

Submission into the AER, for:

Essential Energy - Ring-fencing waiver - Kerbside EV charging infrastructure

By: Ross De Rango, [REDACTED] July 2026

Reference:

<https://www.aer.gov.au/industry/networks/ring-fencing/essential-energy-ring-fencing-waiver-kerbside-ev-charging-infrastructure/application>

Preamble:

Ross is the former Head of Energy and Infrastructure at the Electric Vehicle Council, and has recently founded a new business, Vehicle Charging Solutions Australia.

Ross' background includes:

- Detailed work in the National Construction Code (NCC) to create EV readiness requirements in new buildings,
- Submissions to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) that have shaped the AER's advice to ministers on consumer protections for EV charging.
- Input into regulatory reset processes, shaping the tariff structures applicable to public charging infrastructure operators in WA, NSW, Victoria, SA, and QLD.
- Close engagement with NSW government on the majority of EV charging programs currently in operation, including the kerbside program.
- Participation in the development of Australian Standards relating to demand response, electric vehicle maintenance, vehicle to grid, and the national electrical wiring rules.

For the avoidance of doubt, this submission is not to be considered the position of the Electric Vehicle Council. It is the position of a very active industry expert.

The key takeaway is:

This waiver application has not demonstrated that any market failure warranting the setting aside of ringfencing protections has actually occurred.

The waiver application has not demonstrated any robust work to determine that the proposed EV charging equipment will actually be useful, for the purpose of supporting EV drivers or securing meaningful EV uptake.

Independent research has actually shown that this type of DNSP-led infrastructure rollout can be harmful to EV uptake, not helpful.

This ringfencing waiver application should be rejected, on the evidence.

Response part 1: That DNSPs are a proven poor choice of party to own public EVSE, based on their track record.

It's been suggested by Essential Energy and others that there is some form of general market failure, or chicken and egg problem, in public EV charging.

If we're talking about the coastal parts of NSW that Essential serve, there is no shortage of public EV charging infrastructure. The competitive market has determined that there is a need, and so it's rolling at scale, with support from NSW government where required.

There is no need to enable a state-owned monopoly to own a class of asset in locations where the competitive market has it under control, and is meeting the needs of the citizenry.

If we go into the regions, though.... If a town like Bogan gate, in regional NSW, doesn't have a place where locals can buy surfboards and wetsuits off the shelf, is that market failure?

Or, is it the market correctly assessing that the residents in that town don't have a particular need for that service... and business owners are therefore choosing to not wastefully deploy capital on a useless folly, that ends up looking like that picture?

The recent application by Essential Energy to rate-base 300 relatively slow EV chargers into lighting poles across regional NSW relies heavily on this concept of 'market failure' for justification. The line of thinking is, "we see kerbside AC charging proliferating in Sydney, but not in the regional towns – so clearly we must intervene, by making the residents of country towns pay for us to deploy this type of infrastructure through their energy bills".

It's not quite 'won't somebody please think of the children', as a line without merit - but it's close. And it's much more self serving.

What appears to be entirely missing from the rationale presented by Essential is any evidence that the residents in the communities that they exist to serve actually need this type of hardware to be in the public domain, in order to make the switch to EV.

Kerbside slow charging can make sense in suburbs where off-street parking is limited, meaning that many residents cannot now, and will not in future, be able to easily charge their electric cars at home on their own property.

Pole mounted kerbside AC charging is not the only way to solve for that demographic. Where lots of public charging options are available, drivers have a clear and strong preference for fast charging over slow charging (data from Waverley, Woollahra, Randwick[1], and Inner West[2] has shown this conclusively), and there is plenty of innovation happening in home-to-street EV charging options too... but pole mounted AC

charging in this context can make sense as part of a competitively delivered mix of options for drivers.

That 'competitively delivered' bit is important. Where the AER has given waivers to DNSPs and their associated entities to roll out this type of infrastructure the rollouts have been characterised by a failure (at ~70% of sites rolled out by PlusES in Waverley, Randwick, and Woolahra, and at 100% of sites rolled out by Citipower in Melbourne up until June 2026) to secure the parking spaces as dedicated to EV parking, leading to the sites routinely being blocked by petrol cars, and therefore being significantly less useful to drivers than competitively delivered locations.

The root cause of this problem is that unlike the competitive players who make money only when their assets are used, the DNSP has no financial motivation to make sure the site is useful, because they make bank regardless if they're allowed to rate-base the assets. This makes them a terrible choice of party to own the hardware, if the objective is to deploy hardware that is useful to EV drivers.

Response part 2: That the infrastructure that is proposed to be permitted under the waiver is not fit for purpose, given the extant conditions in the regions under consideration.

In country NSW, however – the subject area of Essential Energy's proposal - that key demographic which kerbside AC charging is potentially useful for, of 'car driver without off street parking at home', is virtually non-existent. Even for people who have never visited regional NSW, this is immediately obvious from a quick look at publicly available data sources.

Taking Parkes as an example (because there's better data to be had in a town a bit bigger than Bogan gate):

The last census indicated that the housing mix in Parkes[3] is 89.7% standalone houses – compared to a NSW state average of 65.6%, and a national average of 72.3%. Terrace and row houses - the sorts of homes that sometimes lack off-street parking - in Parkes are 3.5% of the housing stock.... Relative to 11.7% in NSW overall.

The census also indicated that 6.4% of occupied private dwellings in Parkes don't have a registered motor vehicle associated with them... and there's naturally going to be an overlap there, between people who don't own cars, and people who choose to live in lower-cost accommodation that doesn't have parking spaces associated with it.

For an up to the minute consideration of housing stock and parking, we can look at [Realestate.com.au](https://www.realestate.com.au) data, and apply some simple filters. Parkes currently shows 61 dwelling type properties available for sale. 54 of them are positively listed as having parking spaces... and when you look through the pictures at the 7 that don't declare how

much off-street parking is available, what you find is just 1 really old house out of the 61 on the market that doesn't clearly show a picture including a driveway or a garage.

If we switch to looking at properties to rent, there are 46 dwelling type properties currently listed for rental, 40 of which are positively listed as having parking available. Once again, when you look at the pictures, you find most of the properties that don't positively assert that they've got off street parked actually do have it – it just doesn't rate a mention.

This aligns pretty well with the census data – 95%+ of homes in Parkes have easy access to off street parking, in settings where enablement of EV charging in those locations would be trivially easy for any local sparky.

What this means is that almost anyone thinking about buying an EV in a place like Parkes will be able to charge it at home, easily, at the same power level that Essential is planning to make available to them via their plan... in a place far less convenient than their own driveway, and at much higher cost per unit of energy, and at the cost of systemically eroding market protections, and increasing residential energy bills – not just for the EV drivers these assets are notionally meant to serve, but for everyone.

Finally, if we look to the actual data on EV uptake[4], we can compare Parkes to the rest of the state. Registered trailers and goods vehicles are present in Parkes in proportions much higher than the rest of the state, which makes sense in a farming community – so, we'll narrow the focus to passenger vehicles, given what we're talking about is infrastructure to support cars, not goods trucks and trailers.

The numbers in Parkes are:

7,286 passenger vehicles 30 of which are BEV or PHEV – about 0.4%

The NSW overall numbers are:

4,741,053 passenger vehicles, 145,261 of which are BEV or PHEV – about 3.1%

There's no question that Parkes is well behind the state average in uptake of EVs.... But, we know from the property data that of the 99.6% of drivers in Parkes who have not yet switched to a BEV or PHEV, almost all of them will be able to charge easily at home.

It's clearly **not** the lack of access to slow EV charging that is holding the residents of Parkes back from making the switch to EVs, relative to the wider population of NSW. It is very clearly some other combination of factors. And, It's probable that those factors are generally going to be outside the scope and purview of Essential Energy, and the AER - because what we're talking about here is consumer purchasing behaviour around cars, not regulation of poles and wires.

Finally - if what we're talking about is serving the needs of residents of Parkes when they take their EVs on long drives to other places – a public AC charger that will take 6-10

hours to fully recharge a typical EV is not the right way to meet that need. That need is what public DC chargers, capable of fully recharging the car for the next stage of the journey while the driver has lunch, are for... and they've already been rolled out all over the place in regional NSW.

Regional drivers who sometimes go long distances while towing heavy things are also really good candidates for PHEVs... which make up about one third of EVs being sold in Australia today, and don't depend on public EV charging infrastructure at all.

Essential's role with respect to public DC charging infrastructure isn't to own the EV charging infrastructure. It's to support the businesses that do, with efficient connection processes and reasonable tariffs.

To their credit, Essential have been among the best DNSPs in the country at this stuff over the last few years, pioneering easy access to network capacity data at granular level, engaging constructively with CPOs, and incorporating dedicated expert staff to help make it happen.

It's a real shame that at a corporate level, Essential now appear to have drunk from Ausgrid's 'wired for greed' bottle of koolaid, and are setting up to attempt to deal damage to a functional competitive market, while deploying useless infrastructure, that drives up energy bills for regional Australians.

Response part 3:

On the potential harm to EV uptake resulting from DNSP-led EV charging deployments

As noted above, where the AER has given waivers to DNSPs and their associated entities to roll out this type of infrastructure the rollouts have been characterised by a failure (at ~70% of sites rolled out by PlusES in Waverley, Randwick, and Woolahra, and at 100% of sites rolled out by Citipower in Melbourne up until June 2026) to secure the parking spaces as dedicated to EV parking, leading to the sites routinely being blocked by petrol cars, and therefore being significantly less useful to drivers than competitively delivered locations.

In addition to not being particularly useful, however.... independent research work, commissioned by Vehicle Charging Solutions Australia, conducted by YouGov, and shared with the AER along with this submission, demonstrates that the presence of EV charging equipment that is routinely blocked by petrol cars actually has a strong net negative impact (~20%) on EV buying intention.

In effect, the typical DNSP-led pole mounted EV charging deployment in Australia acts as a public advertisement for *not* buying an EV, in the mind of the Australian population.

A significant part of the justification offered by DNSPs and the ENA when arguing for the of the setting aside of ringfencing protections in this domain is the contention that it's OK to do damage to competitive markets in service of helping drive EV uptake, and that the DNSPs are better placed to deliver the outcome of increased EV uptake than the competitive businesses currently serving the space, at a time when EV uptake is hitting record levels.

This contention is demonstrably not true or correct, based on the real world outcomes of the waivers the AER has already given in this space. These outcomes were predicted by multiple parties in industry, both in submissions to the AER and in evidence given to parliamentary inquiries in NSW and Victoria.

As I understand it, the AER has not, to this point, rejected a single ring fencing waiver from a DNSP, preferring to absolve itself of its duty in this respect under the banner of 'policy lead sandboxing'.

Predictably, this has lead to state level jurisdictions stepping in to protect their competitive markets from insufficiently regulated monopolies, which have caused harm to those markets[5].

There's an opportunity here for the AER to justifiably, and on the basis of robust evidence, and for the first time – say no to a DNSP that wants to expand without good cause, and without a good plan, into the competitive domain.

[1] https://www.linkedin.com/posts/bjornsturmberg_our-latest-research-on-kerbside-electric-share-7447107027207847936-2ygY/

[2] https://www.linkedin.com/posts/nickfranco1_kerbside-public-charging-utilisation-study-ugcPost-7467788387782025217-ps1I/

[3] <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA16200>

[4] <https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/data-and-research/drives-reporting-portal/registration-snapshot-report>

[5] https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0024/785031/ev-charging-regulatory-statement.pdf

AUSTRALIA

Powerpole Charging & EV Purchase Intent

Prepared for :

EV Charging Solutions

May 26

Methodology

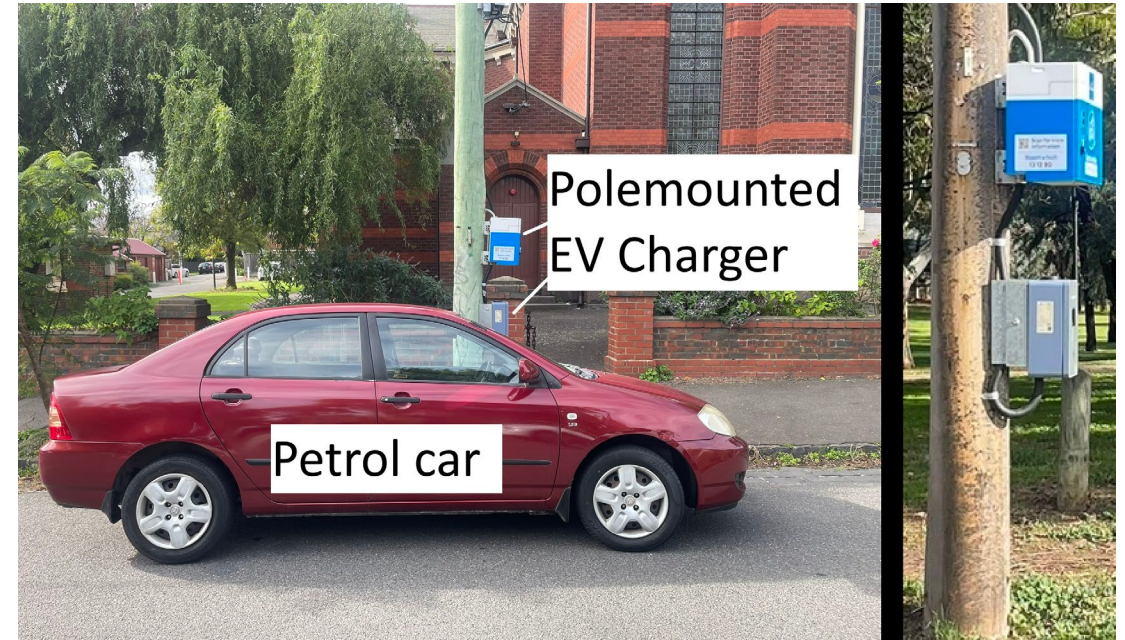
Methodology

- This study was conducted online between 21st - 26th May 2026.
- The sample comprised of a *nationally representative* sample of 1,032 Australians aged 18 years and older.
- A copy of the questionnaire has been included in this report.
- Following the completion of interviewing, the data was weighted by age, gender and region to reflect the latest ABS population estimates.
- Significant differences have been reported at the 95% confidence interval.
- This study has been carried out in accordance with the ISO 20252:2019 standards, to which YouGov is accredited.

Key Findings

Key Findings

- Over four in five (85%) Australians say that if street side powerpoles EV chargers were installed in their neighbourhood and the charging spaces next to them were not reserved exclusively for EV charging, leading to them usually being blocked by petrol vehicles, it would not make them more likely to purchase an EV.
- More specifically, half (48%) of Australians report that it would make no difference to their intention to purchase an EV, and nearly two in five (37%) say that it would even make them less likely to purchase an EV.
- Only 15% of Australians think that it would make them more likely to purchase an EV.
- This lack of impact is particularly pronounced among older Australians as Gen X and Baby Boomer Australians are more likely than their younger counterparts to say this would not impact their intention to purchase an EV (Gen X: 57%, Baby Boomers: 55% compared to Gen Z: 42% and Millennials: 38%).
- Meanwhile younger Australians are more likely to report that it would increase their likelihood to purchase an EV (Gen Z: 28%, Millennials: 23% compared to Gen X: 7% and Baby Boomers: 8%).



Base: n=1,032 Australians 18+

Q1. Thinking about electric vehicle (EV) chargers installed on street side power poles, like in the image below: [Image shown – See image above]. Imagine these chargers were installed in your neighbourhood, and that the parking spaces next to them were not reserved exclusively for EV charging, leading to them usually being blocked by petrol vehicles... How, if at all, would this affect your intention to purchase an EV? Please select the option that best applies

Key Findings

- Regionally, almost nine in ten (89%) of Queenslanders say that it would not increase their likelihood of purchasing an EV, which is more likely than those from NSW (82%) and VIC (82%).
- Australians living outside the 5 major capital cities are more likely to report that it would not increase their likelihood of purchasing an EV compared to those living within the 5 capital cities (91% compared to 81%).
- By housing type, nine in ten (90%) of Australians living in standalone houses say that it would not make them more likely to purchase an EV, which is more likely compared to just 73% of those living in semi-detached, townhouses or terrace houses, and 80% of those living in apartments.

Questionnaire

POWERPOLE EV CHARGER SURVEY	
MARKET	AUSTRALIA
SAMPLE	N=1000 AUSTRALIANS AGED 18+ NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE BY AGE, GENDER, LOCATION
QUESTIONNAIRE NAME	POWERPOLE EV CHARGER STUDY
USE AU DEMO TEMPLATE	YES

Qtn #	Question Text	Logic
Demographic questions		
S1	Age	Ask all
S2	Gender	Ask all
S3	Location	Ask all
S4	Children in the household under 18 years	Ask all
S5	Marital status	Ask all
S6	Work status	Ask all
S7	Household income	Ask all
S8	House Type	Ask all
	What type of home do you currently live in?	Ask all
	Please select the option that best applies	
	<i>Single select, randomise</i>	
1.	Flat or apartment	
2.	Standalone or fully detached house	
3.	Townhouse or semi-detached house	
4.	Terrace house	
5.	Other	Fixed
6.	Don't know	Fixed

Thinking about electric vehicle (EV) chargers installed on street side power poles, like in the image below:

Q1



Ask all

Imagine these chargers were installed in your neighbourhood, and that the parking spaces next to them were not reserved exclusively for EV charging, leading to them usually being blocked by petrol vehicles...



How, if at all, would this affect your intention to purchase and EV?

Please select the option that best applies

Single select, reverse

1. It would make me much *less* likely to purchase an EV
2. It would make me a bit *less* likely to purchase an EV
3. It would make no difference to my intention to purchase an EV
4. It would make me a bit *more* likely to purchase an EV
5. It would make me much *more* likely to purchase an EV

Thank you

Julie Do, Senior Research Manager

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