



TRR 2027-32

Transmission Stakeholder Advisory Panel (TSAP)

Summary Notes for Landholder Engagement Deep Dive

Details	Attendees	AusNet Staff
1.30pm to 4.45pm Thursday 1 May 2025 In-person & Online (MS Teams) Chair: Glenn Orgias Secretariat: AusNet prepared draft, finalised by Chair Glenn Orgias	Transmission Stakeholder Advisory Panel (TSAP): - Alex Crosby, <i>Customer advocate</i> - Gavin Duffy, <i>St Vincent de Paul</i> - Glenn Orgias, <i>Chair of TSAP</i> - Harshal Patel, <i>Beca</i> - Rebecca Xuereb, <i>Customer advocate</i> - Richard Robson, <i>Citipower, Powercor & United Energy</i> - Roy Unny, <i>Customer advocate</i> - Tennant Reed, <i>Ai Group</i> Industry representatives (including landholder and social service advocates, and government agencies): - Bel Plumb, <i>Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner</i> - Bridget Ryan, <i>Re-Alliance</i> - Charles Everist, <i>Victorian Farmers' Federation</i> - David Bryant, <i>Brotherhood of St Laurence</i> - Felicity Fast, <i>Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria</i> - Felix Chan, <i>Essential Services Commission</i> - Heather Wagland, <i>Energy Charter</i> - John Harbour, <i>Essential Services Commission</i> - Julianne Peavey, <i>Landholder</i> - Rory Anderson, <i>Victorian Council of Social Service</i> - Simon Tickner, <i>Landholder</i> - Tony Goodfellow, <i>Re-Alliance</i>	AusNet Staff: - Liz Ryan, <i>Executive General Manager Transmission (joined for part b & c)</i> - Tom Hallam, <i>General Manager Strategy & Regulation (Transmission)</i> - Lauren Priddy-Leng, <i>General Manager Field Operations & Maintenance (Transmission)</i> - Anita Nayak, <i>Landholders & Community Manager (Transmission)</i> - Alastair Gowing, <i>Principal Consultant Customer and Community Engagement</i> - Michael Larkin, <i>Price Review Manager</i> - Lucy Holder, <i>Customer Engagement Manager</i> - Khai Ling Chan, <i>Strategy Lead</i> - Charlie Qin, <i>Regulatory Economist</i> - Emma Ferrie, <i>Engagement Specialist</i> - Eleya Pisani, <i>Business Graduate</i> - Nicholas Gathercole, <i>Business Graduate</i> Observers: - David Prins, <i>Australian Energy Regulator Consumer Challenge Panel</i> - Michael Brothers, <i>Australian Energy Regulator</i> - Dan Tulen, <i>Energy Safe Victoria</i> - Leesa Anderson, <i>Energy Safe Victoria</i> - Gavin Jackson, <i>Energy Safe Victoria</i>

Apologies:

- Andrew Richards, *EUAA & TSAP*
- David Markham, *Energy Users Association Australia & TSAP*
- Theodora Karastergiou, *Jemena & TSAP*

Key outcomes

Participants agreed there is a strong need for AusNet to improve the experience of and level of service provided to landholders who host existing transmission infrastructure. They agreed that the nine improvement opportunities identified by AusNet were priorities, and made some changes to the wording and three further additions.

Key points participants made on AusNet enhancing its landholder engagement capabilities included:

- Not all landholders will want AusNet to heavily engage with them proactively. An opt-in/opt-out approach was suggested, where landholders can easily interact and engage with AusNet when needed.
- Landholders generally don't want or expect a "gold plated" engagement service, but do want improvements and are considerate of costs.
- AusNet needs to demonstrate through its Transmission Revenue Reset 2027-2032 proposal how increased investment in landholder engagement capabilities will benefit all Victorian energy users, particularly with respect to deliverability of projects.

Based on the discussion and points raised by participants, AusNet is proposing the following uplifts in its capabilities for landholder engagement on the existing transmission network:

- Proactive establishment of access agreement for 2% of landholders (focusing on projects and landholders who request or would benefit access agreements).
- Enhanced safety support (safety assessments and permit visits) when requested by landholders.
- Landholder opt-in/opt-out model for notifications.
- Adopt some key elements of the Land Access Code of Practice (LACoP).
- AusNet to consider and respond to landholder requests.
- Proactive safety annual campaigns.
- AusNet regional engagement resources covering smaller regions.
- New landholders contacted as soon as possible after purchase of land.

The cost of these uplifts are estimated to cost customers in the low \$1's per annum for 2027-2032.

AusNet will refine the landholder experience package of improvements and costings to reflect the final selections above. AusNet will include this package and costings in its draft proposal for public consultation and engage further on it in August-September 2025, before finalising and including in the proposal it submits to the Australian Energy Regulator on 31 October 2025.

Purpose & Agenda

Agenda item	Key questions asked	Timing
Introduction - Overview of the Transmission Revenue Reset (TRR) - Purpose of this session	N/A – for information only	1:30pm 15 mins
A How transmission operations impact landholders	Which areas should we be prioritising for improvement?	1:45pm 45 mins
B Improvements already underway - AusNet's recent and ongoing landholder engagement initiatives - Remaining problems to solve	This section is mostly for information, but we'd welcome feedback on what we're doing today	2:30pm 40 mins
Break		3:10pm 10 mins
C Step change service improvement options - Goals of investment in TRR 2027-32 - Options for service level along different dimensions	What bundle of services (and at what cost) would you accept?	3:20pm 60 mins
Wrap-up & next steps	Anything else you'd like to raise?	4:20pm 10 mins
		4:30pm end

Summary of discussion

Topics	Discussion points
Introduction	Glenn Orgias, <i>Chair of the Transmission Stakeholder Advisory Panel (TSAP)</i>, opened the session. Glenn stated that the purpose of the session was to reach general acceptance of the types and levels of service that AusNet should deliver for landholders who host existing transmission infrastructure. Glenn furthered that the services would form part of AusNet's Transmission Revenue Reset (TRR) proposal for 2027-2032. Glenn explained that AusNet would present opportunities identified through feedback it has received from landholders and invited participants to consider if they are the right items to prioritise. He noted that while higher service levels can offer greater benefits, they come with increased costs for energy users across Victoria. Glenn then clarified the scope for the session and for the Transmission Revenue Reset (TRR) process overall noting: - the focus is on existing transmission assets, e.g. current easements, towers, and lines - compensation related to productivity loss due to interruption by AusNet works would be in scope (discussed as part of access agreements), but other types of compensation are out of scope. Tom Hallam, General Manager Strategy & Regulation at AusNet, gave an overview of the Victorian transmission network and AusNet's role as the Victorian Transmission Network Service

Provider (TNSP) and the TRR process and its timelines, whereby the Australian Energy Regulator sets service standards and prices for AusNet for the five-year period.

Tom highlighted that the session on this day would be an example of the cost vs service level trade-offs that the regulator wants networks to engage on in revenue reset process. He noted AusNet will release its draft proposal for the TRR 2027-2032 in July/August, which will include the outcomes from this meeting and broader conversations AusNet is having with stakeholders.

Discussion included:

- Nil

Part A: How transmission operations impact landholders

Alastair Gowing, Principal Consultant, Customer and Community Engagement at AusNet, provided an overview of the landholders hosting AusNet's transmission network, highlighting 90% of AusNet's transmission easements are in rural or regional communities and 50% of landholders' properties are zoned for farming or other agricultural activities. Alastair flagged that while farmers stand out as the largest cohort and the landholder group most impacted by transmission activities, AusNet also wants to address the concerns of all people who meets the definition of a landholder.

Alastair pointed out that easements can also include other public infrastructure, such as distribution lines, gas pipelines, or water utility assets. As a result, landholders are often impacted by several utility providers, in addition to AusNet. He spoke to how landholder engagement has evolved over time, from easements being established in the 1950's-60's, to being part of the State Electricity Commission (SEC), to privatisation in 1990s, then various iterations of PowerNet and now AusNet.

Alastair noted that, historically, landholder engagement was often managed through informal arrangements, such as handshake agreements, without formal or digitised records. Alastair explained that this approach generally worked and offered a high degree of flexibility, at a time when the transmission network has needed few major upgrades, and there was little concern or opposition from landholders and communities.

Land use evolving over time, revised farm layouts and larger equipment can lead to increased activity beneath transmission lines, which AusNet may not always be aware of. At the same time, the environment surrounding transmission projects is becoming more complex for both AusNet and landholders, who are now also being approached by wind and solar farm developers seeking access to their land. The cumulative impact of AusNet's routine inspections and maintenance activities can affect landholders' willingness to engage with renewable energy projects, and those projects can, in turn, influence receptiveness to AusNet's operations.

Alastair provided an overview of the landholder engagement work that AusNet currently undertakes and explain how each is managed differently:

- Project work: In a project, incorporating improved engagement is more straightforward, as there is more time. A longer look-ahead means more opportunity for a dedicated person to map impacted landholders, and build those relationships for the project. The project has known constraints and footprints, and when engagement teams talk to landholders, they can take requests back to project teams, who have more capacity to adopt methodology to suit the needs of landholders and the project.
- Inspections & maintenance: These are active rolling programs with no set minimum notice period. While increased notification could improve transparency, it also carries the risk of over- or under-notifying landholders due to the volume and variability of the work.
- Emergency works: In emergencies the priority is always addressing the fault, but best efforts are made to contact the landholder. In an emergency, AusNet is not in a position to make any guarantees on notifications.

Tom noted two key factors driving the need for AusNet to uplift its engagement with landholder who host existing transmission infrastructure:

1. rising expectations of landholders, which we would like to hear more about directly from landholders and their advocates today.
2. growing amount of work in Victoria. Victoria hasn't substantially invested in new capacity for 30-40 years. Additionally, many transmission assets are 60-70 years old, requiring more frequent maintenance and upgrades, and climate change is having a significant impact including new and challenging wind events causing tower collapses.

Tom noted that the Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP) is expected to be released by VicGrid shortly, and would outline the new renewable development zones (REZs) and new transmission infrastructure, as well as upgrades to existing transmission assets. Tom shared that AusNet has been encouraging VicGrid to look at options to improve existing assets rather than invest in new assets, as the easements are already there, and communities are used to hosting transmission infrastructure.

Alastair discussed the increasing expectations of landholders and AusNet's approach to engagement. Alastair noted that while existing guidelines provide a starting point, they primarily address new transmission infrastructure and don't fully apply to AusNet's existing transmission assets. Alastair highlighted the Energy Charter's Better Practice Social Licence Guideline and the Victorian Farmers Federation Code of Conduct as benchmarks, emphasising that these documents are being considered in the context of AusNet's current network. Alastair also provided an overview of Land Access Code of Practice (LACoP), and discussed how it sets out comprehensive requirements for notifications of entering landholder properties. Alastair concluded by stressing that these challenges are not unique to AusNet or transmission projects and are common across the infrastructure sector. Alastair cited Infrastructure Australia's estimate of \$40 billion in potential losses over a decade due to poor social license outcomes. Without well-managed engagement, those costs are shared by the whole community.

Alastair then summarised key opportunities AusNet has identified for landholder experience improvement and opened the floor, inviting participants to share what they considered most important, whether anything had been missed, and what AusNet should prioritise.

Discussion included:

The groups feedback and discussions on the impacts of transmission operations on landholders and the opportunities for improvement included:

- A participant representing The Energy Charter, shared the work the Energy Charter is doing to better understand landholder needs, particularly through the development of its Better Practice Social Licence Guideline. The participant raised that poor engagement with landholders has led to project delays, safety and reliability risks, and erosion of community trust.

The participant outlined four commonly raised concerns on the existing transmission network, noting the Energy Charter's guidelines offer practical actions to address these issues:

- Biosecurity: Landholders need to control access and track vehicle movements to manage outbreak risks.
- Restrictions to innovation: Infrastructure built decades ago often don't support modern agricultural practices. For example, low conductor heights limiting equipment use.
- Financial loss: Damaged crops, loss of stock disrupted by helicopters, compaction of soil, and diverting staff to round up animals all contribute to financial loss.

- **Respect:** Landholders want to be treated as valued business partners, not as an afterthought in large-scale infrastructure projects.
- **Participants supportive of the opportunities presented:** Participants supported the nine opportunities for improvement (listed below) raised by AusNet. A participant representing landholders noted that the issues they have been raising are addressed well in the opportunities. They noted in addition that they respected the point made before about not “overdoing it”, and called out that a check in is useful, but not every day.
- **Strong support for timely and detailed notifications:** A participant representing landholders shared that they are very supportive of AusNet improving their engagement to provide landholders with timely and detailed notifications of planned entry to their property, to allow landholders to plan and prepare.
- **Strong support for consistent and local points of contact:** A participant representing landholders shared strong support for landholders being provided with consistent and local points of contact with AusNet. The participant representing landholders furthered, stating that this is one of the most critical opportunities for AusNet as there are often different contexts when interacting with landholders that can't be known through desktop analysis, and need to be drawn out through real people doing the engagement.
- **High importance of biosecurity:** A number of participants noted how crucial biosecurity is for landholders and supported AusNet seeking to improve in this area.
- **Opportunity for landholders to negotiate and re-negotiate agreements:** A participant representing landholders noted that it was good to see landholders being provided an opportunity to negotiate land access agreements as a priority for improvement. The participant representing landholders furthered that AusNet should consider having a mechanism to re-negotiate agreements. The participant representing landholders shared that the farming context has changed over time, which may lead to aspects of the agreement needing to be shifted.
- **Info pack provided to landholders:** In addition to the 9 opportunities, participants also raised a desire for more information to be made available to new landholders through “info packs”, which AusNet was supportive of.
- **AusNet accessing easements:** A participant asked if landholders are obliged to let AusNet access easements. AusNet shared that it has certain legal rights and powers under the Electricity Act. Where there is an easement, AusNet and the landholder have shared rights to access to that land. AusNet noted that landholders have primary responsibility for maintaining the land, but AusNet would manage any vegetation that may encroach clearance zones and is responsible for maintaining the assets. AusNet shared that it can generally enter easements from the road easily, and that problems arise when there is a need to use another access path elsewhere on the property. In that situation, AusNet may need to rely on section 93 of the Act which provides the right to traverse land to access transmission assets but noted that this often leads to an increased risk of conflict or complaints from the landholder.

AusNet added that while it can use those powers, it is something it actively tries to avoid. AusNet furthered by sharing that it is challenging to use these powers, as it is time consuming, costly, and damaging to relationships. A participant representing landholders added that from a farmer's perspective, a landholder may be using the land at the time, so even if AusNet has a right to access, the farmer needs to know given the operations that they may have planned.
- **AusNet's complaint and dispute resolution process:** A participant representing landholders noted that complaints are usually recorded at the point when landholders are already very frustrated, after a series of disappointing interactions. The participant representing landholders noted that there is a major opportunity for improvement in AusNet's engagement to prevent landholders reaching this level of frustration.

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- **Landholder routine check-ins:** A participant asked if AusNet has regular contact with landholders, such as routine check-ins or 'cold calls'. AusNet said this is not standard practice.
 - **Benefits of Customer Relationship Management system:** There was discussion about aerial inspections and the potential to disturb cattle. A participant representing landholders noted that they could see how a Customer Relationship Management system could be useful for AusNet to better track data and interactions with landholders.
 - **Safety concerns:** A participant asked if the lack of education or notification of landholders had led to safety issues. AusNet responded that it had little concrete data on this.
 - **Tractors and agricultural infrastructure evolving:** There was discussion of how the size of tractors used by farmers near transmission lines had changed over time. A participant representing landholders shared that when the lines were installed, agricultural equipment was smaller, but that new machinery is around 5 metres tall. He noted that this scale-up reflected the need to grow more food in the last 70 years.
 - **AusNet point of contact for landholders:** Participants asked whether landholders have a specific point of contact at AusNet they can reach out to. AusNet responded saying that messaging from the landholder safety campaign included details for the call centre, and that landholder specific inquiries are directed to the engagement team to follow up with. AusNet added that an opt-in form has been added to its website which allows landholders to voluntarily provide their information. AusNet shared that it is also working on a new initiative to provide landholders with notifications.
 - **Landholders want to be treated like valued clients:** Several participants expressed that landholders often feel overlooked by utility companies and want to be treated more like valued clients. A participant shared those small adjustments such as choosing more convenient access points, can provide meaningful difference in landholders experience in a project. AusNet acknowledged that while similar service levels and experiences do exist at AusNet, they are not consistently applied.
 - **AusNet's previous work understanding landholders needs and potential pain points:** A participant representing landholders asked if there have been any focus groups held with landholders to inform AusNet's TRR submission. AusNet responded by sharing that this is the first group session it has held on landholder engagement for this purpose but AusNet are communicating with landholders directly and the feedback we have heard has been reflected in our thinking. AusNet noted that it is aware it's not meeting expectations and acknowledged past challenges it experienced previously in this area. AusNet furthered that it has utilised studies and frameworks completed by the broader industry (including the Energy Charter, the Land Access Code of Practice and the VFFs Code of Conduct), as well as daily feedback it receives from landholders to inform its proposal. AusNet reiterated the importance of having a diverse range of perspectives in this meeting to achieve a balanced approach to enhance services for landholders while ensuring that associated costs remain equitable and manageable for all consumers.
 - **Age of AusNet's assets:** A participant representing landholders asked if AusNet had a good view of the age of its assets that are on farms, noting that those are the assets AusNet will be more likely needed to engage with landholders on. AusNet shared that the regional parts of the transmission network are amongst the oldest and were built in the 1950-60s when Victoria was electrified.
 - **Victorian Farmers Federations' Code of Conduct:** There was discussion on the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Code of Conduct. A participant representing the VFF shared that the Code was not limited to transmission lines and was designed to encompass all infrastructure developments over farmland including pipelines and roads. Participant representing the VFF acknowledged that while the VFF Code of Conduct is primarily focused on new infrastructure projects, AusNet's observation that
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certain provisions are relevant to existing infrastructure is valid, especially given the current challenges. There was discussion around key aspects of the Code of Conduct being applicable to both new and existing infrastructure, such as the importance of agreeing access routes. The discussion also raised the potential for regulation on landholder engagement. However, participants emphasised that the onus is on organisations such as AusNet to proactively adhere to the Code. It was noted that the critical factor is not whether such engagement is regulated but that it occurs effectively.

- **Potential Customer Service Incentive Scheme for the transmission network:** A participant raised that a Customer Service Incentive Scheme (CSIS) similar to the one implemented for electricity and gas distributors would be beneficial for transmission organisations. AusNet responded sharing that the CSIS was introduced to distribution through the AER's small scale schemes framework. AusNet said this could be an option for transmission.
- **How AusNet will build trust with landholders:** A participant asked how exactly AusNet is planning to build trust with landholders. AusNet responded by saying that providing landholders with a consistent and local point of contact will help create a personal connection, and foster trust and effective communication between the landholder and AusNet.
- **Communications between AusNet and landholders:** A participant representing landholders shared their personal preference that most of the time, they don't want or need any engagement with AusNet and stated that it is important that this process doesn't overreach and overcomplicate what goes on. The participant representing landholders noted that their biggest challenge through the years has been figuring out who to talk to at AusNet and how to get in touch with the right department. The participant representing landholders expressed a desire for AusNet to make sure that any issues are followed up promptly and have a communications link that landholders could follow up with at a later point in time. The participant representing landholders noted that the biggest thing in addressing issues is a consistent and local point of contact. They recognised that it is really challenging to implement this in a modern work context, but shared that the agricultural community really values face-to-face and long-term relationships. They noted that the more AusNet can do to build that structure, the better.
- **Need for consistency when landholders are interacting with AusNet's delivery partners:** There was discussion around the challenges landholders experience with dealing with delivery partners / contractors rather than the main organisation that owns the assets. Participants raised the importance of AusNet having robust communication channels with its delivery partners to promptly address and escalate any key landholder issues.
- **Potential impacts of new transmission infrastructure projects:** A participant representing landholders expressed a desire for improved service but clarified that, despite the challenges and negative sentiments surrounding new projects like the Western Renewables Link and VNI West, they do not require extensive information and are able to farm around and underneath transmission infrastructure comfortably. The participant representing landholders stated it is important that AusNet doesn't get overwhelmed with the pushback in the short term on those two new transmission projects, and prevent a good long-term structure that is practical for the existing transmission network.
- **Role of the Energy Charter in supporting landholders:** There was discussion about whether the Energy Charter could support companies like AusNet by being a single place to share information with landholders. AusNet raised that this would be difficult to successfully implement as information given to landholders often needs to be provided on an individual basis due to the variability. For example, lines at different voltages require different clearance distances.
- **Overground vs underground options for transmission projects:** A participant representing landholder expressed a desire for AusNet to consider underground lines

as an alternative to overhead, quoting their own positive experience with hosting underground assets. There was discussion about the various pros and cons of undergrounding, and the way different types of landholders would be impacted during and after construction. AusNet noted that undergrounding is a more relevant conversation in the context of new infrastructure rather than in the replacement of existing infrastructure, and the participant representing landholders agreed. There was a suggestion AusNet could include more information about the pros and cons of undergrounding transmission lines on its website.

- Participants were asked to indicate their agreement (or otherwise) that there was a strong case for change with respect to the service levels landholders experience, noting silence would be taken as agreement. **There was unanimous agreement that there is a strong case for change.**

AusNet's updated opportunities for improvement:

The updated list of opportunities identified for improvements at the end of Part A is as follows. Changes made to the list during the discussion stage were all additions, and are marked in **green** (opportunities are listed in no particular priority order):

1. Timely and detailed notification of planned entry to landholders property, allowing them to plan or prepare
2. Opportunity to negotiate land access timing and methods after being notified of planned works
3. Consistent and local points of contact with AusNet
4. Biosecurity procedures consistently applied
5. New Access Agreements with AusNet that provide long term accountability and **certainty with a mechanism to re-negotiate**
6. Respect for their farming activity (or other operations) factored into AusNet's planning and ways of working
7. Shared risk documentation for projects that occur on their land
8. Fair compensation for damage and productivity loss
9. Support to understand how to stay safe and their rights and obligations when operating around transmission assets **including more information (incl. packs for new landholders)**
10. **Promoting consistency with contractors and delivery partners**
11. **Dispute resolution continuous improvements (including strengthening internal processes and enhancing awareness of external escalation pathways)**
12. **More transparency on overground vs underground options considered**

Part B: Improvements already underway

Alastair Gowing provided a brief overview of AusNet's current capabilities regarding engagement with landholders who host existing transmission infrastructure. Alastair noted that AusNet's transmission engagement team is primarily focused on interacting with landholders who are being impacted by a project relating to upgrades or maintenance on the existing transmission network.

Alastair shared a case study on the benefits of good landholder engagement and collaboration, and summarised the improvements AusNet is making to its landholder engagement in the near-term.

Lauren Priddy-Leng, General Manager of Field Operations & Maintenance at AusNet, highlighted that AusNet has begun uplifting its engagement capabilities, but further work (which would form a step change in AusNet's opex proposal for the TRR 2027-2032) is needed

to enable broader and more consistent delivery of these improvements across all landholders on the existing transmission network.

Discussion included:

- **AusNet's biosecurity procedures:** A participant representing landholders asked for further clarity around AusNet's priority to follow biosecurity procedures consistently when instruction from the landholders is clear. There was discussion around AusNet currently following biosecurity procedures only when landholders have signs up or have otherwise made it clear what the biosecurity requirements for their land is, often leaving AusNet to operate on an ad hoc basis.
- **Biosecurity consistency:** A participant representing landholders asked if AusNet has contemplated putting systems in place to make its biosecurity processes more consistent across all landholders. The participant representing landholders noted that the best place to get engagement and advice on biosecurity would be through Agriculture Victoria. There was further discussion around which costs AusNet would absorb, particularly those related to biosecurity, and which would be addressed in its capital expenditure proposal, especially in response to specific landholder requests.
- **Animal welfare:** A participant representing landholders raised that AusNet should include animal welfare in its biosecurity investment. The participant representing landholders shared that there is new legislation on animal welfare that is likely to be imposed. Another participant asked if there is an expected timeline on the animal welfare legislation being released. The participant representing landholders responded saying that there is no definitive timeline but shared that the legislation is currently sitting with Cabinet.
- **Improvements for planned or unplanned transmission works:** A participant asked if the priorities AusNet presented were referring to landholder engagement on planned or unplanned works. AusNet clarified that the priorities presented in this workshop are referring to planned works.

Part C: Step change service improvement options

Alastair Gowing presented an overview of the landholder requests to improve AusNet's landholder engagement that it will require additional resourcing to address. Alastair noted that not all the landholder requests which were shared in Part B of this meeting will require additional resourcing through AusNet's opex proposal.

Alastair highlighted several new tasks within the requests AusNet would like additional resources to address, including:

- Providing landholders with a mechanism to re-negotiate new access agreements.
- Providing landholders with more information on how to stay safe and their rights and obligations when operating around transmission assets.

Alastair shared that using local contractors and improving AusNet's systems to support the contractors to deliver consistently is a key component of the uplift. Additionally, Alastair highlighted the dispute mechanism and continuous improvements for landholders to have a clear escalation process within AusNet, in addition to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV)'s process to support dispute resolution. Alastair noted that it is AusNet's goal to resolve landholder complaints before they are escalated to EWOV.

Lauren Priddy-Leng shared that several opportunities for improvement in landholder engagement that AusNet presented earlier in the session, will not require additional resourcing through AusNet's opex proposal, and will either be absorbed by AusNet, or addressed in AusNet's capex proposal for the Transmission Revenue Reset 2027-2032. These opportunities include:

- Opportunity 4 – biosecurity procedures consistently applied
- Opportunity 7 – shared risk documentation for projects that occur on their land
- Opportunity 8 – fair compensation for damage and productivity loss

- Opportunity 10 – promoting consistency with contractors and delivery partners
- Opportunity 11 – dispute resolution continuous improvements (including strengthening internal processes and enhancing awareness of external escalation pathways).
- Opportunity 12 – more transparency on overground vs underground options considered

Alastair shared that addressing the other opportunities for improvement will require investment in two key areas, which AusNet will seek through its TRR 2027-2032 opex proposal:

- additional AusNet engagement people
- digital systems.

Alastair shared that one of the fundamental challenges AusNet is working to address is enabling employees to effectively engage with landholders and interpret their individual needs, while also equipping staff with the appropriate tools and systems to support this engagement.

Alastair presented three options, each representing a different level of service and associated cost, for participants to indicate their preferred level of investment in AusNet's Transmission Revenue Reset proposal for 2027–2032. Each option outlined the corresponding improvements landholders would experience, as well as the people and digital system capabilities AusNet would need to deliver those improvements.

It was noted that the three bundled options were not intended to limit flexibility, and the final package could be a mix of different levels of services from across the three options.

This was followed by extensive discussion and identification of a preferred mix of solutions.

Discussion included:

- **Cultural heritage:** There was discussion around if cultural and environmental heritage would be addressed in AusNet's engagement capability uplift. AusNet shared that cultural and environmental heritage is addressed through the capital works program and is factored into the cost of a project, and therefore is not included in its opex proposal.
- **Importance of AusNet staffed being trained and equipped:** A participant representing landholders raised that an essential part of AusNet's landholder engagement uplift will be training and equipping AusNet staff so they can effectively handle unique and often complex situations that arise when working with different landholders.
- **Role of EWOV in landholder complaint escalation:** A participant representing landholders inquired about the role that the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (EWOV) has regarding the complaint escalation process for landholders. A participant representing EWOV explained that EWOV now holds jurisdiction over land access for planned works on the existing transmission network. The participant representing EWOV noted that only a small number of complaints have been received in this area, likely due to limited awareness within the industry and among landholders about EWOV's expanded role.
- **Split between AusNet's opex and capex proposal:** A participant raised that they would like to further understand the split between the landholder requests that AusNet will address through its opex and capex. The participant noted that the overall impact for customers remains the same, but flagged it as a future conversation for the Transmission Stakeholder Advisory Panel to understand further.
- **Baseline for landholder engagement:** A participant asked which option will provide an appropriate level of value to meet landholders needs and asked for further clarification on what the baseline of service is. AusNet responded by saying that the minimum option is above what it is currently offering landholders. AusNet spoke

through how the different levels of investment would impact and improve the level of service landholders receive, along with the pros and cons of each level.

- **Risk mitigation through investment landholder engagement:** A participant asked whether selecting a high level of landholder engagement service could serve as a risk mitigation strategy for AusNet, potentially reducing future costs by minimising the need to allocate resources to escalated landholder engagement cases. AusNet responded that providing landholders with better information typically leads to fewer access refusals, which in turn delivers benefits and helps reduce overall costs. AusNet added that it is mindful of not overinvesting in landholder engagement and is seeking the group's perspective to help determine the balance between making meaningful investments that deliver value to landholders and going beyond what is necessary and cost-effective. AusNet stated that it will provide an analysis outlining both the estimated cost and quantified benefits of the landholder engagement uplift, as part of its Transmission Revenue Reset 2027–2032 proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator. The participant responded by noting that while it may not be necessary for AusNet to quantify the benefit, it would be valuable to gain a deeper understanding of how improved landholder engagement will benefit Victorian energy customers through AusNet's investment.

Discussion on AusNet's proposed landholder engagement uplift:

The feedback and discussions from the group that informed the selection of items are outlined below:

- **Opt-out model for notifications:** A participant representing landholders raised the challenge of designing a system that accommodates all landholders, emphasising that an opt-out mechanism for notifications would help cater for the diverse needs and preferences of individual landholders.
- **Opt-out model for notifications:** A discussion was had about whether LACoP level of notifications was required. A participant representing landholders raised that AusNet issuing 48 hour notifications for Inspection and Maintenance activities and not being able to change the access time without renotifying may not be required. It was suggested that landholders could instead opt into this level of notification. Another participant representing landholders added that, in addition it would be valuable for landholders to have a dedicated point of contact within AusNet to raise concerns. The participant representing landholders noted that this uplift represents a significant increase in the level of communication and transparency landholders have historically received from AusNet, positioning the company more effectively to address and resolve potential issues.
- **Providing landholders flexibility regarding notifications:** A participant raised that providing landholders with the choice of being notified 48 hours prior to accessing land could allow landholders with the flexibility to choose a notification option that works for them.
- **Proactive engagement with landholders:** There was a discussion about what proportion of landholders with existing transmission infrastructure AusNet could realistically engage with proactively to establish access agreements. A participant representing landholders suggested that engaging around 2% of landholders would be appropriate. The participant representing landholders expressed the view that widespread proactive engagement may not be necessary, as most landholders are unlikely to be interested unless a specific project or upgrade directly affects their property. However, the participant representing landholders acknowledged the value in proactively engaging a small group and proposed an opt-in model, where landholders can choose to be contacted or easily access information on how to reach out to AusNet when needed.
- **Proactive engagement with landholders:** A participant representing landholders raised that selectively offering proactive engagement to only certain landholders could create contention and lead to issues. Another participant suggested that

AusNet could establish a clear set of principles such as a code of conduct to help provide consistency and transparency. An additional participant representing landholders shared that most landholder issues are individual in nature and generally straightforward to resolve, suggesting that solutions don't need to be overly complex or burdensome.

- **Ongoing review of engagement uplift:** A participant suggested that AusNet should implement a review process for the additional actions taken as part of the engagement uplift. AusNet agreed, noting that the enhanced engagement resources would support ongoing monitoring and updates as necessary.
- **Safety support for landholders:** A participant asked about the enforceability of the safety guidance AusNet would share in its safety campaign. The participant noted that while frameworks exist, they are only effective if actively enforced. AusNet responded by saying that the regulations AusNet would be promoting in its campaign are enforceable through Energy Safe Victoria.
- **Building trust with landholders:** There was further discussion on the importance of removing fear or hesitation among landholders when engaging with AusNet. It was highlighted that building trust is essential, and AusNet should work towards making landholders feel comfortable asking for and receiving support, with the assurance that the primary goal is to help them operate safely and effectively around transmission infrastructure.

Outcome of the discussion:

There was clear support for action to improve landholder experience. AusNet guided the group through each item in the potential options and took clear direction on the mix of options to be included in the overall package. As a result the group agreed on the bundle marked up below:

The bundle of landholder experience improvements we propose will be a combination of A, B & C

*Inclusions selected at Landholder Experience Workshop on 1 May 2025

Improvement Area	OPTION A	OPTION B	OPTION C
Improved land access management & notifications	- Landholder opt-in for notifications - Timing window notifications (not held to) - Landholder requests considered - Proactive establishment of access agreement for 2% of landholders (focus projects & sensitive landholders)* - Proactive safety campaigns occasionally	- Opt-out model for notifications (phased in)* - Adopt key elements of LACoP for access e.g. prior notification (react to landholder specific needs)* - Landholder requests considered & response given* - Land access agreements for ~8% of landholders (focus on agriculture) - Proactive safety annual campaigns*	- Same as option B except: - Opt-out system immediately implemented - To full LACoP requirements for all land access - Land access agreements for ~50% of landholders - Landholders gain self service accounts/portal to manage their properties with AusNet
More personalised services	- Dedicated contact line for landholders - Localised land engagement resources servicing large regions - Enhanced safety support on request basis only*	- Includes all of option A plus - Localised land engagement resources with reduced region size - Proactive safety visits offering advice	- Includes all of option B plus - Engagement resources cover smaller regions - New landholders contacted ASAP on purchase* - Annualised program of safety check-ins and personalised support
Resources required to deliver these improvements			
People required	2 additional engagement/safety resources - FTE to landholder ratio 1 FTE : 2333 landholders - Active case load potential of 90 - 120 - One safety campaign over five years Est cost: \$2M - \$4M	4 additional engagement/safety resources - FTE to landholder ratio 1 FTE : 1750 landholders - Active case load potential of 120 - 160 - Annual safety campaign for five years Est cost: \$7M - \$9M	7 additional engagement/safety resources - FTE to landholder ratio 1 FTE : 1000 landholders - Active case load potential of 210 - 280 - Annual safety campaign same as option 2 Est cost: \$10M - \$12M
Digital systems required	- Modest upgrade to existing ICT - Basic integration across multiple platforms - Enhanced GIS tools Est cost: \$6M - \$8M	- Major upgrade to existing ICT - Deep integration of multiple systems to create land access management system - Deployed into field Est cost: \$11M - \$13M	- Includes all of option B plus - Creation of landholder self service accounts and portal - Maximum elimination of manual processes Est cost: \$14M - \$16M
TOTAL EST. COST	\$8 - \$12M \$0.50 to \$0.75 per end user per annum	\$18M - \$22M \$1.13 to \$1.39 per end user per annum	\$24M - \$28M \$1.51 to \$1.76 per end user per annum

INDICATIVE COST OF SELECTED "BUNDLE"

Resourcing and costs will be reviewed in more detail prior to publishing our Draft Proposal

Wrap up

Glenn Orgias closed the meeting and informed participants:

- AusNet will share a summary of this meeting which will outline the preferred package of services for landholder and community engagement services.
- AusNet will engage further on the preferred package with landholders and other stakeholders through its TRR 2027-2032 draft proposal.

Comments received after the meeting

- AusNet will incorporate the feedback received through its final TRR 2027-2032 proposal, which it will submit to the Australian Energy Regulator on 31 October 2025.
- A social service customer advocate emailed after the meeting to say they do not support passing additional costs on to consumers unless there is a clear benefit for overall Victorian energy users. They noted that many of the proposed improvements, such as consistent case management and proper recording of landholder interactions are the kinds of activities that most consumers would assume are already part of AusNet's standard operations. Ideally, they would have liked to see these investments treated as business-as-usual. They reiterated the suggestion made during the meeting that AusNet should clearly link the proposed improvements in landholder experience to benefits for all Victorian energy users. AusNet confirmed via email that it will be proposing an opex step-change for landholder experience, as that is the appropriate regulatory mechanism for proposing and engaging on the cost trade-offs for uplifts to service levels.

Action items

Action	Assigned to	Status	Due
AusNet to share a summary of outputs of this workshop with participants.	AusNet	Complete	May 2025
AusNet to discuss how landholder engagement might be split between opex and capex with the Transmission Stakeholder Advisory Panel.	AusNet Reg Team	Not started	August 2025
AusNet to quantify the benefits of uplifting its landholder engagement capabilities for all customers, and include in its TRR 2027-2032 draft proposal.	AusNet Transmission Engagement Team	In progress	August 2025
AusNet to investigate the benefits and practicality of implementing a Customer Service Incentive Scheme (CSIS) for its transmission network.	AusNet Reg and Engagement Team	In progress	TBC
Participants to share any further feedback they have following the session with AusNet. Feedback received by Friday 16 May is included in this meeting summary.	Participants	Underway	May 2025