

FINAL DECISION

ActewAGL Distribution  
Access Arrangement

2016 to 2021

Attachment 2 – Capital base

May 2016

© Commonwealth of Australia 2016

This work is copyright. In addition to any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all material contained within this work is provided under a Creative Commons Attributions 3.0 Australia licence, with the exception of:

* the Commonwealth Coat of Arms
* the ACCC and AER logos
* any illustration, diagram, photograph or graphic over which the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission does not hold copyright, but which may be part of or contained within this publication. The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website, as is the full legal code for the CC BY 3.0 AU licence.

Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the:

Director, Corporate Communications  
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission   
GPO Box 4141, Canberra ACT 2601

or publishing.unit@accc.gov.au.

Inquiries about this publication should be addressed to:

Australian Energy Regulator  
GPO Box 520  
Melbourne Vic 3001

Tel: (03) 9290 1444  
Fax: (03) 9290 1457

Email: [AERInquiry@aer.gov.au](mailto:AERInquiry@aer.gov.au)

1. Note
2. This attachment forms part of the AER's final decision on the access arrangement for ActewAGL Distribution for 2016–21. It should be read with all other parts of the final decision.
3. The final decision includes the following documents:
4. Overview

Attachment 1 - Services covered by the access arrangement

Attachment 2 - Capital base

Attachment 3 - Rate of return

Attachment 4 - Value of imputation credits

Attachment 5 - Regulatory depreciation

Attachment 6 - Capital expenditure

Attachment 7 - Operating expenditure

Attachment 8 - Corporate income tax

Attachment 9 - Efficiency carryover mechanism

Attachment 10 - Reference tariff setting

Attachment 11 - Reference tariff variation mechanism

Attachment 12 - Non-tariff components

Attachment 13 - Demand

1. Contents

[Note 2-2](#_Toc451759136)

[Contents 2-3](#_Toc451759137)

[Shortened forms 2-4](#_Toc451759138)

[2 Capital base 2-6](#_Toc451759139)

[2.1 Final decision 2-6](#_Toc451759140)

[2.2 ActewAGL’s revised proposal 2-7](#_Toc451759141)

[2.3 AER’s assessment approach 2-9](#_Toc451759142)

[2.4 Reasons for final decision 2-9](#_Toc451759143)

[2.4.1 Roll forward of capital base during the 2010–15 access arrangement period 2-10](#_Toc451759144)

[Conforming capital expenditure in the 2010–15 access arrangement period 2-10](#_Toc451759145)

[2.4.2 Projected capital base over 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period 2-11](#_Toc451759146)

[2.4.3 Capital base at the commencement of the 2021–26 access arrangement period 2-11](#_Toc451759147)

1. Shortened forms

| 1. Shortened form | 1. Extended form |
| --- | --- |
| 1. AA | Access Arrangement |
| 1. AAI | Access Arrangement Information |
| 1. AER | 1. Australian Energy Regulator |
| 1. ASA | Asset Services Agreement |
| 1. ATO | Australian Tax Office |
| 1. capex | 1. capital expenditure |
| 1. CAPM | 1. capital asset pricing model |
| 1. CCP | 1. Consumer Challenge Panel |
| 1. CMF | construction management fee |
| 1. CPI | 1. consumer price index |
| 1. DAMS | Distribution Asset Management Services |
| 1. DRP | 1. debt risk premium |
| 1. EBSS | Efficiency Benefit Sharing Scheme |
| 1. ECM | Efficiency Carryover Mechanism |
| 1. EIL | Energy Industry Levy |
| 1. ERP | 1. equity risk premium |
| 1. Expenditure Guideline | Expenditure Forecast Assessment Guideline |
| 1. gamma | value of imputation credits |
| 1. GSL | Guaranteed Service Level |
| 1. GTA | Gas Transport Services Agreement |
| 1. ICRC | Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission |
| 1. MRP | 1. market risk premium |
| 1. NECF | National Energy Customer Framework |
| 1. NERL | National Energy Retail Law |
| 1. NERR | 1. National Energy Retail Rules |
| 1. NGL | 1. National Gas Law |
| 1. NGO | 1. National Gas Objective |
| 1. NGR | 1. National Gas Rules |
| 1. NPV | net present value |
| 1. opex | 1. operating expenditure |
| 1. PFP | partial factor productivity |
| 1. PPI | 1. partial performance indicators |
| 1. PTRM | 1. post-tax revenue model |
| 1. RBA | 1. Reserve Bank of Australia |
| 1. RFM | 1. roll forward model |
| 1. RIN | 1. regulatory information notice |
| 1. RoLR | retailer of last resort |
| 1. RSA | Reference Service Agreement |
| 1. RPP | 1. revenue and pricing principles |
| 1. SLCAPM | 1. Sharpe-Lintner capital asset pricing model |
| 1. STTM | Short Term Trading Market |
| 1. TAB | tax asset base |
| 1. UAFG | unaccounted for gas |
| 1. UNFT | Utilities Network Facilities Tax |
| 1. WACC | 1. weighted average cost of capital |
| 1. WPI | Wage Price Index |

# Capital base

The capital base roll forward accounts for the value of ActewAGL’s regulated assets over the access arrangement period. The opening capital base value for a regulatory year within the access arrangement period is rolled forward by indexing it for inflation, adding any conforming capex, and subtracting depreciation and other possible factors (for example, disposals or customer contributions).[[1]](#footnote-1) Following this process, the AER arrives at a closing value of the capital base at the end of the relevant year. The opening value of the capital base is used to determine the return of capital (regulatory depreciation) and return on capital building block allowances.

As discussed in the overview, our final decision applies a reconciliation (or ‘true-up’) of ActewAGL’s revenue for the 2015–16 interval of delay. Consequently, we must make a decision on ActewAGL’s opening capital base as at 1 July 2015. We must also make a decision on ActewAGL’s projected capital base during 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period. This attachment presents our final decision on these matters.

## Final decision

We determine an opening capital base of $338.4 million ($nominal) as at 1 July 2015 for ActewAGL. This value is $0.3 million (or 0.1 per cent) higher than ActewAGL’s revised proposed value of $338.1 million ($nominal).[[2]](#footnote-2) This is because we have updated the capital base roll forward to reflect the approved conforming capex for 2014–15.

We determine a projected closing capital base of $417.8 million ($nominal) as at 30 June 2021. This is $14.9 million (or 3.4 per cent) lower than ActewAGL's revised proposed value of $432.7 million ($nominal).[[3]](#footnote-3) Our final decision on the closing capital base reflects our adjustments to the revised opening capital based as at 1 July 2015 (section 2.4.1), forecast inflation (attachment 3), forecast depreciation (attachment 5) and forecast net capex (attachment 6).

Table 2.1 summarises our final decision on the roll forward of ActewAGL’s capital base during the 2010–15 access arrangement period.

We have revised the access arrangement having regard to our reasons for refusing to approve ActewAGL's proposal and the further matters identified in the NGR section 64(2). Our revisions are reflected in the Approved Access Arrangement for ACT, Queanbeyan and Palerang gas distribution network 2016–2021, which gives effect to this decision.

Table 2.1 AER’s final decision on ActewAGL’s capital base roll forward for 2010–15 access arrangement period ($million, nominal)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2010–11 | | 2011–12 | | 2012–13 | | 2013–14 | | 2014–15 |
| Opening capital base | 278.1 | | 288.6 | | 302.2 | | 313.8 | | 326.9 |
| Net capex | 12.0 | | 15.0 | | 18.7 | | 18.6 | | 24.6 |
| Indexation of capital base | 7.9 | | 9.8 | | 5.3 | | 7.7 | | 8.1 |
| Depreciation | –9.4 | | –11.2 | | –12.5 | | –13.2 | | –13.7 |
| Closing capital base | 288.6 | | 302.2 | | 313.8 | | 326.9 | | 345.9 |
| Adjustment for difference between estimated and actual capital expenditure in 2009–10a |  | |  | |  | |  | | –7.5 |
| **Opening capital base at 1 July 2015** |  |  | |  | |  | | **338.4** | |

Source: AER analysis.

(a) Comprising the difference between the actual and estimated capex for 2009–10 and the return on that difference.

Table 2.2 sets out the projected roll forward of the capital base during 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period.

Table 2.2 AER’s final decision on projected capital base roll forward for 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period ($million, nominal)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2015–16 | 2016–17 | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 | 2020–21 |
| Opening capital base | 338.4 | 365.3 | 378.7 | 391.1 | 402.7 | 409.9 |
| Net capex | 31.4 | 18.8 | 18.6 | 18.5 | 15.0 | 16.6 |
| Indexation of capital base | 7.4 | 8.0 | 8.3 | 8.5 | 8.8 | 8.9 |
| Depreciation | –11.8 | –13.4 | –14.4 | –15.5 | –16.6 | –17.6 |
| Closing capital base | 365.3 | 378.7 | 391.1 | 402.7 | 409.9 | 417.8 |

Source: AER analysis.

## ActewAGL’s revised proposal

ActewAGL's revised proposal submitted an opening capital base as at 1 July 2015 of $338.1 million ($nominal). ActewAGL adopted our draft decision to reverse the adjustment it made to the opening capital base as at 1 July 2015 for the ‘IT systems’ asset class. ActewAGL also updated its capital base roll forward for 2014–15 actual capex and corrected an error in its RFM for the reported allocation of actual capex between the 'contract meters' and 'tariff meters' asset classes.[[4]](#footnote-4) ActewAGL’s revised proposed capital base roll forward during the 2010–15 access arrangement period is shown in table 2.3.

Table 2.3 ActewAGL's revised proposed capital base roll forward during the 2010–15 access arrangement period ($million, nominal)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2010–11 | 2011–12 | 2012–13 | 2013–14 | 2014–15 |
| Opening capital base | 278.1 | 288.6 | 302.2 | 313.8 | 326.9 |
| Net capex | 12.0 | 15.0 | 18.7 | 18.6 | 24.3 |
| Indexation of capital base | 7.9 | 9.8 | 5.3 | 7.7 | 8.1 |
| Depreciation | –9.4 | –11.2 | –12.5 | –13.2 | –13.7 |
| Closing capital base | 288.6 | 302.2 | 313.8 | 326.9 | 346.0 |
| Adjustment for 2009–10 capexa |  |  |  |  | –7.5 |
| **Opening capital base at 1 July 2015** |  |  |  |  | **338.1** |

Source: ActewAGL, Revised proposed RFM, January 2016; AER analysis.

(a) Comprising the difference between the actual and estimated capex for 2009–10 and the return on that difference.

ActewAGL did not adopt our draft decision on the projected closing capital base as at 30 June 2021. Instead, ActewAGL's revised proposal submitted a projected closing capital base of $432.7 million ($nominal). This value reflects its revised proposed opening capital base at 1 July 2015, forecast capex, forecast depreciation and forecast inflation over 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period. The projected roll forward of the capital base during 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period is shown in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 ActewAGL's revised proposed projected capital base roll forward during 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period ($million, nominal)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2015–16 | 2016–17 | 2017–18 | 2018–19 | 2019–20 | 2020–21 |
| Opening capital base | 338.1 | 365.5 | 380.1 | 393.9 | 408.2 | 423.0 |
| Net capex | 31.8 | 20.1 | 19.9 | 21.4 | 22.7 | 18.5 |
| Indexation of capital base | 7.4 | 8.0 | 8.3 | 8.6 | 8.9 | 9.3 |
| Depreciation | –11.8 | –13.4 | –14.5 | –15.6 | –16.9 | –18.0 |
| Closing capital base | 365.5 | 380.1 | 393.9 | 408.2 | 423.0 | 432.7 |

Source: ActewAGL, Revised Proposed PTRM, January 2016.

## AER’s assessment approach

We have not changed our assessment approach for the capital base from our draft decision. Section 2.3 of our draft decision details that approach.[[5]](#footnote-5)

We received one submission from the CCP raising concerns over the rate of increase in the value of ActewAGL's capital base over the 11-year period spanning the current and previous access arrangements.[[6]](#footnote-6) The increase in ActewAGL's capital base is mostly driven by an increase in capex. We have carefully reviewed the cost drivers of ActewAGL's forecast capex in terms of prudency and efficiency. We have not accepted ActewAGL's forecast capex in its entirety and our assessment is detailed in attachment 6.

## Reasons for final decision

We do not approve ActewAGL’s proposed opening capital base of $338.1 million ($nominal) as at 1 July 2015. We determine an opening capital base of $338.4 million ($nominal) as at 1 July 2015 for ActewAGL. This is $0.3 million (or 0.1 per cent) more than the revised proposed amount. This is because we have updated the capital base roll forward for the conforming capex for 2014–15.

We also do not approve ActewAGL’s projected closing capital base of $432.7 million ($nominal) as at 30 June 2021. We instead determine a closing capital base of $417.8 million ($nominal) as at 30 June 2021, a reduction of $14.9 million or 3.4 per cent from the proposed value. The main reasons for the reduction are our adjustments to ActewAGL's forecast inflation (attachment 3), forecast depreciation (attachment 5) and forecast net capex (attachment 6).

We are satisfied each of these amendments is necessary having regard to the requirements of the NGR. The reasons for our decision are discussed below.

### Roll forward of capital base during the 2010–15 access arrangement period

We determine ActewAGL's opening capital base as at 1 July 2015 to be $338.4 million ($nominal). This amount is $0.3 million (or 0.1 per cent) more than ActewAGL's revised proposed value of $338.1. This is because we have updated the capital base roll forward for the conforming capex for 2014–15.

In our draft decision, we did not approve ActewAGL's proposed exclusion of its over-depreciated IT systems capital base value (resulting in a negative value for the 'IT systems' asset class) from the opening capital base. ActewAGL has adopted our draft decision on this issue in its revised proposal.[[7]](#footnote-7)

We note that ActewAGL's revised proposal has corrected an error in its RFM for the reported allocation of actual capex between the 'contract meters' and 'tariff meters' asset classes.[[8]](#footnote-8) We accept this correction as it does not change the value of the opening capital base.

1. Conforming capital expenditure in the 2010–15 access arrangement period

In determining the opening capital base as at 1 July 2015, we assessed whether ActewAGL’s proposed capex amounts for the 2010–15 access arrangement are properly accounted for in the capital base roll forward. Our assessment of ActewAGL's conforming capex (net of customer contributions) for the 2010–15 access arrangement period is set out in the capex attachment 6.

For this final decision, we updated ActewAGL's revised proposed capex for 2014–15. This is because ActewAGL has further revised the actual capex 2014–15 after the submission of the revised proposal. As shown in attachment 6, we have accepted the updated actual capex 2014–15 as conforming capex. Our final decisions on ActewAGL's capital base roll forward for the 2010–15 access arrangement period reflects the conforming capex for 2014–15 which is consistent with the requirements of the NGR.[[9]](#footnote-9)

### Projected capital base over 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period

We do not approve ActewAGL's projected capital base as at 30 June 2021 in its revised proposal. Instead, we forecast ActewAGL’s projected capital base at 30 June 2021 to be $417.8 million ($nominal), a reduction of $14.9 million or 3.4 per cent from ActewAGL’s revised proposal. This results from our final decision on the inputs to the determination of the projected capital base. We have amended the inputs in the following ways:

* reduced ActewAGL's revised proposed forecast inflation to 2.18 per cent per annum for 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period from 2.19 per cent per annum. Our assessment of ActewAGL’s revised proposed forecast inflation is set out in attachment 3.
* reduced ActewAGL’s revised proposed forecast straight-line depreciation over 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period by $0.9 million ($nominal) or 1.0 per cent. Our assessment of the revised proposed forecast depreciation is set out in attachment 5.
* reduced ActewAGL’s revised proposed forecast net capex over 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period by $15.4 million ($nominal) or 11.5 per cent. Our assessment of the revised proposed forecast capex is set out in attachment 6.

### Capital base at the commencement of the 2021–26 access arrangement period

The capital base at the commencement of the 2021–26 access arrangement period will be subject to adjustments consistent with the NGR.[[10]](#footnote-10) The adjustments for ActewAGL include (but are not limited to) actual inflation and approved depreciation over 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period.[[11]](#footnote-11)

We note ActewAGL's revised proposal adopted our draft decision on the use of forecast depreciation (as approved in this final decision for 2015–16 and the 2016–21 access arrangement period) for establishing the opening capital base at 1 July 2021.[[12]](#footnote-12) This approach is consistent with the approach outlined in the AER's Access arrangement guideline.[[13]](#footnote-13) We therefore maintain our draft decision position on this issue for this final decision.

1. The term ‘rolled forward’ means the process of carrying over the value of the capital base from one regulatory year to the next. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ActewAGL Distribution, Access arrangement information for the ACT Queanbeyan and Palerang access arrangement—Revised in response to the AER's draft decision, 6 January 2016, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ActewAGL Distribution, Access arrangement information for the ACT Queanbeyan and Palerang access arrangement—Revised in response to the AER's draft decision, 6 January 2016, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ActewAGL Distribution, Response to the AER's draft decision: 2016–21 ACT, Queanbeyan and Palerang gas network access arrangement, January 2016, pp. 30–31. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. AER, Draft decision: ActewAGL distribution access arrangement, attachment 2, November 2015, pp. 10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. CCP, Advice to AER from Consumer Challenge Panel sub-panel 8 regarding the AER Draft Decision and ActewAGL Distribution's Revised Access Arrangement 2016–21 proposal, March 2016, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ActewAGL Distribution, Response to the AER's draft decision–2016-21 ACT, Queanbeyan and Palerang gas network access arrangement, January 2016, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ActewAGL Distribution, Response to the AER's draft decision–2016-21 ACT, Queanbeyan and Palerang gas network access arrangement, January 2016, p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. NGR, r. 77(2)(b). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. NGR, r. 77(2). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For this final decision we have included the actual capex for the last year of the 2010–15 access arrangement period (2014–15). Therefore, there is no need to make a true-up adjustment for 2014–15 capex at the next access arrangement review. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. ActewAGL Distribution, Response to the AER's draft decision, 2016–21 ACT, Queanbeyan and Palerang gas network access arrangement, January 2016, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. AER, Final access arrangement guideline, March 2009, pp. 61–62. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)