

Electricity Distribution Price Review FY2027 to FY2031 (EDPR 2027-31)

Resubmission Addendum: Field Enablement

Date: 1 December 2025



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Document history

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03/11/2025	V1.0	Draft business case addendum
27/11/2025	V2.0	Final addendum for submission

Related documents

DOCUMENT	VERSION	AUTHOR
Wipro - Cost Estimation Report	V1.0	Wipro
Revised Proposal Digital Program NPV Model	V2.0	AusNet Services

Approvals

POSITION	DATE
Digital & Technology – Strategy, Regulatory and Partner Management	November 2025
Digital & Technology – Architecture	November 2025
Distribution – Network Operations & Delivery	November 2025
Distribution – Strategy and Regulation	November 2025

Executive Summary

The Field Enablement program represents AusNet's non-recurrent expenditure to address capability gaps and inefficiencies resulting from the digital tools used to coordinate and execute work. The way that field crews are managed, and the digital tools available to them, are critical to the way they operate and can materially impact on our network performance, customer experience, and maintenance costs.

AusNet's initial proposal included \$18.8m capex and \$10.8m opex (\$real 2026) for the Field Enablement program. The AER's Draft Decision approved this proposal, however included a \$1.3m adjustment to capex and removal of incremental opex as detailed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1 AusNet Initial Proposal and AER Alternative Forecast (\$m, real FY2026)

Cost item	AusNet Initial Proposal	AER Alternative	Adjustment
Capex	\$18.8m	\$17.5m	-7%
Opex	\$10.8m	-	-100%

The AER's Draft Decision details reasons for these adjustments, which AusNet has addressed in our Revised Proposal.

AER Draft Decision Feedback	How this has been addressed in AusNet's Revised Proposal
Allocation of project costs between AusNet's distribution, transmission and gas network businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AusNet's initial proposal reflected only distribution network allocated costs, as per our Cost Allocation Methodology. Distribution related allocations have been more clearly documented in our revised proposal
AusNet's quantified employee productivity benefits were inconsistent with its narrative regarding current inefficiencies and the ability of these systems to provide productivity uplifts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AusNet has updated the benefit quantification for the Field Enablement resubmission to align with the revised proposal scope. We have incorporated employee productivity improvements associated with the program and they have been captured in our benefit modelling.
Proposed opex step change not required as forecast business opex savings will obviate the need for additional expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AusNet has accepted the AER's Draft Decision feedback. Incremental opex for licencing and support has been removed from AusNet's Revised Proposal step change given it is offset by business productivity benefits. For completeness, licencing and support opex is still included in the business case cost benefit NPV evaluation.

Over the past 10 months, since the initial proposal, AusNet has further matured the scope, costs and benefits of our Field Enablement program, resulting in consolidation to proposed energy and non-energy related mobility projects. We have evaluated two options for delivery of these projects, with options assessed relative to their cost and benefits. **Table 2** details the results of this assessment, with the preferred Option 2 of both projects delivering the highest NPV.

Table 2 – Options assessment results (\$m, real 2024, distribution network cost allocation)

#	OPTION NAME	COST (TOTEX \$M)	NPV (\$M)	PREFERRED
1	Implement only energy mobility solution	\$27.4m	\$16.0m	No
2	Implement both energy and non-energy mobility solutions	\$36.7m	\$25.5m	Yes

Based on this assessment, AusNet's Field Enablement Revised Proposal represents \$30.6m capex and \$6.1m opex (for ongoing software licencing and support, noting that AusNet is not proposing a step change for this amount as it is self-funded through the forecast productivity benefits). All costs represent distribution network allocation. The expenditure profile for the FY2027-31 regulatory period is shown in **Table 3** below.

Table 3 - Forecast expenditure for Option 2 (\$m real 2024, distribution network allocated costs)

Cost item	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030	FY2031	Total
Capex	\$16.5m	\$14.2m	-	-	-	\$30.6m
Opex	-	-	\$2.0m	\$2.0m	\$2.0m	\$6.1m
Total	\$16.5m	\$14.2m	\$2.0m	\$2.0m	\$2.0m	\$36.7m

1. AusNet's proposal and AER Draft Decision

The way that field crews are managed, and the digital tools available to them, are critical to our operations and can materially impact network performance, customer experience, and maintenance costs. Our growing network, increasing customer expectations, and extreme weather events, increase expectations on our field crews to efficiently and effectively complete repair and maintenance works.

This section summarises AusNet's initial FY2027-31 regulatory period proposal for Field Enablement investments; and the digital tools used to coordinate and execute field work. Also detailed is the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER's) Draft Decision, alternative forecast, reasons for adjustments to AusNet's proposal, and feedback to be addressed in our revised proposal.

1.1. Initial Submission Summary

AusNet has identified the following gaps in our existing field operations systems capabilities that require investment to remediate:

- Multiple different systems and processes used to manage different Field Service Providers (FSPs).
- Inefficient systems for making changes so new data can be collected by field crews.
- Low degree of 'data richness'.
- Lack of visibility in relation to field crew location, fatigue limits (hours worked), capability or progress on task.
- Reliance on manual processing by the controllers due to lack of system integration.
- Inefficient process for prioritisation and reprioritisation of work orders, particularly between different FSPs.
- Difficult to engage additional FSPs for the purpose of surge capacity support during major events.
- Field crew lack of real-time access to the same information as the Control Room at all times and vice versa giving rise to the potential for miscommunication between field crews and controllers.

To address these needs, AusNet's initial Field Enablement submission comprised of four initiatives to be undertaken in the FY2027-31 regulatory period to enable more efficient usage of field crews, better engagement with our delivery partners and improve outage restoration timeframes:

- **Field crew mobile solutions (energy-related activities):** Provide real-time faults management including damage assessment during storms to enable seamless interactions between the control room and the field.
- **Field crew mobile solutions (non-energy activities):** Provides real-time network management information related to network activities that are not related to unplanned outages. This can include asset inspections and asset maintenance or replacement work orders, and vegetation management activities.
- **Field crew and fault location visibility:** Enables planners and schedulers to precisely locate both faults/worksites and field crews to optimise work packaging and dispatch. This will also provide management level visualisation of where crews are currently located on a network map for strategic review and assessment of how field crews are being deployed, how fatigue is being managed, if overflow crew support is needed and if there are any network hot spots that may indicate an emerging issue.
- **Delegated switching:** Provides delegation to field crews for switching in specific emergency scenarios using SCADA capabilities to more rapidly begin field works and reduce restoration times. This will save time by avoiding communication bottlenecks with controllers under high workload conditions.

The benefit case for the program in the initial proposal primarily focused on quantification of customer value from reduced outage impacts and faster service restoration enabled by improved field workforce efficiency. Benefits from field crew productivity efficiencies realised from these initiatives were only partially explored.

Based on assessment of multiple architectural implementation options, recommended expenditure was \$17.2m capex and \$10.2m opex for incremental ongoing licences and support, as shown in **Table 4** below (\$real 2024 and representing distribution network allocated costs). The recommended option expenditure was based on augmenting AusNet's existing GE network control and SAP asset maintenance systems.

Table 4 - Initial Submission Forecast Expenditure for Field Enablement (\$'million, real FY24)

Cost item	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030	FY2031	Total
Capex	\$9.7m	\$3.0m	\$1.5m	\$3.0m	-	\$17.2m
Opex	\$1.8m	\$2.1m	\$2.1m	\$2.1m	\$2.1m	\$10.2m
Total	\$11.5m	\$5.1m	\$3.6m	\$5.1m	\$2.1m	\$27.4m

1.2. AER Draft Decision Feedback

The AER accepted the Field Enablement program in the Draft Decision.

In accepting this program the AER made two adjustments to AusNet's proposal. Reasons detailed for these adjustments were:

- Capex: Allocation of project costs between AusNet's distribution, transmission and gas network businesses
- Opex: Proposed step change not required as forecast business opex savings will obviate the need for additional expenditure

Additionally, the AER and EMCa Draft Decision feedback noted that AusNet's quantified benefits for the Field Enablement program did not incorporate employee productivity benefits. This was highlighted as being inconsistent with the program narrative regarding current inefficiencies and the ability of these systems to provide productivity uplifts. The AER and EMCa recommended that AusNet should look to revise the original benefits modelling to capture these efficiencies and to strengthen the overall NPV profile of the business case.

The resulting AER Draft Decision for the Field Enablement program is shown in **Table 5** below.

Table 5 - AER Alternative Forecast Expenditure (\$m, real FY2026)

Cost item	Initial Proposal	AER Alternative	Adjustment
Capex	\$18.8m	\$17.5m	-7%
Opex	\$10.8m	-	-100%

2. AusNet's Revised Submission

In the 10 months since our initial EDPR submission, AusNet has further matured the required scope, business benefits and cost estimates for Field Enablement program initiatives. This section details these revised proposal changes, along with specifically addressing the Draft Decision feedback.

2.1. Updated Program Scope

Since the initial EDPR submission in January, AusNet has completed the detailed design phase for the energy-related Field Crew Mobile Solutions program. This work has delivered a fully defined scope, leading to the consolidation (e.g. crew visibility) and rescoping of initiatives (e.g. delegated switching), revised benefits quantification, and updated cost estimate. With this detailed design work completed, and project team mobilising, AusNet is preparing to progress the project into execution.

Additionally, completion of field service provider transition from Downer to Zinfra has enabled further definition of the scope for non-energy related Field Crew Mobile Solutions. The associated costs and benefits of this initiative have been re-quantified to reflect the revalidated business requirements.

The updated scope for each program initiative is detailed in **Table 6** below.

Table 6 – Revised Field Enablement Program Scope

Initiative	Scope
Field crew mobile solutions (energy-related activities) <i>Scope expanded to include Mobile Switching and Fault Crew and Fault Location Visibility</i>	<p>The AusNet Distribution Network Operations team's Switching and Outage Management capabilities are currently highly manual and inefficient due to a lack of digital tools. These inefficiencies hinder the timely resolution of day-to-day unplanned outages and are particularly exacerbated during major weather events where the volume of activity is significant, and manual processes involving phone calls become the bottleneck for throughput.</p> <p>Implementation of the following two (C-I-C) ADMS solution modules seeks to address these limitations, and are designed to replace manual phone-based communication with digital mobile solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mobile Switching:</i> Will provide the ability for the control room to send digitised instructions to the field operator's mobile devices and allow field operators to confirm switching is completed in real-time, removing the need for back-and-forth phone calls between parties. Mobile Switching has replaced Delegated Switching to address the need for greater efficiency in field communications. This is a new scope item identified during the design phase. • <i>Outage Management and Damage Assessment:</i> Will deliver a mobile-based platform to capture and integrate damage assessment information within the ADMS to support prioritisation of resolution workflows and optimal deployment of field resources. The module will also deliver real-time outage management information, including visualisation of the as-built and real-time as-operated network models, from the ADMS to field worker mobile devices. • Scope of work includes the design, build, testing and deployment of both modules, including integrations with AusNet's ADMS and ERP workflows to process damage assessment and outage data. <p>The project also includes the field crew and fault location visibility initiative from AusNet's original Field Enablement submission. The project will integrate crew location data into AusNet's ADMS solution to provide real-time location tracking of crew location in relation to faults and provide a visualisation of where crews are located on a network map. This will enable more efficient field crew dispatch, work packaging, fatigue monitoring and enhance AusNet's ability to monitor network hotspots.</p>
Field crew mobile solutions (non-energy activities) <i>Extended scope</i>	<p>Non-energy activities refer to field work that does not directly affect energy supply and can be scheduled rather than addressed urgently. These tasks can refer to permanent restoration after the initial temporary fault fix, asset inspections and maintenance, vegetation management, etc.</p>

Currently, non-energy planned works are managed through AusNet's field service delivery partner's mobility solution and cannot perform automated fault dispatch functionality. This initiative aims to bring this capability in-house to reduce reliance on external parties through the extension of AusNet's current ERP platform capabilities to cover non-energy activities.

Enhancement will deliver an integrated solution that can:

- Allocate work to field crews via a mobility solution to enable instant dispatch of tasks, ensuring crews receive work orders in real time and information about the job (i.e. location, issue, instructions, etc).
- Deliver workforce management and planning capabilities to show a consolidated view of field crew availability, project assignment, skills/capabilities and rostering. This will better support back-office teams to plan and allocate work orders whilst considering field crew capacity and capability.
- Maintain a centralised repository of field crew qualifications, licenses, and capabilities, including surge resources. This ensures accurate and compliant work allocation based on crew credentials.

AusNet's workforce management, planning and field crew qualifications programs will be addressed in this Field Enablement initiative.

2.2. Revised Program Costs

Costs for AusNet's proposed Field Enablement program have been revised to incorporate detailed design work and enhanced scope maturity. A summary of the changes, relative to AusNet's initial proposal, is detailed below:

Field crews mobile solution (planned/unplanned/energy) - capex increased from (C-I-C) and opex reduced from (C-I-C) (\$real 2024)

- Consolidation of initially proposed (C-I-C) for Delegated Switching into the project, however rescope as Mobile Switching module (increasing cost to (C-I-C)
- Consolidation of initially proposed (C-I-C) for Fault Crew and Fault Location Visibility program into the project
- (C-I-C) of licencing and support opex moved to capex, reflective of capitalisation during project build phase
- Additional (C-I-C) of costs can be attributed to new architectural, integration and resourcing requirements identified during the recently completed design phase.

Field Mobility Solution (non-energy) - capex increased from (C-I-C) (\$real 2024)

- (C-I-C) for new requirements and additional workforce management initiatives, identified following completion of field services provider migration

The resulting revised cost estimates are detailed in **Table 7** below. All costs in this program are fully allocated to the Distribution line of business and opex licencing costs are based on vendor quotes.

Table 7 – Revised submission costs (\$'million, real FY2024)

Initiative	Capex	Opex Implementation	Opex - Licensing	Notes
Field crews mobile solution (planned/unplanned/energy)	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)	Project delivery cost estimate*, as per detailed design completed with (C-I-C)
Field Mobility Solution (non-energy)	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)	Wipro cost estimate
Total	\$30.6m	-	\$6.1m	

* Refer Appendix Table 1 for a breakdown of project cost estimates

The non-energy project cost estimate, reflecting updated requirements and matured scope, has been provided by Wipro, and is based on their experience delivering AusNet's foundational (C-I-C) mobility capabilities in the current regulatory period. The Wipro estimate has been adjusted to \$real 2024 cost basis, and AusNet Internal Program Management and Architecture costs have been added.

2.3. Updated Program Benefits

The Field Enablement program delivers benefits through direct field crew work productivity improvements through digital mobility tools, with resulting improvements expected in customer outage performance and cost efficiencies. Consistent with the AER and EMCa Draft Decision feedback, we have reviewed the initial benefit quantification modelling and have incorporated additional productivity benefits that further strengthen the programs' value proposition.

Overall, Field Enablement benefits, as seen in the revised proposal cost benefit model, include:

- Minimise delays caused by manual communication between the control room, field crews and dispatch staff. We have taken a conservative case for communication efficiencies gained from energy-related mobile solutions, with potential for benefits to be greater than those quantified
- Enable real-time access to switching instructions and network data
- Faster execution of work orders reducing fault restoration times for customers during major events
- Reduce delivery partner costs related to operating and supporting a third-party field operations platform
- Reduced idle time and improved coordination of field crews during day-to-day operations and storm events

AusNet's Field Enablement, Network Model Management and ADMS programs all provide benefits to customer outcomes such as reduced outage frequency and duration, whilst enhancing AusNet cost efficiency and productivity. While these programs target similar customer outcomes, the quantified benefits of each are mutually exclusive. Benefits defined in the Field Enablement business case are execution-layer benefits and delivered through digital mobility tools, focusing on how efficiently field crews can operate in the field, respond to issues and restore customer supply.

3. Evaluation of Options

Consistent with the AER's "Non-network ICT capex assessment approach" of November 2019, for AusNet's revised proposal we have evaluated credible options for the Field Enablement program. Recognising the AER's Draft Decision feedback, we have focused options analysis on alternate degrees of scope within the program.

We have identified two credible Field Enablement scope options, as detailed in **Table 8** below:

Table 8 – Options summary

OPTION	SUMMARY
Option 1: Implement only energy field mobility solutions	This represents a reduced scope option, implementing only the field crews (planned/unplanned) energy mobile solution. Uplifting our switching and outage management capabilities is a priority for the business and is critical to delivering improved customer outcomes. Detailed design has been completed for this project, and implementation activities are ready to commence in the new period. The non-energy mobility solution, which is planned to commence in late 2026, would not be implemented under this option.
Option 2: Implement both energy and non-energy field mobility solutions	Fully implement both proposed digital solutions for managing field crews identified in Section 2. This is our recommended option and addresses all of the capability gaps identified, through the implementation of digital mobile solutions and the insourcing of workforce management and dispatch capabilities under the control of AusNet.

3.1. Option 1 – Implement only energy mobility solution

This option represents a reduced scope approach, only implementing the energy mobility solution, for which AusNet has completed the detailed design phase and is ready to execute. This option does not include scope of the proposed non-energy mobility initiative.

The cost of this option is \$22.0m capex and \$5.4m ongoing opex for licencing and support, and it delivers NPV of \$16.0m, as shown in **Table 9** below.

This option is not recommended as it does not address the identified capability gaps in AusNet's field operations and would forgo significant quantified productivity and work execution benefits achieved through insourcing our workforce management and dispatch solution.

Table 9 – Forecast Expenditure for Option 1 (\$'million, real FY24, distribution network allocation)

Cost item	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	FY2030	FY2031	Total
Capex (Implementation)	\$14.3m	\$7.7m	-	-	-	\$22.0m
Opex (Licencing and Support)	-	-	\$1.8m	\$1.8m	\$1.8m	\$5.4m
Total expenditure	\$14.3m	\$7.7m	\$1.8m	\$1.8m	\$1.8m	\$27.4m
Net Present Value						\$16.0m

3.2. Option 2 – Implement both energy and non-energy mobility solutions

Option 2 represents the implementation of both initiatives included in AusNet's proposed Field Enablement resubmission. The energy-related mobility solution will begin implementation at the commencement of the EDPR period, with non-energy mobility initiatives scheduled to commence later in 2026.

The cost of this option is \$30.6m capex and \$6.1m ongoing opex for licencing and support as shown in **Table 10** below. This option is recommended as it delivers NPV of \$25.5m, higher than Option 1 through capture of all the quantified benefits from both the customer outage time reduction and workforce productivity benefits identified in the revised proposal assessment.

Table 10 – Forecast Expenditure for Option 2 (\$'million, real FY24)

Cost item	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31	Total
Capex (Implementation)	\$16.5m	\$14.2m	-	-	-	\$30.6m
Opex (Licencing and Support)	-	-	\$2.0m	\$2.0m	\$2.0m	\$6.1m
Total expenditure	\$16.5m	\$14.2m	\$2.0m	\$2.0m	\$2.0m	\$36.7m
Net Present Value						\$25.5m

3.3. Preferred Option

Of the options evaluated, our analysis has found that Option 2 provides the highest NPV, delivering the most benefit to customers, the greatest productivity benefits and exposing AusNet to the least operational risk. This option best supports AusNet's commitment to enhancing resilience and service outcomes for our customers and is aligned to the overall strategy for the Distribution line of business.

Noting the AER's Draft Decision feedback regarding business opex benefits of this program offsetting the incremental digital licences and support costs, AusNet is not requesting a step change for the \$6.1m incremental opex. This amount is included in the cost benefit NPV analysis for completeness of evaluations.

Table 11 – Option analysis summary (\$'000s, real FY24)

Criteria	Option 1	Option 2	Initial Proposal
NPV (\$'000, real FY24)	\$15,962	\$25,476	\$385
Capex (\$'000, real FY24)	\$21,997	\$30,617	\$17,121
Opex (\$'000, real FY24)	\$5,396	\$6,117	\$10,170
Technically feasible	✓	✓	
Addresses identified need	✗	✓	
Deliverable within timeframe	✓	✓	
Delivery risk	Low	Low	
Preferred option	✗	✓	

4. Appendix

4.1. Revised Cost Estimate Breakdown – Energy Mobility Solution

Based on detailed design completed in 2025, revised energy mobility solution project cost is based on bottom-up cost estimates developed in conjunction with (C-I-C). This cost estimate is reflective of detailed design scope, resource breakdown and implementation requirements.

Table 12 – Revised AusNet costing for Field crews (planned/unplanned/energy) mobile solution

Implementation Scope Component	Capex ('000, \$real 2024)	Cost Basis
Mobility – Switching	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)
Mobility – Outages	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)
Mobility – Software Module Licences	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)
Infrastructure	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)
AusNet Internal Program Management and Architecture	(C-I-C)	(C-I-C)
Total	21,997	

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