

Ring-fencing Guideline Electricity Transmission Version 3

July 2022

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Background

1. Clause 6A.21.1 of the National Electricity Rules (**NER**) requires all Transmission Network Service Providers to comply with the Transmission Ring-Fencing Guideline prepared in accordance with clause 6A.21.2 of the NER.
2. Clause 6A.21.2(a) of the NER required the Australian Energy Regulator (**AER**) to develop the Transmission Ring-Fencing Guideline.
3. This **Guideline** commences on 6 July 2022 and incorporates amendments made from time to time as indicated on page ii.

Preliminary

4. In this Guideline, unless the contrary intention appears, bolded expressions have the meaning given to them in:
 - (a) this Guideline; or
 - (b) if they are not defined in this Guideline, the meaning given to them in the National Electricity Law and NER.

In this **Guideline**:

- **associate**, in relation to a **person**, has the meaning it would have under Division 2 of Part 1.2 of the **Corporations Act** if sections 13, 16(2) and 17 of that Act did not form part of that Act.
- **auditing standards** means the Auditing Standards and Auditing Guidance Statements as in force or existing from time to time issued by the Auditing Standards Board of the Australian Accounting Research Foundation (and any succeeding bodies).
- **auditor** means a person who qualifies as an auditor under Part 2M.4 of the Corporations Act.
- **Corporations Act** means the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth).
- **economic entity** has the meaning given in Accounting Standards and Auditing Guidance Statements as in force or existing from time to time issued by the Auditing Standards Board of the Australian Accounting Research Foundation (and any succeeding bodies).
- **Information Guidelines** means the Electricity Transmission Network Service Providers Information Guideline (Version 2) published by the **AER** in April 2015 or any subsequent versions.
- **marketing staff** means servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents directly involved in sales, sale provision or advertising (whether or not they are also involved in other functions) but does not include servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents involved only in:
 - (a) strategic decision-making, including the executive officer or officers to whom marketing staff report either directly or indirectly; or
 - (b) technical, administrative, accounting or service functions.
- **operational activities** means activities common to the production of both **ring-fenced services** and **unregulated activities**.

- **parent entity** has the meaning given in Accounting Standards and Auditing Guidance Statements as in force or existing from time to time issued by the Auditing Standards Board of the Australian Accounting Research Foundation (and any succeeding bodies).
- **person** includes an individual or a body politic or corporate.
- **related business** means the activities of **generation**, **distribution** and electricity retail supply.
- **relevant commencement date** means 6 July 2022:
- **reporting entity** has the meaning given in Accounting Standards and Auditing Guidance Statements as in force or existing from time to time issued by the Auditing Standards Board of the Australian Accounting Research Foundation (and any succeeding bodies).
- **ring-fenced services** means **prescribed transmission services** (but does not include, in accordance with clause 6.24.2 of the NER, a service provided by means of, or in connection with, a **dual function asset**)
- **TNSP** means a **Transmission Network Service Provider**.
- **unregulated activities** means activities other than the supply of **ring-fenced services**, and includes but is not limited to carrying on a **related business**.

5. Where this Guideline authorises the making of an instrument or decision:

(a) the power includes the power to amend or repeal the instrument or decision; and

(b) the power to amend or repeal the instrument or decision is exercisable in the same way, and subject to the same conditions, as the power to make the instrument or decision.

6. In this **Guideline**

(a) words in the singular include the plural; and

(b) words in the plural include the singular.

Ring-fencing minimum obligations

7. A **TNSP** must comply with the following provisions on and from the **relevant commencement date**:

7.1 (a) A **TNSP** that supplies **ring-fenced services**:

- i. must be a legal entity incorporated under the **Corporations Act**, a statutory corporation or an entity established by royal charter; and
- ii. subject to clause 7.1(b), must not carry on a **related business**. To avoid doubt, if the **TNSP** is a member of a partnership, joint venture or other unincorporated association, the **TNSP** is carrying on the activities of the partnership, joint venture or unincorporated association.

(b) A **TNSP** is not subject to clause 7.1(a)(ii) if it carries on **related businesses** that, in total, attract revenue of less than or equal to 5 per cent of the **TNSP's** total annual revenue.

7.2 (a) The directors of a **TNSP** that provides **ring-fenced services** must act in the best interest of the **TNSP** in respect of all decisions relating to the provision of **ring-fenced services** and the terms and conditions on which those services are provided.

(b) A **TNSP** that provides **ring-fenced services** must not make decisions or act in a manner that discriminates in favour of an **associate** in relation to the terms or conditions on which those services are provided. To avoid doubt, a **TNSP** providing **ring-fenced services** must offer those services to its customers on terms and conditions no less favourable than it provides to itself or its **associates**.

7.3 (a) A **TNSP** that provides **ring-fenced services** must establish and maintain:

- i. a separate set of accounts for the provision of **ring-fenced services**; and
- ii. a separate amalgamated set of accounts for its entire business.

(b) The accounts must be prepared in accordance with any guidelines or instruments that apply to the **TNSP** under clause 8.

Note: Since clause 7.1(a)(ii) prohibits a **TNSP** from carrying on a **related business**, clause 7.3(a)(ii) will only impose additional obligations on a **TNSP** if (a) the **TNSP** is carrying on any **unregulated activities** other than a **related business**; (b) clause 7.1(b) applies to the **TNSP**; and/or (c) the AER, under clause 11, has waived the **TNSP's** obligation under clause 7.1(a)(ii).

7.4 A **TNSP** that provides **ring-fenced services** must allocate any costs that are shared between an activity covered by a set of accounts described in clause 7.3(a)(i) and any other activity, in accordance with a methodology that complies with any guidelines or instruments that apply to the **TNSP** under clause 8.

Note: Clause 7.4 regulates the allocation of costs between **ring-fenced services** and any other activity including activities undertaken by other entities. The purpose of clause 7.4 is to prevent **TNSPs** subsidising contestable activities through regulated activities.

7.5 If a **TNSP** that provides **ring-fenced services** is part of an **economic entity**, the **TNSP** must ensure that:

(a) a separate amalgamated set of accounts in respect of the provision of **ring-fenced services** by that **economic entity** is established and maintained; and

(b) the accounts are prepared in accordance with any guidelines or instruments that apply under clause 8.

Note: Accounting Standard requires a **parent entity** in an **economic entity** that is a **reporting entity** to prepare consolidated accounts to reflect the **economic entity** as a **single reporting entity**. Principally, adjustments will be necessary whenever entities within an **economic entity** have had transactions with each other. The purpose of clause 7.5 is to ensure that the cost of providing the **ringfenced services** is adjusted to reflect any transactions between the entities within the **economic entity**, that relate to the provision of **the ring-fenced services**.

7.6 A **TNSP** that provides **ring-fenced services** must:

(a) ensure that information it provides in relation to its **ring-fenced services**, to any **associate** that takes part in a **related business** is available to any other party; and

Note: The purpose of clause 7.6(a) is to restrict access to information that may give the associated entity an unfair advantage over other participants in the national electricity market.

(b) ensure that preferential treatment is not given to an **associate** that takes part in a **related business**, through sharing of **operational activities**.

7.7 A **TNSP** that provides **ring-fenced services** must:

(a) i. ensure that its **marketing staff** are not also servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents of an **associate** that takes part in a **related business**; and

ii. in the event that its **marketing staff** become or are found to be servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents of such an **associate** contrary to clause 7.7(a)(i), procure their immediate removal from its **marketing staff**; and

(b) i. ensure that none of its servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents are **marketing staff** of an **associate** that takes part in a **related business**; and

ii. in the event that any of its servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents are found to be the **marketing staff** of such an **associate** contrary to clause 7.7(b)(i), procure their immediate removal from their position with the **TNSP**.

Note: Clause 8.6.1(d) of the NER also states that the officers of a **TNSP** participating in **transmission service** pricing must not be involved in or associated with competitive electricity trading activities of any other **Registered Participant**.

7.8 A **TNSP** that provides **ring-fenced services** must notify the **AER** if:

(a) any of its servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents are, or will be, servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents of an **associate** that takes part in a **related business**; or

(b) any servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents of an **associate** that takes part in a **related business** will be servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents of the **TNSP**.

7.9 A notification under clause 7.8 must be provided to the **AER** on or before the later of the following dates:

(a) the **relevant commencement date**; or

(b) five business days prior to the date:

i. on which the servant, consultant, independent contractor or agent of the **TNSP** will be a servant, consultant, independent contractor or agent of the **associate**; or

Note: See clause 7.8(a).

- ii. on which the servant, consultant, independent contractor or agent of the **associate** will be a servant, consultant, independent contractor or agent of the **TNSP**.

Note: See clause 7.8(b).

8. In complying with clauses 7.3, 7.4 and 7.5, a **TNSP** must:

(a) comply with the **Information Guidelines** and the **TNSP's Cost Allocation Methodology**; or

(b) to the extent a matter is not dealt with in the **Information Guidelines** or the **TNSP's Cost Allocation Methodology**, comply with any guidelines in relation to that matter that are prepared by the **TNSP** and approved by the **AER**.

Additional ring-fencing obligations

9. The **AER** may, by notice to the **TNSP**, require the **TNSP** to comply with obligations in addition to those contained in clause 7 provided that the **AER** is satisfied that the administrative cost to the **TNSP** and its **associates** of complying with the additional obligations is, or is likely to be, outweighed by the benefit to the public.
10. Without limiting the additional obligations that may be imposed under clause 9, the **AER** may require that:
 - (a) the **TNSP** ensure its servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents are not also servants, consultants, independent contractors or agents of an **associate** that takes part in a **related business** and, in the event that they become or are found to be involved with such an **associate**, ensure their immediate removal from their position with the **TNSP**;
 - (b) at least one director of the **TNSP** is not also a director of a company (whether or not an **associate**) that takes part in a **related business** or is a **Market Participant** or **Intending Participant**; and
 - (c) the electronic, physical and procedural security measures employed in respect of the offices of the **TNSP** and of all offices of its **associates** are satisfactory to the **AER**.

The examples given in this clause 10 shall not be construed as limiting the types of action a **TNSP** may have to take to comply with clause 7.

Waiver of ring-fencing requirements

11. The AER may, by notice to the **TNSP**, waive any of the **TNSP's** obligations under clause 7 provided that the AER is satisfied that the benefit, or any likely benefit, to the public is outweighed by the administrative cost to the **TNSP** and its **associates** of complying with the obligation.

Note: In deciding whether to waive any of the **TNSP's** obligations under clause 7, the **AER** may consider any additional obligations that can be imposed under clause 9.

Compliance procedures and compliance reporting

12. A **TNSP** must establish and maintain appropriate internal procedures to ensure it complies with its obligations under clause 6A.21.1 of the NER. The **AER** may require the **TNSP** to demonstrate the adequacy of these procedures upon reasonable notice. However, any statement made or assurance given by the **AER** about the adequacy of the **TNSP's** compliance procedures does not affect the **TNSP's** obligations under clause 6A.21.1 of the NER.
13. A **TNSP** must provide a report to the **AER**, at reasonable intervals determined by the **AER**, describing the measures taken to ensure compliance with its obligations under clause 6A.21.1 of the NER, and providing an accurate assessment of the effect of those measures.
14. A **TNSP** that is required to prepare documents in accordance with clauses 7.3, 7.4 and/or 7.5 must provide those documents to the AER at least once a year or at reasonable intervals determined by the AER.
15. (a) The **AER** may, on reasonable notice, require a **TNSP** to:
- i. appoint an independent **auditor** approved by the **AER** to report on such matters as specified by the **AER**; and
 - ii. provide a copy of the auditor's report to the AER by a date specified by the **AER**.
- (b) If the AER nominates **auditing standards** to apply to an audit under clause 15(a), the **auditor** must report in accordance with those **auditing standards**. To avoid doubt, the **AER** may nominate one or more **auditing standards**.
- (c) For the purpose of clause 15(a), the **AER** may **publish** auditing guidelines with which a **TNSP** must comply.

Note: The **AER** need not **publish** auditing guidelines to impose an obligation on a **TNSP** under clause 15(a). It is intended that auditing guidelines will be **published** where obligations are to apply generally to **TNSPs** on an on-going basis.

16. When a **TNSP** becomes aware of a breach of any of its obligations under clause 6A.21.1 of the NER, it must immediately inform the **AER**.

Consultation

17. In deciding whether to:

- (a) amend the **Transmission Ring-Fencing Guideline**;
- (b) impose additional obligations on a **TNSP** under clause 9; or
- (c) waive a **TNSP's** obligations under clause 6;

the AER will follow the **Transmission Consultation Procedures**, except for reissuing waivers in substantially the same form as the waivers issued under the transmission ring-fencing guideline published by the AER in August 2005.