't respond. Stuart, while not based in an educational institution is an experienced climate scientist.</p>	<p>Stuart Browning Risk Frontiers' atmospheric scientist and climate risk specialist.</p>
<p>Project manager from the Community Battery at Lake Macquarie</p>	<p>Alida Jansen van Vuuren</p>	<p>Alida Jansen van Vuuren Distribution System Operator Manager at AusGrid. Alida is responsible for the delivery of Community Battery trials at AGD.</p>
<p>Battery Science specialist on the various types of options we have. not just Tesla, but tesla could work.</p>	<p>Approached Dr Marnie Shaw from ANU has worked with Citipower in this area but was not able to get a response. Citipower recommended Matt as an advocate of these systems with a real community perspective.</p>	<p>Matthew Charles Jones Founder Totally Renewable Yackandandah.</p>
<p>Salvos/Vinnies to talk about the socio/economic disadvantages</p>	<p>Gavin Dufty, recommended Rhiannon Cook from St Vinnie's NSW, she is not available on the day - but will attend tomorrow's session and you will be able to see notes from that session. Rhiannon recommended Helen as the Deputy Ombudsman.</p>	<p>Helen Ford Deputy Ombudsman Energy & Water</p>
<p>Engineer - remote management Matthew Jolliffe (Wallsend) Ausgrid Senior Distribution Planner</p>	<p>Matthew Jolliffe</p>	<p>Matthew Jolliffe Senior Distribution Planner at AusGrid</p>

WHAT THE PANEL ACHIEVED

Responding to the remit, the panel delivered or achieved the following:

- One definition of fairness.
- 10 recommendations.
- Each recommendation received 80% or above approval from the panel.
- One minority report.

Ausgrid has promised to use the Voice of Community Panel's recommendations to the greatest extent possible when preparing their 2024 – 2029 Plan and Regulatory Proposal (according to the collaborate level of engagement in the International Association of Public Participation engagement spectrum).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following 10 recommendations were written and decided by the Ausgrid Voice of the Community Panel:

1. Advocate and lobby for reform to energy regulations to improve service to customers.
2. Incentivise the adoption of cost-effective renewable energy, balancing the speed and uptake of technologies, while leading by example.
3. Enhanced community engagement and communication.
4. Visibility of Ausgrid costs to customers.
5. Maintain and improve current emergency procedures.
6. Ausgrid to collaborate on research & innovation on emerging technologies and best practices.
7. Executing collaborative innovation and research.
8. Investing in capital expenditure (Capex) to reduce future operational expenditure (Opex).
9. Influence customer behaviour with a flexible two-way pricing mechanism in order to optimise electricity supply and demand, balancing time of use, time of feed-in, and reliability.
10. Review minimum level of reliability of supply.

To read the panel's final report, including a full description of each recommendation, go to the Ausgrid website

<https://ausgrid.engagementhub.com.au/ausgridengagementhubcomauhouseholds>

PANEL MEMBER FEEDBACK

Panel members were invited to complete a survey at two points in the process:

- After the meet and greet session (52 of the participants responded to the pre-deliberation survey).
- After panel completion (43 of the participants responded to the post-deliberation survey).

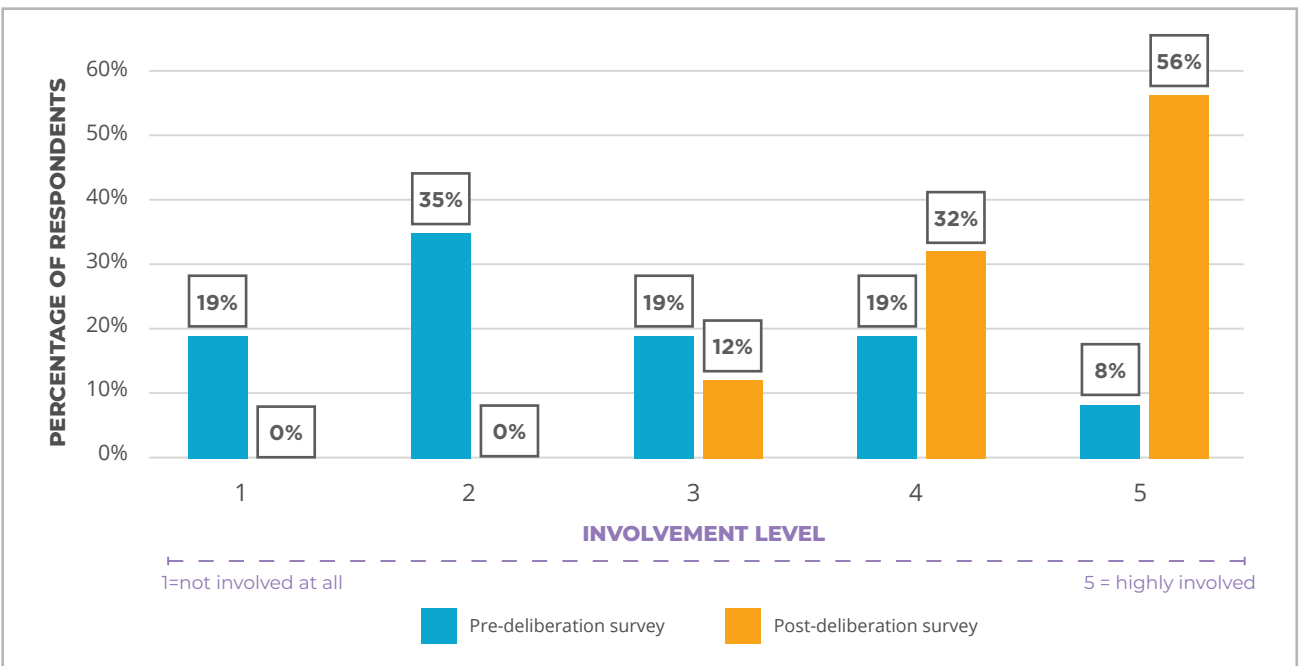
Feedback received has been summarised in the sections below.

INVOLVEMENT IN CIVIC AFFAIRS

The panel members that responded said they were much more likely to participate in civic activities (i.e. get involved in government decisions that affect them) after being involved in the panel process.

At the beginning of the process, 54% of the group either were not involved in civic activities in the past or had had very little involvement and 27% said they had been involved or very involved in the past. By the end of the process, 88% said they thought they would be involved or highly involved in government decisions that affected them in future. This is a **61-percentage point increase** or a **225% growth** in the number of participants who said they would be involved or highly involved in civic affairs.

PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How involved are you currently when it comes to government/authority decisions that affect you?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	Now you have had this experience, how involved might you be in the future when it comes to government/authority decisions that affect you?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not involved at all and 5=highly involved



INFLUENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Two pre-deliberation questions were asked to understand the level of confidence the panel members had in influencing decision making before commencing the process.

Pre-deliberation question A: Panel members were asked how confident they had been in the past that community input would influence Ausgrid's decisions. At the start of the process, 48% said they were very doubtful and doubtful that community input would influence Ausgrid's decisions in the past. 12% said they were confident or very confident.

PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION A	In the past, how confident have you been that community input will influence this organisation's decisions?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident

Pre-deliberation question B: The panel members were then asked to rate their level of confidence in Ausgrid implementing the work of the panel. 35% responded that they were confident or very confident, and 10% were doubtful or very doubtful.

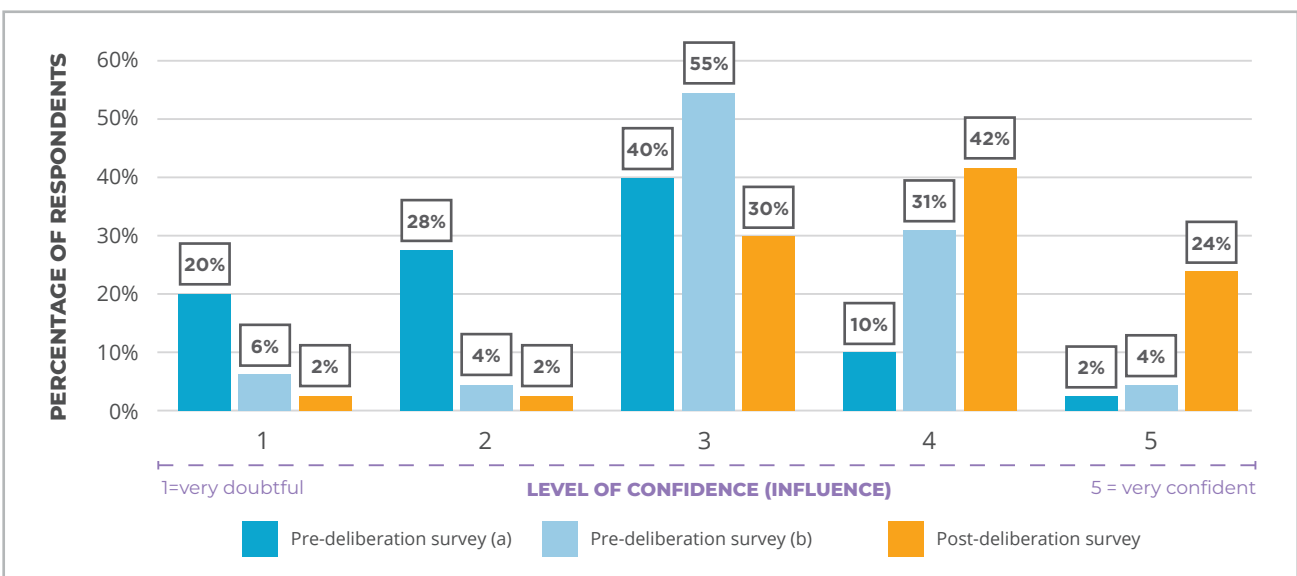
PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION B	How confident are you that your recommendations on this current issue will be implemented by Ausgrid?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident

Post-deliberation question: Following the panel process, 66% of panellists were very confident or confident that the work of the panel would be implemented and only 4% were very doubtful or very doubtful.

This represents a **53-percentage point increase** or **442% growth** in the number of participants who were confident or very confident when compared to pre-deliberation question A (past confidence in community influence over Ausgrid's decisions).

It also represents a **30-percentage point increase** or **86% growth** when compared with the response to pre-deliberation question B (confidence in Ausgrid implementing the panel's recommendations).

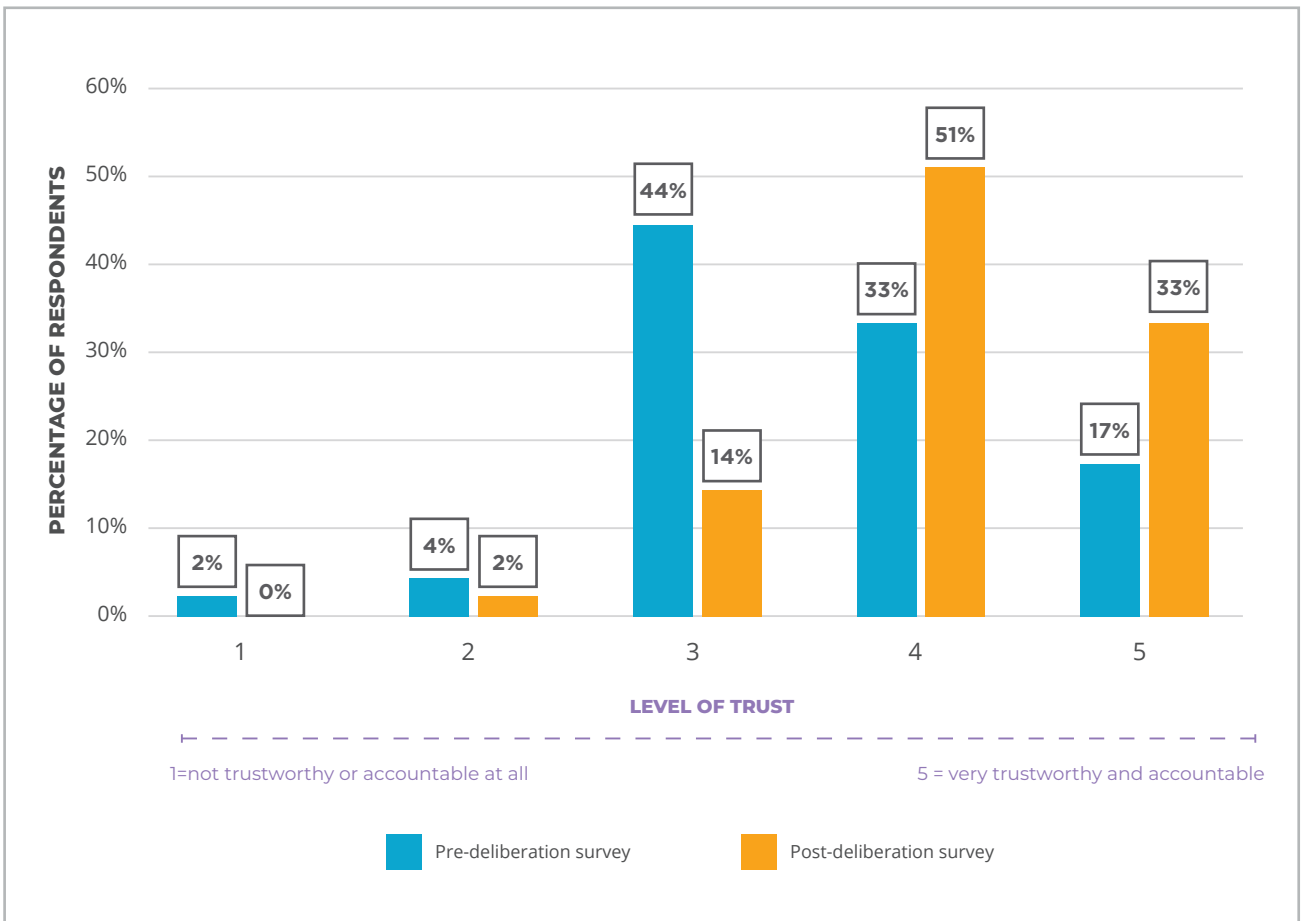
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	Now that you have been through the process, how confident are you that your recommendations will be implemented by Ausgrid?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident



TRUST

Overall, the panel’s level of trust in Ausgrid improved by the end of the deliberative process. 83% of panel members felt that Ausgrid was very trustworthy and accountable or trustworthy and accountable by the completion of the process, compared with 50% at the commencement of deliberations. This is a **33-percentage point increase** or **66% growth** in the number of participants who said they they trusted Ausgrid.

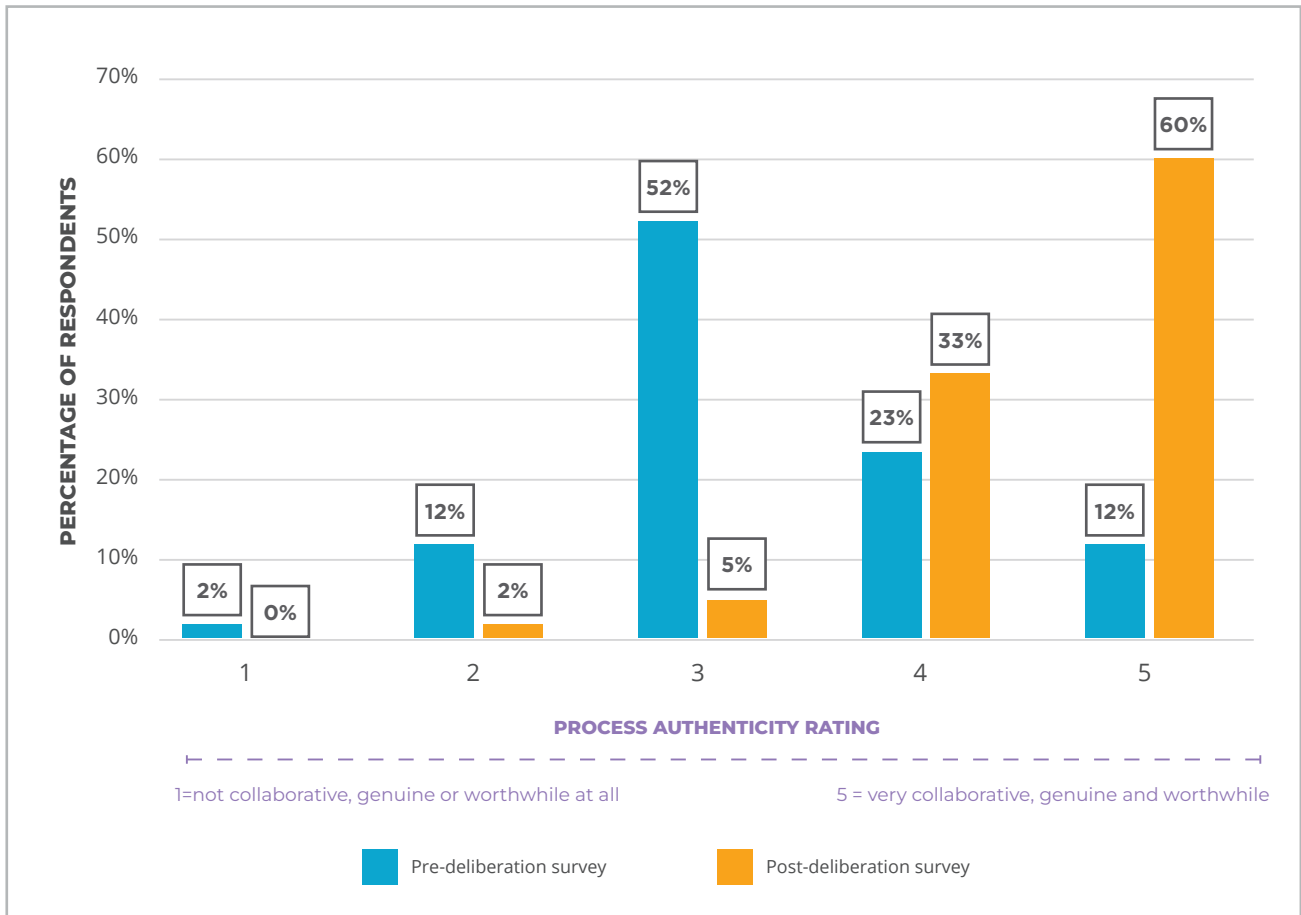
PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	In your view, how accountable or trustworthy do you think Ausgrid is?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How accountable or trustworthy do you think Ausgrid is now that you have been through this experience?
SCALE/MEASURE	<i>1=not trustworthy or accountable at all and 5=very trustworthy and accountable</i>



COLLABORATION & OVERALL PROCESS AUTHENTICITY

Before deliberations commenced, panel members were asked to indicate how collaborative, genuine and worthwhile they thought Ausgrid had been in the past with their community engagement activities. 35% felt that Ausgrid had been 'collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' or 'very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' in the past. 93% of panellists felt that this process was 'collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' or 'very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' by the end of the panel sessions. This is a **58-percentage point increase** or a **166% growth** in the number of participants who said they felt this process was collaborative, genuine and worthwhile (compared to views of past engagement).

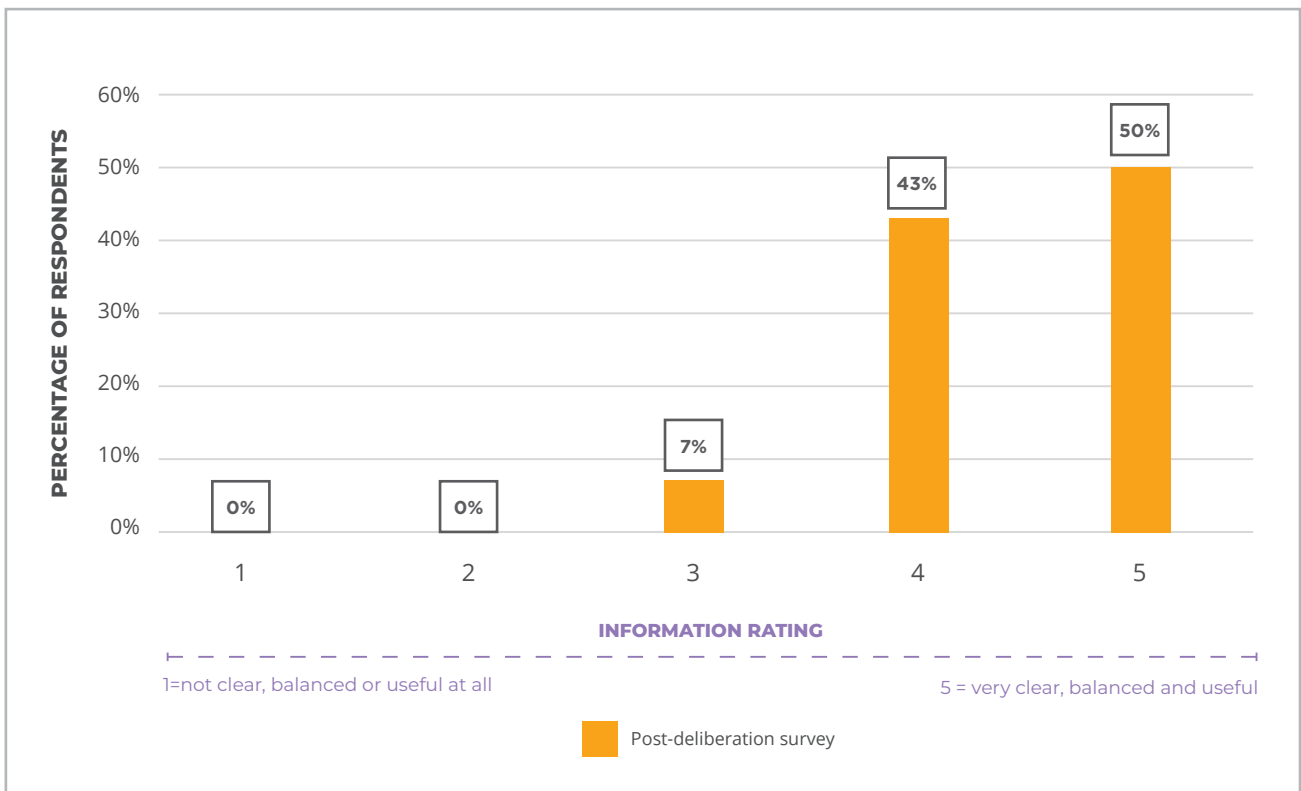
PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How collaborative, genuine and worthwhile do you think Ausgrid's community engagement activities have been in the past?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How collaborative, genuine and worthwhile do you think Ausgrid's engagement activities have been through this experience?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not collaborative, genuine or worthwhile at all and 5=very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile



CLEAR, USEFUL AND BALANCED INFORMATION

Throughout the deliberations, panel members raised their level of knowledge of Ausgrid and the services that they provide to their customers. It is important to hear post the panel process how this information helped them with their task. **93% of panellists** felt that the information was ‘very clear, useful and balanced’ or ‘clear, useful and balanced’. This question was only asked at the end of the process and hence there is no comparison.

POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How clear, useful and balanced was the information provided to you during this process? (i.e. to what extent was it helpful in supporting you to respond to your remit).
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not clear, useful or balanced and 5=very clear, useful and balanced



UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE

Three questions were asked at the completion of the Ausgrid Voice of the Community Panel to better understand the overall experience of the process. All questions were asked in the post-deliberation survey.

Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



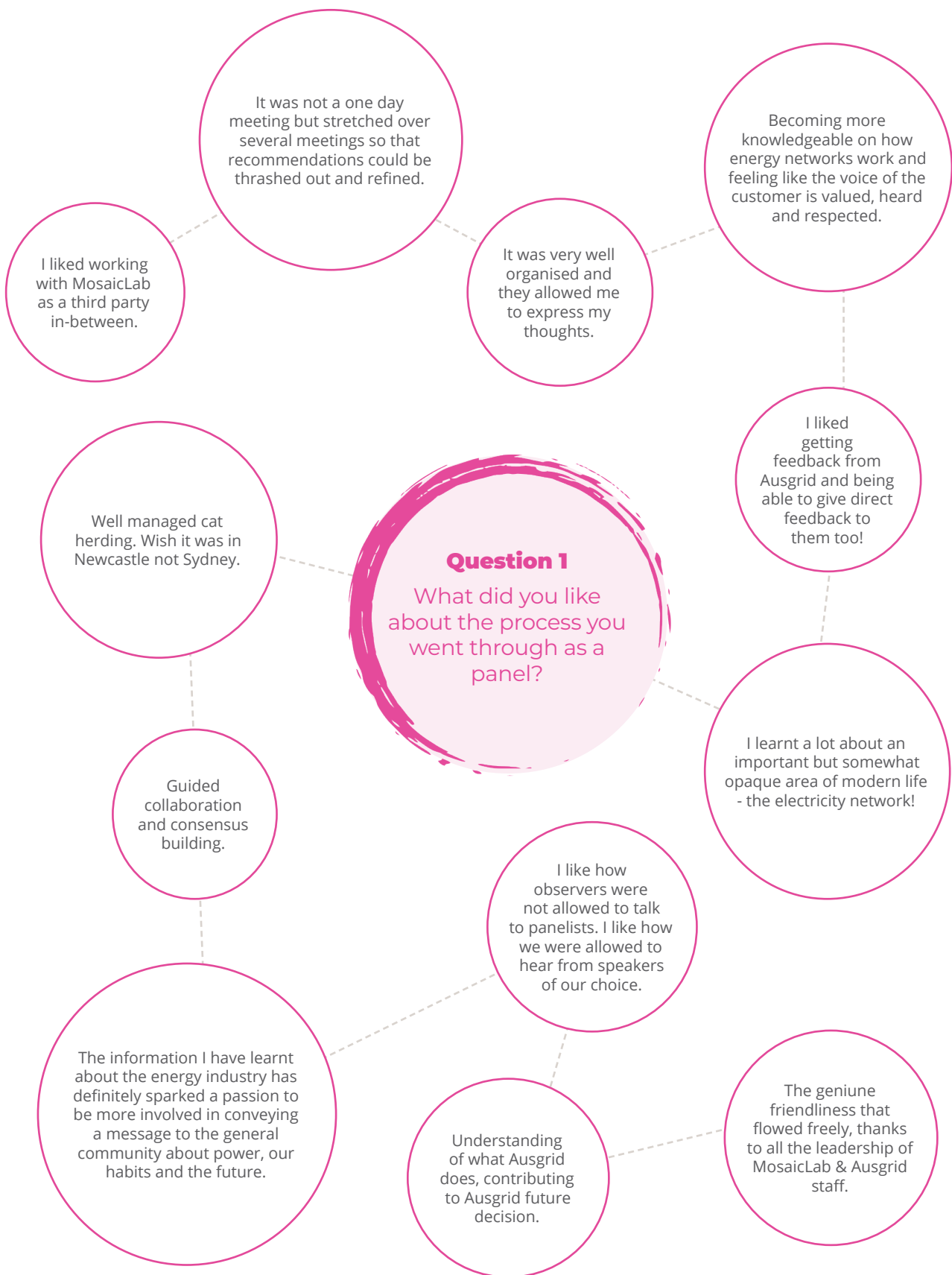
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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



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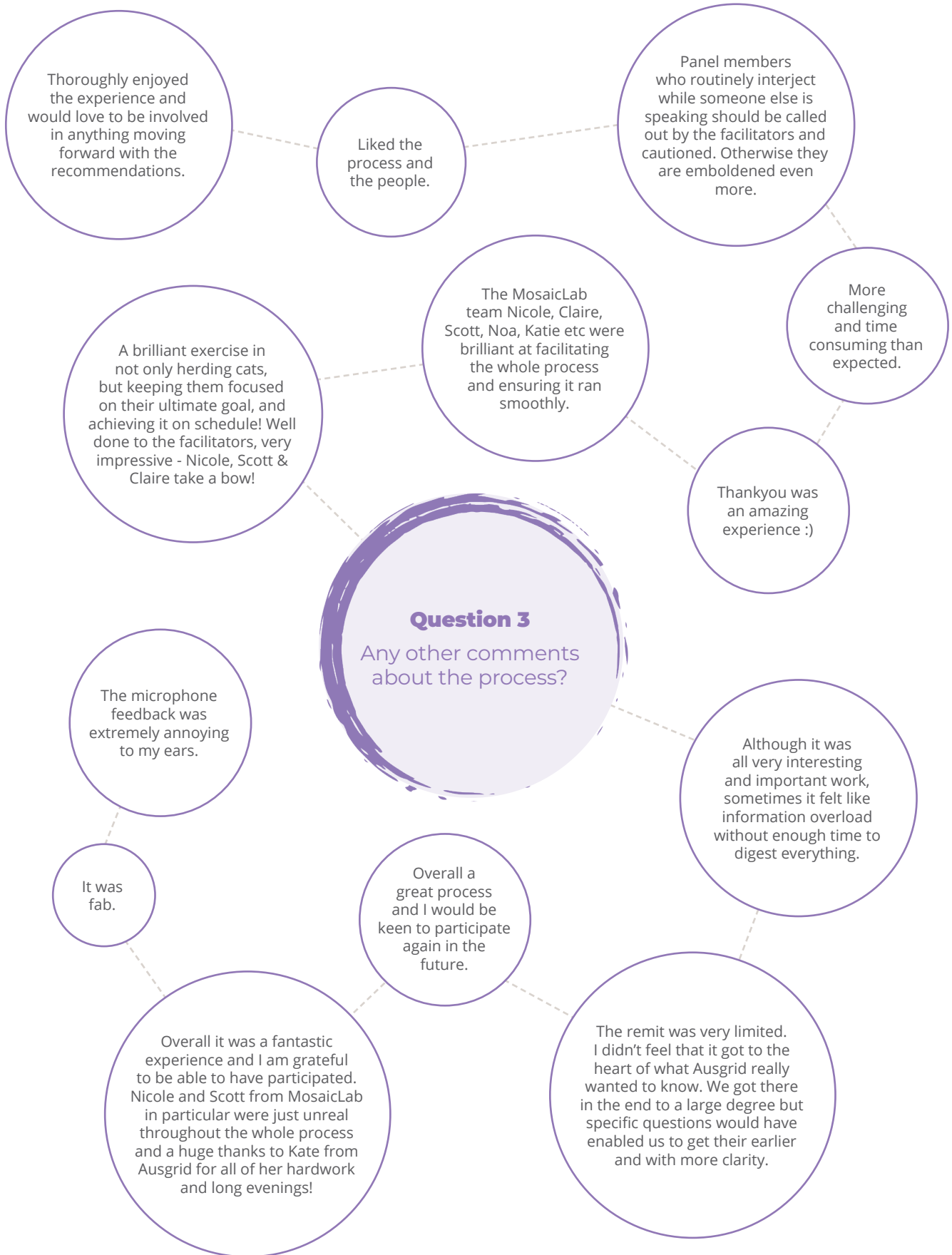


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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



NEXT STEPS

The panel's recommendations were presented by the panel to Richard Gross, CEO of Ausgrid and Helen Nugent Chair of the Board.

Recall sessions have been planned for the evening of September 21 and October 8. These sessions will provide an opportunity for the panel to hear how Ausgrid have incorporated their recommendations into the draft plan and to test and provide feedback on the plan.



Letter to the Panel

Dear Panel member,

We are bd infrastructure - a small, independently owned consultancy firm.

Since September last year, we have been working with Ausgrid to engage small business customers and residential customers in vulnerable circumstances as part of the preparation of the Reset Proposal. We are writing to share some insights from these conversations.

We are also sharing the outcomes of discussions that Ausgrid has held a with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) businesses and households, and communities impacted by disruptive events.

In total, these conversations have involved 33 organisations, 30 small business customers and 47 residential customers.

- **Lived Experience:** 18 organisations and 11 residential customers.
- **Small business:** 9 organisations and six small business owners.
- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse:** 10 business owners and 18 CALD residential customers.
- **Natural Disasters:** Six organisations, three small business owners and 12 residential customers.

The conversations in the first three streams focussed on the topics of:

price and affordability

network resilience and outages

transition to net zero

customer service

The natural disasters stream touched on the network resilience topic, but also customer service.

Through this engagement, Ausgrid has invested in strong relationships and partnerships with organisations that advocate for customers and communities, and has reached a rich and representative group of people. Everyone was generous with their time and ideas for how to improve the electricity network, now and into the future.

The tables below summarise what customers told Ausgrid through this engagement. Based on this summary, we've created three descriptions that reflect what customers in each stream might say about Ausgrid in five years time if all their feedback was taken on board. This might help you with your deliberations.

However, this letter does not represent how Ausgrid can or will respond. That is for you to shape.

Our best wishes to you as you work through this exciting future network planning process. We can't wait to see and share what you come up with!

To make sure we, and the VoC Panel, could consider the full range of perspectives from across our customers, we worked with our partners bd Infrastructure to talk with a broad range of people. Here's bd's report, summarising what we heard. Thx Ausgrid



Yours faithfully,
Rachel, Laura, Jaime and Alex



What should Ausgrid look like in five years?



Lived experience customers:

Ausgrid takes responsibility for the wider electricity system even though their role is confined to distribution. They have every customer at their heart. They seek to support and care for their customers and reach out to us with empathy.

Every facet of Ausgrid's customer service is accessible to the broad customer base. They take a leadership stance on social issues like housing tenure and a fair transition to net zero.

They partner with community organisations to help people access the benefits of solar and renewables.

They help to strengthen community resilience, by sharing intelligence and advice with local services about preparing and responding to outages and disruptive events.

Ausgrid helps people transition to net zero solutions that best suit their individual circumstances, even if this is outside the conforming view of good business for a distribution network.



Small and medium business owners:

Ausgrid values us for the role we play in our communities and economy, and for our significance to its customer base.

Ausgrid respects our entrepreneurial spirit and helps us to build our business cases for distributed energy resources and the transition to net zero.

Ausgrid is known within the electricity sector for the tailored approach to dealing with small business – they provide dedicated business advice and customer service channels and work alongside peak bodies to assist in future business planning.

They acknowledge the diversity of business types and priorities, knowing that some of us plan for a week ahead while others have sophisticated management systems. We really appreciate that Ausgrid never underestimates the impact outages have on business operations and they always provide us with information tips to manage outages.

Ausgrid respects the foresight and practicality of business owners and our suggestions – we like that they don't wait for a regulatory submission period to implement our ideas as business improvement actions.



Culturally and linguistically diverse customers:

Ausgrid embraces the cultural diversity of its customers. Ausgrid knows our communities have different interests, needs and abilities to transition to the future network.

Some communities need information and will take their own next steps. Others need deeper partnership and support.

Ausgrid is intentional about helping us share the benefits of solar and other renewable energy sources.

Ausgrid recognises our communities share information in different ways and always provides the information we need to our first languages.

Information about DER and network outages is provided in an accessible way and Ausgrid's customer-focussed approach is the envy of other networks.

Engagement highlights



	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Purpose	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to hear from low-income households, people with disabilities, young and older people, and renters. People in the Upper Hunter and southwest Sydney where targeted, because several types of vulnerabilities overlap in these areas.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand small business' experiences of the electricity network. We focussed our conversations on the Upper Hunter, Pittwater and Sydney's Inner West, and worked through small businesses associations, chambers of commerce and councils in each area.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand CALD communities' experiences of the electricity network. Ausgrid worked with the Ethnic Communities' Council to hold discussions in Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand the impact of disruptive events on communities and identify opportunities for Ausgrid to support building resilience in the future. Ausgrid worked with Nous Group to hold these discussions in four areas.
Price and affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income households face multiple pressures. Electricity consumption is increasing, and the pressures of prices continue to be felt by low-income households. • Housing tenure is a major barrier to a just energy system. People on low incomes are more likely to rent or live in low quality stock. This limits options to keep bills low through energy efficiency measures, solar panels and batteries. More affordable homes sometimes lie at the end of the network where supply can be less reliable. • The current system is complex and is becoming more complex. Focusing on individual choice or action to meet net zero targets (switch suppliers, install solar, be energy efficient) adds burden to already stressed households. Equal access to affordable electricity is a human right, not a consumer choice. • A health and wellbeing lens should be applied to energy concessions and rebates to address a broader array of vulnerabilities. • The current system is complex and is becoming more complex. This disadvantages people who can't engage with billing or customer service systems for reasons of accessibility, crisis, language or literacy. • New technology and customer information can be inaccessible. Billing systems, smart meters, and websites often can't be accessed by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of energy is a top priority for small business. This was further compounded by the pandemic. Ausgrid's reduced prices are not being felt by some small businesses or passed on by retailers and businesses want help finding the best offers. • Small businesses are concerned about fixed costs in their bills. Even when energy efficiency reduces use, customers perceive that retailers are increasing the fixed costs which can push electricity bills higher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of energy is a low or medium concern for CALD businesses. For some, affordability is an incentive to invest in solar but for others it is a barrier to individual action. 	





	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Network resilience and outages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impacts of outages are much greater on people in vulnerable circumstances, particularly those in regional areas where outages can be more frequent and longer, and which are further away from services. The impact of a lost freezer of food on a low-income or rural household, or lost communications channels for people with sensory disabilities, can be profound. • Young people want to see organisations to take action to address climate change and see the concept of a 'resilient network' as a Band-Aid solution to a major issue. • Communities need power urgently after an outage. They need to connect with loved ones, manage their lives and plan their next steps. • Many organisations are helping communities respond to extreme events. A combined effort could deliver safe spaces and refuge hubs at swimming pools, libraries and other community facilities. • Outage and emergency information is inconsistent and doesn't go far enough. People don't just need to know 'where' and 'how long' but also 'what to do' and 'where to go'. • People with a disability are highly impacted during outages as it affects their ability to connect through tech-enabled communications channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small business owners are highly invested in their enterprise and are highly sensitive to loss of income, revenue, bookings or reputation. • Some businesses have plans and bookings months in advance and feel planned outages should provide for more notice than just 14 days', to allow businesses to better plan. • Small businesses need more direction and advice to help during an outage. Not just information on when and how long, but what to do and where to go. • Outages have indirect impacts for businesses: interrupted supply affects product quality, supplies can be ruined, servers take time to reboot; equipment needs to be recalibrated, electricians need to be called out, cancelled bookings ruin reputation. • Small businesses want simple and practical advice from Ausgrid as detailed below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CALD businesses want Ausgrid to plan with their needs in mind – no planned outages during working hours; SMS, email and Social Media outage alerts; a dedicated business hotline to report outages; timely notifications that include the expected duration 	<p>What happens during disruptive events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fallen powerlines increase the risk to residents' safety. They can also delay efforts by emergency services to evacuate residents during disruptive events. • Prolonged power outages affect access to emergency services. Residents rely heavily on electronic devices to receive updates from emergency services and, where necessary, request assistance. • Prolonged power outages can increase the hardship experienced by the community, preventing residents from accessing basic amenities. • Prolonged power outages delay a community's recovery from a disruptive event by preventing residents from accessing social and online networks.





	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Transition to net zero:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in vulnerable circumstances care about a low carbon future but their options to take action (time, housing type and tenure, priorities, money) are limited. Social and private renters can't invest in Distributed Energy Resources (DER) and landlords have little incentives to invest. • Not everyone can have solar but all can share the benefits of renewables. Youth representatives viewed decisions about DER as complex, requiring time and resource to get across the technical details. Customers have an appetite for DER resources that can be shared such as solar gardens and virtual power plants • Electric vehicles may not be right for rural communities. They are not suitable for country life even if charge points are provided. Their introduction could increase the cost of grid power and petrol, regional communities rely on. • Housing is key to low carbon future. Greater energy efficiency in social housing, and embedded networks in housing developments, could make inroads to net zero targets. • Accessibility of information and technology is a barrier – solar panels and smart metres are not accessible to people with sensory disabilities, is seen as unobjective and sales-based, information does not address consumer rights and is not in plain English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small businesses need information and resources to make the transition to net zero or see how they can play a part. This needs to include objective and impartial information on options (batteries, solar) and help to analyse the costs and benefits options. • Property tenure creates barriers for small businesses adopt energy efficacy and DER because many don't own their premises. There is a desire for opportunities to build co-investment in rooftop solar into leasing agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses owners are taking steps to become more energy efficient, but they look to Ausgrid and the government for support tailored to their needs. Businesses that rent premises support incentives for their landlords to invest in solar. • CALD customers are enthusiastic about reaching net zero and support DER technologies. Some communities need time to establish their roots in the local community first while others are ready to make the transition. Customers look to Ausgrid to support investment in DER technologies including subsidized batteries and solar. 	





	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Customer service: needs to be streamlined and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined processes and simple, accessible information would help a wide variety of customers. The deaf and blind communities are large and diverse and face a variety of accessibility challenges. Blind people can't access bills or smart metres, English is a second language for many Auslan users and information isn't available in that format. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small businesses want to feel as valued to Ausgrid as large customers and assisted to find the best approach for their retail plans, customer service and move to net zero. Small business owners want a tailored approach – such as customised information and a dedicated hotline they can use to get advice when an outage or maintenance occurs. They feel Ausgrid's providers doesn't always prioritise their customer service needs. Small business owners want an empathetic response from customer service representatives who can understand what may be going through. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CALD customers expect supportive customer service and interpreting services. CALD customers have a very strong desire for education and information across a variety of topics: what to do during an unplanned outage, how to manage electricity consumption and cost, information about 'green' and DER technologies. 	



<p>The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances</p>	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be active in initiatives to end energy poverty. • be part of developing energy solutions for the rental housing sector. • be part of addressing the structural problems in the energy network. • consider rebates to people with health conditions, or a single affordable scheme or tiered tariff structure for vulnerable customers. • work with other utilities and community organisations to simplify systems and create training packages to help customer access services and payment schemes. • ensure its digital systems comply with accessibility guidelines and interface with smart phone applications. • have different responses for different communities. • take action to address the root causes of climate change that lead to outages. • provide stand-alone power sources during outages, such community generators, and should co-design these solutions with communities. • partner with others to provide responses to outages • work with other organisations during outages to provide 'joined up' information and advice and share it with the local services that communities look to for advice • make sure outage communication is accessible and varied and provide longer lead times for planned outages. • address the issue at a systematic level, focusing on the impact of, not access to, DER. Tariff designs, community batteries and solar gardens are part of this. • consider those 'left behind' in the transition to Electric Vehicles. • help give renters more choice in embedded networks, and partner and advocate for greater housing and energy choice. • provide real people for customers to talk to, who is empathetic and empowered to help. • provide disability awareness training for call centre staff. • provide voice-based information for visually impaired customers • ensure its website works with screen readers and has a responsive live chat functionality • use captioned telephone technology and SMS alerts with Auslan videos
<p>The experiences of small businesses</p>	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support businesses to understand their energy bills, including Ausgrid's contribution, and how they can find the best energy offers. • work with local council small business teams to build capacity on how to respond to outages • provide better notice of planned outages and more useful information on what do to lower the impact (for example turning off the air conditioning to prevent tripping when the power is restored). • provide more information to small businesses on options for taking up Distributed Energy Resources. • improve responsiveness to small business needs (for example by reducing the long windows provided for meter reading and responding to simple requests for support). • Pprovide customer service training to maintenance contractors.
<p>Communities that have experienced disruptive events</p>	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the community in building resilience through: • resilient network infrastructure – residential customers expect Ausgrid to consider all options for cost-effective investment in resilient network assets. • backup power sources Residential customers would value greater access to backup power sources during disruptive events. • improved and personalised communication – customers desire personalised communication about the expected duration of unplanned power outages. • first responders expect greater strategic engagement with Ausgrid around planning for disruptive events.





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PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to transcribe participants comments accurately a small number may not have been included in this summary due to the legibility of the content. Please email Claire Connell at claire@mosaiclab.com.au for any suggested additions.

This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of the Ausgrid project working group. The sole purpose of this report is to provide a report of the process undertaken by the Voice of the Community Panel.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by Ausgrid. Ausgrid can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a Victorian-based consultancy that specialises in community & stakeholder engagement, facilitation, negotiation, strategic planning and coaching.

C. Community Resilience Focus Groups



Community Resilience Focus Groups Summary Report

Tuesday 11 January 2022

Disclaimer:

Nous Group (**Nous**) has prepared this report for the benefit of Ausgrid (the **Client**).

The report should not be used or relied upon for any purpose other than as an expression of the conclusions and recommendations of Nous to the Client as to the matters within the scope of the report. Nous and its officers and employees expressly disclaim any liability to any person other than the Client who relies or purports to rely on the report for any other purpose.

Nous has prepared the report with care and diligence. The conclusions and recommendations given by Nous in the report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading. The report has been prepared by Nous based on information provided by the Client and by other persons. Nous has relied on that information and has not independently verified or audited that information.

Contents

1 Executive Summary

2 Background

3 How do fallen power lines affect communities during disruptive events?

4 How do prolonged power outages affect communities during disruptive events?

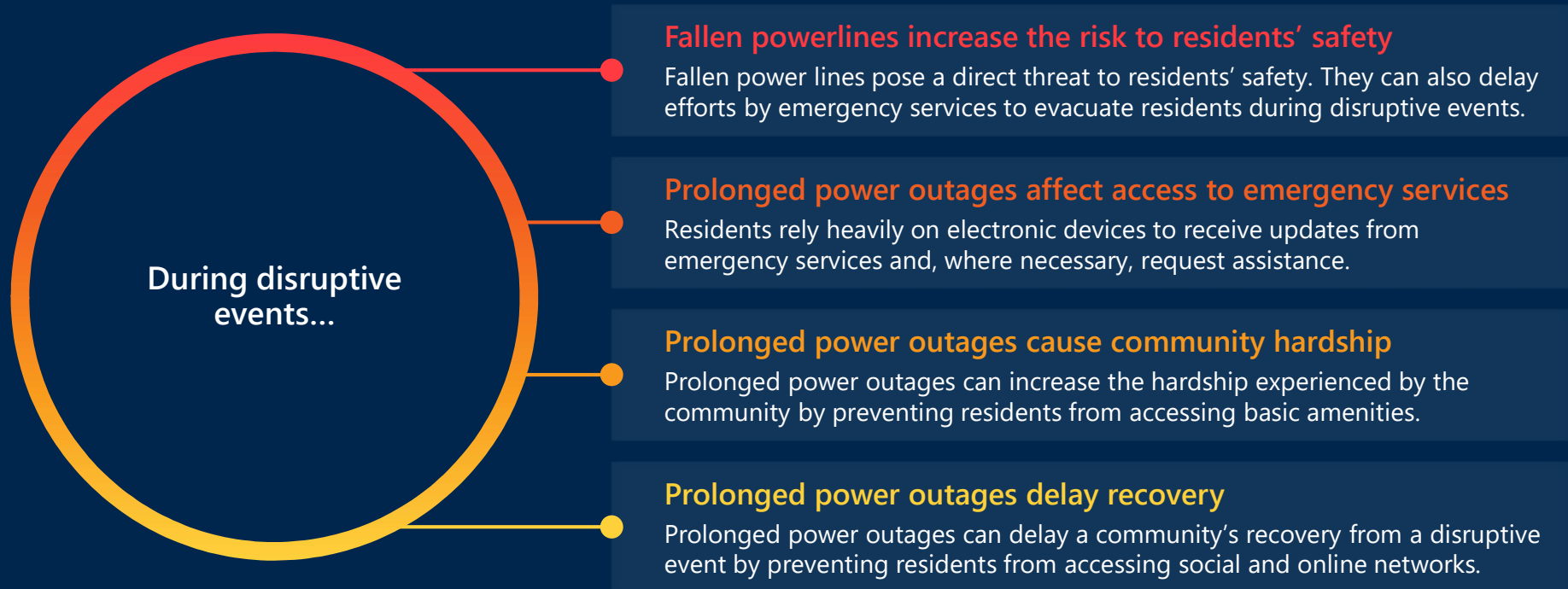
5 Will resilience become a more important issue in the future?

6 How can Ausgrid support the NSW community in building resilience?

Executive Summary

Executive Summary (Part 1 of 2)

Nous Group (Nous) was engaged by Ausgrid to deliver focus groups in four communities that have been impacted by natural disasters or extreme weather events ('disruptive events'). The aim of these sessions was to understand the impact of disruptive events on these communities and identify opportunities for Ausgrid to support them in building resilience to these events in the future.



Executive Summary (Part 2 of 2)

Most focus group participants agreed that, due to the increasing frequency and severity of disruptive events, resilience would become a more important issue for their communities in the future. Consequently, they expect Ausgrid to provide greater support to communities in building resilience. They identified four main opportunities for Ausgrid to support communities in this mission.

1. Resilient network infrastructure

Residential customers expect Ausgrid to consider all options for cost-effective investment in resilient network assets.

3. Improved communication

Residential customers expect personalised communication about the expected duration of unplanned power outages.

Opportunities
for Ausgrid to
support the
community in
building
resilience

2. Backup power sources

Residential customers would value greater access to backup power sources during disruptive events.

4. Greater strategic engagement

First responders expect greater engagement with Ausgrid around planning for disruptive events.

Background

Background

Nous was engaged by Ausgrid to deliver focus groups in four NSW communities that have been impacted by natural disasters or extreme weather events ('disruptive events'). The communities selected by Ausgrid for the engagement were:

- Hornsby and Pennant Hills
- City of Canterbury-Bankstown
- Cessnock
- Nelson Bay

The objective of these focus groups was to identify opportunities for Ausgrid to support the NSW community in building resilience against these events in the future. These insights will inform Ausgrid's upcoming Regulatory Reset program and Strategy Refresh.

For each session, Nous recruited a diverse mix of residential customers, commercial customers and first responders for each session. This included older customers, customers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and customers from low-income households. All participants reported lived experience of disruptive events.

Nous delivered the four focus groups over a six-day period between Friday 26 November and Monday 13 December. Each focus group lasted 90 minutes and had a minimum of five participants.

Nous recruited a diverse mix of focus group participants*



Twelve
residential
customers



Three small- and
medium-sized
enterprise owners



Two hospital
representatives



Four first
responders

*Most SME owners, first responders, and hospital representatives were also local residents.

Our aim was to

understand the impact of natural disasters and extreme weather events on affected communities

in order to

better define Ausgrid's role in supporting the NSW community in building resilience

and thereby

inform Ausgrid's upcoming Regulatory Reset program and Strategy Refresh.

What is resilience?

Ausgrid has worked with other electricity distributors in New South Wales, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory to develop a common definition of resilience within the context of their electrical networks. This definition, which was adapted from the definition proposed by Resilience NSW, is currently the subject of stakeholder consultation.



Resilience is the ability to **resist**, **absorb**, **accommodate**, **adapt to**, **transform** and **recover** from the effects of a **hazard**.



Resist	Absorb/Accommodate	Adapt/Transform
Building our capability to withstand impacts or avoid network destruction.	Minimising disruptions to networks and customers, and supporting communities during these events.	Use learnings to identify opportunities or anticipate hazards to ensure the lived experience is acceptable to customers.
Recover	Hazard	
Ensuring plans and processes provide energy supply restoration as quickly as possible.	Major disruptive event or chronic risk (e.g., extreme weather events, cyber-attacks, or losses in power supply from fluctuations in intermittent energy sources outside of normal operating parameters).	

How do fallen powerlines affect communities during disruptive events?

Fallen powerlines increase the risk to residents' safety during disruptive events

Certain types of disruptive event (e.g., severe storms) can cause severe damage to overhead network infrastructure. This can lead to fallen powerlines, which pose a direct threat to residents' safety. Fallen powerlines can also delay an attempt by emergency services to evacuate residents from high-risk areas by blocking arterial roads. Several participants viewed more resilient network infrastructure, such as underground powerlines, as one approach to mitigating this risk.

“

It's a **“life or death”** issue.

”

“

We've had **electrocution deaths** in the last couple of years...through **trees bringing down power lines**.

”

“

When the overhead powerlines come down, you've got...potential **blockage of some roads...[with] whole communities cut off**.

”

“

We rely on the power companies to **clean up fallen powerlines as fast as possible**.

”

How do prolonged power outages
affect communities during
disruptive events?

A prolonged power outage can exacerbate the hardship caused by disruptive events

Many residents expressed their frustration with their inability to access hot showers, working toilets and cooked food during prolonged power outages. Several residents reported that they replaced their existing electric stovetops with gas-powered stoves to ensure they were able to cook food during prolonged power outages.

“

We rely on electricity to run pumps and **if you don't have electricity, you can't flush the toilet or get water out of the tap** for cooking.

”

“

If we want to go to toilet, we go in the bucket and put it in [the septic tank].

”

“

We saw how people reacted when they couldn't get haircuts during the pandemic. **Just imagine if they couldn't have a shower for a week.**

”

“

The Pennant Hills area had an extensive blackout for a number of days. We saw an increase in hostility towards [first responders]...**People were really getting frustrated with not having power.**

”

“

If you have a child... you have to be able to sterilise bottles. **You're worried about the health and well being of your youngest [child].**

”

Residents' inability to connect with emergency services during disruptive events can undermine the efforts of first responders

During disruptive events, residential customers rely heavily on electronic devices to receive updates from emergency services and, where necessary, request assistance. During prolonged power outages, residents' inability to communicate with emergency services can severely undermine efforts by first responders to safely evacuate residents in high-risk areas. In addition, it can prevent residents from contacting emergency services with unrelated requests for assistance (such as a request for an ambulance).

Many residents who have experienced multiple prolonged power outages during previous disruptive events have invested in backup generators and power packs to charge their electronic devices. A minority have also purchased battery-powered radios to access updates from emergency services during disruptive events.

“

Communications are really quite critical...That's how you get your updates, get help or seek other options.

”

“

With many of us **getting rid of our landlines...**we are even more stuck.

”

“

[NSW Ambulance] went right back to the very basics of just patrolling streets because **some people were not able to ring 000 because [they] are using VoIP systems that rely on power.**

”

Residents' inability to access communication services during prolonged power outages also causes residents severe distress and can delay the recovery process

After disruptive events, residential customers normally use their electronic devices to access formal support services and seek informal support from friends and family. This support can include temporary accommodation, childcare and the use of gas-powered generators (see Appendix A). Residents reported their frustration that they were unable to access this support during prolonged power outages due to their inability to charge their electronic devices. Several residents also recounted their distress when they were unable to contact vulnerable relatives (such as those with life support machines) during power outages.

“

One of the **biggest impacts**...was the lack of communication.

”

“

The first thing we have to do...is **make sure we have our communications up and running.**

”

Will resilience become a more important issue in the future?

Most residents recognised that resilience would become a more important issue for their community in the future

This position was often based on their lived experience of the increasing frequency and severity of disruptive events.

“

I think **we're going to be exposed to more stress...** [and] we will need to be more resilient.

”

“

I've been here for 17 years and we've never ever had a **blackout** up until the last five years. Now it **happens frequently**.

”

“

There will be **growing pains...**as we transition to renewable energy technologies.

”

“

I think **resilience will be more important in the future** because climate change seems to be causing more adverse weather events.

”

Customers with lived experience of disruptive events therefore recognised the need to 'build back better' from disruptive events

First responders remain concerned that the complacency of formerly unaffected communities will lead to underinvestment in community resilience.

“

We took the view that we will use this opportunity to **build back better, stronger**. We replaced the tiled roof with a metal one.

”

“

Four years ago, when we got flooded, I was up to my knees, on Christmas Day, in water. We spent a **huge amount of money**... Now I smile as I walk around in poor conditions and go 'We're good, we're good'.

”

“

Those [communities] that have not been devastated by storms or impact...will just continue to be happily ignorant about it. I think **it's important for [Ausgrid] to be proactive**...and let people know that they need to be prepared.

”

How can Ausgrid support the NSW
community in building resilience?

Local communities expect greater support in building resilience against disruptive events

Focus group participants identified four opportunities for Ausgrid to build resilience within their community:

1. Resilient network infrastructure

Residential customers expect Ausgrid to consider all options for cost-effective investment in resilient network assets.

3. Improved communication

Residential customers expect personalised communication about the expected duration of unplanned power outages.

2. Backup power sources

Residential customers would value greater access to backup power sources during disruptive events.

4. Greater strategic engagement

First responders expect greater engagement with Ausgrid around planning for disruptive events.

Opportunities for Ausgrid to support the community in building resilience

Resilient network infrastructure: residential customers expect cost-effective investment by Ausgrid in more resilient network assets

Residential customers are frustrated by increasingly frequent and prolonged power outages. Many residents therefore supported greater action by Ausgrid in improving network resilience. While some customers cited the undergrounding of powerlines as an example of such action, others recognised that this approach would not be the most cost-effective way of improving resilience. Instead, one Cessnock resident suggested that Ausgrid employ a 'risk-based approach' to hardening the network.

First world countries put their **power lines underground.**

In areas where there's more **risk of fire** and damage to infrastructure with timber power poles, they could **replace them with concrete power poles.**

Underground powerlines would be a lovely idea, but...we all know **everything comes down to a dollar.**

Why don't you put [powerlines] **underground?**

You should have done that years ago.

In high-risk areas, **there are better ways of managing a power supply** [than overhead power lines].

A lot of other countries have **power lines underground.**

Backup power sources: residential customers would value greater access to backup power sources during power outages caused by disruptive events

Residential customers believe that Ausgrid has an opportunity to work with local councils to ensure that communities have access to critical resources (e.g., gas generators, batteries) during prolonged power outages.

“

There was a real 'run' on gas generators...I think **the community could be better prepared** in having those sort of supplies available.

”

“

During the June long weekend 'super storms'... there was an **influx of people buying generators**...and a lot of places like BCF sold out.

”

“

I think there needs to be more encouragement from Ausgrid to offer **rebates for...solar-power backup generators**.

”

Improved communication: residential customers expect personalised communication about the expected duration of unplanned power outages

Many residential customers expressed their frustration about the uncertainty around the expected duration of unplanned power outages. This frustration stemmed from their inability to decide on the appropriate recovery mechanisms to implement. For example, a residential customer's life support machine may have sufficient battery life to survive a one-hour power outage. In the event of a multi-day power outage, the customer may need to arrange transport to a local hospital.

Several participants also emphasised that all communications should also be delivered in a customer's preferred language.

When [Ausgrid] is repairing the powerlines, they are already sending messages...but **these [messages don't say] how long it takes to repair them.**

When I experienced the mini tornado this year in our area...the power was out for one day and one night...

My mum's Italian...She's almost 80 [years old] and she's lost a lot of her English...

When she gets a text message, she goes, "Oh, what does this mean?" **If it was in her own language, she would understand.**

People put their own spin on things...

I prefer the one source [of information]...[from] a trusted source.

We couldn't do anything...
I didn't get any information about when it's going to be fixed...

My three children were very scared.

Greater strategic engagement: first responders expect greater engagement with Ausgrid around planning for, and responding to, disruptive events

First responders recognise that Ausgrid has an important role to play in supporting communities to build resilience against disruptive events. At least one first responder observed that this role is particularly important in communities that have been previously unaffected by certain types of disruptive events (and, thus, have less developed recovery strategies).

It feels like the energy companies... are more reactive than proactive.

The **only time** that we ever really **deal with the energy companies** is in an incident room.

It will be great to work alongside Ausgrid to understand...how they respond, what their procedures are, and how they feed into our own.

We are at the mercy of Ausgrid a lot of the time in terms of our ability to respond.

Appendix A – The importance of community networks in building resilience

Social, online and place-based community networks play an important role in a community's response to disruptive events



Social networks: residents rely on family and friends to access short-term support

Residents rely heavily on existing networks of friends and family to access support after a disruptive event. This support can include temporary accommodation, childcare and the use of gas-powered generators. Several residents reported that, after relocating to a new community, they felt more vulnerable during disruptive events. Others expressed concern about similarly isolated members of the community (e.g., older residents) whose lack of social networks may also make them more vulnerable during such events.

“

We've got a **very strong community** here. If the power is out, **we rely on the community to help.**

”

“

We lost power for seven days...I think **most people managed to find friends or family** that were in areas that still had power **to look after them.**

”

“

[The power was out for] a whole day and I had to **move meats and other food to friends' or neighbours' [fridges].**

”

Place-based networks: community centers (e.g., schools, churches) act as de facto emergency response centers for regional communities after disruptive events

During prolonged power outages, residents congregate at community centers to receive updates from emergency services and coordinate the recovery effort. In contrast, residents in urban communities reported that they were unaware of any local community centres that acted as a hub after disruptive events.

“

The local church was the only place that had power...Without that I don't know what we would have done.

Nelson Bay resident

”

“

We don't have a place where we can congregate and meet.

Canterbury-Bankstown resident

”

Online networks: social media connects communities after disruptive events

Residents use social media to monitor updates from emergency services, seek support and coordinate their response. Older customers, who expressed concern about the reliability of information on social media, were less likely to use social media. However, they were also less likely to report a high level of social resilience within the community.

“

If there's a power outage, I'd jump onto Facebook because...you get an instant reply from other people.

”

“

When the power goes out...people put maps of areas that the power is out [on Facebook] and when it's going to be put back on.

”

“

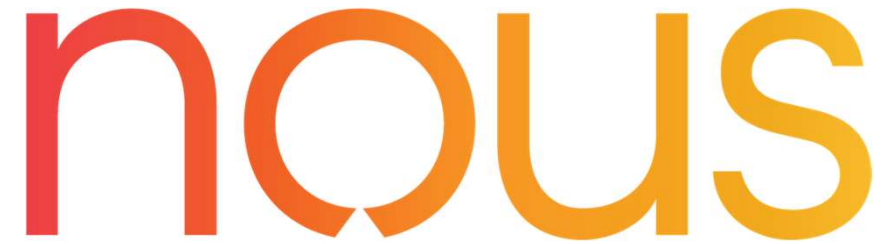
If Facebook is one of the main sources of information... isn't there a concern about the information they're getting and where that's coming from?

”

“

The community Facebook page was a real eye-opener about the power of the community... We went from a forum to complain about your neighbors and people driving too fast to a forum to connect and get people to help out, pitch in and help the more vulnerable in the community.

”



About Nous

Nous Group is an international management consultancy operating across Australia and New Zealand, the UK, Ireland and Canada.

For over 20 years we have been partnering with leaders to shape world-class businesses, effective governments and empowered communities.

450

PEOPLE

50

PRINCIPALS

5

COUNTRIES

D. Life Support Customers Survey Insights



Life Support Customers

Survey Insights May 2022



Key Summary Points

Key themes:

- Overall satisfaction for customers is 81% with the level of customer service and notifications on planned outages provided by Ausgrid.
- Getting timely & accurate communication is the most important factor that drives satisfaction.
- Most of our life support customers (71%) are not prepared for an unforeseen event regarding unplanned outage.

Opportunities

- **Information:** Those customers with solar installed want to explore options of how to be self-sustainable with batteries but need information
- **Community Battery:** Customers feel investment in long term back-up options such as community batteries will be very helpful
- **Communication:** Real-time and accurate communication is important, as is receiving updates during an outage (back-up for internet/landline access is concerning)
- **Affordability:** Many customers have asked for discounts & rebates on electricity as the cost of living has increased

Life Support Customer Survey

Purpose: To seek feedback on research recommendations developed by the Australian Energy Foundation and better plan Ausgrid's services today and into the future.

Objectives:

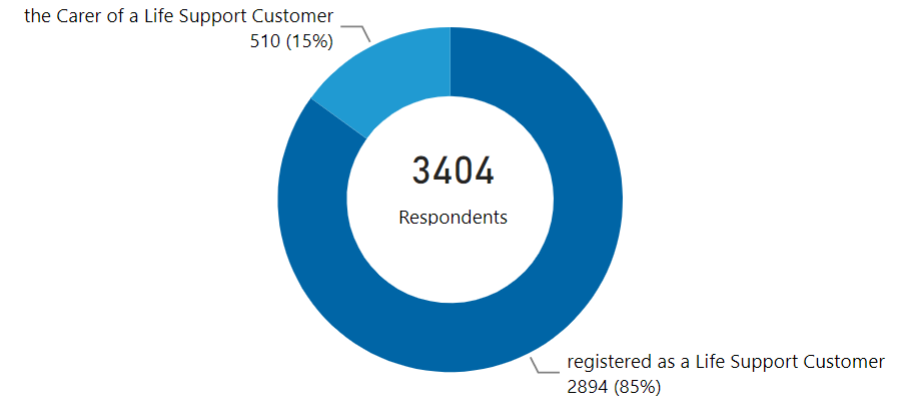
- Understand current drivers of satisfaction
- Understand current importance of key factors that drives satisfaction
- Understand resilience of Life Support Customers (LSCs)
- Investigate future initiatives that are aligned to customer needs

Methodology: Sample of LSCs was retrieved from Metering Business System (MBS), based on availability of email.

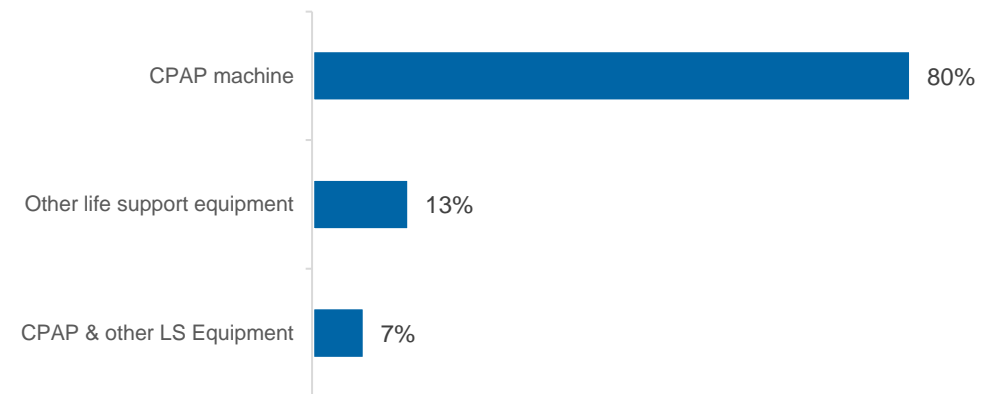
- Exclusion criteria was applied to remove customers who have participated in any Ausgrid's survey in the last 4 months, as well as keeping sample available for regular monthly VoC surveys for the coming 5 months to manage survey fatigue.
- Survey was conducted in the month of April 2022.
- Sample of 19,973 was selected to receive the survey via email using Qualtrics platform. This is approximately 50% of the LSCs in the Ausgrid network.
- Total of 3,404 customers completed the survey - a high response rate of 17%.

Distribution of Customer

By identity

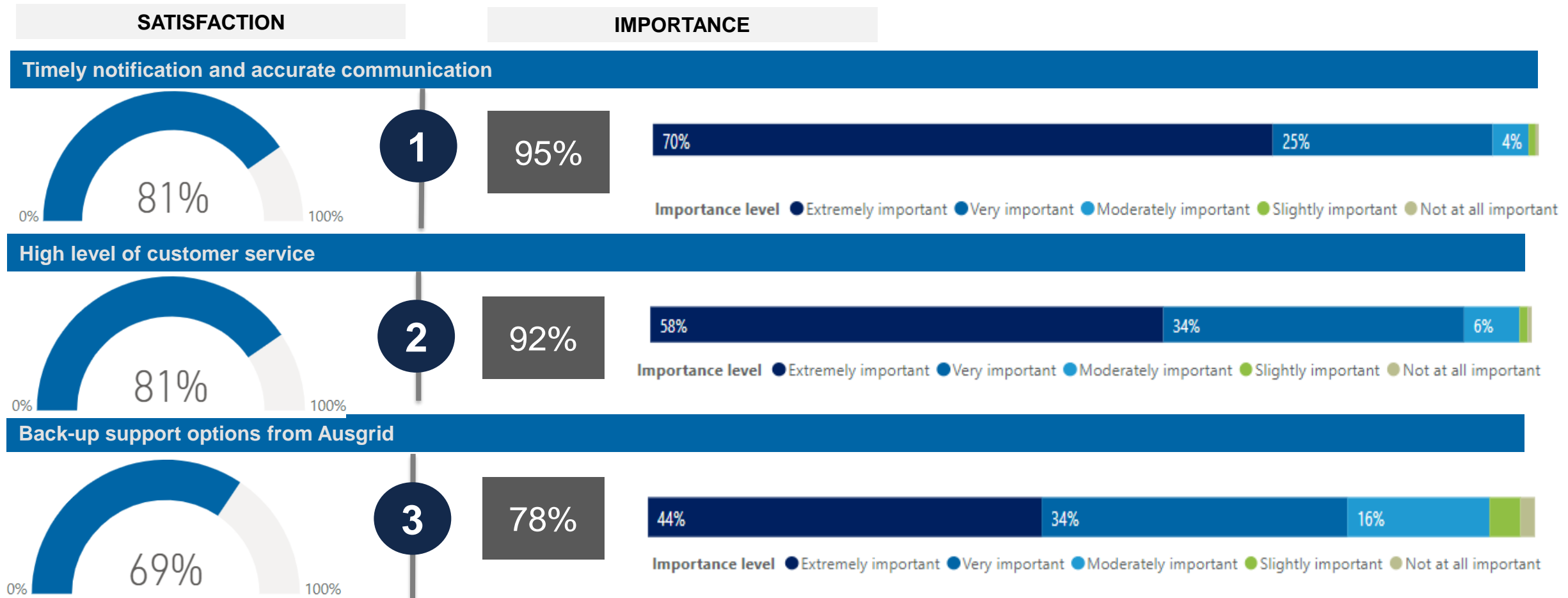


Distribution of Life Support Equipment used



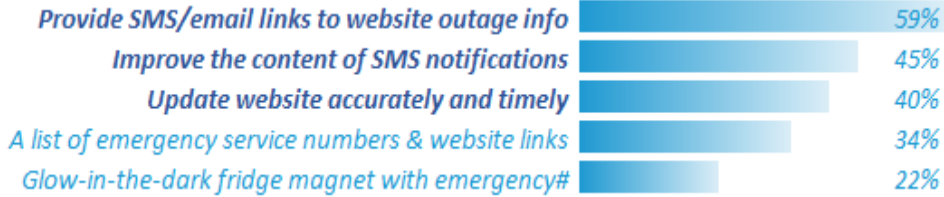
Current customer satisfaction & importance of attributes

- 81% of Life Support Customers are satisfied with Ausgrid's notification process for planned outages. Getting timely & accurate notifications is most important for these customers followed by customer service attribute
- Satisfaction with back-up support options provided by Ausgrid is low at 69% however, in terms of importance, this factor is considered least important



Ratings of key factors to achieve higher satisfaction

Timely notification and accurate communication

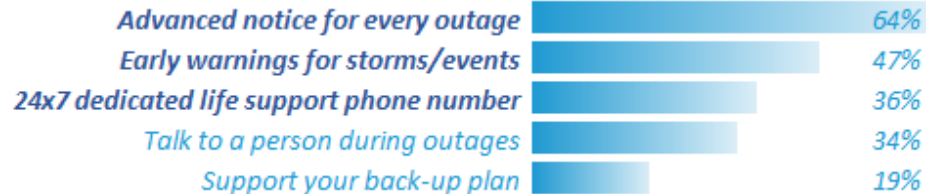


1

- Life Support Customers information on outages & restoration to assist in their planning.
- Customers are not happy with generic messages regarding outages.

Ausgrid needs to provide accurate information about power outage. Most of the time I get late sms. Need to send early sms reminder or email about the upcoming outage on the area. Detailed information on reason for power outage and estimated time of service restoration. This will help me plan to my own extended power backup for plan.

High level of customer service



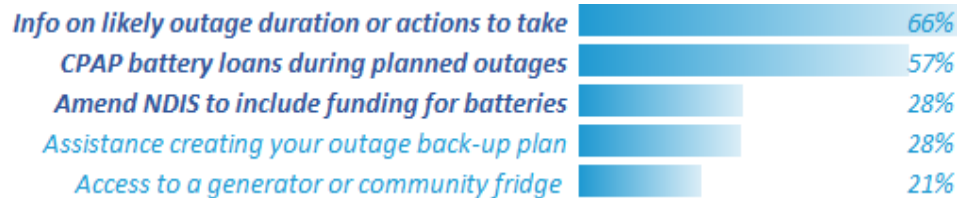
2

- Advance notification for planned outages as well as early warning for storms & adverse weather events will help LSCs plan better. This also correlates to the post-incident survey findings after major storm in Northern Beaches in Dec 2021.
- In the event of customer seeking urgent support talking to a customer representative becomes a key moment of truth & impacts customer experience.

Information on solar battery to go off grid to support the CPAP or other devices needed to reduce health risks.

Good communication and immediate access to professional customer support when an emergency arises related to power outages

Back-up support options from Ausgrid



3

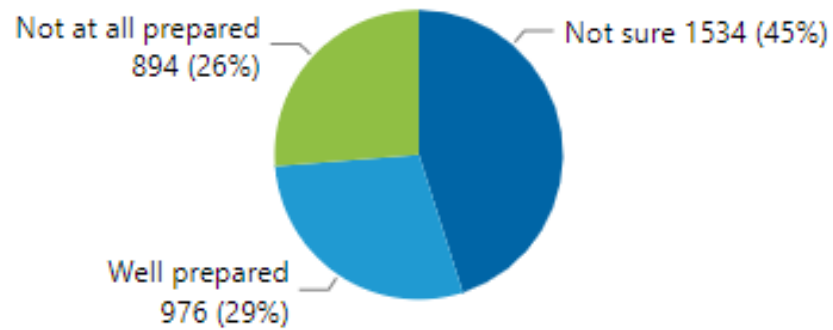
- Communication forms a key factor for customers for their back-up support.
- In the event of an outage when landline/internet doesn't work, phone battery reliability is key. A back-up for phone & internet can assist customers.

In order to have access to the internet or phone in case of a power failure an NBN Battery Back would also be a great advantage in order to contact Ausgrid (but with the newly built houses NBN DO NOT Provide a Battery Backup) May be Ausgrid can work in conjunction with the NBN to provide that to their customers who are on life support equipment.

Resilience of LS Customers

- Majority of the life support customers have no preparation in case of an unplanned outage event such as major storms/floods.
- Just under 3 in 10 customers mentioned being well-prepared for such events, with majority relying on back-up batteries for their CPAP machine, access to a generator or arrangement for alternate accommodation if required.

Preparation of Customer in case of Unplanned Outages



registered as a Life Support Customer

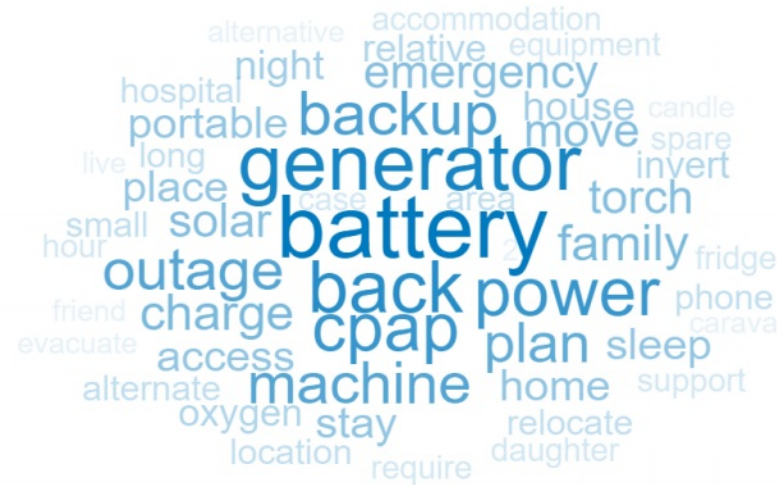
813 83%

the Carer of a Life Support Customer

163 17%



What are customers' plan



Extra batteries, access to portable generator, list of close facilities that will be able to assist in emergency e.g. local hospital

additional machines and then when batteries expire use motor vehicles to power machine

Have a back-up generator that I bought

contact support persons and relocate to unaffected area.

Always watching the weather and radar on BOM!

12V Inverter to 240V, runs off car battery for 12 hours and ensures my machine can operate for the time required

Back up battery which is continuously charging and the base station is tested externally every month

How can Ausgrid better support Life Support Customers

Communication

- Ensure communication is on time & accurate
- Back-up options to ensure internet/phone is working for communication was seen of critical importance
- In the event of planned outages cancelled, a notification on the update is seen important as the customer has to plan their day accordingly e.g. arrange alternate accommodation

*I received a letter from you to say there would be an outage on 21st June from 6am to 6pm. **We worked our whole day around this only to find no power cut at all.** I went to your website and put in my postcode 2257. No outage today in that area. While in my car I found that 2 streets away the road was half closed and lots of large equipment and quite a few employees of yours were working there. **So, website says nothing going on - letter says outage. Not good enough!***

*Communication systems you asked us to rank for outages all need an electrical supply to operate. So during outage these run out quickly. I lived through a 3 week outage about 5 years ago after storm damage to whole area. **Need long use solutions not several hours backup.** Request Ausgrid to **advocate for NDIS/government funding for disabled customer** outage planning and necessary equipment. Better access to applications for priority assist for electricity supply. Have researched online and can't find contact details.*

Support

- Being able to talk to a support person as needed
- Ausgrid to provide local community battery storage as long term solution
- Provide discount to LSC
- Customers with solar installed wanted to investigate the option of getting off the grid in outage situations
- Information on battery (solar) has been frequently asked

*Understand need for planned outages and OK with scheduling of them as generally during the day time hours (so may not effect CPAP usage) but important to be advise to minimise risk to other electronic gear. Unplanned Outage is more the major concern, as can happen at anytime & **getting information on, impact in area & possible time to restore services more critical, to help apply any backup plan or seek alternatives while services being restores** (eg major storms, resulting in power lines damaged or down that may take some time to fix & restore services. Also, **more effort in infrastructure improvement with modernising of power delivery** (eg moving powerline underground that will minimise weather impact & introduction local BCP battery storage sites in the grid, to help provide electric to local communities, should disruption to local power system occur, that can be switched to & routed around problem assist keep communities working (even in reduce capacity) while repairs worked on. Also, **better rates for customer utilising Solar generated power & help to provide local community battery storage** to take up excess power production provide this back to community usage, at reduce rate then currently supplied power via grid.*

Process/Planning

- Renewal of Life Support status process to be simplified as in the instances of life long illness the status doesn't change so quickly
- As a suggestion, some customers mentioned to use SMS to reply YES or No for confirming status rather than tedious forms
- Some customers also suggested to consider what time of the day an outage should be planned & Ausgrid may note customer's preferences for planning

***To be able to talk directly to a designated technical support person**, who is familiar with the life support system and regarding our issues instead of getting ticket numbers and sending emails after emails, while waiting for response...who knows when it will be received and responded. It would be great to have a real person who knows how to answer our queries and be physical present in Sydney or Australia to understand the context of our situations. **Also, please refrain from using generic emails or sending forms that is unnecessary.** Provide forms that is ONLY needed and NOT the generic one.*

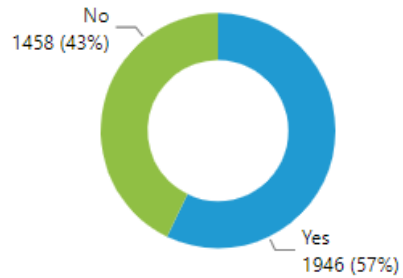
When advocating for batteries - my husband is DVA you would need to do NDIS and DVA as well as the state based systems whom provide CPAP and other ventilators like ENABLE in NSW. Plus the insurers - eg lifetime care NSW

Subscription to SMS service and acceptance for planned outage duration

- Many customers are still unaware of the SMS notification service offered by Ausgrid. A large majority of them are willing to subscribe to this service & have provided their details.
- A large section of customers have acceptance of duration of up to 4 hours when it comes to planned outage as anything longer than this gets them to seek alternative arrangements e.g. other accommodation

SMS notification for planned outage

Do customer know ?



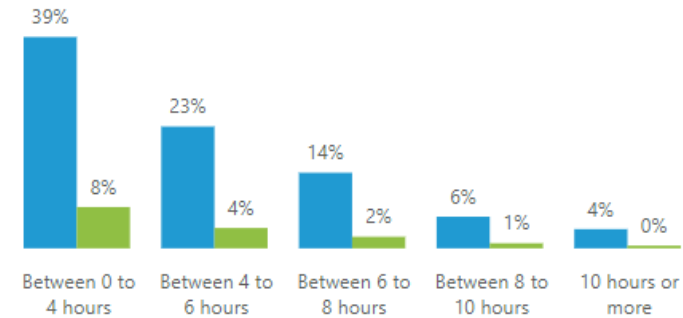
Would you like to subscribe to SMS notification?



Level of acceptance for planned outage duration

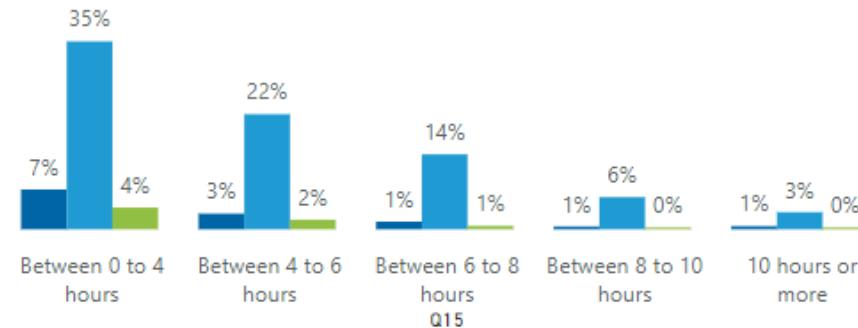
By group of LSC and carer

● registered as a Life Support Customer ● the Carer of a Life Support Customer



By group of machine type

● No, I use other life support equipment ● Yes, a CPAP machine only ● Yes, as well as other life support equipment



E.Evaluation Surveys

Ausgrid Reset evaluation survey analysis

June 2022, prepared by bd infrastructure

Contents

1.	Phase 1 – comparison across common questions	2
2.	Phase 1: NSW Peak round table 1 follow up survey	2
3.	Phase 1: Upper Hunter Round Table	4
4.	Phase 1: LE ‘deep dive’ follow up survey	6
5.	Phase 1: Lived experience household customers focus group	7
6.	Phase 1: SME customer focus group	9
7.	Phase 1: SME stakeholder discussion group	11
	Phase 2 participant feedback	12
1.	Phase 2: LE and SME Stakeholders	12
2.	Phase 2: LE and SME Focus Groups	13
3.	Phase 2: Retailers and larger customers	16

Phase 1 participant feedback

1. Phase 1 – comparison across common questions

A total of 16 participants provided feedback on engagement activities. Overall, participant feedback suggests engagement activities were genuine and well delivered. Participants felt that:

- engagement activities were a good use of their time
- Ausgrid’s efforts to engage with customers is genuine
- Ausgrid would use their ideas to help improve electricity services for customers
- the information received was clear and easy to understand
- they would participate in future activities.

Figure 1 below provides a data summary for relevant questions in the feedback survey.

Figure 1 Lived Experience participant evaluation



2. Phase 1: NSW Peak round table 1 follow up survey

Have you previously worked with Ausgrid as part of your current role (n=2)

Two participants had previously worked with Ausgrid.

Figure 2 Have you previously worked with Ausgrid as part of your current role (n=2)



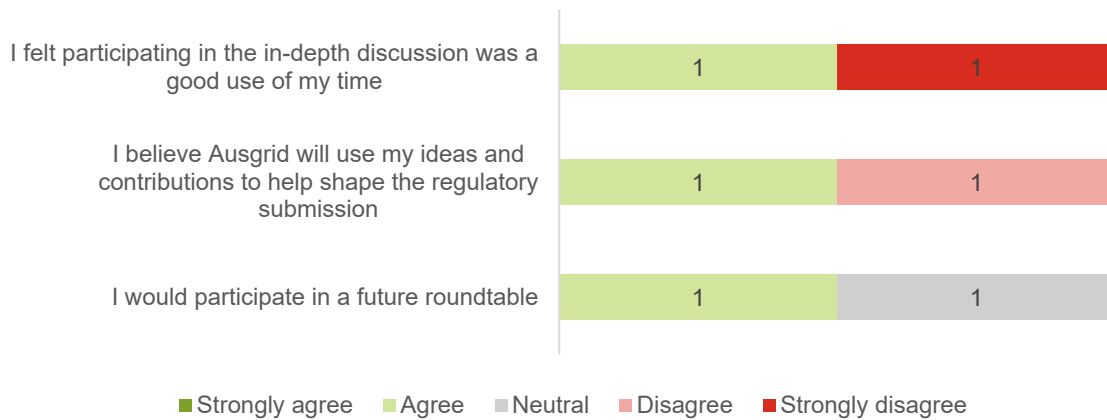
Please respond to these statements (n=2)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, participants had mixed views. One respondent agreed while the other respondent strongly disagreed.

There were mixed views on whether participants ideas and contributions would be used by Ausgrid to help shape the regulatory submission. One participant agreed while the other participant disagreed.

When asked if participants would participate in a future roundtable, one participant agreed while the other was neutral.

Figure 3 Please respond to the following statements (n=2)



Do you have any feedback on the format and roundtable approach? (n=1)

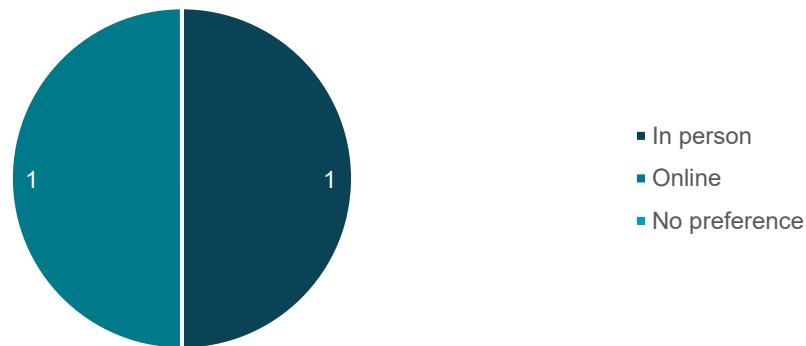
One participant provided feedback. They stated:

Technology worked satisfactory. Good support from the team.

I would prefer to participate in future roundtables: (n=2)

When asked how participants would prefer to participate in future round tables there was mixed views between online and in person.

Figure 4 I would prefer to participate in future roundtables: (n=2)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Energy cost and affordability’ topic? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

I expect some bill shock in coming times after lockdowns

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Supporting customers through outages’ topic? (n=0)

No participants provided further comment.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Fair transition to net zero’ topic? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

I would hope that new technology will result in equitable sharing of productivity between shareholders and various classes of customers

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Communicating with customers’ – our additional topic? (n=0)

No participants provided further comment.

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate

3. Phase 1: Upper Hunter Round Table

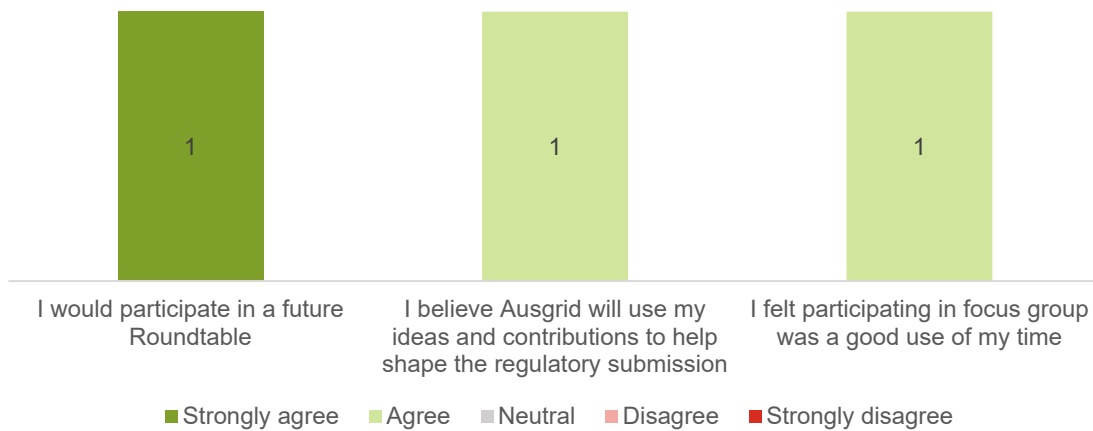
Please respond to these statements (n=1)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, the participant agreed.

When asked if Ausgrid will use their ideas and contributions to help shape the regulatory submission, the participant agreed.

The participant strongly agreed that they would participate in a future roundtable.

Figure 5 Please respond to the following statements (n=1)



Do you have any feedback on the format and roundtable approach? (n=1)

One participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

I thought this was a great approach

I would prefer to participate in future Roundtables (n=1)

The participant would prefer to participate in future Roundtables online rather than in person.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Energy cost and affordability’ topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Supporting customers through outages’ topic (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Fair transition to net zero’ topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Communicating with customers’ (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=1)

One participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Social and Affordable consumers are the biggest impact

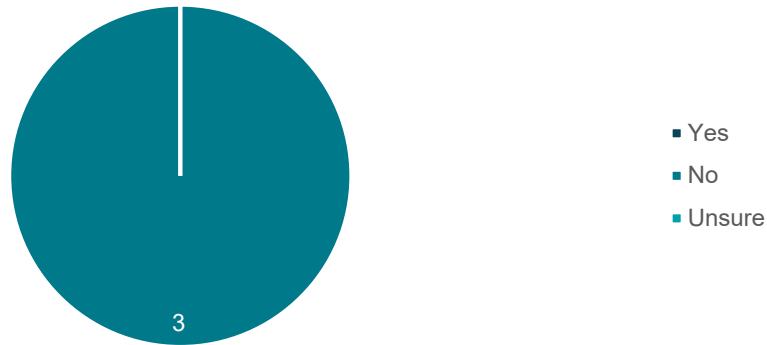
4. Phase 1: LE ‘deep dive’ follow up survey

(Interviews with Tenants Union, Deaf Australia, Vision Australia and South Eastern Community Centre)

Have you previously worked with Ausgrid as part of your current role (n=3)

No participants had previously worked with Ausgrid.

Figure 6 Have you previously worked with Ausgrid as part of your current role (n=3)



Please respond to these statements (n=3)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, two out of three participants agreed. Only one participant was neutral on the matter.

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if Ausgrid is genuine in its efforts to engage customers, only one participant agreed and two were neutral.

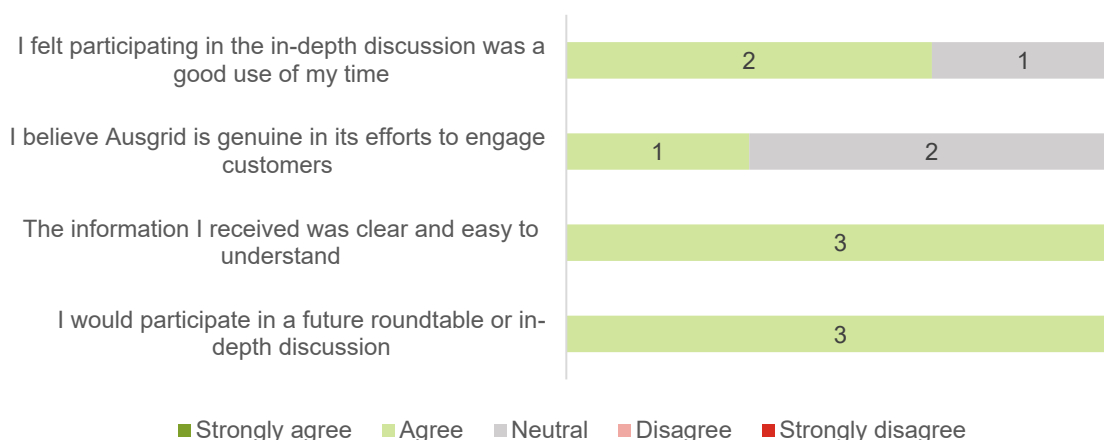
Key takeaway: there was mixed viewed regarding how genuine participants felt the engagement was.

When asked if the information participants received was clear and easy to understand, all participants agreed.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team developed supporting materials which were accessible for participants.

When asked if participants would participate in a future roundtable or discussion, all participants agreed.

Figure 7 Please respond to the following statements (n=3)



Do you have any feedback on the format and discussion approach? (n=2)

Two participants provided additional information. They stated:

A little more time would have been useful

Participants were engaged and knowledgeable on their topic areas. Process was streamlined and information provided clear and accessible.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Energy cost and affordability' topic? (n=0)

No participants provided further comment.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Customer service' topic? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

I encourage you to consult further with the deaf community to accurately understand how customer service could be improved so that deaf people do not have to bear the onus of communication all the time. Just kicking up a NRS number on your website does not equate [to] genuine accessibility or understanding of deaf customers.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Supporting customers through outages' topic? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

Do consider plain English sms and auslan videos.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Fair transition to net zero' topic? (n=2)

Two participants provided additional information. They stated:

We didn't really get to discuss this from the perspective of issues in land lease communities, of which there are a quite a few

Just re-emphasising the need to have this information accessible in auslan

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=0)

No participants provided further comment.

5. Phase 1: Lived experience household customers focus group

(This group included customers who have found themselves in vulnerable circumstances as well as three representatives from the Great Sydney Commission (now Greater Cities Commission) Youth Panel who represented young people in areas that cross over with Ausgrid's network.)

Please respond to these statements (n=9)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (89.9 per cent and 11.1 per cent respectively)

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if the participant's believed Ausgrid is genuine in its effort to engage with customers, one third of respondents agreed and two-thirds strongly agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: participants felt that Ausgrid's engagement processes is genuine.

Just under half of respondents (44.4%) agreed Ausgrid will use their ideas to help improve electricity services for customers, while 55.5% said they strongly agreed with this statement.

Key takeaway: participants believe Ausgrid will use their ideas to improve electricity services for customers.

When asked if the information participants received was clear and easy to understand, all participants agreed (44.4%) or strongly agreed (55.5%).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team presented information clearly.

When asked if participants would participate in a future roundtable or in-depth discussion, one-third agreed and two-thirds strongly agreed they would participate in the future.

Key takeaway: participants are keen to be involved in future Reset engagement activities.

When asked if it was easy to participant in the discussion, 22.2% agreed and 77.8% of participants strongly agreed with the statement.

Key take away: The discussion format empowered participants to contribute.

Figure 8 Please respond to the following statements (n=9)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Energy cost and affordability’ topic? (n=0)

Three participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Progress has been made in Solar, Batteries and Green Hydrogen. When is use of this going to be put into practice by the providers?

Structure of Ausgrid and retailers.

Structure of Ausgrid and retailers [duplicate comment].

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Customer service’ topic? (n=9)

Three participants provided additional information. They stated:

It was good discussions about doing more to connect with customers during outages. Ausgrid took that onboard.

Good.

Good.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Supporting customers through outages’ topic? (n=9)

Two participants provided additional information. They stated:

I have recently been involved in conflict between suppliers, retailers and a customer with life maintenance equipment during a planned outage.

see above [assume related to outage comment].

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Fair transition to net zero' topic? (n=9)

Three participants provided additional information. They stated:

Is there any planned transition by providers and can this planning be passed onto the consumer?

Query carbon capture

Query carbon capture [duplicate answer]

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=9)

Three participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

It was great to feel heard on these topics. Great decision by Ausgrid.

Not at this time.

I felt the team listened

6. Phase 1: SME customer focus group

Please respond to these statements (n=3)

When asked if participating in in-depth discussions was a good use of their time, two out of three respondents strongly agreed and agreed, while one participant was neutral.

All participants strongly agreed or agreed that Ausgrid is genuine in its efforts to engage customers (33.3 per cent and 66.7 per cent respectively).

When asked if participants thought Ausgrid would use their ideas to help improve electricity services for customers, two out of three respondents strongly agreed and agreed, while one participant was neutral.

All participants strongly agreed or agreed that the information they received was clear and easy to understand (33.3 per cent and 66.7 per cent respectively).

When asked if participants would participate in a future roundtable or in-depth discussion, two out of three respondents strongly agreed and agreed, while one participant was neutral.

When asked if participating in the discussion was easy, two out of three respondents strongly agreed and agreed, while one participant was neutral.

Figure 9 Please respond to the following statements (n=3)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Energy cost and affordability’ topic? (n=1)

Only one participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Re. solar panels and storage batteries, does Ausgrid provide extra information and advice or recommendations for reputable, reliable installers?

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Network resilience and outages’ topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Customer service’ topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Becoming net zero’ topic? (n=2)

Two participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Without generation, I guess Ausgrid is just striving like BP or Qantas to become net zero in their offices and depots. No big deal. Last year it was “Office recycling”, new name, same old thing, Net zero

Does Ausgrid recommend reliable installers of solar panels and storage batteries?

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=3)

Three participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

[I] felt outnumbered by Ausgrid staff, surely most could watch a recording

Reiterating, any recommendations on how to choose a reputable and reliable installer of solar panels and storage batteries?

Would be great to receive update on the findings

7. Phase 1: SME stakeholder discussion group

Please respond to these statements (n=2)

When asked if participating in the focus group was a good use of their time, all respondents agreed with the statement

When asked if Ausgrid is genuine in its efforts to engage customers, one participant strongly agreed and one was neutral on the topic.

When asked if participants thought Ausgrid would use their ideas to help improve electricity services for customers, one participant agreed and one was neutral.

All participants agreed that the information they received was clear and easy to understand.

When asked if participants would participate in a focus group, all participants agreed.

When asked if participating in the discussion was easy, all participants agreed.

Figure 10 Please respond to the following statements (n=2)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Energy cost and affordability' topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback on the following questions

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Network Resilience and outages' topic? (n=0)

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Customer service' topic? (n=0)

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Becoming net zero' topic? (n=0)

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=0)

Phase 2 participant feedback

1. Phase 2: LE and SME Stakeholders

Have you engaged with Ausgrid before this Reset as part of your current role? (n=3)

Two-thirds of respondents (66.7 per cent) who responded to the evaluation survey had engaged with Ausgrid prior to this Reset in their current role. One-third of respondents (33.3 per cent) had not engaged with Ausgrid prior to this Reset as part of their current role.

Please respond to these statements (n=3)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, two out of three participants agreed. Only one participant was neutral on the matter.

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if the participant's believed Ausgrid is genuine in its effort to engage with customers, all respondents agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: participants felt that Ausgrid's engagement processes was genuine.

Two out of three respondents agreed that the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset engagement were knowledgeable. One respondent was neutral.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team was a good fit for the activities undertaken.

When asked if the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset Engagement were approachable, all participants agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team were approachable, overall contributing towards a safe and respectful discussion space.

When asked if the Ausgrid team they dealt were clear about the purpose of the Reset Engagement, all participants agreed.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team conducted themselves with clarity and integrity, clearing identifying the purpose of the engagement processes.

When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with information that was easy to understand, two out of three respondents agreed while one respondent was neutral on the matter.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team developed supporting materials which were accessibility for participants.

When asked if the engagement activity took place at a time and in a format that suited them, all participants agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: for Lived Experience and Small and Medium Enterprise stakeholders, the online format of the engagement sessions worked well.

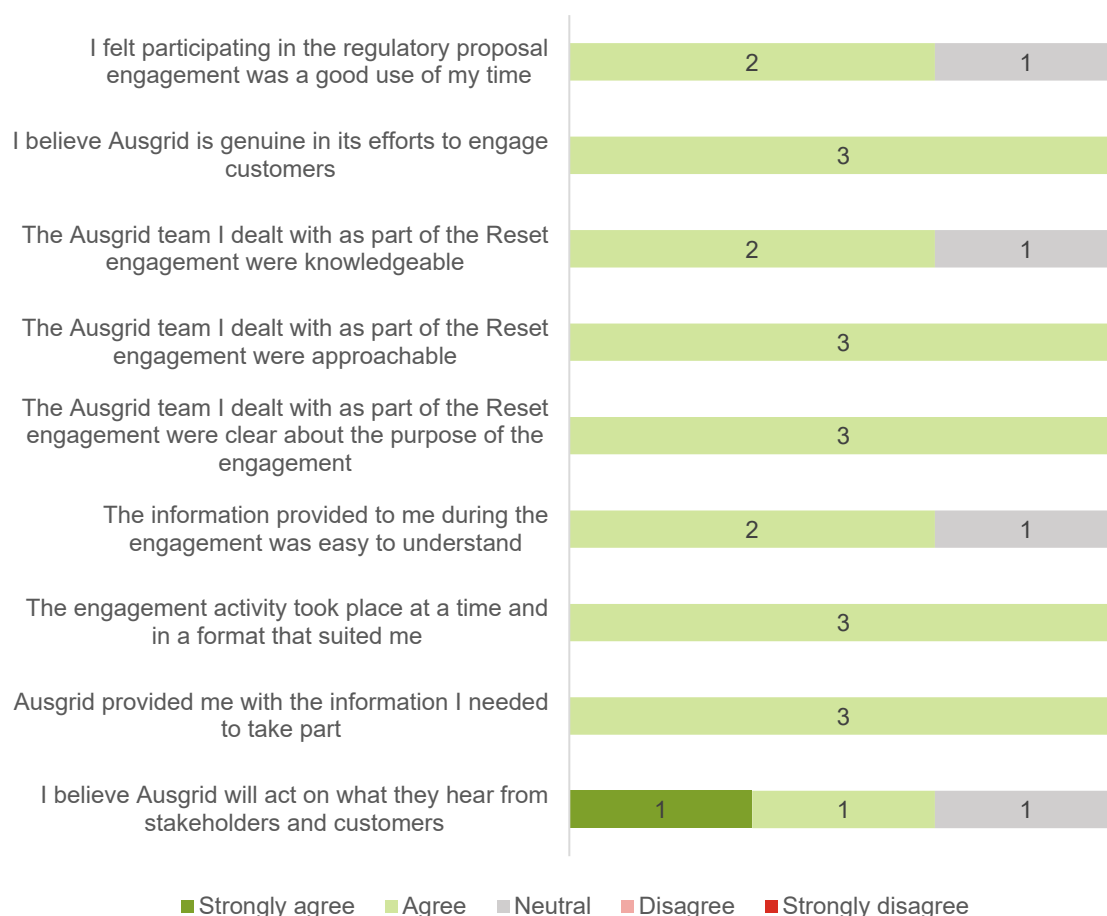
When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with the information needed to take part in the Reset proposal engagement, all participants agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: participants felt that they had the materials required to engage with Ausgrid on the Reset proposal.

When asked if participants believe that Ausgrid will act on what they heard from stakeholders and customers, participants had mixed opinions. Two out of three respondents thought Ausgrid will act on what they have heard, with one respondent strongly agreeing and the other agreeing. One respondent was neutral on the topic.

Key takeaway: while some participants believed Ausgrid will act on the outcomes from the Reset proposal engagement, other participants were not as confident this would occur.

Figure 1 Please respond to the following statements (n=3)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the topics discussed (n=1)

Only one participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Coming from a regional area I appreciate the online participation

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=0)

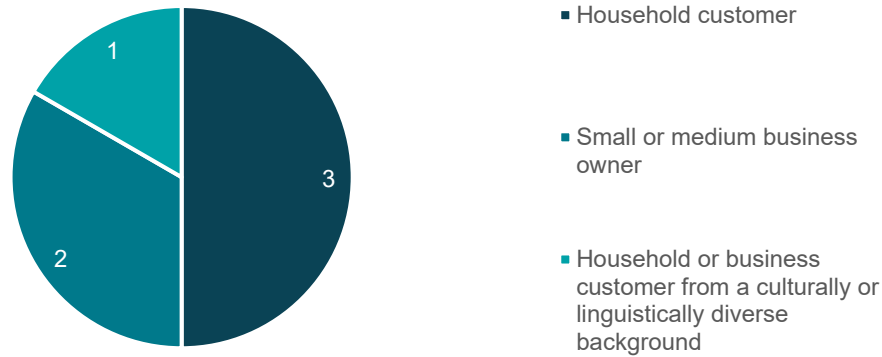
No participants provided general comments or feedback.

2. Phase 2: LE and SME Focus Groups

I recently participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a: (n=6)

Half of respondents (50.0 per cent) had participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a household customer, two thirds (33.3 per cent) had participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a small or medium business owner, while 16.7 per cent had participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a household or business customer from a culturally or linguistically diverse background.

Figure 2 I recently participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a (n=6)



Please respond to these statements (n=5)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (80.0 per cent and 20.0 per cent respectively)

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if the participant's believed Ausgrid is genuine in its effort to engage with customers, all respondents strongly agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: participants felt that Ausgrid's engagement processes was genuine.

All respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset engagement were knowledgeable (40.0 per cent and 60.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team was a good fit for the activities undertaken.

When asked if the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset Engagement were approachable, the majority of respondents (80.0 per cent) strongly agreed with the statement while 20.0 per cent agreed.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team were approachable, overall contributing towards a safe and respectful discussion space.

When asked if the Ausgrid team they dealt were clear about the purpose of the Reset Engagement, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed (60.0 per cent and 40.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team conducted themselves with clarity and integrity, clearing identifying the purpose of the engagement processes.

When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with information that was easy to understand, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed (40.0 per cent and 60.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team developed supporting materials which were accessibility for participants.

When asked if the engagement activity took place at a time and in a format that suited them, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed (80.0 per cent and 20.0 per cent).

Key takeaway: for Lived Experience and Small and Medium Enterprise focus groups, the online format of the engagement sessions worked well.

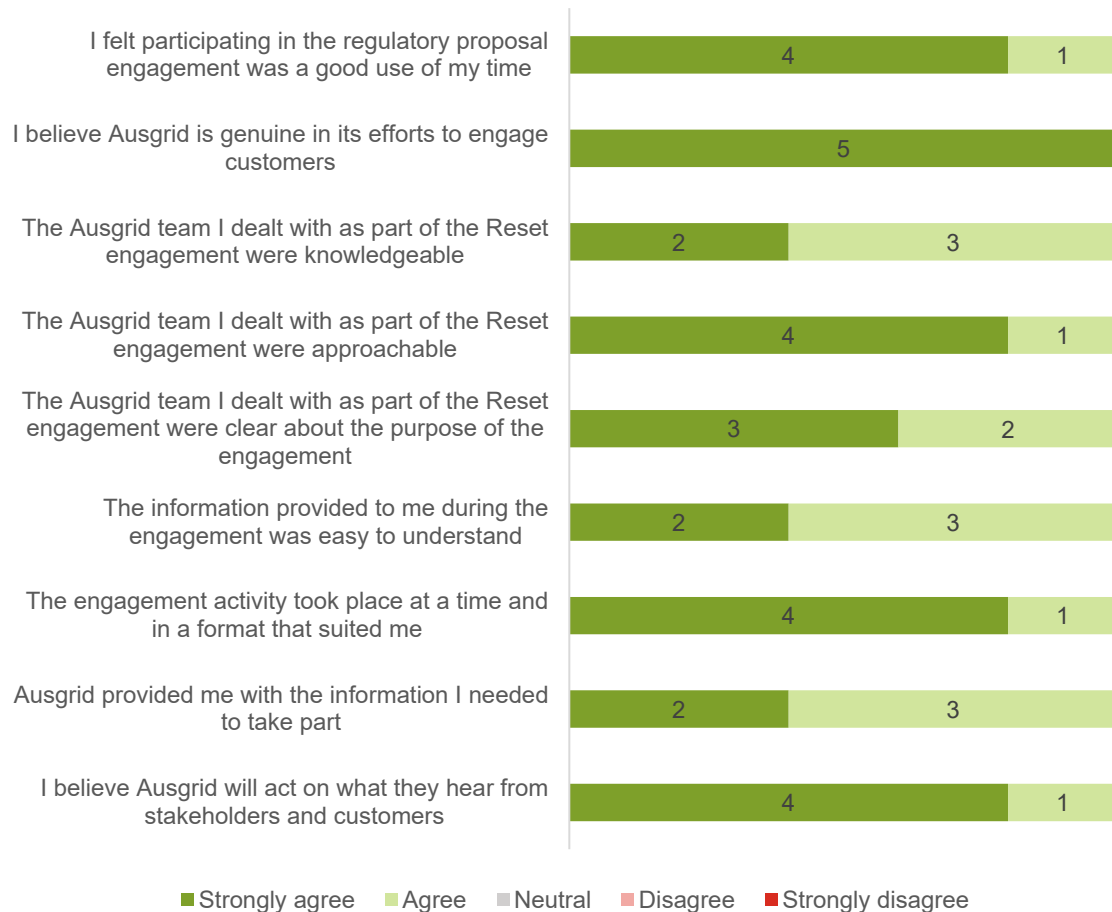
When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with the information needed to take part in the Reset proposal engagement, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed (40 per cent and 60.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: participants felt that they had the materials required to engage with Ausgrid on the Reset process.

When asked if participants believe that Ausgrid will act on what they heard from stakeholders and customers, the majority of respondents strongly agreed (80.0 per cent). The remaining 20.0 per cent of respondent agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: all respondents believed Ausgrid will act on the outcomes from the Reset proposal engagement.

Figure 3 Please respond to the following statements (n=5)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the topics discussed (n=3)

Three participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

I liked the zoom and the use of written materials on the screen together with the verbal explanations

The facilitators were excellent

The format [was] well planned and the discussion approach well controlled

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=1)

One participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

It seemed to me that Ausgrid as a distributed of electricity were getting involved in generation and retail

3. Phase 2: Retailers and larger customers

Have you engaged with Ausgrid before this Reset as part of your current role? (n=9)

Three quarters of respondents (77.7 per cent) who responded to the evaluation survey had engaged with Ausgrid prior to this Reset in their current role. One quarter of respondents (22.3 per cent) had not engaged with Ausgrid prior to this Reset as part of their current role.

Please respond to these statements (n=8)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, the majority of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (37.5 per cent and 50 per cent respectively). Only one participant was neutral on the topic.

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if the participant's believed Ausgrid is genuine in its effort to engage with customers, there was mixed views. The majority of participants believe Ausgrid's effort was genuine, with 12.5 per cent strongly agreeing and 62.5 agreeing. 25.0 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: while many participants felt that Ausgrid's effort to engage with customers is genuine, some participants did not agree.

All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset engagement were knowledgeable (50.0 per cent and 50.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team was a good fit for the activities undertaken and had good content knowledge.

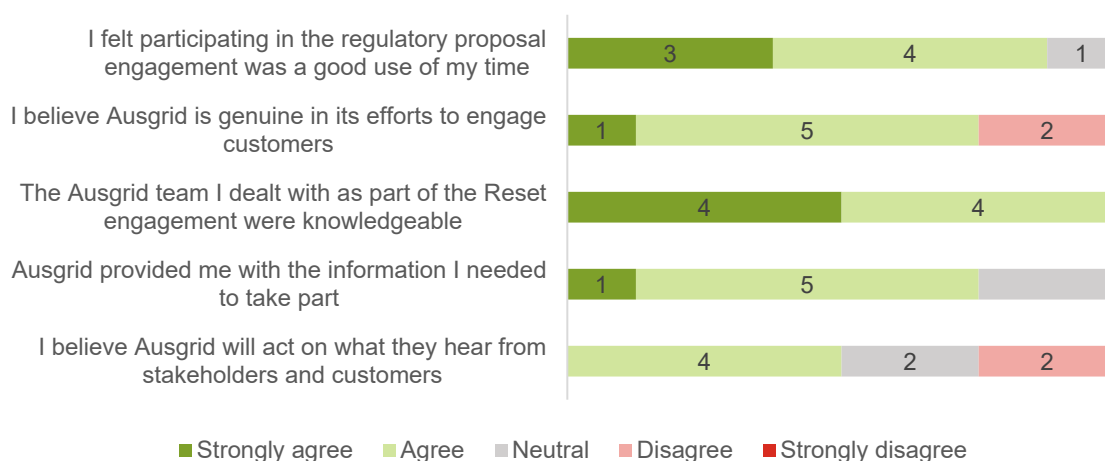
When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with the information needed to take part in the Reset engagement there was mixed views. The majority of participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (12.5 per cent and 62.5 per cent respectively). 25.0 per cent were neutral on the matter.

Key takeaway: participants felt that they had the materials required to engage with Ausgrid on the Reset proposal.

When asked if participants believe that Ausgrid will act on what they heard from stakeholders and customers, participants had mixed opinions. 50.0 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement, while 25.0 per cent were neutral. A quarter (25.0 per cent) disagreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: while some participants believed Ausgrid will act on the outcomes from the Reset proposal engagement, other participants were not as confident this would occur.

Figure 4 Please respond to the following statements (n=8)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the topics discussed (n=1)

Only one participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

I hope there is more detailed customer engagement sessions happening as part of the regulatory reset period. This forum is a limited opportunity to provide feedback and only a short-time provided to respond to questions that require further thought from a wider audience.

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=2)

Two participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

More or new costs associated with solar

Great to see the engagement and the opportunity t[o] highlight areas for improvement for customers