

Powercor Willingness to Pay Research and Engagement

Produced by Quantum Market Research
for Powercor, September 2025



Contents

Background	3
Objectives and methodology	6
Key Summary	9
Section 1: Residential and SMB online survey	12
Methodology	13
Residential and SMB results: SWER line Upgrades	17
Residential and SMB results: Customer Assistance Packages	31
Additional findings: Brand awareness and general perceptions	45
Section 2: C&I Customer Engagement	49
Approach and methodology	50
C&I customer engagements: Current and emerging issues and needs	52
C&I customer engagements: willingness to pay findings – SWER line upgrades	62
C&I customer engagements: willingness to pay findings – Customer Assistance Packages (CAP)	69
Appendices	76



Background



Introduction

Powercor commissioned Quantum Market Research (Quantum) to conduct a willingness to pay program to inform the business cases presented in their 2026-2031 regulatory reset proposal.

Powercor (along with CitiPower and United Energy) previously submitted their proposals for the 2026–2031 regulatory reset. This year, 2025, is the final year of the current five-year strategy period. In this final year, Powercor has the opportunity to strengthen their proposal submissions through the following:

- Responding to questions from the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) and the Energy Market Consulting Association (EMCa)
- Addressing feedback from the Customer Advisory Panel (CAP).
- Reviewing and potentially revising components of the submission ahead of the December 2025 final deadline.
- Obtaining additional research and engagement insights for business cases.

Powercor came to Quantum with two identified business cases that required testing,

1. Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) Line Upgrades to Three-Phase
2. Customer Assistance Packages

During a public forum held by the AER earlier in 2025, the AER said that they would consider a willingness to pay analysis to support these types of business cases.

A copy of Powercor's full draft regulatory reset proposal can be accessed [here](#).

Program Context

Key events in the electricity sector including price shifts, regulatory changes, and outages can shape customer preferences and perceptions, influencing priorities like cost, reliability, sustainability, and trust in energy providers.

Developments that may have influenced customers in 2025 include:

- Bill stress heightened heading into the New Year in early 2025, with 29% of Australians reporting they would struggle to pay their electricity / gas bill over the three months from November 2024. (AusNOW Nov 2024)
- In February 2025, cost of living remained the number one issue for state and federal governments to act on, with 48% of Australians identifying it as a key priority ahead of the 2025 Federal Election. (AusNOW Feb 2025)
- The Australian Energy Regulator [released](#) its draft determination for the Default Market Offer in March 2025, outlining proposed increases to the DMO of between 2.5% and 8.9% for residential customers and between 4.2% and 8.2% for small business customers.
- In March 2025 there was growing anticipation for energy costs to increase, as 75% of Australians expect rises in electricity prices, with 22% believing prices will increase by more than 20%. Over a third of Australians (38%) believe the Australian Government does not have enough involvement in the energy market (AusNOW April 2025).
- A greater focus on renewable energy continues, with 36% of Australian households reporting they have solar panels. (AusNOW April 2025).
- Over the year to April 2025, reducing energy costs remained at the forefront of Australian households, with 40% of Australians intentionally reducing their electricity consumption, 26% comparing energy retailers' prices. Nearly two thirds of Australians (68%) said they were at least somewhat likely to change the time of day they use major appliances to reduce their bills. (AusNOW April 2025).
- In April 2025, 47% of Australians wanted their energy provider to focus on affordability, in addition to energy efficiency, urban livability and a reduction in environmental impact. (AusNOW April 2025).
- A review into the Default Market Offer was [announced](#) by the Australian Government on 18 June 2025. A series of proposals were unveiled, with public consultation open to submissions until 18 July 2025.
- The Australian Government [invested](#) an additional \$1.8 billion towards the Energy Bill Relief Fund (EBRF), extending bill relief to eligible households and small businesses from 1 July 2025 until the end of the year.
- A mechanical failure at the Yallourn Power Station, supplying roughly 20% of Victoria's electricity, [sparked](#) concerns about the reliance on aging coal-fired infrastructure and its potential to increase wholesale electricity prices higher.
- The Victorian Default offer prices [increased](#) from 1 July 2025, by an average of 1% for domestic customers and 3% for small business customers across their annual bill. This applied to AusNet Services, CitiPower, Jemena, Powercor and United Energy.

Program objectives and methodology



Engagement Objectives

The objectives of this willingness to pay program were designed in response to Powercor's business objectives in relation to their 2026-2031 regulatory reset proposal.

Powercor business objectives

Through this program Quantum supported Powercor to:

- Develop and deliver regulatory reset proposals that align with and address customer energy needs and preferences.
- Ensure regulatory and strategic decisions are backed by robust community insights.

Regulatory engagement objectives

The willingness to pay program will:

- Strengthen the final proposal for the final 2025 submission by integrating new insights that support updating business cases.
- Address AER and EMCa feedback through detailed clarifications, supplementary insights, and evidence-based responses.
- Respond to Customer Advisory Panel proposal recommendations.
- Validate or seek further evidence for key programs (SWER line upgrades and Customer Assistance Packages) through additional engagement and research.
- Stand up to the AER acceptance criteria as outlined in the Better Reset Handbook.



Considerations in developing approach

Quantum designed this research program to meet the outlined business and research objectives of Powercor. Quantum took into consideration the following factors when designing the approach.

Research had already been conducted and published

Engagement and research had already been conducted on both business cases where customer needs were identified. Powercor responded via further engagement to understand desired outcomes, and refined initiatives to ensure they are fit-for-purpose. In some cases WTP research has been conducted.

This research built upon the important work that had already been undertaken to ensure that WTP objectives for each business case were met explicitly.

Simplicity to ease cognition

Both concepts require us to equip residents and business decision makers to enable concepts to be fairly evaluated in the chosen research environment. A careful balance between education whilst maintaining engagement and minimising fatigue was sought.

Working with Powercor Quantum developed stimuli within the research instrument that concisely and clearly conveys the business cases and the benefits to the community to maximise data quality.

Audience

C&I customers represent 1% whilst residential customer represent 87% of the customer base. C&I customers also consume 55% of all energy generated.

Due to the differing qualities of these audiences, Quantum developed different approaches to engage with residential and small business audiences versus C&I customers.

Stand up to the AER acceptance criteria

The research needed to be conducted with sincerity, and in partnership with Powercor customers to derive accurate measures of consumer preferences. The surveys were carefully designed to ensure that all participants were equipped to evaluate business cases.

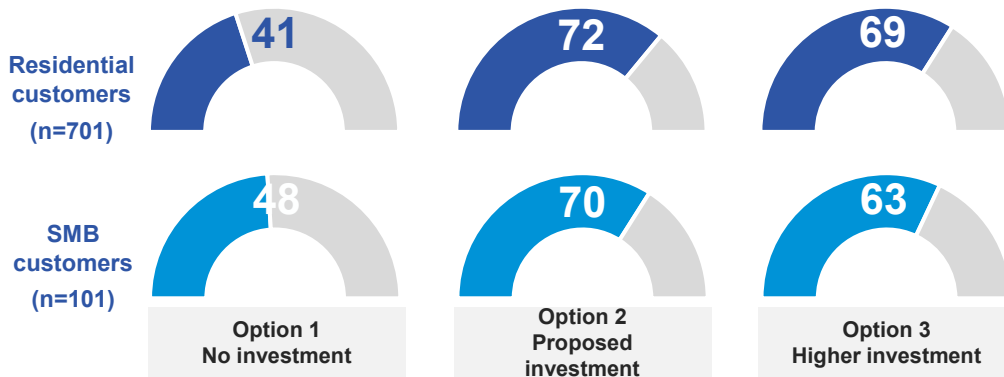
Quantum developed the most appropriate and accurate approach to willingness to pay, without incorporating unnecessary complexity.

Key summary

Key Summary

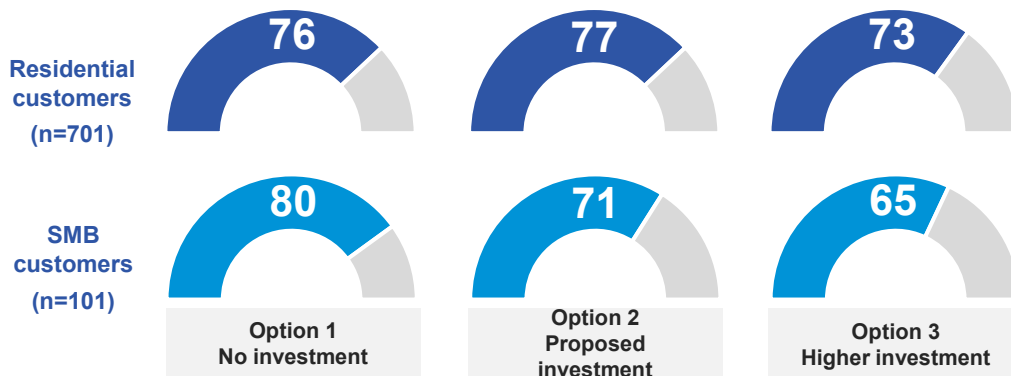
Residential and SMB Customer Results

Net willingness to pay for each proposed option under the SWER line upgrade initiative (%)



- Residential customers and SMB customers demonstrated the highest levels of support for option 2 (current proposed option) for the SWER line upgrade initiative.
- 72% of residential customers supported Powercor's intention to fund option 2.
- 70% of SMB customers supported Powercor's intention to fund option 2.
- Primary reasons for supporting this initiative included improved energy reliability for customers, modernising the infrastructure, and supporting regional communities to have similar access to electricity as those in urban areas.

Net willingness to pay for each proposed option under the Customer Assistance Packages initiative (%)



- Residential customers provided similar levels of support across option 1 (maintaining the CAP program as it is today) (76%) and expanding the packages under option 2 (77%).
- SMB owners and financial decision makers showed their highest level of support for maintaining the CAP program as it is today (80%), with support from SMB customers decreasing for option 2 (71%) and option 3 (65%).

Key Summary

C&I Customer Results

C&I customers current and emerging issues and needs

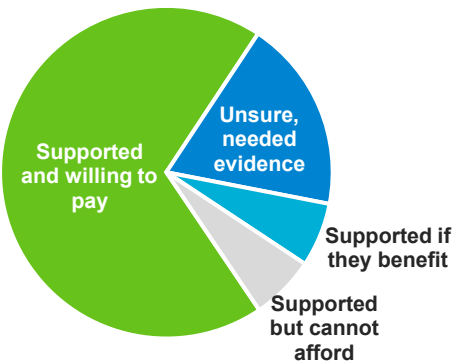
C&I customers' priorities remained similar to those expressed in the engagement in 2024 with energy reliability and power quality, decarbonisation and sustainability, relationship management, and costs remaining as top priorities. However, many C&I did expand upon the actions they were taking and/or provided updates on the support and feedback sought from Powercor.

These included seeking greater information from Powercor about the work being done to ensure the resiliency of the network as climate related events increase (ex. Flooding and bushfires), information on emergency backstop mechanisms, and for Powercor to act as a trusted advisor on renewable energy options and infrastructure.

C&I customers willingness to pay for SWER line upgrades

Most C&I customers were willing to pay for the SWER upgrades to three-phase, with only one customer opposing the proposal on a cost basis. All customers who were willing to pay for option 2 (as currently proposed) were also willing to pay for option 3 (a higher investment).

Those who were unsure if they were willing to pay sought further evidence that this was the most efficient and cost-effective solution.

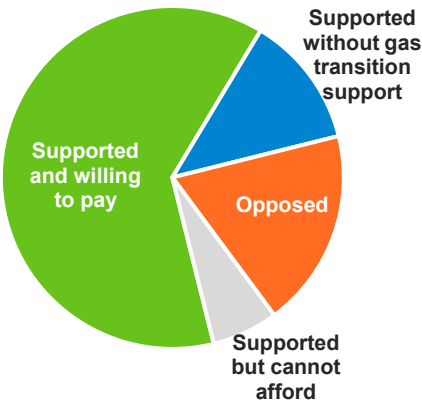


C&I customers willingness to pay for Customer Assistance Packages

Overall, C&I customers tended to support CAP initiative, one C&I customer opposed the proposal because of the cost.

Two customers who supported the proposed option 2 did not support option 3 (higher investment) because it included increased support for customers to transition away from gas.

Three C&I customers opposed the CAP proposal because they felt that some or all of the packages were not within Powercor's remit, these opposers typically deemed Energy Advisory Services to be the only element within Powercor's remit.



Section 1

Residential and SMB online survey



Methodology

Two separate program streams were developed based on audience considerations. One approach was tailored to residential and small business customers, the second tailored to C&I customers.

1. Online survey for residents and small businesses

Methodology

An online quantitative survey was designed to test willingness to pay among residential and small business owners and financial decision makers in the Powercor area.



Online quantitative survey with respondents sourced from an AS ISO 20252 accredited online panel supplier.



Survey was programmed and hosted by Quantum Market Research.



Fieldwork was conducted between 17th of July and 28th of July 2025.



Average survey length was 10 minutes.



The residential sample was representative of Powercor households spread across Greater Melbourne and Regional Areas with quotas applied to age and gender. The SMB sample was defined as SMB owners or financial decision makers with businesses within the Powercor distribution region, these fell out within the sample.



Residential data was weighted by age and gender across regional and Greater Melbourne areas based on ABS 2021 Census Data. Household Census data was used to calculate the balance between Greater Melbourne and regional responses.

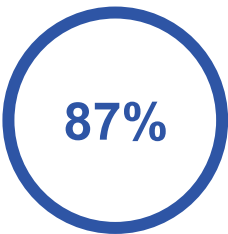
- The maximum margin of error (at the 95% confidence interval) on the total sample size is +/- 3.458%. Where significance testing has been shown, results are significant at the 95% significance level.
- The project was carried out in line with the Market Research International Standard, AS ISO 20252.
- The total sample size was n=802, breakdown by sample type and area provided below.

Region	Residential (n=)	SMB (n=)	Total (n=)
Greater Melbourne	318	50	368
Regional	383	51	434
Total	701	101	802

Sample – Residential

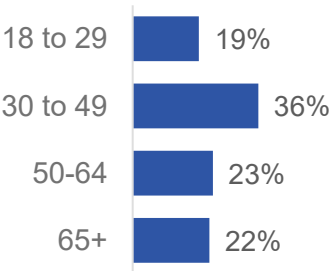
Who we spoke to among Powercor residential customers (weighted sample)

Sample type (% of total sample)

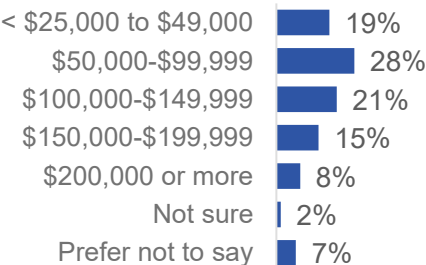


Residential

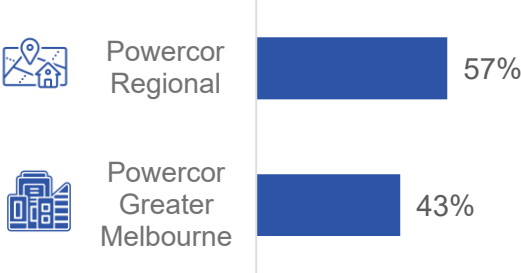
Age



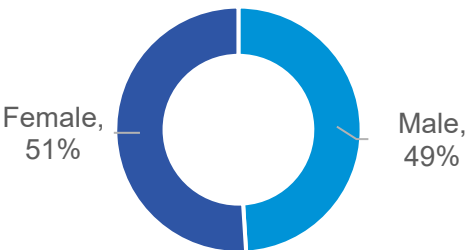
Annual household income (residential)



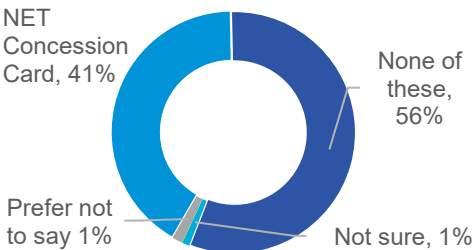
Residential Area



Gender



Concession card holders



Sample - SMB

Who we spoke to among Powercor small to medium (SMB) owners and financial decision makers

Sample type (% of total sample)



Business Region Area



Powercor
Regional

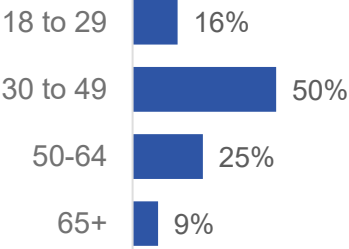
50%



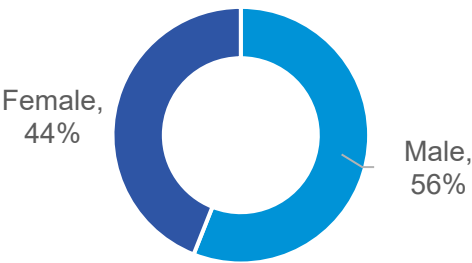
Powercor
Greater
Melbourne

50%

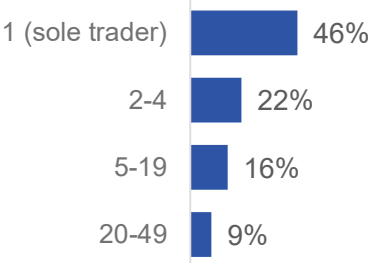
Age



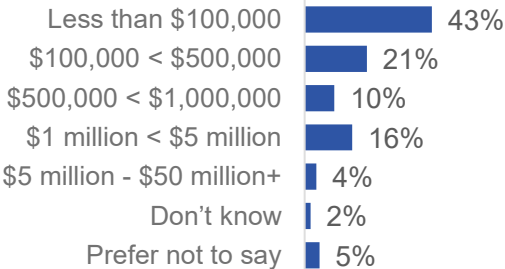
Gender



Number of employees



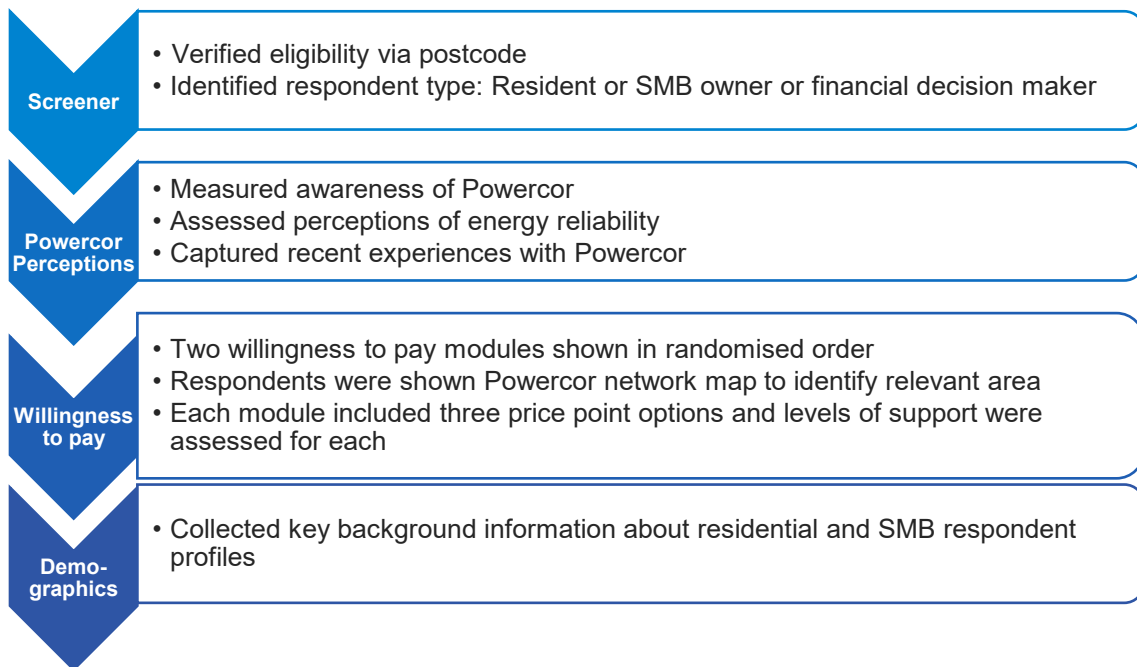
Annual turnover



Quantitative Survey Structure

The residential and SMB survey was designed to address key research objectives while ensuring a clear and logical experience for respondents. To achieve this, a structured and user-friendly questionnaire flow was developed.

Overview of quantitative survey flow



Map of the Powercor network area



Residential and SMB results: SWER line Upgrades



Willingness to Pay Research,
September, 2025

17

Confidential - Not for Public Consumption or Distribution

Quantum
Market
Research

Willingness to Pay - SWER Line Upgrades

Overall summary of results

Customers tended to be supportive of SWER line upgrades, with 72% of residential customers and 70% of small business customers supportive of option 2 (the investment already proposed by Powercor).

While support of the program was consistent between residential and SMBs, residential customers were more likely than SMBs to actively oppose no upgrade to the system (35% residential vs. 22% SMB).

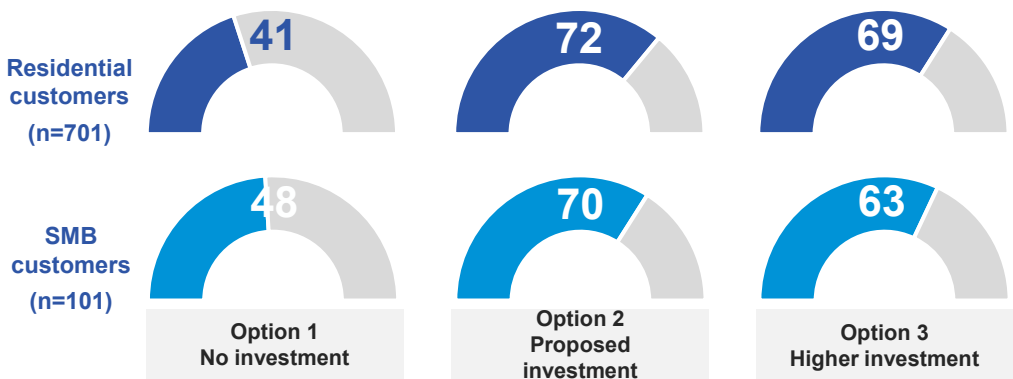
Contrary to expectation, Melbourne-based SMB customers were significantly more likely to be supportive of upgrade option 3 compared to their regional counterparts (74% support in Greater Melbourne vs. 53% in regional Victoria); a similar tendency was observed for option 2 (78% support in Greater Melbourne vs. 63% in regional Victoria) though this did not achieve statistical significance. Melbourne based SMBs were more likely to express a concern that regional customers should have access to reliable energy compared to regional SMBs (70% Greater Melbourne vs 44% regional).

There were no differences in level of overall support (i.e. strongly / somewhat support) for the upgrades (option 2 or 3) between residents in Greater Melbourne vs. regional Victoria, although for option 2 regional residents were more likely to **strongly** support the initiative (43%) compared to those living in Greater Melbourne (33%). Key reasons for supporting the SWER line upgrades were a belief that regional residents deserve to have a reliable electricity supply (64%) and that it is important to modernise the network (21%); there were no differences between regional and Greater Melbourne residents in terms of reasons for support.

Households that had at least one concession card holder resident were more likely than those who did not to strongly oppose option 3, but only in regional areas (12% concession card household vs 5% non-concession card household, regional only). However, regional concession card households were also more likely to strongly oppose **not** upgrading the SWER lines (option 1) compared to regional non-concession card households (17% concession card household vs 9% non-concession card household).

No differences in support for SWER line upgrades by concession card status were observed in Greater Melbourne.

Net support for each proposed option under the SWER line upgrade initiative (%)



Willingness to Pay - SWER Line Upgrades

Overview of tested options

Residents and SMB were first presented with the general concept of upgrades to SWER lines to assess levels of support. They were then shown three specific investment options, which were tested for willingness to pay among customers.

SWER Line Upgrades - General Concept

Powercor is proposing to upgrade some SWER lines to three-phase lines, which are designed to deliver larger amounts of energy with better reliability.

Customers would be less likely to experience outages and would be more able to export solar, charge electric vehicles and power heavy machinery.

Option 1

Do nothing “status quo”

The program continues as is, all regional and regional customers will experience the same outcomes as they do today and there would be no additional cost (\$) to your energy bill per year.

Regional and rural communities would continue to have:

- their day-to-day activities impacted by outages
- less ability to export solar energy or charge electric vehicles than urban and city customers
- more frequent and longer unplanned outages due to a higher risk of equipment failure
- planned outages, as their lines require increased maintenance



Option 2

As currently in Powercor’s proposal

The program upgrades 606km of SWER lines to three-phase lines and delivered the following benefits for Powercor’s worst served customers:

- 1,310 households and businesses would have access to more electricity that would allow them to fully ‘electrify’ or grow their businesses.
- Better protection against bushfires along 606km of electricity lines.
- 577 households and businesses will have less issues with the quality of their power supply, which reduces the risk of their appliances failing or being damaged.

Bill impact:

Residential \$1.47

SMB \$3.56



Option 3

A higher investment than currently proposed

The program upgrades 1,160km of SWER lines to three-phase lines and delivered the following benefits for Powercor’s worst served customers:

- 2,117 households and businesses would have access to more electricity that would allow them to fully ‘electrify’ or grow their businesses.
- Better protection against bushfires along 1,160km of electricity lines.
- 654 households and businesses will have less issues with the quality of their power supply, which reduces the risk of their appliances failing or being damaged.

Bill impact:

Residential \$2.09

SMB \$5.07



Willingness to pay testing

Willingness to Pay

SWER Line Upgrades - General Initiative (Uncosted)

Customers were introduced to the proposed SWER line upgrade initiative without financial context, to gauge levels of support. Customers were then presented with three costed options – one option to maintain lines as they are with no investment, one at Powercor’s proposed price, and one with a greater reach and price than proposed.

Proposed SWER upgrade initiative (uncosted) as presented to customers

Single wire earth return (SWER) line upgrades to three-phase

The electricity distribution network is made up of 3 different types of powerlines; Single Wire Earth Return (SWER), two-wire single phase and three-phase powerlines.

SWER networks rolled out in the 1960s were designed for remote or regional locations as a low-cost solution for providing lights and refrigeration to areas with a low number of customers spread over large areas. In the Powercor network today, around 28,000 customers get electricity through 21,300 kilometres of SWER power lines.

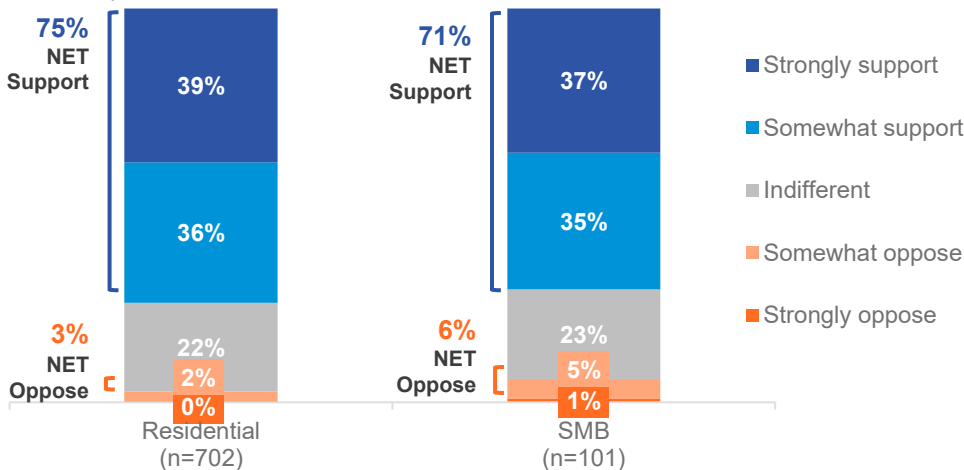
These remote and regional customers typically receive less reliable power compared to urban customers.

- Their day to day activities are more likely to be impacted by outages,
- They are less able to export solar or charge an electric vehicle
- They experience more and longer unplanned outages because of increased risk of failing
- They experience more planned outages as these lines require more maintenance

Powercor is proposing to upgrade some SWER lines to three-phase lines, which are designed to deliver larger amounts of energy with better reliability. Customers would be less likely to experience outages and would be more able to export solar, charge electric vehicles and power heavy machinery

Extent that customers support/oppose the proposed SWER line upgrade initiative – no financial context

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q17 To what extent do you oppose or support Powercor investing in SWER line upgrades to three-phase?

Willingness to Pay




SWER Line Upgrades - Supporters

Customers supported the upgrades to ensure everyone has access to reliable energy, has the ability to access consumer energy sources (EV's and solar panels) and simply because these upgrades are necessary.

- Three in four (75%) residential customers supported Powercor's proposed initiative to upgrade some SWER lines to three-phase lines, as did 71% of SMB customers.
- Residents and SMB customers who supported the upgrades said their primary reason for providing support was a belief that everyone should have access to a reliable energy supply (72% of residents and 64% of SMB).

Top three reasons for supporting the proposed SWER line initiative

Base: Customers who strongly or somewhat support the SWER line initiative, n in brackets

	Residential (n=525)	SMB (n=72)
 Ensuring everyone has access to reliable energy supply	72%	64%
 Enabling customers to have access to consumer energy resources	25%	28%
 The upgrades are important and necessary	16%	31%

Q17a Why do you support Powercor investing in upgrading the SWER line upgrades to three-phase?

- Another key reason for supporting the upgrades was to enable all customers to have access to consumer energy resources (such as EV's and solar panel) (25% of residents and 28% of SMB) which highlighted the importance of future proofing the network for customers.
- Many residents (16%) and SMB (31%) simply supported the upgrades because they view them as important and necessary.

“

Because regional customers should have access to a reliable service just as city customers are. In fact in some ways it is more important for regional customers as so many are in farming and the supply of our basic necessities such as milk, vegetables , meat etc If their power supply is disrupted during milking/harvesting which could lead to possible loss of that days work the cost carries on down to the consumer as they need to cover their losses

Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer

“

We rely on stable electricity supply and for some this reliance is life saving, if we can increase stability of the system then I am in favour of upgrades

**Powercor SMB
(Greater Melbourne)
customer**

“

Because a safe and reliable source of power is a basic need wherever you live. Frequent power outages are not just inconvenient, they can be dangerous.

Powercor Residential (Regional) customer

Willingness to Pay - SWER Line Upgrades




Indifferent Customers

The most common reasons for Powercor customers being indifferent to the SWER line initiative were needing more information (especially regarding costs) or feeling that the initiative would not benefit them.

- Just over one in five residential (22%) and SMB (23%) customers stated that they were indifferent (neither in support of nor in opposition to) of Powercor's proposed initiative to upgrade some SWER lines to three-phase lines.
- The top reason among residents (37%) and SMB (30%) customers for being indifferent towards the upgrades was because they needed more information, specifically in relation to the costs and who would benefit from these upgrades.
- The second most common reason for indifference towards the upgrades was because the upgrades would not benefit them (21% of resident) or their business (13% of SMB).

Top three reasons for being indifferent towards the proposed SWER line initiative

Base: Customers who were indifferent to the SWER line initiative, n in brackets below.

		Residential (n=157)	SMB (n=23*)
	Need more information about costs/who will benefit	37%	30%
	Support the idea but has no benefit to my household/business	21%	13%
	No feelings either way	19%	13%

Q17b You indicated you neither support nor oppose Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer?

- Among those who were indifferent to the upgrades 19% of residents and 13% of SMB said this was simply because they had no strong feelings either way and could not identify a root cause behind their indifference.

I have no information about how the proposed change will financially affect me, as I do not live in a regional area that would be a beneficiary of these changes.

Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer

I didn't believe I will be affected by these works

Powercor SMB (Greater Melbourne) customer

I am considered regional so I need more information about how well this will work for my household.

Powercor Residential (Regional) customer

I don't really have enough knowledge or info.' to judge. In general, I support, but at what cost?, who pays?, what is the cost/benefit to different groups?

Powercor Residential (Regional) customer

Willingness to Pay - SWER Line Upgrades Opposers

Among customers who opposed the proposed initiative, nearly all of their concerns were related to the cost that would be incurred by Powercor and/or their customers.

- A small proportion of residential (3%) and SMB (6%) customers said they would oppose Powercor's investment in the SWER line initiative.
- There were negligible differences in opposition by region among residential customers, as 4% of those in Greater Melbourne and 2% in regional areas opposed the initiative.
- Similarly, among SMB, 8% of customers in Greater Melbourne and 4% in regional areas were opposed to a potential investment in the SWER line initiative.

Example verbatim reasons for not supporting towards the proposed SWER line initiative

Base: Customers who were opposed to the SWER line initiative, n=20 residents and n=6 SMB.



I did not support Powercor's proposal because though it might be necessary – the impact it could have on our electricity might take a toll on people's bills. They should consider the wellbeing of the community by not increasing the prices.

Powercor SMB (Greater Melbourne) customer



28,000 seems like a minimal amount to be doing all this work for. The work outweighs the outcome.

Powercor SMB (Greater Melbourne) customer



Upgrades usually end up being costly and less reliable.

Powercor Residential (Regional) customer



I manage with how it is now and if they upgrade they will increase costs.

Powercor Residential (Regional) customer



I think it should be done on a fair basis i.e. depend on their income and asset worth. for those who cannot afford the additional charge then it is fair to support them but otherwise those who have decided to build far from the main network and have the capacity to pay, should do so. Assistance should be offered to those REALLY in need.

Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer

Q17c You indicated you do not support Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer?



Willingness to Pay

SWER Line Upgrades – Option 1 No Investment

Residential customers were significantly more likely than SMB customers to oppose Powercor continuing the SWER program as it is today (with no funding provided to upgrade the lines)

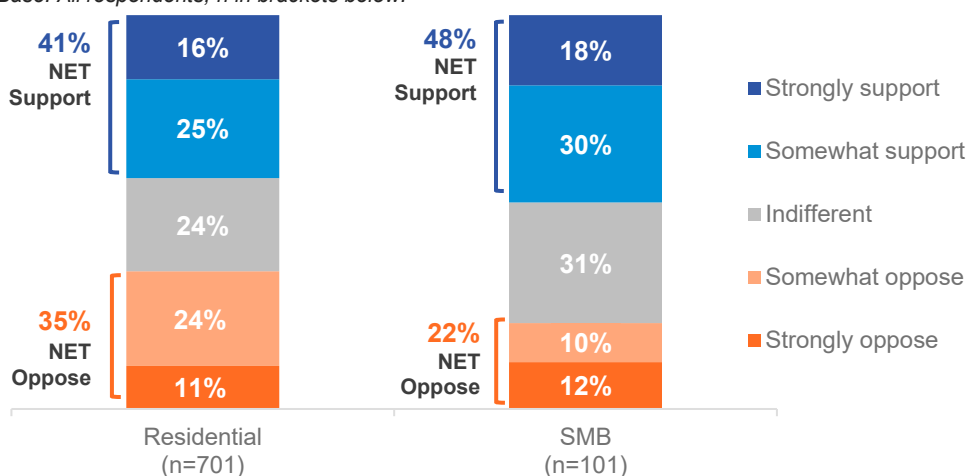
Proposed SWER Line Upgrades Option 1 (no investment) as presented to customers

The program continues as is, all regional and regional customers will experience the same outcomes as they do today and there would be no additional cost (\$) to your energy bill per year.

- Two in five residential (41%) and just under half (48%) of SMB customers said they would support Powercor continuing the program as it is today – meaning no additional cost to customers' bills and no improvement in power reliability for regional and regional customers.
- Just over a third (35%) of residential customers said they would oppose Powercor continuing the program as it is today, significantly higher than SMB customers (22%).

Extent that customers support Powercor continuing the program as it is today?

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q.18 To what extent would you support Powercor continuing the program as it is today?

- There were no significant differences in support nor opposition by region among residential customers.
- Powercor residential customers aged 18-29 (26%) were significantly less likely to oppose Powercor continuing the program as it is today (compared to 37% of those aged 30 and over).
- Among residents, regional concession card households were more likely to strongly oppose not upgrading the SWER lines (option 1) compared to regional non-concession card households (17% concession card household vs 9% non-concession card household).
- Women (40%) were significantly more likely than men (30%) to oppose continuing the program as it is today.
- Among SMB customers, 22% in Greater Melbourne and 20% in regional areas said they opposed Powercor continuing the program as it is today.

Willingness to Pay

SWER Line Upgrades – Option 2

Powercor's Proposed Investment

There was strong support for Powercor's proposed SWER line upgrade initiative (option 2), with equal levels of support provided by residential and SMB customers when informed about the cost of this option.

Proposed SWER Line Upgrades Option 2 (Powercor's proposed investment) as presented to customers

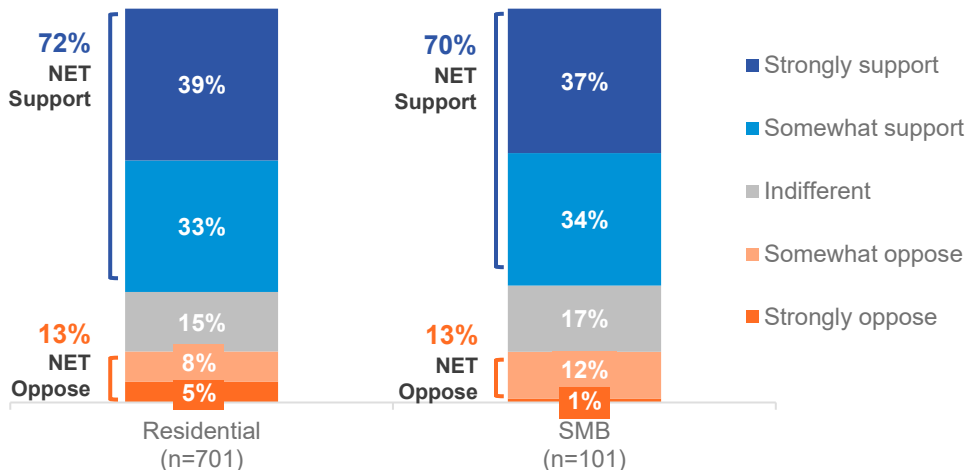
If the program upgraded 606km of SWER lines to three-phase lines, cost you an additional [If Residential \$1.47] [If SME \$3.56] on your electricity bill per year and delivered the following benefits for Powercor's worst served customers:

- 1,310 households and businesses would have access to more electricity that would allow them to fully 'electrify' (for example exporting solar onto the network or charging electric vehicles) or grow their businesses (for example use electricity to automate processes).
- Better protection against bushfires along 606km of electricity lines.
- 577 households and businesses will have less issues with the quality of their power supply, which reduces the risk of their appliances failing or being damaged (for example, fridge, air conditioner, TV).

- Just over seven in ten (72%) residential Powercor customers supported Powercor's proposal to fund SWER line upgrades, with the knowledge that this would involve an increase of \$1.47 on their annual household energy bill.
- Similarly, 70% of SMB owners and financial decision makers supported Powercor's proposal to fund SWER line upgrades, with the knowledge that this would involve an increase of \$3.56 on their business' annual energy bill.
- Among residential customers, 13% opposed the proposal of this initiative under option 2, with 13% of SMB owners and financial decision makers opposing this proposed option for SWER line upgrades.

Extent that customers support Powercor implementing Option 2?

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q19 To what extent would you support Powercor implementing OPTION 2 SWER upgrade initiative ?

- There were similar support levels across residential regions for option 2 of the SWER line initiative, with 71% of those in Greater Melbourne areas and 73% of those in regional Victoria supporting this option.
- Residential customers in regional Victoria were significantly more likely to strongly support this initiative than those in Greater Melbourne areas (43% vs. 33%).

Willingness to Pay

SWER Line Upgrades – Option 3 Higher Investment than Proposed

Support for option 3 under the proposed SWER line upgrade initiative was slightly lower compared to option 2, with support declining as the cost of funding the proposed initiative increased.

Proposed SWER Line Upgrades Option 3 (higher investment) as presented to customers

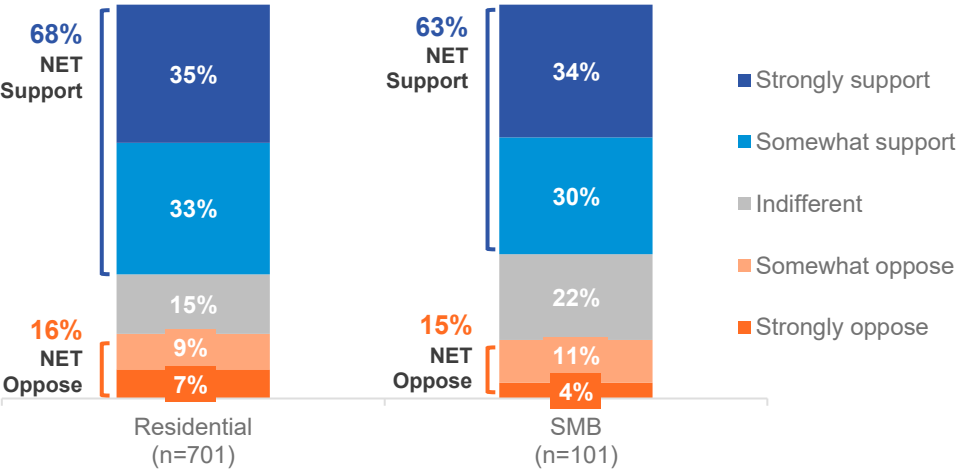
If the program upgraded 1,160km of SWER lines to three-phase lines, costs you an additional [If Residential \$2.09] [If SME \$5.07] on your electricity bill per year and delivered the following benefits for Powercor's worst served customers:

- 2,117 households and businesses would have access to more electricity that would allow them to fully 'electrify' (for example exporting solar onto the network or charging electric vehicles) or grow their businesses (for example use electricity to automate processes).
- Better protection against bushfires along 1,160km of electricity lines.
- 654 households and businesses will have less issues with the quality of their power supply, which reduces the risk of their appliances failing or being damaged (for example, fridge, air conditioner, TV).

- Just over two thirds (68%) of residential Powercor customers supported Powercor's proposal to fund SWER line upgrades, with the knowledge that this would involve an increase of \$2.09 on their annual household energy bill.
- Support was slightly lower among SMB customers, as 63% of SMB owners and financial decision makers supported Powercor's proposal to fund SWER line upgrades, with the knowledge that this would involve an increase of \$5.07 on their business' annual energy bill.
- Similar proportions of residential customers (16%) and SMB customers (15%) opposed option 3 under the proposed SWER line upgrade initiative.
- A fifth (22%) of SMB owners and financial decision makers stated indifference (neither support nor opposition) to option 3, as did 15% of residential customers.

Extent that customers support Powercor implementing Option 3?

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q20 To what extent would you support Powercor implementing OPTION 3 SWER upgrade initiative?

Willingness to Pay

SWER Line Upgrades - Option 3 Higher Investment than Proposed

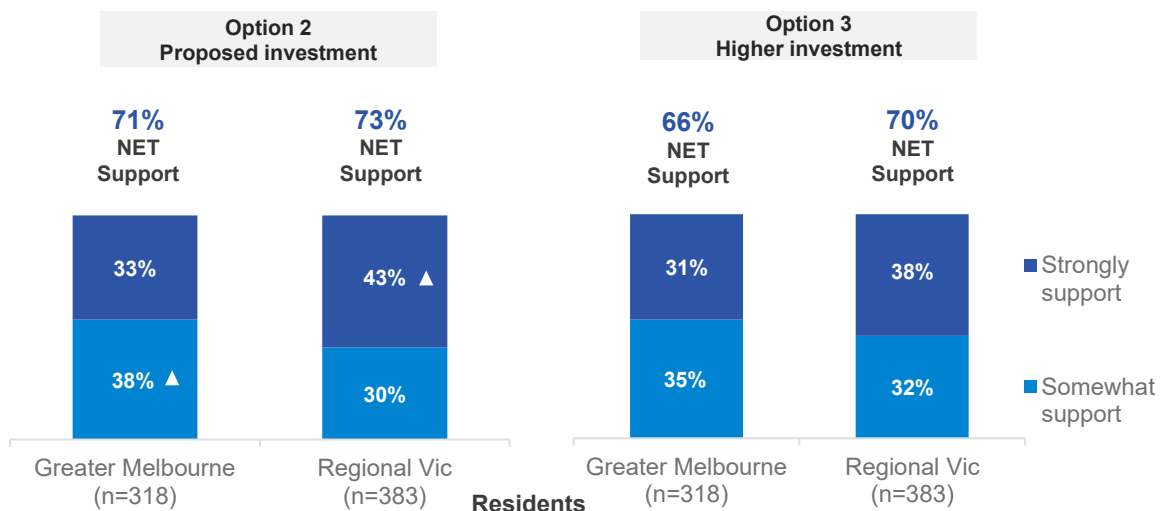
- As for option 3, SMB owners and decision makers with businesses in Greater Melbourne areas were significantly more likely to strongly support this option compared to those with businesses in regional areas (44% vs. 22%), and more likely to support this option overall (72% vs. 54%).
- Households that had at least one concession card holder resident were more likely than those who did not to strongly oppose option 3, but only in regional areas (12% concession card household vs 5% non-concession card household, regional only).

Willingness to pay for option 2 and option 3 of the SWER upgrades investments were compared by residing region

- Willingness to pay for SWER line upgrades did not significantly differ by region, for option 2 (the proposed investment) nor option 3 (the higher investment option). This finding disproved a previous business hypothesis that anticipated that residents of regional Victoria would be more likely to be willing to pay for upgrades (in regional areas) than residents in greater Melbourne/metro areas.
- There were, however, some variations by region in relation to the extent that residents supported investment in option 2. Residents in Regional Victoria were significantly more likely to strongly support investment in Option 2 compared to residents in Greater Melbourne, but this difference does not translate to overall willingness to pay for this option.

Breakdown of willingness to pay among supporters of Option 2 and 3 by residing region (%)

Base: All residents, n in brackets below.



Q19 - To what extent would you support Powercor implementing OPTION 2 SWER upgrade initiative?

Q20 - To what extent would you support Powercor implementing OPTION 3 SWER upgrade initiative?

Willingness to Pay - SWER Line Upgrades

Residential supporters

When viewed by location (greater Melbourne vs. rural and regional) residents shared their top two reasons for supporting but varied on their third reason. Residents in greater Melbourne were more likely to support the upgrades to improve the lives of their rural counterparts, whereas regional/rural residents simply support the upgrades because they are necessary.

- Regardless of their residing location achieving equitable energy supply and resources for all customers were the top reasons for supporting the SWER upgrades.
- Among residents who supported the upgrades, the top two reasons for supporting were to ensure everyone has access to a reliable energy supply (71% of greater Melbourne and 73% of regional/rural residents) and enable all customers to be able to access consumer energy resources (24% of greater Melbourne and 27% of regional/rural residents).
- There was some variation by location among those who support the upgrades. Supporters in greater Melbourne said they provided support because the upgrades will improve the quality of life of residents in rural areas (18%), while those in rural areas provided support because the upgrades are necessary to them (16%).

Top three reasons for supporting the proposed SWER line initiative by residing region

Base: Residential customers who support the SWER upgrade general concept by greater Melbourne (n=240) and Regional Vic (n=284).

	Greater Melbourne	Regional or rural
1	71% Ensuring everyone has access to reliable energy supply Everyone needs access to reliable, efficient, and consistent energy supply <i>"Because everyone should have access to reliable electricity"</i> Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer	73% Ensuring everyone has access to reliable energy supply Everyone needs access to reliable, efficient, and consistent energy supply <i>"Because a safe and reliable source of power is a basic need wherever you live. Frequent power outages are not just inconvenient, they can be dangerous."</i> Powercor Residential (Regional) customer
2	24% Enabling customers to access consumer energy resources Future proofing infrastructure, enabling customers to access resources such as EV's and solar panels <i>"future proof, early detection of unforeseen problems and issues, ample preparation, reliability, required for latest products"</i> Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer	27% Enabling customers to access consumer energy resources Future proofing infrastructure, enabling customers to access resources such as EV's and solar panels <i>"Technologies like solar power and EV vehicles are going to keep on increasing, as will the population"</i> Powercor Residential (Regional) customer
3	18% Providing a better quality of life for rural communities <i>"I have family and friends who live in rural areas and why shouldn't they have the same reliable access as I do in metro Melbourne!"</i> Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer	16% The upgrades are important and necessary <i>"Because it sounds like it needs to happen."</i> Powercor Residential (Regional) customer

Q17a Why do you support Powercor investing in upgrading the SWER line upgrades to three-phase?

Willingness to Pay - SWER Line Upgrades SMB Supporters

SMB customers shared their top reasons for supporting the SWER upgrades regardless of location. However, SMB customers in regional or rural Victoria were more likely to view the upgrades as important and necessary than those in greater Melbourne.

- SMB customers in greater Melbourne (73%) and regional/rural locations (50%) also shared their top reason for supporting the upgrades, which was to ensure everyone has access to reliable energy.
- However, SMB supporters with business in regional or rural areas (43%) were slightly more likely than their greater Melbourne (22%) counterparts to say they supported the upgrades because they are important and necessary. This is indicative of how rural SMBs view these upgrades as a necessity to sustain their businesses.
- Regardless of location, SMBs also highlighted the important of enabling all customers to have access to consumer energy resources as a key reason for supporting the upgrades (29% greater Melbourne, 27% regional/rural).

Top three reasons for supporting the proposed SWER line initiative by SMB region

Base: : SMB customers who support the SWER upgrade general concept by greater Melbourne (n=41) and Regional Vic (n=30*).

	Greater Melbourne	Regional or rural
1	73% Ensuring everyone has access to reliable energy supply Everyone needs access to reliable, efficient, and consistent energy supply <i>"Because no matter where an Australian resides, they should have access to equitable services. It is a responsibility of government to enable equitable services to their taxpayers."</i> Powercor SMB (Greater Melbourne)	50% <i>"Current supply's are unreliable and costing everyone money"</i> Powercor SMB (Regional) customer
2	29% Enabling customers to access consumer energy resources <i>"I think this upgrade would help people in remote locations to more reliable and more sustainable energy"</i> Powercor SMB (Greater Melbourne) customer	43% The upgrades are important and necessary <i>"We are on a SWER and experience significant outages both planned and unplanned, the need for 3 phase power in rural and remote areas is now a need not a want."</i> Powercor SMB (Regional) customer
3	22% The upgrades are important and necessary <i>"Why! It's not rocket science, if it can help other people supply more power and help them in their day to day work environment thats a big achievement."</i> Powercor SMB (Greater Melbourne) customer	27% Enabling customers to access consumer energy resources <i>"It is necessary to make sure all equipment is up to date and efficient, despite any inconveniences."</i> Powercor SMB (Regional) customer

Q17a Why do you support Powercor investing in upgrading the SWER line upgrades to three-phase?

SWER Upgrades - Summary



Resi and SMB customers are willing to pay for Option 2 or Option

- Residential and SMB customers expressed high levels of willingness to pay for Option 2 (as currently included in Powercor's proposal) and Option 3 which was presented as a higher investment.
- Customers also expressed low levels of support for maintaining the SWER lines as they are today.



Business hypothesis has been disproved

- Greater Melbourne and Regional customers were willing to pay for Option 2 and Option 3 investments.
- There were no significant differences in willingness to pay for SWER line upgrades between customers in Greater Melbourne and Regional Victoria.



Improving conditions for rural communities vs. a need for necessary upgrades

- While willingness to pay did not vary by location, the some reasons for supporting the initiative did.
- Greater Melbourne residential customers were more likely to be mindful that upgrades would improve quality of life for rural customers, while Regional residents focused on the upgrades being necessary.

Residential and SMB results: Customer Assistance Packages

Willingness to Pay

Customer Assistance Packages – Overall summary of results

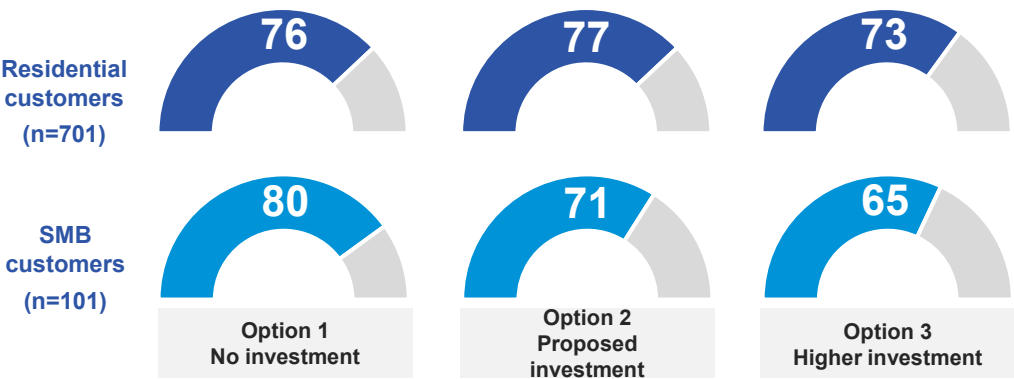
Both residential and SMB customers tended to supportive of Customer Assistance Packages. While support tended to be slightly lower for SMBs than residents, this difference was not statistically significant. Support tended to hinge on a belief that those in need of additional assistance and/or financial literacy education should be provided it.

Only 3% of residents and 7% of SMBs opposed the Customer Assistance Packages in principle (before the various options were shown). Those who opposed the Packages tended to feel that these programs were either already provided by energy retailers or the government (or should be) and were concerned about costs that would be passed on to consumers.

While there were no significant differences in support for the Customer Assistance Packages between residents in Greater Melbourne vs regional Victoria, there was a significant difference between these regions for SMBs. SMBs in Melbourne were significantly more likely than those in regional areas to support option 2 (84% Greater Melbourne vs. 59% regional Victoria) and option 3 (82% Greater Melbourne vs. 49% regional Victoria).

While there were no differences by location for residents, those who lived in a household with concession cards were less likely to support option 3 compared to those who did not (68% concession card households vs. 77% non-concession card households). This trend held for option 2, but the difference between the groups was much smaller and not statistically significant (73% concession card households vs. 80% non-concession card households).

Net support for each proposed option under the Customer Assistance Packages initiative (%)



Willingness to Pay Customer Assistance Packages

Overview of tested options

Residents and SMB were first presented with the general concept of Customer assistance Packages (CAP) proposal to assess levels of support. They were then shown three specific investment options, which were tested for willingness to pay among customers.

Customer Assistance Packages - General Concept

Powercor has created a program to help customers who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances or hardship with respect to energy. The program would include:

- Energy Care
- Vulnerable Customer Assistance Program
- Energy Advisory Services

Option 1

Do nothing “status quo”

Support for customers experiencing vulnerable circumstances will remain as today, which includes energy literacy: Customers can access billing information via our digital channels such as our engagement website.



Option 2

As currently in Powercor’s proposal

The program helps people who struggle with energy costs/access:

3,000 customers upgrade their homes to switch from gas to electric

30,000 customers better understand their energy bills

17,000 customers get information and advice on where to connect renewable energy resources

Bill impact:

Residential \$0.23

SMB \$0.56



Option 3

A higher investment than currently proposed

The program helps people who struggle with energy costs/access:

6,000 customers upgrade their homes to switch from gas to electric

30,000 customers better understand their energy bills

17,000 customers get information and advice on where to connect renewable energy resources

Bill impact:

Residential \$0.41

SMB \$0.98



Willingness to pay testing

Willingness to Pay

Customer Assistance Packages - General Initiative (Uncosted)

Customers were introduced to the Customer Assistance Packages without financial context, to gauge levels of support. Customers were then presented with three costed options – one option to maintain the customer assistance as it is with no investment, one at Powercor’s proposed cost, and one with a greater expansion and cost than proposed.

Proposed Customer Assistance Packages (uncosted) as presented to customers

Assistance packages for customers experiencing vulnerability

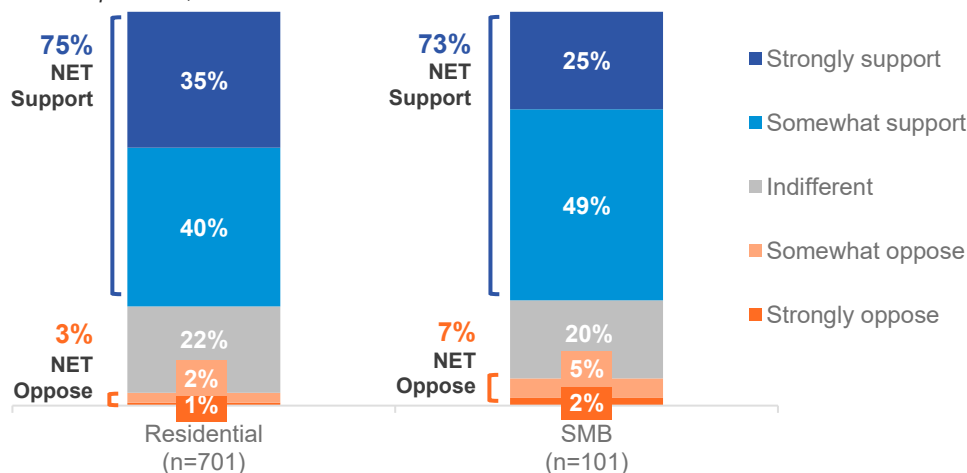
Powercor is the sole electricity distribution network for 60% of western Victorians. Their job is to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity to their customers.

Powercor has created a program to help customers who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances or hardship with respect to energy. The program would include:

- Energy Care – teaches people how to read their energy bills and understand their energy use.
- Vulnerable Customer Assistance Program – helps people and communities replace infrastructure at their properties to accommodate increased electricity capacity e.g. phase upgrades.
- Energy Advisory Services – improves how Powercor shares data with customers.

Extent that customers support Powercor investing in the CAP initiatives

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q21 To what extent do you oppose or support Powercor investing in an initiative to provide these types of Customer Assistance Packages?

- When introduced to the proposed Customer Assistance Packages, residential (75%) and SMB customers (73%) expressed high levels of support for this initiative.
- Just 7% of SMB owners and financial decision makers opposed Powercor’s proposal to invest in these initiatives with this reducing to 3% opposing among residential customers.
- A fifth of residential (22%) and of SMB (20%) customers stated indifference (neither oppose nor support) towards the proposed Customer Assistance Packages.

Willingness to Pay




Customer Assistance Packages - Supporters

Customers who supported this initiative largely did so because they believed vulnerable customers need and deserve support when it comes to energy

- Three in four (75%) residential customers supported Powercor's' proposed initiative to fund Customer Assistance Packages, as did 73% of SMB owners and financial decision makers.
- Among residential customers there was equal support across those residing in Greater Melbourne (76%) and regional (74%) areas.
- Among SMB owners and financial decision makers there were significant differences in level of support based on region. SMB customers with businesses in Greater Melbourne areas (82%) were significantly more likely to support the Customer Assistance Packages initiative than those with businesses in regional Victoria (64%).

Top three reasons for supporting the proposed CAP initiatives

Base: Customers who strongly or somewhat support the CAP initiative, n in brackets below.

		Residential (n=527)	SMB (n=74)
	To support vulnerable customers	57%	47%
	Education to increase energy literacy	24%	15%
	It's an important initiative	16%	27%

Q21a Why do you support Powercor investing in Customer Assistance Packages?

- Customers who supported Powercor’s proposal to fund Customer Assistance Packages did so because they believe it is appropriate to support vulnerable customers, that people need education to increase energy literacy, and that anything that supports customers is a positive thing and the right thing to do.

“

I think it's important to help those who may need assistance, even though it would be adding additional charges to non regional areas it needs to be done to assist those in regional places.

Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer

“

There isn't much education delivered to most people about power and usage and costs so that would be beneficial. Also there will always be people who need support.

Powercor Residential (Regional) customer

“

People in the community need assistance, and if we all absorb a small cost in making this happen, it helps everyone have equality and access to what they need as not everyone’s needs and abilities are the same.

Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer

“

It will help people have a clearer understanding of the way there paying their power bills.and helping the vulnerable in understanding the way their power is supplied.

Powercor SMB (Greater Melbourne) customer

Willingness to Pay




Customer Assistance Packages – Indifferent Customers

Similarly to the SWER line initiative, customers who were indifferent to the proposal commonly said this was because they needed more information, especially in relation to what the proposed initiative would cost to fund.

- Among residential customers 22% stated that they were indifferent (neither in support nor opposition) of Powercor's proposed initiative to fund Customer Assistance Packages, 20% of SMB owners and financial decision makers also stated indifference.
- 23% of regional residential customers stated indifference towards this proposed initiative, while a fifth (20%) of Greater Melbourne customers stated indifference.
- SMB owners and financial decision makers (26%) were directionally (but not significantly) more likely to said they were indifferent to this proposal, compared to 14% of SMB customers in Greater Melbourne areas.

Top three reasons for being indifferent towards the proposed CAP initiatives

Base: Customers who were indifferent (neither supported nor opposed) the CAP initiative, n in brackets below.

		Residential (n=152)	SMB (n=20*)
	Need more information about costs/who will benefit	25%	40%
	No feelings either way	23%	15%
	Support the idea but has no benefit to my household/business	21%	15%

Q21b You indicated you neither support nor oppose Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer? *Caution small base size

- Needing more information was the main reason for customers stating that they were indifferent to this proposal, followed by not being personally impacted by the initiative and simply not having any strong feelings towards the proposed Customer Assistance Packages.

If there is a cost for this proposal then I think that's wrong and should be implemented by using current staff and communications
Powercor Residential (Regional) customer

Does not affect me, unless I have to pay additional funds to support these people
Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer

If it costs nothing to the rest of the population, I support. But if everyone pays, and often the increase in the bills is not clear (not broken down clearly) and coupled with inflation and adjustment to CPI, and price gouging, it is harder to justify.
Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer

It doesn't seem to impact my business all that much
Powercor SMB (Greater Melbourne) customer

Willingness to Pay

Customer Assistance Packages - Opposers

Additional costs borne by customers and sentiment that customer assistance packages should be provided by energy retailers and not distributors were main reasons for opposing this proposal.

- There was a small proportion of customers who were opposed to Powercor's proposal to invest in the Customer Assistance packages, this included 3% of residential customers and 7% of SMB customers.
- Reasons for being opposed to the proposed Customer Assistance Packages included that it seemed outside of a distributors role and better suited to energy retailers, and that customers would have to pay additional costs to fund these initiatives.

Example verbatim reasons for not supporting the proposed Customer Assistance Packages

Base: Customers who were opposed to the CAP initiative, n=22 residents and n=7 SMB.



I think that information about our electricity usage can be found easily enough through an energy provider (e.g. AGL). The rest of the plan just seems a bit wishy-washy and unnecessary honestly.

Powercor Residential (regional) customer



This is an additional cost which will ultimately be borne by the consumer.

Powercor Residential (regional) customer



These sound like activities for energy retailers. Stick to your core business.

Powercor Residential (Greater Melbourne) customer



Okay with it in some ways but I feel people will take advantage of the program. That will then affect me. I always pay on time and in full but never get any help or assistance.

Powercor Residential (Regional) customer



If it's going to cost me more, then I don't want it. Simply put, these companies have way more resources than the little guy like me, and they should pay for it. Not us. We are already struggling and you want to "increase" our bills. With all respect. Screw that.

Powercor Residential (regional) customer

Q21c - You indicated you do not support Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer?



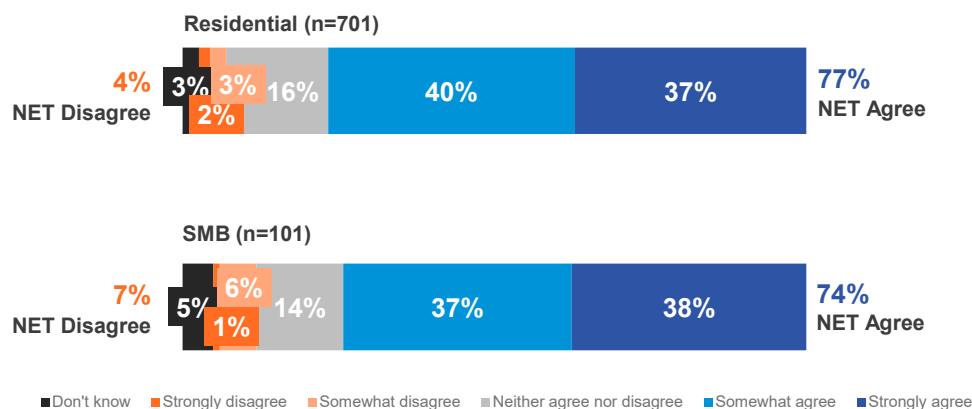
Willingness to Pay Customer Assistance Packages – Powercor’s role

Based on prior feedback, it was anticipated that some customers may feel that these initiatives do not fall under Powercor’s role and responsibilities. However, 77% of residential and 74% of SMB customers agreed that it should be Powercor’s responsibility to provide this type of support.

- Among residential customers (77%) there was strong agreement that it should be Powercor’s responsibility to provide this type of support to customers.
- Just 4% of residential customers disagreed that Powercor should be responsible for providing this type of support, while 16% stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.
- Among SMB owners and financial decision makers, three in four (74%) agreed that it should be Powercor’s responsibility to provide this type of support to customers.
- 7% of SMB owners and financial decision makers disagreed that Powercor should be responsible for providing this type of support, while 14% stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

Extent that customers agree it should be Powercor’s responsibility to provide this support to customers

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q22 To what extent do you agree or disagree it should be Powercor's responsibility to provide this type of support to customers?

Willingness to Pay

Customer Assistance Packages – Option 1

No Investment

There was strong support from both residential customers and SMB owners and financial decision makers for Powercor to continue providing support to vulnerable customers as they do today, without introducing any new packages.

Proposed Customer Assistance Packages Option 1 (no investment) as presented to customers

To what extent would you support Powercor continuing with supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances, without introducing any new packages, if this meant no additional cost (\$0) on your electricity bill per year?

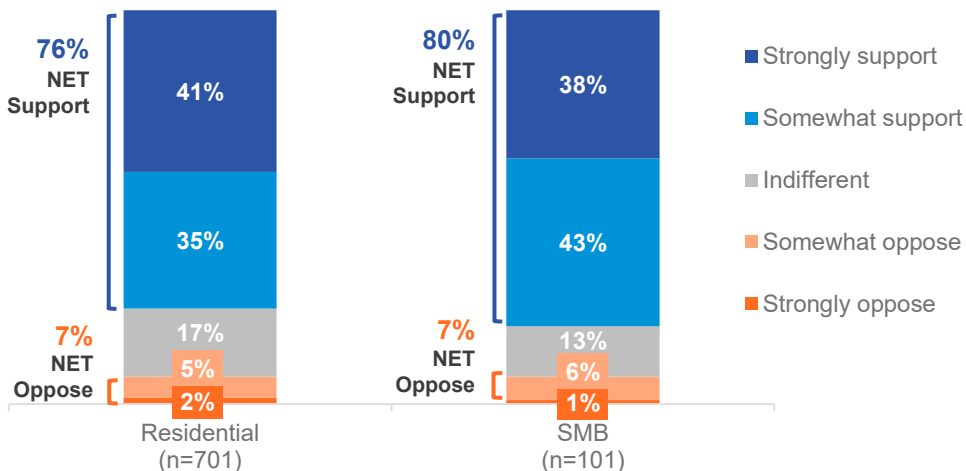
Support for customers experiencing vulnerable circumstances will remain as today, which includes...

Energy literacy: Customers can access billing information via our digital channels such as our engagement website.

- Three in four residential (76%) and eight in ten (80%) of SMB customers said they would support Powercor continuing to provide support as they do today, without introducing any new packages.
- Just 7% of residential customers and SMB customers respectively said they would oppose Powercor continuing the program as it is today without introducing new packages to these supports.

Extent that customers support Powercor continuing the program as it is today?

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q23 To what extent would you support Powercor maintaining this current level of support, without further investment?

- There were no significant differences in support nor opposition among residential customers when assessed by region.
- However, SMB customers with businesses in Greater Melbourne areas (88%) were significantly more likely to support maintaining the current level of support without further investment, compared to 72% of those with businesses in regional areas.

Willingness to Pay

Customer Assistance Packages - Option 2

Powercor's Proposed Investment

SMB customers stated lower levels of support towards funding the Customer Assistance Packages under the proposed option 2, compared to the level of support they expressed towards Powercor maintaining the current program.

Proposed Customer Assistance Packages Option 2 (Powercor's proposed investment) as presented to customers

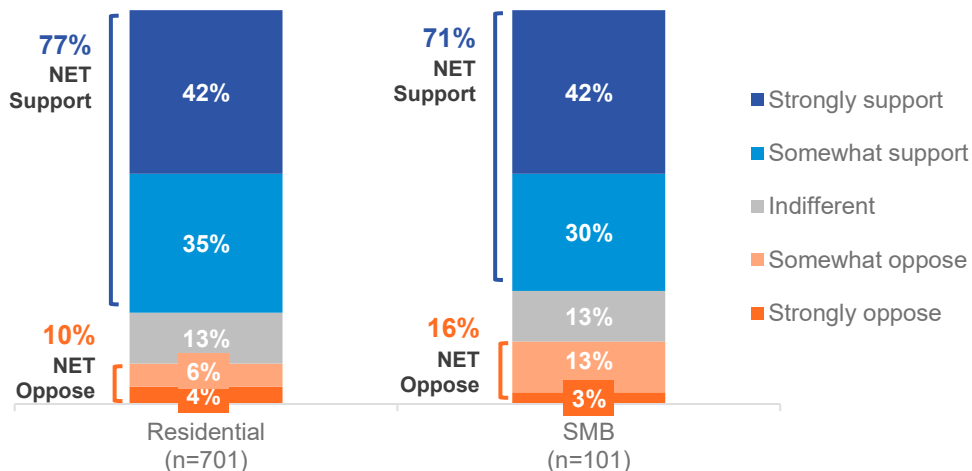
If the proposed program expansion costs you an additional [If Residential \$0.23] [If SMB \$0.56] on your electricity bill per year and helped people who struggle with energy costs or access by supporting:

- about 3,000 customers upgrade their homes so they can switch from gas appliances to electric ones
- about 30,000 customers better understand their energy bills and how their usage impacts their bills
- about 17,000 customers get information and advice on where to connect renewable energy resources onto the network

- Residential customers (77%) expressed a similar level of support towards Powercor funding option 2 of the Customer Assistance packages as they did towards maintaining the packages in their current state without any expansion (76%).
- Conversely, among SMB owners and financial decision makers, 71% supported option 2, which was a lower level of support than these customers provided towards maintaining the program as it is today (80% of SMB customers supported this option).
- SMB owners and financial decision makers (16%) were directionally more likely than residential customers (10%) to oppose Powercor's proposal to fund the Customer Assistance Packages under option 2.

Extent that customers support Powercor implementing Option 2?

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q24 To what extent would you support Powercor implementing the Customer Assistance Packages [OPTION 2] ?

- SMB customers in Greater Melbourne areas (86%) were significantly more likely than those in regional areas (56%) to support Powercor implementing option 2 of the Customer Assistance Packages program.

Willingness to Pay

Customer Assistance Packages - Option 3

Higher Investment than Proposed

SMB owners and financial decision makers were significantly more likely than residential customers to oppose Powercor's proposal to fund the expansion of Customer Assistance Packages under option 3.

Proposed Customer Assistance Packages Option 3 (higher investment) as presented to customers

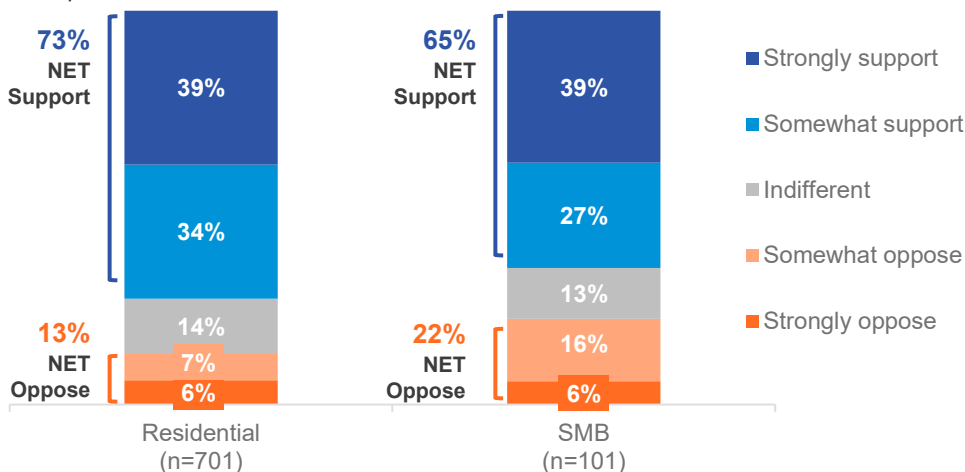
If the proposed program expansion costs you an additional [If Residential \$0.41] [If SME \$0.98] on your electricity bill per year and helped people who struggle with energy costs or access by supporting:

- about 6,000 customers upgrade their homes so they can switch from gas appliances to electric ones
- about 30,000 customers better understand their energy bills and how their usage impacts their bills
- about 17,000 customers get information and advice on where to connect renewable energy resources onto the network.

- Just under three in four (73%) residential customers supported Powercor's proposal to implement option 3 of the Customer Assistance Package initiative. This compares to 76% of residents who supported the implementation of option 2.
- Among SMB owners and financial decision makers, support for implementing option 3 of the Customer Assistance Package initiative declined to 65%.
- SMB owners and financial decision makers (22%) were significantly more likely than residential customers (13%) to oppose Powercor's proposal to fund expanded Customer Assistance Packages under option 3.

Extent that customers support Powercor implementing Option 3?

Base: All respondents, n in brackets below.



Q25 To what extent would you support Powercor implementing the OPTION 3 Customer Assistance Packages?

- SMB customers with businesses in Greater Melbourne areas (80%) were significantly more likely than those in regional areas (50%) to support Powercor implementing option 3.
- Residential customers who lived in a household with concession cards (68%) were less likely to support option 3 compared to those who did not (77%).

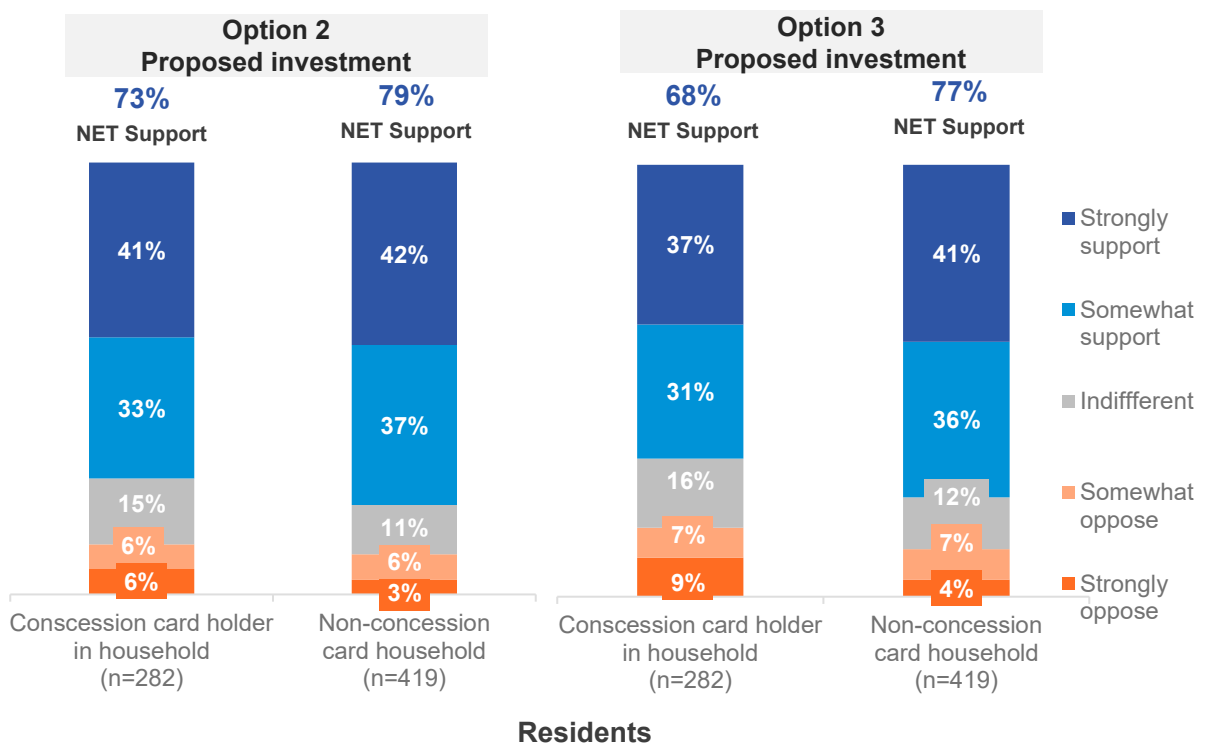
Willingness to Pay Customer Assistance Packages

Willingness to pay for option 2 and option 3 of the Customer Assistance Packages were compared between households with concession card holders vs. non-concession card holders

- Willingness to pay for Customer Assistance Packages did not significantly differ between vulnerable and non-vulnerable households, for option 1 (the proposed investment) nor option 2 (the higher investment option). This finding disproved a previous business hypothesis that anticipated that residents of vulnerable households would be more likely to support CAP than residents in non-vulnerable households. .
- Contrary to this hypothesis, for option 3, non-vulnerable customers were significantly more likely to be willing to pay for this higher investment, compared to customers with vulnerable household member.
- However, at this higher investment (option 3) customers with vulnerable household members were significantly more likely to oppose Option 3 than customers in non-vulnerable households. Indicating lower levels of willingness to pay among vulnerable households at this higher investment option.

Breakdown of willingness to pay among supporters of Option 2 and Option 3 by concession card households (%)

Base: All residents, n in brackets below.



Q24 To what extent would you support Powercor implementing the Customer Assistance Packages [OPTION 2] ?

Q25 To what extent would you support Powercor implementing the Customer Assistance Packages [OPTION 3] ?

Note: Responses of 'Not sure' and 'prefer not to say' in relation to concession card holders have been excluded in this analysis.

Willingness to Pay – CAP

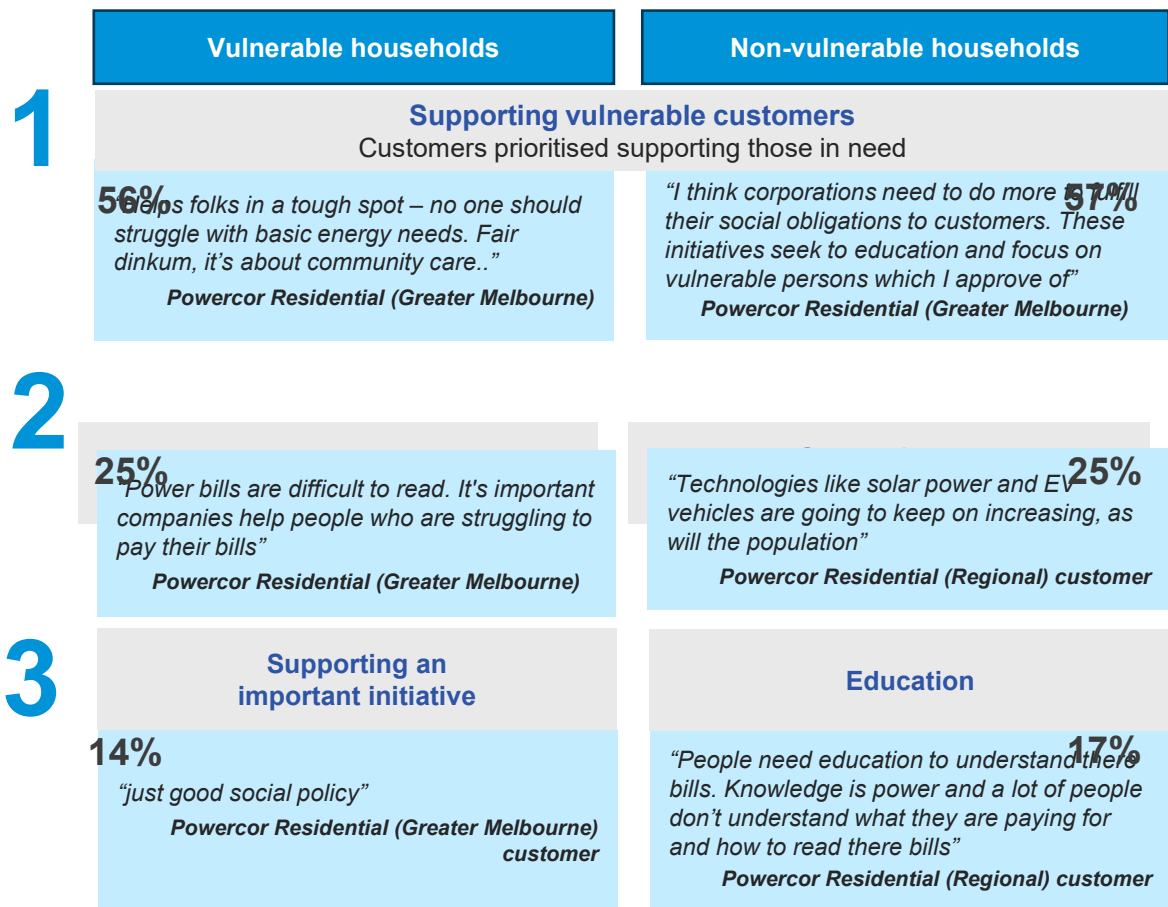
Residential supporters

Vulnerable households and non-vulnerable households had shared key reasons for supporting the CAP initiative, including to support vulnerable customers, provide education and to generally support an important initiative.

- The same proportion of residents said that supporting vulnerable customers was their main reason for supporting the CAP initiative, regardless of whether they were from a vulnerable (56%) or non-vulnerable household (57%).
- A quarter (25%) of vulnerable households who supported CAP, did so because they felt it was important that everyone has access to education related to energy literacy. 17% of supporters from non-vulnerable households also said this was a key reason for their support.
- Many supporters also simply said they supported the CAP program because they felt it was an important initiative (25% on non-vulnerable households and 14% of vulnerable households).

Top three reasons for supporting the proposed CAP by concession card household status (%)

Base: Residential customers in concession card households (n=211) and without non-concession card households (n=305) who support the CAP program general concept.



Q21a - Why do you support Powercor investing in Customer Assistance Packages?

Customer Assistance Packages - Summary



High support for all options

- Residential and SMB customers expressed high levels of willingness to pay for Option 2 (as currently included in Powercor's proposal).
- Willingness to pay for Option 3 declined slightly among SMB customers.
- Customers also expressed high levels of support for maintaining the current program.



Business hypothesis has been disproved

- Vulnerable and non-vulnerable households were willing to pay for CAP Option 2 and 3.
- Non-vulnerable households were significantly more likely to support Option 3 (the higher investment option), compared to vulnerable households.



Reasons for support

- Supporting vulnerable customers was the primary reason behind support for the CAP initiative.
- Providing education to customers and a sense they were supporting an important initiative (particularly for reasons related to social responsibility) were other key reasons for supporting the CAP initiative.

Residential and SMB Results

Additional findings: Brand awareness and general experiences of Powercor



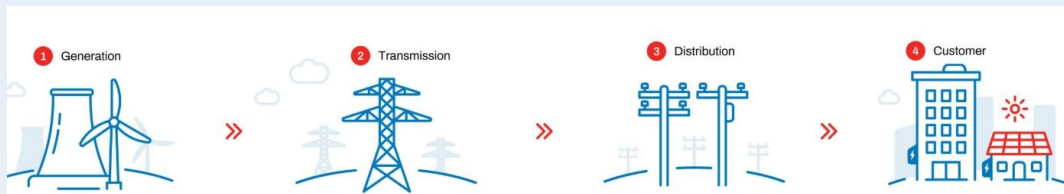
General Experiences of Powercor

Before testing willingness to pay, residential and SMB customers were asked a series of questions to assess their general perceptions of Powercor and the reliability of their power supply. This information provided broader context for the Powercor customers in our sample, especially in relation to their understanding of a distributor's role and their recent experiences with Powercor.

Awareness of Powercor and understanding of the energy supply chain

- Powercor customers overall had a low unprompted awareness of their electricity distributor. One in five (21%) residential customers correctly identified their distributor as Powercor unprompted, with a similar proportion of SMB customers (18%) identifying Powercor unprompted. Low unprompted distributor recall can primarily be attributed to customers' poor understanding of the roles of energy generators, retailers, and distributors, which Quantum has observed in previous studies. Three quarters of residential (75%) and SMB (75%) customers incorrectly named an energy retailer when asked who their distributor was.
- To participate in the willingness to pay testing later in the survey, customers need to have a clear understanding of a distributor's role and who their distributor was. The following information, highlighting the roles in the energy supply chain, was presented to all customers.

There are four steps in the energy supply chain that moves energy from being generated to your home / business



1. An energy generator produces electricity by hydro, wind, solar, coal or gas.
2. An energy transmission business transports high voltage energy over long distances.
3. An energy distributor, such as Powercor, they are responsible for converting the high voltage electricity into lower voltage and distributes it to your home and most businesses. The electricity meter connected to your property measures the amount of energy you use.
4. Your home or business uses the energy sent to it from your distributor. Your retailer accesses the data on your meter and sends you your electricity bill. The cost of distributing the electricity to your property accounts for around 30% of your bill.

Diagram and information related to the energy supply chain, as shown to customers.

- Once provided with this information, customers were informed that Powercor was their energy distributor. At this point 69% of residential and 65% of SMB customers said they knew Powercor was their energy distributor.

General Experiences of Powercor









Powercor residents in regional and regional Victoria were significantly more likely than those in Greater Melbourne areas to have experienced unplanned power outages in the past 12 months. While a similar pattern was observed between SMB customers in regional Victoria and those in Greater Melbourne, the difference was not statistically significant.

Reliability of power supply

- Powercor residential customers (83%) were significantly more likely than SMB customers (74%) to agree that Powercor provides a reliable supply of electricity to their home/business.
- Among SMB customers, 15% disagreed that Powercor provided a reliable supply of energy to their business. When split by region, 12% of Greater Melbourne and 18% of regional SMB customers disagreed that Powercor provided a reliable power supply.
- Among residential customers, 7% disagreed that Powercor provided a reliable supply of energy to their home. Regional residential customers (9%) were significantly more likely than Greater Melbourne customers (5%) to disagree that that Powercor provided a reliable supply.

Experiences related to power supply in the past 12 months by Residential and SMB

Base: All respondents, residential customers n=701, SMB customers n=101.

		Residential	SMB
	Unplanned power outage	45%	48%
	Planned power outage	33%	37%
	Tree trimming around powerlines	19%	33%
	Network maintenance	16%	35%
	A new connection or change	5%	8%
	Rejected connection application	1%	4%
	Other	1%	1%
	None of these	30%	19%

Significantly **higher** or **lower** compared to comparison group

Q12 Have you experienced any of the following in the past 12 months in relation to your \ your business electricity supply?

General Experiences of Powercor

- Unexpected power outages were the most mentioned experiences (48% of SMB and 45% of residential customers), followed by planned power outages (37% of SMB and 33% of residential).
- Powercor residents in regional Victoria (51%) were significantly more likely than residents living in Greater Melbourne areas (37%) to have had an unexpected outage in the past 12 months.
- Among customers who experienced a planned power outage in the past 12 months, 59% of residential and 50% of SMB experienced these outages once, while 30% of residential and 24% of SMB experienced this twice.
- SMB customers were significantly more likely to have reported experiencing planned outages three or more times (26%), compared to 8% of residential customers.
- Among customers who experienced an unplanned power outage in the past 12 months, 44% of residential and 49% of SMB experienced these outages once, while 33% of residential and 28% of SMB experienced this twice. Similar proportions of residential (20%) and SMB (21%) customers reported experiencing these outages three or more times.
- There were no significant differences reported in the frequency of unexpected power outages between regional and Greater Melbourne Powercor areas among SMB nor residential customers.
- Two in five SMB customers (37%) had interacted with Powercor in the past 12 months. Unexpected power outages (38%), network maintenance (22%), and interactions in relation to solar (19%) were the most common reasons for interacting.
- Just over one in five (23%) of residential customers had interacted with Powercor in the past 12 months. Among Powercor residents unexpected (47%) and planned (23%) power outages were the main reasons for interacting with Powercor.

Section 2

C&I Customer Engagement



Approach and methodology

C&I customer engagements

Following the online survey with residents and SMB, a second stage of the program was developed which involved engagements with a range of Powercor’s C&I customers.

Methodology



Qualitative engagement with C&I customers operating in the Powercor region, offered online or in-person.



Consultations were conducted between the 11th of August and 15th of September 2025.



Each consultation had a duration of approximately 45 minutes.



C&I customers registered to participate through Powercor’s engagement website or through the Committee for Greater Shepparton (C4GS).



No incentives were offered but participants will receive a copy of the report.



A Powercor representative attended the consultations where requested by the C&I customer

Two channels were used to recruit participants to ensure a diverse group of relevant Powercor C&I customers were invited to participate. The two channels included:

- An invite from Powercor which was sent to C&I customers and C&I representatives via email. Those interesting in taking part in the engagement were directed to Powercor’s engagement website to register.
- Secondly, email invites were sent by the Committee for Greater Shepparton (C4GS) (a not-for-profit, member funded advocacy organisation) and Energy Users Association of Australia (EUAA) to relevant C&I customers and representatives which again directed interested participants to the Powercor engagement website to register.

A total of n=16 consultations were conducted throughout the engagement period.

Australian Consolidated Milk (Jason Limbrick), Committee for Ballarat (Michael Poulton), Gouge Linen and Garment Services (John Calleja), GWMWater (Mark Williams), Kagome Australia (Derek Robinson) and Trevaskis Engineering (Michael Mason).

The remaining 10 C&I customers chose to remain anonymous.

Approach and methodology

C&I customer engagements

Each consultation was led by a consultant from Quantum Market Research and was divided into two key sections.

Engagement part 1

The first section was designed to explore the customers current energy needs, how their prioritisation of their energy needs have changed in the past two previous years and also to assess how they expect their needs to change in the next 5-10 years. This part of the engagement explored the supports customers may require from Powercor currently and into the future. A range of key energy related topics were explored, with a focus given to the areas given the highest priority by customers. The topics discussed included:

- Energy reliability
- Power quality
- Demand management
- Tariffs
- Relationship management
- Energy transition

Engagement part 2


The second section tested willingness to pay for the Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) upgrades and Customer Assistance Packages (CAP) among C&I customers. A range of pricing options were presented for each initiative and C&I customers were provided with an estimated bill impact in AUD\$ based on an estimated proportion of their annual energy bill.

The order in which C&I were presented with SWER and CAP initiatives was rotated per consultation to remove any potential ordering bias.

IAP2 Spectrum

The level of C&I customer participation in this program was intentional and is highlighted in our depiction of the IAP2 Spectrum shown below. This consultation falls within the 'involve' classification on the IAP2 Spectrum. Customers were involved in assessing the current regulatory proposals for CAP and SWER, to feed into the revised proposals to be made by Powercor towards the end of 2025.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

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.

C&I customer engagements:

Current and emerging issues and needs



C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs overview of findings

C&I customers' priorities remain largely similar to those expressed in the engagement in 2024 with energy reliability and power quality, decarbonisation and sustainability, relationship management and costs remaining as top priorities. However, many C&I did expand upon the actions they were taking and/or provided updates on the support and feedback sought from Powercor.

Energy supply reliability and quality remained top of mind for C&I customers, with many customers facing financial and reputational costs as a result of downtime caused by power outages and micro-outages. C&I customers continue to look for ways to mitigate these impacts, investing in generators and battery storage systems. In 2025, there is growing concern among customers about the resiliency of the networks infrastructure in the face of growing climate related events, such as bushfires and flooding. C&I customers are also seeking information from Powercor about emergency backstop mechanisms and are seeking to be more collaborative with Powercor when it comes to planned outages.

C&I customers are continuing to work towards **decarbonisation and sustainability** goals, with pressure to meet these goals now stemming from customers as well as internal stakeholders. Organisations aiming to meet these goals through electrification are facing cost barriers and those in the manufacturing industry are often limited by the network capacity. As organisations continue to explore options for decarbonisation and **the energy transition** new barriers and concerns have emerged. Some C&I customers currently dependent on gas have identified that there is no existing electric appliance that can produce the heat and/or pressure that their process requires, regardless of cost and grid constraints. Smaller organisations are unsure of the best approach to adopting renewable energy resources and are looking to trusted sources like Powercor to provide this guidance. As customers continue to explore their options for electrification, there is growing speculation about the suitability of the current grid and whether alternative solutions such as micro-grids should be explored.

For some C&I customers Powercor still has an opportunity to be proactive in their approach to **relationship management**. Customers who do not have an existing relationship with Powercor are unsure of who they can reach out to for information and/or support and hesitate to contact Powercor for this reason. C&I customers may benefit from a directory of contacts they can approach for specific issues/information. Those who do have a relationship with Powercor speak highly of this relationship, have support on achieving their long-term energy strategies and are eager to collaborate with Powercor to improve grid stability.

Costs remained a top of mind issue for C&I customers but were secondary to the strategic issues discussed throughout the engagement. As high-costs remain a key issue in broader society, organisations are increasingly pivoting towards looking for efficiencies that can reduce their outgoing costs.

Some new priorities emerged since 2024, with some customers seeking to understand the tangible actions that are taken from their participation in engagements and consultations with Powercor and some requesting improved real-time information from Powercor about outages and restoration times.

C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs

Reliability of energy supply and power quality continue to be the most important priorities for C&I customers, now and into the future

Energy supply reliability and quality

A previous C&I customer engagement conducted in 2024, among CitiPower, United Energy and Powercor customers identified that energy supply reliability and power quality were universal priorities, regardless of industry.

Energy reliability and power quality are essential for operational continuity and the avoidance of downtime for manufacturers. Disruptions, regardless of severity can cause significant financial and reputational damages to organisations. There are also a number of energy-intensive sectors and critical infrastructure services that are particularly impacted such as manufacturing, utilities, and large-scale educational institutions (such as universities with research laboratories).

To mitigate the consequences of these disruptions many organisations in 2024 were investing in backup systems, revising energy strategies, and demanding more reliable solutions from distributors.

The current 2025 engagement program found that energy reliability and power remain key concerns among C&I customers. A range of similarities were found between the issues highlighted in 2024, while there has also been a growing interest among C&I customers to understand Powercor's plans and an increased long-term interest on mitigating the impacts of climate change and power outages into the future.

Similarities between the 2024 and 2025 engagements

- For C&I customers who are reliant on the grid, improved energy reliability and power quality remain the number one priority. Planned and unplanned outages (long-term or momentary) continue to pose significant financial and operational risks to C&I customers on the Powercor network.
- Organisations are continuing to invest in back up systems and alternative energy sources to mitigate the negative impacts of energy and power quality issues. A number of organisations have recently invested in generators or battery storage systems, however, these come at a significant financial cost and typically only provide support during short-term or momentary outages. These short-term solutions do not reduce C&I customers' concerns related to their energy reliability needs.



"In the Goulburn Valley region, I think you will find that there is a general dissatisfaction with the reliability of supply... both in terms of blackouts but also kind of micro dropouts that aren't really recorded and have an impact on sensitive electrical equipment... It causes a disruption to production."

John Calleja, Gouge Linen and Garment Services

C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs

Emerging issues in 2025 related to energy supply reliability and quality include, a growing focus on climate change and network resiliency and a desire for greater collaboration around planned outages

Energy supply reliability and quality

Emerging issues and needs in 2025

Climate change and network resiliency

The impending impact of climate change on the power network is a growing concern for C&I customers. In previous engagements customers have highlighted their concerns about the impacts that bushfire and flooding have had on the network. There is now a growing desire to understand what actions Powercor is taking to build network resilience as climate change heralds more frequent and extreme weather events. There is a growing sentiment that reactive responses to major climate events will be insufficient and instead proactive steps towards network resilience need to be taken while they are viable.



“Obviously we had the floods back in, oh, a couple of floods really, but kind of a significant one back in twenty-one and another in twenty-two...and that's really about kind of electricity infrastructure...resilience...that kind of key...businesses or kind of areas of business...were without power for, I don't know...probably at least a week. Um, from memory and. You know, ultimately we're an essential service provider. If we're not getting linen out to hospitals, um, then then there's kind of a real challenge. And so...you know, I guess advocating, I guess more so for the Maroopna and kind of Shepparton region or the Goulburn Valley is certainly about making sure that there is resilience in that infrastructure.

John Calleja, Gouge Linen and Garment Services



“You know this sense of a resilient system in regional communities is critical... By and large, we cope with reliability. The resilience is the issue where it is. In Ballarat, half an hour out of Ballarat. It's that divide between a regional city versus a regional town... You know short term outages are really concerning some businesses.”

Michael Poulton, Committee for Ballarat

Planned outages: collaboration and transparency

C&I customers understand that while they are an inconvenience, planned outages are necessary to ensure continuity of energy supply. However, they would prefer Powercor works closer with its C&I customers to enable greater planning around planned power outages. One C&I customers specifically requested an agreed cap on the number of hours or days an outages can be planned for over a specified time period, assisting organisations to plan ahead and minimise the disruption caused by planned outages.

C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs

Emerging issues in 2025 related to energy supply reliability and quality include, a growing focus on climate change and network resiliency and a desire for greater collaboration around planned outages

Energy supply reliability and quality

Information on backstop measures

C&I customers are seeking more information and support from Powercor in relation to the introduction of Victoria's emergency backstop mechanism for solar. The need for these supports has been growing as customers continue to explore alternative energy supply options and seek to understand measures to maintain grid stability.



[One of my guys has] specifically asked for some feedback around emergency backstop mechanism plans and intentions simply because we're trying to manage the cost of deployment of all of our assets. It'd be good to know what the long term plan is so we can just manage that.

Anonymous

C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs

The energy transition, specifically with decarbonisation and sustainability as a focal point, was the second most commonly mentioned area of interest and concern

Decarbonisation and sustainability

During the 2024 engagement with C&I customers it was found that long-term decarbonisation and sustainability remained strategic priorities for the majority of C&I customers but these goals had been overshadowed by the pressing need for energy reliability and cost management in the short term

Organisations were committed to sustainability initiatives, but these goals had a secondary focus due to the challenges posed by energy supply instability, rising costs, and grid constraints

In 2025, decarbonisation and sustainability goals remained a key priority for C&I customers. Some industries are beginning to encounter sector specific barriers to achieving these goals in addition to costs and grid constraints. A number of C&I customers also highlighted that there is growing strategic pressure for them to achieve decarbonisation and sustainability goals as this becomes an expectation from their customers and a way to have a competitive edge against other businesses in their industry.

Similarities within the 2025 engagement

Many organisations are still committed to improving their environmental credentials and achieving their strategic decarbonisation and sustainability goals, but the cost of achieving these coupled with grid constraints remain a barrier for some.

“

We want to move towards electrification where we can, and we need to do that in concert with you guys because it doesn't really matter what we do if the [network] capacity isn't available

Derek Robinson, Kagome Australia

“

Getting the funds to be able to do it is one of the biggest barriers. Obviously, you know, we've got to be able to find the right funding and then knowing what government funding is available as well sometimes is a little bit difficult

Anonymous

C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs

Some industries are beginning to encounter sector specific barriers to achieving sustainability goals, such as a lack of adequate electric replacements for gas-powered manufacturing processes

Decarbonisation and sustainability

Emerging issues and needs in 2025

Energy transition and the lack of suitable electric replacements

A number of C&I customers that we spoke to were heavily reliant on gas-powered machinery. In preparing for the energy transition these customers have identified that there is no existing electric appliance that can produce the heat and/or pressure that their process requires. This means that regardless of any potential cost barrier, there is no existing avenue available to them to be able to transition away from gas.



What we do, we need to produce a lot of steam. So for me to comply with our stated goals as an organisation, I need to find some way to electrify or at least decarbonise. Now realistically, even if we had \$500 million to all of a sudden convert all our boilers over to electric capacity tomorrow, I suspect Powercor would struggle to supply me with the electrons to do that. So what I'm interested in is working with Powercor on a path that sees us and the other plants like ours being able to reduce our dependency on gas.

Derek Robinson, Kagome Australia

Organisations seeking trusted advisory services on renewable energy

A number of smaller organisations we spoke to have ambitious decarbonisation and sustainability goals but are hesitating to take any initial steps forward. Some organisations have been slow to adopt renewable energy practices such as solar because they are fearful of making the wrong investments, unsure of who is a trusted supplier to provide and install alternative energy resources and generally unsure of how best to implement initiatives such as solar and battery. Organisations are looking to a trusted organisation like Powercor to provide advice on how best to approach and implement these initiatives.



The other case I was just going to say is we don't really want to do the wrong thing. And I guess we're really conservative about that.

Anonymous

Growing speculation about the current grid and alternative solutions

There is an increasing level of questioning among organisations about whether the effectiveness of the current grid. A number of organisations are now asking if they should be considering other solutions, such as micro-grids.

C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs

Customers with strong relationships had strategic support on long-term challenges but there remains an opportunity to be proactive – many customers do not know what support is available

Relationship management

The 2024 engagement with C&I customers found that many customers felt current relationships were largely transactional, focussed on short-term issues like outages, grid connectivity, and tariff adjustments.

C&I customers emphasised the importance of proactive, collaborative partnerships to address long-term challenges such as energy reliability, renewable integration, and decarbonisation.

In 2025, there were still some customers who felt their relationship with Powercor remained transactional and who sought greater strategic relationships. However, those who had existing relationships with Powercor spoke highly of this relationship.

Similarities within the 2025 engagement

- Some C&I customers still felt they had a transactional relationship with Powercor that primarily only existed to deal with short-term power outages or quality issues. These C&I customers were seeking strategic relationships with Powercor to help them navigate the energy transition and/or a trusted source they could consult.
- As was the case in 2024, Powercor still has an opportunity to be proactive and build relationships with C&I customers who may not reach out to their distributor independently for advice or consultation.



I know that our previous energy officer, [name redacted] did have a contact in Powercor, but when he left, [there was] no switchover. So I think I guess on that one, it would be good to have that one point of contact.

Anonymous



We've worked through that a little bit with Powercor as well, but having the right person to call sometimes is one of the challenges and getting feedback in an appropriate time is sometimes difficult.

Anonymous

Emerging issues and needs in 2025

Through engaging with C&I customers in 2025, it was evident that the C&I customers who had strong relationships with Powercor felt supported on long-term strategic challenges, such as scoping the feasibility of renewable integration. Customers who had these strong relationships spoke highly of their interactions with Powercor and their intentions to continue partnering with Powercor into the future and often expressing a willingness to work collaboratively with Powercor to help develop a more resilient network.

C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs

Costs are always a consideration, but did not appear to be as critical this year among the C&I customers who participated in this engagement

Costs

In 2024 an engagement with C&I customers found that high energy consumption, price volatility, and costly infrastructure investments were placing mounting pressure on operational budgets.

Organisations, particularly those with energy-intensive operations, were struggling to manage rising costs

Cost remained a consideration among C&I customers but did not emerge as a key topic of discussion throughout this engagement, despite a key focus of the engagement focusing on a willingness to pay assessment. A number of organisations are shifting their focus towards cost-saving efficiencies instead and seeking advice from Powercor in this regard.

The majority of C&I customers who engaged held senior roles in their organisation, such as CEO, Managing Director and lead engineering roles and had a greater focus on long-term strategy for their organisation, which may also have contributed to lessened discussion surrounding costs during the 2025 engagement.

Similarities within the 2025 engagement

Costs remain a key issue, as the high-cost of living remains a top-of-mind issue in society. In 2025, organisations are increasingly pivoting towards looking for efficiencies that can reduce their outgoing costs.



I mean our electricity bill is pretty significant. And when you talk about what percentage, it's very hard to put that on there really because I mean utilities is a big cost.

Anonymous

Emerging issues and needs in 2025

Many C&I customers investing in or exploring renewable energy resources as a way of reducing their financial costs, with these investments also feeding into their decarbonisation and sustainability goals.



On the gas side of things that's our biggest issue as far as CO² goes and cost. There isn't an alternative that is commercially available to us to move to in the foreseeable future either and apart from tapping into retailers who are offering renewable electricity...we do have some options to generate electricity ourselves, but none of them are straightforward for us.

Anonymous

C&I customer engagements

Current and emerging issues and needs

The primary issues highlighted by C&I customers remained topical across the 2024 and 2025 engagements with a couple of unique issues arising in 2025

Issues unique to the 2025 engagement



C&I customers are keen to see the tangible actions that are taken from their participation in engagements and consultations with Powercor.

Customers are understanding of the timeline that distributors need to work to under the AER's regulatory reset process and are interested in how their feedback is fed into businesses cases as they proceed.

As part of the current engagement, C&I customers will receive a copy of the final report and the findings from this overall engagement will feed into and refine Powercor's final proposal to be submitted to the AER towards the end of 2025.



"Over time, there's probably been a few of these processes from various different guises with Powercor that I've been through, and I guess to some degree it would be nice to see what the actual outcomes of these processes are. This is probably the third or fourth conversation in the last three years I guess I've had with Powercor and... there's never kind of any really tangible outcomes that I see."

John Calleja, Gouge Linen and Garment Services

Another issue raised by a C&I customer was the need for more real-time information from Powercor about outages and restoration times.

This information would allow C&I customers to plan ahead once they know when power will be restored, to be able to manage their employees and reduce the financial losses caused by power outages.







"You know, just putting up that "we've got an outage in this area" on a computer doesn't really help. I think the customer already knows it's an outage, right? So at some point, how do you share information quicker?"

Anonymous

C&I customer engagements summary

Current and emerging issues and needs

		Summary
	Energy supply reliability and quality	<p>Simple, clear information needed about Powercor's future plans to safeguard and improve reliability, and how businesses can benefit</p> <p>Reliability is particularly top of mind as climate change poses greater risks to infrastructure</p>
	Decarbonisation and sustainability	<p>More advice, information, and support wanted from Powercor in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to take advantage of the energy transition efficiently and effectively • potential solutions for those currently reliant on gas
	Relationship management	<p>Those without relationship managers often felt uninformed and daunted approaching Powercor</p> <p>In addition to consultation, provision of contact details for different issues would be helpful in establishing a dialogue</p>
	Feedback post-consultation	<p>Feedback post-consultation is needed to encourage continued engagement</p>
	Rapid sharing of information related to outages	<p>Rapid sharing of outage information and restoration estimates is critical for some in making decisions on how to deploy their own resources</p>

C&I customer engagements:

Willingness to pay findings – SWER upgrades

C&I engagements - SWER Line Upgrades

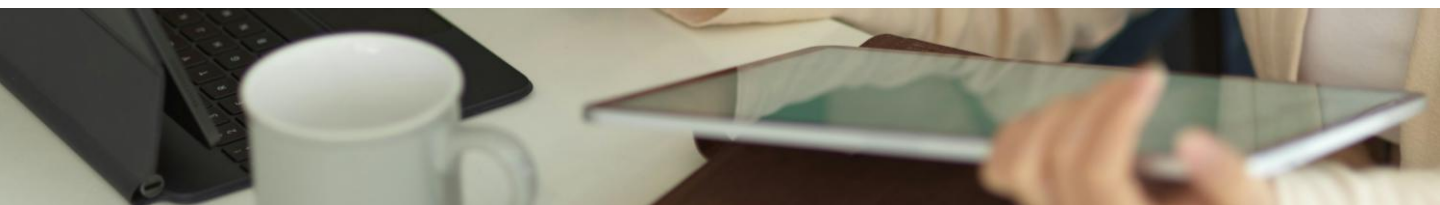
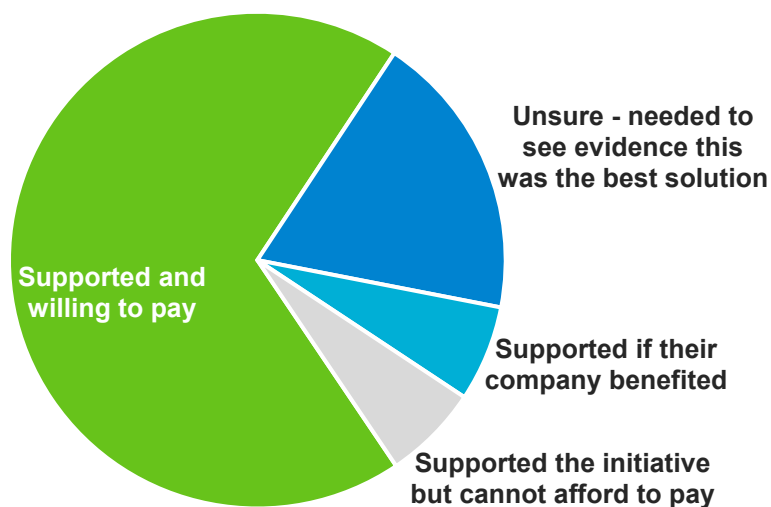
Willingness to pay findings

Most C&I customers were willing to pay for the SWER upgrades to three-phase, with only one customer opposing the proposal on a cost basis. All customers who were willing to pay for option 2 (as currently proposed) were also willing to pay for option 3 (a higher investment).

- All C&I customers that were consulted recognised that the current network in rural and regional areas is outdated and needs to be upgraded to future-proof the Powercor network. However, some C&I customers did hesitate to support the proposal because they were hesitant about whether this was the most efficient and/or cost-effective solution.
- As a primary objective of this engagement was to assess willingness to pay for upgrades, cost was a focal point of each consultation and C&I were provided with an estimated annual bill impact based on their own current annual energy bill. Despite this focus on cost throughout the engagement, only one C&I customer opposed the upgrades from a cost perspective, highlighting that their organisation was not in a position to take on costs that would not directly benefit their organisation.
- Another C&I customer stated support of the SWER upgrades and was willing to pay but only if they were guaranteed to directly benefit from the upgrades.

SWER upgrades to three-phase initiative support breakdown among C&I customers

Base: All C&I Customers, n=16.



C&I engagements - SWER Line Upgrades

Overview of tested options



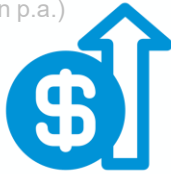
C&I customers were introduced to the general concept of upgrades to SWER lines to gauge their initial reactions to the proposal. They were then shown the following three specific investment options and willingness to pay for each option was assessed.

Single Wire Earth Return Line Upgrades - General Concept

Powercor is proposing to upgrade some SWER lines to three-phase lines, which are designed to deliver larger amounts of energy with better reliability.

Customers would be less likely to experience outages and would be more able to export solar, charge electric vehicles and power heavy machinery.

The cost to the business per annum was calculated and provided to participants in AUD\$

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
<p>Do nothing “status quo”</p> <p>The program continues as is, all regional and regional customers will experience the same outcomes as they do today and there would be no additional cost (\$) to your energy bill per year.</p> <p>No cost</p> 	<p>As currently in Powercor’s proposal</p> <p>The program upgrades 606km of SWER lines to three-phase lines.</p> <p>Cost ranged from \$129.69 - \$8,397.77</p> <p>(0.106% of distribution component in Powercor region p.a.)</p> 	<p>A higher investment than currently proposed</p> <p>The program upgrades 1,160km of SWER lines to three-phase lines.</p> <p>Cost ranged from \$183.53 - \$11,883.63</p> <p>(0.150% of distribution component in Powercor region p.a.)</p> 



C&I engagements - SWER Line Upgrades

Willingness to pay – reasons for support

C&I customers supported the SWER line to three-phase upgrades because they are necessary, benefit regional employees and businesses and align with their organisations' stated ESG goals.

- The primary reason for supporting the SWER line upgrades were that the network is generally seen as outdated and currently inadequate for supporting the incoming energy transition, which is a key strategic focus for most C&I customers on the Powercor network.
- In support of the proposed upgrades, C&I customers highlighted the potential unintended consequences that may occur as a result of not upgrading the SWER lines to three phase. These included an increased frequency of unplanned outages as the lines continue to age, damages to equipment and maintenance costs (with no improvements) being passed on to customers.
- The majority of C&I viewed proposed the bill impact (ranging from \$129.69 - \$8,397.77 per annum) needed to pay for the proposed upgrades, as a negligible increase to their annual energy bill and an acceptable amount to pay to strategically fund these necessary upgrades.

Well, there is an additional cost with [option 1] because... there will be more unplanned outages, there's more equipment failure, and so that cost still gets worn. It gets worn by Powercor's overheads, but that still gets passed on. So option one's not an option.

Derek Robinson, Kagome Australia

That's a small portion of our bill. I think it's hard to argue with that knowing they're ageing assets too. I'm not sure what their anticipated lifespan is but it sounds like they are nearing end of life anyway. It's probably something that needs money spent on it to begin with, so having a more targeted or strategic approach for and from our perspective, it's a minimal cost increase that makes sense.

Anonymous

- Locally run organisations tended to have a greater focus on improving quality of life in regional areas when explaining their reasons for supporting the SWER line upgrades. This compares to nationally or globally run organisations who more often considered the necessity of the upgrades or the negligible cost impacts to their business.
- These locally-run organisations often acknowledged that they would not directly benefit from the SWER line upgrades but knew that the upgrades would likely improve the energy supply available to their employees who live in the worst effected regional and rural areas of Victoria. A number of organisations who would not benefit directly highlighted that their suppliers would likely benefit from these upgrades, which in turn could boost their productivity. Leading to indirect benefits for C&I customers as a result of the upgrades.
- A small number of C&I customers stated that supporting the upgrades aligned with their organisations ESG goals, which was a reason to support the proposal.

Yeah, I think that's a reasonable cost to improve the lives of those people and a little disclosure for you. We sell equipment into rural areas that requires electricity, and we have run into trouble more than once with SWER lines and not enough power coming into communities out in particularly western Victoria and they've had to go to using generators, which comes with a whole lot of other issues as well

Michael Mason, Trevaskis Engineering

C&I engagements - SWER Line Upgrades

Willingness to pay – reasons for support

I would represent a group of Members who would say things come at a cost. You want better train services, then slashing the cost of your train ticket probably doesn't deliver that. You know you wanna buy the shoes, you pay the money, you know? But one of the issues for regional people right now is they see the blowout costs of Westgate Tunnel. They see the blowout costs of Melbourne Metro. They see \$30 billion being spent suburban rail open. So no wonder the state's broke, you know, that's where the money is being spent. [People in the regions] are paying more money, but we're not seeing a return for it.. So if you can deliver the returns, we're happy to cop some increasing cost. That's negligible.

Michael Poulton, Committee for Ballarat

C&I engagements - SWER Line Upgrades

Willingness to pay – reasons for indecisiveness

C&I customers who were indecisive about whether to support the upgrades wanted further proof that this was the most efficient and effective solution.

- C&I customers who were unsure of whether to support the initiative primarily took this stance because they wanted to pressure test the proposal. These customers want assurance that there is not a better alternative solution (ex. Micro-grids) than upgrading these lines to three phase.
- These C&I customers wanted further evidence from Powercor that this was the most efficient and cost-effective solution to addressing the problem. In the case that this evidence was provided, these customers did not provide any opposition towards paying for the upgrades – highlighting that cost was not the deciding factor.



My question is, well, is there a better use of investment, which is to support people to actually put in a battery and an oversized solar array on their properties? Is that a better option or community batteries or whatever it might be, is that a better use of resources more generally for everyone?

Anonymous



My primary issue would be, is it a good investment

Anonymous

- A number of C&I customers noted that there were more effective ways to position and present the proposal in order to receive their support, enabling them to be willing to pay for this initiative from a business perspective.
- The two ways that C&I customers felt these proposals could be more effectively be presented as business cases to C&I customers were through framing the initiative as a way of reducing bushfire risk in regional Victoria, which also feeds into climate action and climate change goals embedded in many organisations. The second was to frame the upgrades as a way to boost productivity among suppliers and customers (as was highlighted previously as a key reason for supporting the proposal among C&I customers).



I'll be thinking about climate resilience, businesses and then individuals. keeping in mind that there are a range of solutions that could be deployed to attack or address each of those exposures... but I think anything that's a climate-related risk is certainly worth flagging and considering slightly differently.

Anonymous

C&I engagements - SWER Line Upgrades

Willingness to pay – reasons for opposition

One C&I customer supported the upgrade in principle but could not justify having to pay the additional costs, due to the business being under significant financial pressure.

- For an organisation under internal financial constraint, trying to justify additional energy costs to pay for improvements that do not directly benefit your organisation is difficult. The C&I customer that we spoke to supported the proposed initiative in theory and could see the benefits of the upgrades. However, they explained that their organisation has internal upgrades of their own to fund before they can consider taking on additional costs to support others.



We're not impacted at all. So yeah, we would definitely support continuing as normal with no improvements. But having to fund an upgrade for all other businesses around us would be hard to digest I guess as a business especially.

Anonymous

C&I engagements - SWER Line Upgrades Summary



Most customers were willing to pay for the SWER phase upgrades to three-phase

- Those who were unsure primarily wanted reassurance that upgrading the lines was a better solution than alternatives (e.g. micro grids)



Upgrades supported because they are necessary and support wider community

- There were common reasons for supporting the SWER upgrades which included the upgrades being necessary to facilitate the incoming energy transition and the positive impact these upgrades would have on employees and suppliers in regional areas.
- Some organisations supported the upgrades because they align with their ESG goals.



Cost was not a contributor to the decisions made (with one exception)

- Cost was not the deciding factor behind willingness to pay for C&I customers, with the exception of one organisation who could not support the initiative due to financial constraints.

C&I customer engagements:

Willingness to pay findings – Customer Assistance Packages (CAP)

C&I engagements - CAP

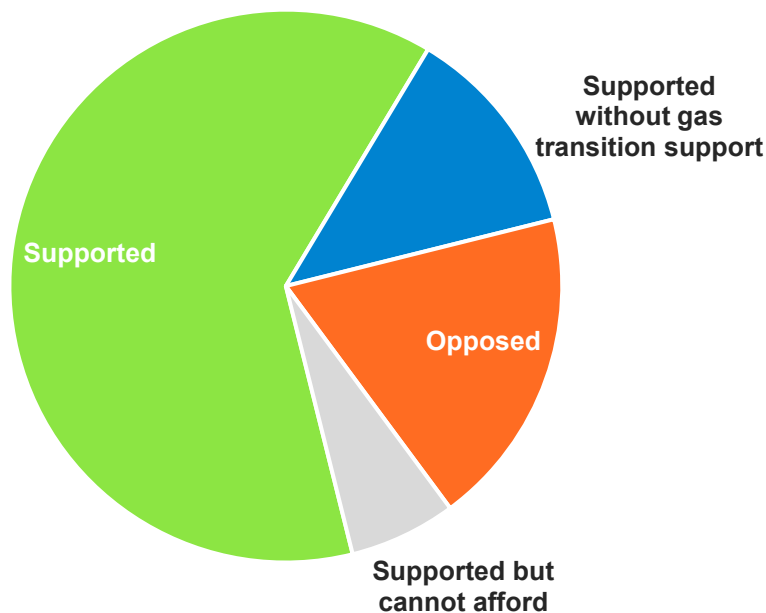
Willingness to pay findings

Overall, C&I customers tended to support CAP initiative and just one C&I customer opposed the proposal because of the cost.

- The majority of C&I customers supported the CAP initiative at both pricing levels (option 2 & option 3), indicating that the cost was negligible.
- Two C&I customers supported the majority of the CAP proposal (including the energy care and the energy advisory program) but did not support the proposed vulnerable customer assistance program. This was because these customers did not want to support customers to transition from gas to electricity.
- These two customers supported option 2 but did not support option 3 because the only change between options 2 and 3 was the addition of more support for transitioning from gas to electricity.
- One C&I customer supported the CAP proposal in theory but could not justify any additional costs as a result of financial constraints and was not willing to pay for the packages.
- Three C&I customers opposed the CAP proposal because they felt that some or all of it was not within Powercor's remit.

Customer assistance packages (CAP) support breakdown among C&I customers

Base: All C&I Customers, n=16.



C&I engagements - CAP

Overview of tested options




C&I customers were introduced to the general concept of the Customer Assistance Packages (CAP) to gauge their initial reactions to the proposal. They were then shown the following three specific investment options and willingness to pay for each option was assessed.

Customer Assistance Packages - General Concept

Powercor has created a program to help customers who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances or hardship with respect to energy. The program would include:

- Energy Care
- Vulnerable Customer Assistance Program
- Energy Advisory Services

The cost impact per annum was calculated and provided to customers in AUD\$

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Do nothing “status quo” <p>Support for customers experiencing vulnerable circumstances will remain as today, which includes energy literacy: Customers can access billing information via our digital channels such as our engagement website.</p> <p>No cost</p> <div></div>	As currently in Powercor’s proposal <p>The program helps people who struggle with energy costs/access:</p> <p>3,000 customers upgrade their homes to switch from gas to electric</p> <p>30,000 customers better understand their energy bills</p> <p>17,000 customers get information and advice on where to connect renewable energy resources</p> <p>Cost ranged from \$20.80 - \$1,346.81</p> <p>(0.017% of distribution component in Powercor region p.a.)</p> <div></div>	A higher investment than currently proposed <p>The program helps people who struggle with energy costs/access:</p> <p>6,000 customers upgrade their homes to switch from gas to electric</p> <p>30,000 customers better understand their energy bills</p> <p>17,000 customers get information and advice on where to connect renewable energy resources</p> <p>Cost ranged from \$35.48 - \$2,297.50</p> <p>(0.029% of distribution component in Powercor region p.a.)</p> <div></div>



C&I engagements - CAP

Willingness to pay – reasons for support

The majority of C&I customers supported the CAP initiative at both pricing levels (option 2 & option 3)

- Altruism was the main reason for supporting the CAP proposal. Most C&I customers stated that their gut reaction was to support any initiative that would provide support to vulnerable customers.
- C&I customers also said they supported the program because many customers need assistance in understanding the energy transition that is happening and because supporting a program like this aligns with their companies ESG goals.
- There was also an indication that locally-run businesses were more likely to be supportive of the CAP proposal than organisations that were managed at a national level.



I have no problem with that [options 2 or 3] at all. If they've if they've got a greater prospect of paying their energy bill, they'll also have a greater prospect of paying their water bill. And you know, we're a soft touch when it comes to hardship. So not a problem. We'll wear it.

Mark Williams, GWMWater



I think it would be helpful. In our current environment with cost of living and the way, certainly in Victoria, that we're going with emissions targets and the like, it is making sense to electrify and hence you know, those assistance programs do help with that, both understanding but helping share some of the cost. Yeah, I think it does need to be in place.

Anonymous

- The cost of the bill impact (ranging from \$20.80 - \$1,346.81 per annum for option 2) was deemed negligible by all but one C&I customer and was not a factor considered in most C&I customers' likelihood to support the program.
- The majority of customers who supported CAP option 2 also supported CAP option 3 (at the higher investment level).
- Some supporters of the CAP did express caution in relation to energy literacy, considering that many retailers are already offering this support. They suggested it may be worthwhile for Powercor to partner with retailers on energy literacy programs to ensure consistent messaging is provided to customers.
- There were also two customers, who while remaining supportive of the proposal, did not necessarily think it was Powercor's responsibility to be providing this to customers.



For an extra 120 bucks a year, I think it's something we'd support. That's no cost. So if that's going to improve our area and the people within our area for 120 bucks a year, that's a no-brainer.

Anonymous

C&I engagements - CAP

Willingness to pay - reasons for indecisiveness

Two C&I customers supported the majority of the CAP concept, but did not agree with Powercor supporting customers to convert their appliances from gas to electricity

- Support for the CAP did vary per package within the proposal (vulnerable customer assistance program, energy advisory services and energy care), which led to some indecisiveness as to whether some C&I customers would support the full proposal.
- Two C&I customers in particular struggled to support the vulnerable customer assistance program, which is designed to help people and communities replace infrastructure at their properties to accommodate increased electricity capacity.
- While these two customers supported improving energy literacy and providing better information around how and where to connect renewables into the network (covered by the other packages within the proposal), increasing electrification and transitioning away from gas was a more contentious issue for these customers.



Well, I'm dead against anything that is switching from gas appliances to electric ones because again, I think that's a government policy driven thing and where this state's sitting on that much gas, it's not funny and we don't use it. So I'm dead against subsidising poor government policy.

Michael Mason, Trevaskis Engineering



I'm not so convinced about the merit of the price premium for that (option 3). I think it should only be done if it's made sense. I know there's a broader policy debate about the role of gas in the end user consumption market, which is sort of that perception around gas being a premium fuel. I think there's even a broader debate at the moment around sort of the retreating from the pursuit of electrification. If you look here in Horsham and still in Ararat, the gas distribution networks have all been totally relined. So seriously there's another at least 25 - 30 years of life put into the gas network in town. It doesn't make any sense that you start abandoning it and we don't even get in the gas area the benefit of retail competition because it's locked up in an agreement that was struck in 1995... Probably not convinced about the merit of anything which helps that transition. If that needs to happen, government should stump it up

Mark Williams, GWMWater

- These customers felt that if the government wants to transition people off of gas and onto electricity, then it should be the entity to financially assist customers to do so. This cost should not be borne by Powercor nor their customers.
- It is worthwhile noting that the customers who raised this as a point of contention were not reliant on natural gas for their operations.

C&I engagements - CAP

Willingness to pay - reasons for opposition

Three C&I customers opposed the CAP proposal and were not willing to pay for this investment, these customers strongly felt that at least some of the package did not fall within Powercor's remit

- Those who opposed the CAP felt that some or all of the packages were not within Powercor's remit, or they felt these programs are already being offered elsewhere and that Powercor should focus their investments on improving the network.
- The government are working with Victorian residents to convert their electricity to gas where feasible and there was a perception that there is no need to Powercor to also offer this support (under the vulnerable customer assistance program).
- Similarly, retailers are already providing energy advisory services and there is a concern that Powercor's advice may not be consistent with retailers. This may be further complicated by the fact that Powercor has no direct contact with their own customers.



If you ask a distributor who their customers are, they'll tell you their retailers, right? They should be talking to their retailers about what already gets done and how and what. No-one gets a bill from Powercor, the bill comes from the retailer. So you know, [they should be] sharing information with the retailers and utilising what they already do.

Anonymous



I'm not sure that Powercor is the right party for this. I just think it should be done and it's probably being done in part or full by others. I'm probably more of the view that I would prefer that the money is spent on kind of the network itself and getting ready for that increased electricity demand in the future of which will come.

John Calleja, Gouge Linen and Garment Services

- For these opposing C&I customers, the only component of CAP deemed to be within Powercor's remit was providing information and advice on where to connect renewable energy resources onto the network (provided under Energy Advisory Services). Despite this, these customers opposed the total CAP as they cannot support nor be willing to pay for all of the proposed packages.
- There was one C&I customer who did oppose CAP based on cost due to financial constraints in their organisation, but they did express that in theory they would support the packages.

C&I engagements – Customer Assistance Packages Summary



Most customers were willing to pay for the Customer Assistance Package

- Most C&I customers were willing to pay for CAP upgrades.
- All but two customers who supported option 2 (the current proposal) also supported option 3 (higher investment option)
- Energy Advisory services were deemed well within Powercor's remit, while some felt energy literacy services should be delivered by or in partnership with energy retailers.



Reasons for supporting CAP were primarily linked to supporting vulnerable customers

- Those who support CAP feel it is important to support vulnerable customers and ensure that nobody is left behind during the energy transition.
- The CAP initiative also aligned with some C&I customers stated ESG goals, which was a reason for supporting the initiative.



Cost was not a contributor to the decisions made (with one exception)

- Cost was not a factor in willingness to pay for C&I.
- The exception was one C&I customer who supported the initiative in theory but could not justify additional costs of any kind to the business.

Appendices



Appendix 1: Questionnaire



Appendix: Residential and SMB Questionnaire

Final (14/07/2025)

WTP Network Upgrades

Job #: 0702

Powercor

Survey type: Online

Methodology

Summary of research objectives:

In January 2025 Powercor submitted its Regulatory Proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) which outlines its forecast costs, revenue requirements, and proposed tariffs to deliver its services for 2026-31. The AER is reviewing the proposal and Powercor has an opportunity to submit a revised proposal later this year. Since preparing the proposal the business has identified two business cases for further testing: 1) Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) powerline upgrades in selected rural locations where customers are relatively more likely to experience poor reliability/ more outages to three-phase power and 2) Its proposed Customer Assistance Packages. This survey will test these business cases among residents and SMEs on the Powercor grid.

The results of the quantitative survey combined with semi-structured interviewing will provide evidence of customer's energy needs and preferences to help inform Powercor's Revised Regulatory Proposal and is in line with the AER's expectations.

The quantitative survey will measure customers' Willingness to Pay (WTP) for SWER upgrades and Customer Assistance Packages over the next regulatory period (2026-31), among residential and SME respondents, regardless of whether they are likely to be beneficiaries.

Project specifications:

Project consultants:	Sharon Morris, Jessica Hearn
Programmer(s):	Akansa
Tracker:	No
Total number of waves:	N/A
Waves for which this questionnaire applies:	N/A
Total number of interviews to be completed:	n = 800
Questionnaire length:	10 minutes
Definition of target audience:	The target population is Powercor's residential customers and SMEs. The survey is targeted to residents and business operators who are involved in paying the bill and/or financial decision.
Panel Provider (panel sample only):	Octopus
Fieldwork dates:	17 th -28 th July

Screener

The first few questions are to check if this survey is relevant to you.

ASK ALL

Q.1. How old are you?

SINGLE RESPONSE; TERMINATE IF CODE 1	Code
Under 18	1
18-24	2
25-29	3
30-39	4
40-49	5
50-59	6
60-69	7
70-79	8
80+	9

ASK ALL

Q.2. What gender do you identify with?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Male	1
Female	2
Non-binary	3
Another gender (please specify):	95

ASK ALL

Q.3. What is your postcode?

OPEN NUMERIC FIELD; FOUR DIGITS REQUIRED
CODE AS METRO OR REGIONAL VICTORIA
CODE AS VICTORIAN ELECTORAL DISTRICTS

ASK IF Q.3 POSTCODE IS IN POWERCOR AREA

Q.4. To what extent are you involved in financial decisions in your household, such as choosing your energy retailer and paying your household energy bill?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
I am the sole decision maker	1
I share decision making with someone else in the household	2
I am not involved in decision making	3

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Data to be merged with a previous datafile?	No
Questionnaire has been reviewed by Sharon	Yes
Questionnaire approved by client	
Does this job require a representative screener sample (quotas on entry)?	No
Any quotas on the sample? If yes, specify below	Yes - Only Residential

Target quotas (apply to residents only; assuming approx. n=750 of the 800 sample will be residential)

	Male				Female				
Area	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	TOTAL
Greater Melbourne	36	69	33	22	33	70	33	26	322
Regional Vic	38	64	52	54	36	68	56	60	428
TOTAL	74	133	85	76	69	138	89	86	750

Any additional variables that should be tracked in the portal (aside from quota variables):

- SME
- Residential

Weights to be applied (residential only):

	Male				Female				
Area	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	TOTAL
Greater Melbourne	4.8%	9.2%	4.3%	3.0%	4.4%	9.4%	4.4%	3.5%	43.0%
Regional Vic	5.0%	8.5%	6.9%	7.2%	4.8%	9.1%	7.4%	8.0%	57.0%
TOTAL	9.9%	17.7%	11.2%	10.2%	9.3%	18.4%	11.8%	11.5%	100.0%

Introduction - Online

Thank you for taking part in this survey.

We are conducting a short survey about electricity distribution that should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Please be reassured that your response to this survey will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for research purposes. Quantum is an independent market research company and complies with the Australian Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Data Insights Association Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021, and The Research Society's Code of Professional Behaviour. Our privacy policy can be found [here](#).

Powercor

ASK ALL

Q.5. Are you the owner or financial decision maker of a business?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Yes	1
No	2

ASK IF Q.5 = CODE 1

Q.5.a Are any of your business premises located within Victoria?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Yes	1
No	2

ASK IF Q.5 = CODE 1 (BUSINESS DECISION MAKER)

Q.6. What is the postcode of your business premises within Victoria? (If you own or make financial decisions for businesses located in multiple postcodes please list each postcode in a separate box).

OPEN NUMERIC FIELD; FOUR DIGITS REQUIRED, ALLOW UP TO TEN POSTCODE BOXES.
CODE AS METRO OR REGIONAL VICTORIA
CODE AS METRO AND REGIONAL IF BOTH

ASK IF Q.6 IS IN POWERCOR AREA

Q.7. Including yourself, approximately how many employees work in your business or organisation?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
1 (sole trader)	1
2-4	2
5-9	3
10-19	4
20-49	5
50-199	6
200 - 999	7
1,000+	8
Don't know	98

IF (Q.3 NOT IN POWERCOR AREA OR Q.4 = CODE 3) AND (Q.6 NOT IN POWERCOR AREA AND Q.5 = CODE 2 OR Q5a = CODE 2)

TERMINATE

IF (Q.3 NOT IN POWERCOR AREA OR Q.4 = CODE 3) AND (Q.6 IN POWERCOR AREA AND Q.5 = CODE 1 AND Q.7 = CODES 1-6)
CLASSIFY AS SME AND USE POSTCODE FROM Q.6

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Appendix: Residential and SMB Questionnaire

If (Q.3 IN **POWERCOR** AREA AND Q.4 = CODE 1 OR 2) AND (Q.6 NOT IN **POWERCOR** AREA OR Q.5 = CODE 2 OR Q.5A = CODE 2)
CLASSIFY AS RESIDENTIAL AND USE POSTCODE FROM Q.3
If (Q.3 IN **POWERCOR** AREA AND Q.4 = CODE 1 OR 2) AND (Q.6 IN **POWERCOR** AREA AND Q.5 = CODE 1 AND Q.7 = CODES 1-6)
CLASSIFY AS SME AND USE POSTCODE FROM Q.6

Ask IF SME

Q.8. Approximately how much do you spend on electricity for your business (either per year, per quarter, or per month? Please focus only on your business premises in the Powercor distribution region, that is LIST POSTCODES FROM Q.6 IN **POWERCOR** REGION)

\$ _____ per year
OR
\$ _____ per quarter
OR
\$ _____ per month

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Ask ALL

FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE SURVEY PLEASE FOCUS ON YOUR PROPERTY OR PROPERTIES IN THE FOLLOWING POSTCODES ONLY [INSERT POSTCODE]

Q.11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Powercor provides a reliable supply of electricity to your [home/ business]?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly disagree	1
Somewhat disagree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Somewhat agree	4
Strongly agree	5
Don't know	98

Ask ALL

Q.12. Have you experienced any of the following in the past 12 months in relation to your [IF SME: business] electricity supply [IF SME: in the Powercor area, which includes [POSTCODES FROM Q.6 IN **POWERCOR** REGION]]?

MULTIPLE RESPONSE: RANDOMISE	Code
A planned power outage (ie you received a notification about the outage)	1
An unexpected power outage (e.g. caused by a fault or storm)	2
Network maintenance (but there was no outage)	3
Trimming of trees and branches around powerlines	4
A new connection or change to an existing connection	5
Rejected connection application	6
Other (please specify)	95
None of these	98

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General Perceptions

Ask ALL

Q.9. What is the name of your electricity distributor?

OPEN END

NOT AWARE OF ANY = 98

SHOW ALL

There are four steps in the energy supply chain that moves energy from being generated to your [IF residential: home] and [IF SME: business]. Please see this image below:



1. An energy generator produces electricity by hydro, wind, solar, coal or gas.
2. An energy transmission business transports high voltage energy over long distances.
3. An energy distributor, such as Powercor, they are responsible for converting the high voltage electricity into lower voltage and distributes it to your home and most businesses. The electricity meter connected to your property measures the amount of energy you use.
4. Your home or business uses the energy sent to it from your distributor. Your retailer accesses the data on your meter and sends you your electricity bill. The cost of distributing the electricity to your property accounts for around 30% of your bill.

Q.10. According to your postcode, Powercor is the electricity distributor in your area of Victoria. Before today, did you know that Powercor was your local electricity distributor?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Yes	1
No	2

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Ask IF Q.12 = code 1

Q.13. How many times in the past 12 months have you experienced a planned power outage [IF SME: at your business premises] – that is, where you were notified in advance that the power would be off for a period of time?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
I have not experienced a planned outage in the last 12 months	1
Once	2
Twice	3
Three times	4
Four or more times	5
Don't know	98

Ask IF Q.12 = code 2

Q.14. How many times in the past 12 months have you experienced an unplanned power outage (e.g. caused by a fault, accident or storm) [IF SME: at your business premises]?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
I have not experienced an unplanned outage in the last 12 months	1
Once	2
Twice	3
Three times	4
Four or more times	5
Don't know	98

Ask ALL

Q.15. When was the last time you interacted with Powercor? [IF SME: on behalf of your business?]

This can include calling their contact centre, receiving a call from them, emailing or contact with them about an enquiry, complaint etc.

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
In the past 3 months	1
In the past 3 – 6 months	2
In the past 6 – 12 months	3
More than 12 months ago	4
Have never interacted with them	5
Can't recall	6

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Appendix: Residential and SMB Questionnaire

Ask Q.15 = CODES 1-3 (HAD CONTACT IN PAST 12 MONTHS)

Q.16. What was the main reason for your interaction with Powercor?

MULTIPLE RESPONSE; RANDOMISE ALL STATEMENTS	Code
A planned power outage (you received notification for)	1
An unexpected power outage (e.g. caused by a fault or storm)	2
Network maintenance (but not outage)	3
Trimming of trees and branches around powerlines	4
In relation to a claim	5
In relation to a complaint	6
In relation to solar (connection or export)	7
As part of their community consultation	8
A new connection or a change to an existing connection	9
Rejected connection application	10
Another reason (specify): _____	95
Can't remember	99

Modules

PROGRAMMING: RANDOMISE THE ORDER THAT MODULE 1 AND 2 ARE SHOWN.

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OPEN END

Ask IF CODE 1-2 AT Q.17

Q.17.c You indicated you do not support Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer? Please provide as much detail as you can.

OPEN END

New Screen

If Powercor proceeds with the proposal, all customers would pay for the investment, regardless of where they are located on Powercor's network or whether they would directly benefit from the SWER upgrade.

PROGRAMMING NOTE: Include here a graph of the Powercor network area



[Option 1: Maintaining SWER Lines] If the program continues as is, all regional and rural customers will experience the same outcomes as they do today and there would be no additional cost to your (\$0) to your energy bill per year. This means there will be no improvements for regional and rural communities that receive less reliable power compared to urban customers. Regional and rural communities would continue to have:

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Module 1 – SWER Upgrades to Three Phase

We'd now like to ask you about a proposed initiative that could be undertaken in the Powercor distribution region.

SINGLE WIRE EARTH RETURN (SWER) LINE UPGRADES TO THREE-PHASE

The electricity distribution network is made up of 3 different types of powerlines, Single Wire Earth Return (SWER), two-wire single phase and three-wire three phase powerlines.

SWER networks rolled out in the 1960s were designed for remote or regional locations as a low-cost solution for providing lights and refrigeration to areas with a low number of customers spread over large areas. In the Powercor network today, around 28,000 customers get electricity through 21,300 kilometres of SWER power lines.

These remote and rural customers typically receive less reliable power compared to urban customers.

- Their day to day activities are more likely to be impacted by outages;
- They are less able to export solar or charge an electric vehicle
- They experience more and longer unplanned outages because of increased risk of failing
- They experience more planned outages as these lines require more maintenance

ASK ALL

Q.17. Powercor is proposing to upgrade some SWER lines to three-wire three-phase lines, which are designed to deliver larger amounts of energy with better reliability. Customers would be less likely to experience outages and would be more able to export solar, charge electric vehicles and power heavy machinery. To what extent do you oppose or support Powercor investing in SWER line upgrades to three-phase?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

Ask IF CODE 4-5 AT Q.17

Q.17.a Why do you support Powercor investing in upgrading the SWER line upgrades to three-phase? Please provide as much detail as you can.

OPEN END

Ask IF CODE 3 AT Q.17

Q.17.b You indicated you neither support nor oppose Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer? Please provide as much detail as you can.

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- their day-to-day activities impacted by outages
- less ability to export solar energy or charge electric vehicles than urban and city customers
- more frequent and longer unplanned outages due to a higher risk of equipment failure
- more planned outages, as their lines require increased maintenance

Q.18. To what extent would you support Powercor continuing the program as it is today?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

ASK ALL [OPTION 2: UPGRADING 606KM OF SWER LINES TO THREE-PHASE LINES]

Q.19. If the program upgraded 606km of SWER lines to three-phase lines, cost you an additional [If Residential \$1.47] [If SME \$3.56] on your electricity bill per year and delivered the following benefits for Powercor's worst served customers:

- 1,310 households and businesses would have access to more electricity that would allow them to fully 'electrify' (for example exporting solar onto the network or charging electric vehicles) or grow their businesses (for example use electricity to automate processes).
- Better protection against bushfires along 606km of electricity lines.
- 577 households and businesses will have less issues with the quality of their power supply, which reduces the risk of their appliances failing or being damaged (for example, fridge, air conditioner, TV).

To what extent would you support Powercor implementing the SWER upgrade initiative?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

ASK ALL [Option 3: Upgrading 1,160km of SWER lines to three-phase]

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11

Appendix: Residential and SMB Questionnaire

Q.20. If the program upgraded 1,160km of SWER lines to three-phase lines, costs you an additional **[If Residential \$2.09] [If SME \$5.07]** on your electricity bill per year and delivered the following benefits for Powercor's worst served customers:

- 2,117 households and businesses would have access to more electricity that would allow them to fully 'electrify' (for example exporting solar onto the network or charging electric vehicles) or grow their businesses (for example use electricity to automate processes).
- Better protection against bushfires along 1,160km of electricity lines.
- 654 households and businesses will have less issues with the quality of their power supply, which reduces the risk of their appliances failing or being damaged (for example, fridge, air conditioner, TV).

To what extent would you support Powercor implementing the SWER upgrade initiative?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

Break between modules

New Screen

We are now going to ask you some questions about another improvement Powercor is considering.

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13

OPEN END

ASK ALL

Q.22. To what extent do you agree or disagree it should be Powercor's responsibility to provide this type of support to customers?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly disagree	1
Somewhat disagree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Somewhat agree	4
Strongly agree	5
Don't know	98

Powercor's investments are paid for by everyone within the network, including you and your neighbours.

PROGRAMMING NOTE: Include here a graph of the Powercor network area.



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14

Module 2 – Customer Assistance Packages

ASSISTANCE PACKAGES FOR CUSTOMERS EXPERIENCING VULNERABILITY

Powercor is the sole electricity distribution network for 60% of western Victorians. Their job is to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity to their customers.

Powercor has created a program to help customers who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances or hardship with respect to energy. The program would include:

- Energy Care – teaches people how to read their energy bills and understand their energy use.
- Vulnerable Customer Assistance Program – helps people and communities replace infrastructure at their properties to accommodate increased electricity capacity e.g. phase upgrades
- Energy Advisory Services – improves how Powercor shares data with customers

Q.21. To what extent do you oppose or support Powercor investing in an initiative to provide these types of Customer Assistance Packages?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

ASK IF CODE 4-5 AT Q.21

Q.21.a Why do you support Powercor investing in Customer Assistance Packages? Please provide as much detail as you can.

OPEN END

ASK IF CODE 3 AT Q.21

Q.21.b You indicated you neither support nor oppose Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer? Please provide as much detail as you can.

OPEN END

ASK IF CODE 1-2 AT Q.21

Q.21.c You indicated you do not support Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer? Please provide as much detail as you can.

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15

ASK ALL

(Option 1.)

Q.23. To what extent would you support Powercor continuing with supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances, without introducing any new packages, if this meant no additional cost (\$0) on your electricity bill per year?

Support for customers experiencing vulnerable circumstances will remain as today, which includes:

Energy literacy: Customers can access billing information via our digital channels such as our engagement website.

To what extent would you support Powercor maintaining this current level of support, without further investment?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

ASK ALL (Option 2)

Q.24. If the proposed program expansion costs you an additional **[If Residential \$0.23] [If SMB \$0.56]** on your electricity bill per year and helped people who struggle with energy costs or access by supporting:

- about 3,000 customers upgrade their homes so they can switch from gas appliances to electric ones
- about 30,000 customers better understand their energy bills and how their usage impacts their bills.
- about 17,000 customers get information and advice on where to connect renewable energy resources onto the network

To what extent would you support Powercor implementing the Customer Assistance Packages?

SINGLE RESPONSE	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

ASK ALL (Option 3)

Q.25. If the proposed program expansion costs you an additional **[If Residential \$0.41] [If SME \$0.98]** on your electricity bill per year and helped people who struggle with energy costs or access by supporting:

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16

Appendix: Residential and SMB Questionnaire

Q.20. If the program upgraded 1,160km of SWER lines to three-phase lines, costs you an additional [If Residential \$2.09] [If SME \$5.07] on your electricity bill per year and delivered the following benefits for Powercor's worst served customers:

- 2,117 households and businesses would have access to more electricity that would allow them to fully 'electrify' (for example exporting solar onto the network or charging electric vehicles) or grow their businesses (for example use electricity to automate processes).
- Better protection against bushfires along 1,160km of electricity lines.
- 654 households and businesses will have less issues with the quality of their power supply, which reduces the risk of their appliances failing or being damaged (for example, fridge, air conditioner, TV).

To what extent would you support Powercor implementing the SWER upgrade initiative?

Single Response	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

Break between modules

New Screen

We are now going to ask you some questions about another improvement Powercor is considering.

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12

Ask if Residential

Q.29. Do you have any children aged under 18 living in the household?

Single Response	Code
Yes	1
No	2

Ask if Residential

Q.30. Which of the following best describes you?

Single Response	Code
Single	1
Married / de facto	2
Separated / divorced	3
Widowed	4
Prefer not to answer	96

Ask if Residential

Q.31. Which of the following best describes the home you currently live in?

Single Response	Code
Stand-alone / separate house	1
Semi-detached house, row or terrace house, townhouse	2
Unit	3
Flat or apartment	4
Other (please specify): _____	95
Prefer not to say	96

Ask if Residential and Regional

Q.32. And which of the following best describes where you live? If you're not sure, please select the category that feels most appropriate

Single Response	Code
Large regional town (population 10,000 people or more)	1
Small regional town (population under 10,000 people)	2
Rural	3

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Module 2 – Customer Assistance Packages

ASSISTANCE PACKAGES FOR CUSTOMERS EXPERIENCING VULNERABILITY

Powercor is the sole electricity distribution network for 60% of western Victorians. Their job is to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity to their customers.

Powercor has created a program to help customers who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances or hardship with respect to energy. The program would include:

- Energy Care – teaches people how to read their energy bills and understand their energy use.
- Vulnerable Customer Assistance Program – helps people and communities replace infrastructure at their properties to accommodate increased electricity capacity e.g. phase upgrades
- Energy Advisory Services – improves how Powercor shares data with customers

Q.21. To what extent do you oppose or support Powercor investing in an initiative to provide these types of Customer Assistance Packages?

Single Response	Code
Strongly oppose	1
Somewhat oppose	2
Indifferent (neither support nor oppose)	3
Somewhat support	4
Strongly support	5

Ask if CODE 4-5 AT Q.21

Q.21.a Why do you support Powercor investing in Customer Assistance Packages? Please provide as much detail as you can.

OPEN END

Ask if CODE 3 AT Q.21

Q.21.b You indicated you neither support nor oppose Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer? Please provide as much detail as you can.

OPEN END

Ask if CODE 1-2 AT Q.21

Q.21.c You indicated you do not support Powercor's proposal, why did you give this answer? Please provide as much detail as you can.

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Ask if Residential

Q.33. What is your current annual household income, before tax?

Single Response	Code
Less than \$25,000	1
\$25,000-\$49,999	2
\$50,000-\$74,999	3
\$75,000-\$99,999	4
\$100,000-\$124,999	5
\$125,000-\$149,999	6
\$150,000-\$174,999	7
\$175,000-\$199,999	8
\$200,000 or more	9
Not sure	98
Prefer not to say	96

Ask if SME

Q.34. Which of the following best describes the annual turnover of your business or organisation last year?

Single Response	Code
Less than \$100,000	1
\$100,000 – less than \$500,000	2
\$500,000 – less than \$1,000,000	3
\$1 million – less than \$2 million	4
\$2 million – less than \$5 million	5
\$5 million – less than \$25 million	6
\$25 million – less than \$50 million	7
\$50 million or more	8
Don't know	98
Prefer not to say	96

Online thanks

End with thanks (all):

Thank you for assisting us today. Your response to this survey will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only for research purposes. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact us on surveys@qmr.com.au

All data and information collected from the survey will be stored appropriately and in accordance with the Australian Privacy Act 1988, the ADIA Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code 2021, and The Research Society's Code of Professional Behaviour. Our Privacy policy can be found [here](#).

We are conducting this research on behalf of Powercor. Please visit the Powercor engagement page for further information: [Home | Engage CitiPower and Powercor](#).

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13

Appendix 2: Sample Profile



Appendix: Residential and SMB Sample Weighted and Unweighted

Residential Sample

	Count	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Gender	n	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Male	322	46%	49%
Female	377	54%	51%
Non-binary	2	-	-
Age	n	Unweighted %	Weighted %
18 to 24	54	8%	7%
25 to 29	86	12%	12%
30 to 39	160	23%	22%
40 to 49	109	16%	15%
50 to 64	158	23%	23%
65+	134	19%	22%
Powercor Network Area	n	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Greater Melbourne	318	45%	43%
Regional Victoria	383	55%	57%

SMB Sample

	Count	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Gender	n	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Male	57	56%	-
Female	44	44%	-
Non-binary	-	-	-
Age	n	Unweighted %	Weighted %
18 to 24	5	5%	-
25 to 29	11	11%	-
30 to 39	34	34%	-
40 to 49	17	17%	-
50 to 64	25	25%	-
65+	9	9%	-
Powercor Network Area	n	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Greater Melbourne	50	50%	-
Regional Victoria	50	50%	-

Appendix 3: Discussion Guide



Appendix: C&I Customer engagement discussion guide

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FINAL (29/07/2025)

Powercor WTP
Discussion guide

Job no.: 0702

Research background and objectives:

In January 2025 Powercor submitted its Regulatory Proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) which outlines its forecast costs, revenue requirements, and proposed tariffs to deliver its services for 2026-31. The AER is reviewing the proposal and Powercor has an opportunity to submit a revised proposal later this year. Since preparing the proposal the business has identified two business cases for further testing: 1) Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) powerline upgrades in selected rural locations where customers are relatively more likely to experience poor reliability/ more outages to three-phase power and 2) Its proposed Customer Assistance Packages. These interviews will test willingness to pay for these business cases among C&I customers on the Powercor grid.

The semi-structured interviews are designed to assess Willingness to Pay for these business cases among Powercor's C&I customers and to allow C&I customers to discuss critical topics relating to their energy needs today and into the future. A Powercor representative may be in attendance during the interviews, once consented to by the customer. This will allow for a partnership between Powercor and C&I customers and for two-way discussion to occur surrounding the proposals and any potential issues or concerns.

A quantitative survey is also being conducted among Powercor residents and small businesses, and those results will be combined with the results from these interviews. The overall findings will allow Quantum to support Powercor to develop and deliver regulatory reset proposals that align with and address customer energy needs and preferences and ensure regulatory and strategic decisions are backed by robust community insights.

Overview of methodology:

- n=30 IDs. Mix of online and in-person, based on availability and preference.
- Maximum of 45mins.

Sample / target audience:

- Powercor C&I customers

Note for client:

Quantum typically conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews. In semi-structured interviews, discussion guides are used as a guide rather than a script; they prompt interviewers to cover topics of interest and suggest probes to use. In acknowledging this, please don't get too caught up on specific words or phrases used here as we will adapt how questions are phrased when speaking to participants.

1

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Section 1: Introductions (5 mins)

- **Thank-you** for participating. This engagement will be split into two sections:
 - Firstly, we'd like to hear from you about your energy needs today and into the future to ensure Powercor can feed your feedback into business planning and their regulatory proposal.
 - Secondly, we'd like to assess some initiatives Powercor could potentially implement in future.
- This session will last for no longer than **45 minutes**.
- If you're okay with it, I will **record** the session – for note taking purposes only. You may opt out if you prefer.
- I'm a consultant for Quantum Market Research, a **third-party** research agency, and I have the privilege of chatting to people every day about a wide range of topics. I encourage you to **speak openly and honestly** – I'm completely **impartial, non-judgemental and really value your input**.
- I have no personal stake in this engagement, and I am interested in your honest feedback – there are no right or wrong opinions or answers.
- **[If participant has consented to Powercor team member joining the interview]** As you know, we have [Name, role] joining us today from Powercor. They are very interested in hearing what you have to say and will also engage in the discussion. They may ask some questions and are available to answer your queries. However, this does not change your ability to speak openly and honestly about your opinions.
- **[If participant took part in previous engagements]** As you may know from previously engaging with this program, Powercor has already submitted its Regulatory Proposal for 2026-31. While the AER is reviewing the proposal, Powercor wants to connect again with its C&I customers to further ensure that your feedback contributes to the final proposal submitted in December 2025. Your **feedback** however, will also be brought into other business planning and our next reset cycle. Please take this opportunity to ensure your contribution is heard.

Section 2: (5 mins)

Objective: Build rapport with participant and introduce topic of discussion

- Tell me about yourself
 - What organisation do you work for?
 - What is your role?
 - How long have you worked there?
- **[IF TOOK PART IN PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT]** We understand you have taken part in previous engagements with Powercor. Since then, has anything changed relating to your energy needs and plans?
 - If yes, what has changed?
 - Why has this changed / What actions were taken?

2

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- What do you want Powercor to know about these changed needs as a result?
- Looking ahead, what do you think will change about your energy use or priorities in the next 5–10 years?
- What kind of support or information do you think you'll need during this period of change?

[IF PARTICIPANT DID NOT TAKE PART IN PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT]

- Over the past year or two, have your energy needs or concerns changed? In what way?
 - Prompt to understand, electrification, ESG (environment, social, governance) targets, corporate social responsibility, business growth, reliability
- Looking ahead, what do you think will change about your energy use or priorities in the next 5–10 years?
- What kind of support or information do you think you'll need during this period of change?
 - What support would you need from Powercor to support your business needs?

Section 3: (10 mins)

Objective: Assess current and future needs and preferences related to energy

- There are some topics that we hear are important to C&I customers across industry when relating to energy needs. Which, if any of the following are most important to you when considering future planning and achieving your organisational goals?
[Prompt on...]
 - Energy reliability (uninterrupted supply of electricity)
 - Power quality (stability of energy supply - note that customers may talk about reliability and quality together)
 - Demand management (managing the amount of energy being used across time of day)
 - Tariffs / Tariff structures – affordability (pricing structure and energy bills)
 - Relationship management (how their organisation is being managed by Powercor)
 - The energy transition (customers increase use of electricity due to factors such as growth, capacity and changing technology)
- What challenges or opportunities do you see across these important topics?
- What are the potential impacts if the opportunity/challenge is not considered / addressed?

3

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- Does this have impact on growth, ESG targets, corporate and social responsibility, reliability?
- What role do you expect Powercor to play?
- What services would you most like to see Powercor deliver in future?
 - Prompt on previously mentioned priorities / concerns / negative impacts

Probes based on areas raised as most important.

Interviewer note: the following discussion topics are guides only and are to support probing based on the areas that are most important to customers. Not all prompts need to be covered.

RELIABILITY

- What has your reliability experience been?
- If poor reliability experienced: What are the impacts?
 - operational delays
 - financial losses
 - need for critical infrastructure (i.e. water pumps)
- Have you looked into alternative energy systems? E.g. batteries, solar or generators
- What is the cost of investment into substitute energy systems (e.g. batteries or generators)
- Do you use gas in your organisation?
 - What reliance do you have on gas?
 - Do you see benefits in switching to electricity for your organisation?
 - Are you planning to switch to electricity? Why/why not?
 - What are the impacts of switching?
- Are there specific moments or events where reliability really matters to you?
- What expectations do you have from Powercor in maintaining or improving reliability?

POWER QUALITY

Note that some customers might talk about power quality in the same bucket as reliability

- Is power quality important to your business?
- What is your experience with power quality? E.g. is it good or poor
 - Do you experience fluctuations, flickering, sags or surges?
- What is the impact of this experience? (equipment and/or cost to output)
- When would this typically happen?

4

Appendix: C&I Customer engagement discussion guide

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- o Have you worked on mitigation to prevent this from impacting your business
- o What are your plans to monitor the progress and outcomes?
- o Is there a role you expect Powercor to play to support you in this?

DEMAND MANAGEMENT

- o Are there times of day or operations where you could shift load without impacting productivity?
 - If no: why is it not feasible/practical to shift your load?
- o What benefits or disadvantages does this result in?
- o Would you shift your load if there was compensation provided? Why/ why not?

TARIFFS

- o What percentage is your electricity bill compared to your other business expenses? (gauge size)
- o Are there particular pieces of equipment or processes that contribute to high usage at specific times?
- o Do you know what type of tariff you're on? Which one?
 - Have you taken any steps to manage your load to avoid peak charges?

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

- o What is your experience with Powercor team members?
- o Are there contacts within Powercor you can access if you have a question or query?
- o What type of information are you looking for from a Powercor team member?
 - Is there additional information or data you wish you had on your electricity use, why/ why not?
 - How would that assist you?
 - Are you able to access and use network visualisation tools such as Rosetta? (Rosetta is a free tool Powercor has on their website to review things such as energy constraints and assets across the network) Is this helpful? Why/why not?

ENERGY TRANSITION

- o Has your organisation invested in Consumer Energy Resources (CER)?
 - Has the reduction in solar feed-in tariffs (to nearly zero) impacted your decision to invest in CER (solar and batteries)?
- o Has your desire to electrify been impacted by poor community sentiment for transmission upgrades?
- o How does emission reductions and targets, or customer pressures impact your business decisions?

5

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I would now like to talk to you about another proposed initiative...

Powercor is the sole electricity distribution network for 60% of western Victorians. Their job is to deliver reliable, safe and affordable electricity to customers.

Powercor has created a program to help customers who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances or hardship with respect to energy. The program would include:

- **Energy Care** – teaches people how to read their energy bills and understand their energy use.
- **Vulnerable Customer Assistance Program** – helps people and communities replace infrastructure at their properties to accommodate increased electricity capacity e.g. phase upgrades
- **Energy Advisory Services** – improves how Powercor shares data with customers

MODERATOR NOTE: REPEAT QUESTIONS FOR EACH MODULE

- What is your initial reaction to this initiative?
- Would you be likely to support or oppose Powercor's plans to invest in this initiative?
 - o Why is that?
 - o What is your understanding of the benefits/disadvantages of this initiative?
 - o Who do you think would benefit the most? Why?

- [ASK FOR CAP MODULE ONLY] Do you agree or disagree that it is Powercor's responsibility to provide this type of support to customers?

[Moderator to provide the following additional information]

As you may know, Powercor's investments are paid for by everyone within the network, including your industry/organisation, and other business and residential customers.

[Moderator to introduce pricing options and associated benefits]

Moderator notes for showing pricing options:

7

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- o Do you consider energy transparency an important part of your perception as a brand?
- o Are you considering adopting renewable energy technologies? (i.e. electric vehicle fleet) Why/Why not?
 - What are the barriers and opportunities?

Section 4: (Modules, 20 mins)

Objective: Assess attitudes towards and willingness to pay for each initiative

MODERATOR NOTE: ALTERNATE WHICH INITIATIVE IS DISCUSSED FIRST.

[Moderator to introduce proposed initiative – keep language simple, no pricing to be mentioned. Stimulus for each initiative and for each pricing option will be available for the participant to view].

Module 1: Single Wire Earth Return (SWER) Line Upgrades

I would now like to talk to you about a proposed initiative from Powercor, which you may or may not already be aware of.

Currently, the electricity distribution network is made up of 3 different types of powerlines. Single Wire Earth Return (SWER), two-wire single phase and three-wire three phase powerlines.

SWER networks rolled out in the 1960s were designed for remote or regional locations as a low-cost solution for providing lights and refrigeration to areas with a low number of customers spread over large areas. In the Powercor network today, around 28,000 customers get electricity through 21,300 kilometres of SWER power lines.

Remote and rural customers typically receive less reliable power compared to urban customers. For example:

- Their day to day activities are more likely to be impacted by outages
- They are less able to export solar or charge an electric vehicle
- They experience more and longer unplanned outages because of increased risk of failing
- They experience more planned outages as these lines require more maintenance

Module 2: Customer Assistance Packages

6

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- Show options in consecutive order (Option 1, 2, 3).
- Show one option at a time.
- Remind participant that you are independent / do not have a stake in the outcome.
- Remind participant that cost options reflect an increase on their annual bill.
- For C&I price increments will be based on a % of their bill.

Show option, then ask:

- Would you support or oppose Powercor implementing this option?
 - o How did you reach this decision?
 - o Why do you support / oppose this initiative?
 - o You may not directly benefit from this initiative but other people in your community would, does this change your opinion? In what way?

Section 5: (5 mins)

Objective: Wrap up final thoughts and feedback

- Do you have any further thoughts on either of the initiatives I have shown you today?
 - o Prompt on SWER line initiatives
 - o Prompt on CAP initiatives
- Are there any other current topics or issues that you would like to discuss that have not been addressed yet?

Thank and close

Disclosure consent: Do you give consent for your name and organisation to be associated with the feedback you shared today?

If no: your feedback will be aggregated/ synthesised with others we've spoken to

Close-the-loop:

In terms of the next steps, we are going to go away and write up the report based on the feedback we've received across customers, like yourself who have participated in this engagement.

Powercor will then share this report back with yourself and other participants so you can clearly see how your feedback is being shared with the business. You're welcome to give any further feedback at this stage.

How information is being used: Powercor is using this information to feed into their regulatory reset proposal and future business planning, so we really appreciate your open feedback today.

8



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Willingness to Pay Research,
September, 2025

90

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