



PRELIMINARY DECISION
AusNet Services distribution
determination
2016 to 2020

Attachment 9 – Efficiency
benefit sharing scheme

October 2015

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Note

This attachment forms part of the AER's preliminary decision on AusNet Services' revenue proposal 2016–20. It should be read with all other parts of the preliminary decision.

The preliminary decision includes the following documents:

Overview

Attachment 1 - Annual revenue requirement

Attachment 2 - Regulatory asset 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 benefit sharing scheme

Attachment 10 - Capital expenditure sharing scheme

Attachment 11 - Service target performance incentive scheme

Attachment 12 - Demand management incentive scheme

Attachment 13 - Classification of services

Attachment 14 - Control mechanism

Attachment 15 - Pass through events

Attachment 16 - Alternative control services

Attachment 17 - Negotiated services framework and criteria

Attachment 18 - f-factor scheme

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Shortened forms

Shortened form	Extended form
AEMC	Australian Energy Market Commission
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
AER	Australian Energy Regulator
AMI	advanced metering infrastructure
augex	augmentation expenditure
capex	capital expenditure
CCP	Consumer Challenge Panel
CESS	capital expenditure sharing scheme
CPI	consumer price index
DRP	debt risk premium
DMIA	demand management innovation allowance
DMIS	demand management incentive scheme
distributor	distribution network service provider
DUoS	distribution use of system
EBSS	efficiency benefit sharing scheme
ERP	equity risk premium
Expenditure Assessment Guideline	Expenditure Forecast Assessment Guideline for electricity distribution
F&A	framework and approach
GSL	guaranteed service level
MRP	market risk premium
NEL	national electricity law
NEM	national electricity market
NEO	national electricity objective
NER	national electricity rules
NSP	network service provider
opex	operating expenditure
PPI	partial performance indicators
PTRM	post-tax revenue model
RAB	regulatory asset base
RBA	Reserve Bank of Australia

Shortened form	Extended form
repex	replacement expenditure
RFM	roll forward model
RIN	regulatory information notice
RPP	revenue and pricing principles
SAIDI	system average interruption duration index
SAIFI	system average interruption frequency index
SLCAPM	Sharpe-Lintner capital asset pricing model
STPIS	service target performance incentive scheme
WACC	weighted average cost of capital

9 Efficiency benefit sharing scheme

The efficiency benefit sharing scheme (EBSS) provides an additional incentive for service providers to pursue efficiency improvements in opex.

To encourage a service provider to become more efficient, it is allowed to keep any difference between its approved forecast and its actual opex during a regulatory control period. This is supplemented by the EBSS which provides the service provider with an additional reward for reductions in opex it makes and additional penalties for increases in opex. In total, these rewards and penalties work together to provide a continuous incentive for a service provider to pursue efficiency gains over the regulatory control period. The EBSS also discourages a service provider from incurring opex in the expected base year in order to receive a higher opex allowance in the following regulatory control period.

During the 2011–15 regulatory control period AusNet Services operated under the Electricity distribution network service providers' EBSS released in June 2008.¹

9.1 Preliminary decision

We approve an EBSS carryover amount of \$14.0 million (\$2015) from the application of the EBSS in the 2011–15 regulatory control period.² The difference between our calculations of the EBSS carryover amounts and AusNet Services' proposal is due to:

- a difference in the adjustment for movements in provisions, which reduced the carryover amount
- an adjustment we made to AusNet Services' allowed opex to account for new regulatory information notice (RIN) compliance costs, which increased the carryover amount.

Our preliminary decision for the EBSS carryover amounts from the 2011–15 regulatory control period is outlined in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 AER's preliminary decision on AusNet Services' EBSS carryover amounts (\$ million, 2015)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
AusNet Services' proposed carryover	23.5	-5.4	-6.3	12.4	0.0	24.2
Preliminary decision	17.0	-9.1	-7.2	13.2	0.0	14.0

Source: AER analysis; AusNet Services, *Regulatory proposal*, April 2015, p. 254.

¹ AER, *Electricity distribution network service providers- Efficiency benefit sharing scheme*, June 2008.

² AER, *Electricity distribution network service providers -Efficiency benefit sharing scheme*, June 2008.

Our preliminary decision is to apply version two of the EBSS to AusNet Services in the 2016–20 regulatory control period.³ When we apply version two of the EBSS, we will exclude the cost categories listed in section 9.4.2 from forecast and actual opex for the calculation of EBSS carryover amounts. Table 9.2 sets out our preliminary decision on AusNet Services' target opex for the EBSS (total opex less excluded categories⁴), against which we will calculate efficiency gains in the 2016–20 regulatory control period.

Table 9.2 AER's preliminary decision on AusNet Services' forecast opex for the EBSS (\$ million, 2015)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Forecast opex for the EBSS	205.6	209.0	213.1	217.5	221.7

Source: AER analysis.

Note: Total forecast opex less forecast opex on DMIA, debt raising costs and GSL payments.

9.2 AusNet Services' proposal

9.2.1 Carryover amounts accrued during the 2011–15 regulatory control period

AusNet Services proposed \$24.2 million (\$2015) be added to its regulated revenue in the 2016–20 regulatory control period.

AusNet Services made an adjustment to its approved opex forecast to account for differences between forecast growth and actual growth. It adjusted actual opex for the following costs:

- debt raising costs
- self insurance
- the demand management innovation allowance (DMIA)
- guaranteed service level (GSL) payments
- superannuation defined benefits scheme costs
- pass through event costs incurred to implement the recommendations of the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission (VBRC)
- movements in provisions.⁵

³ AER, *Efficiency benefit sharing scheme for electricity network service providers*, November 2013.

⁴ Debt raising costs, GSL payments and DMIA.

⁵ AusNet Services, *Regulatory proposal*, April 2015, pp. 252-253.

9.2.2 Application of the EBSS in the 2016–20 regulatory control period

AusNet Services proposed version two of the scheme would apply to it in the 2016–20 regulatory control period subject to specific exclusions and adjustments. It proposed we exclude the following cost categories from the scheme:

- GSL payments
- DMIA
- debt raising costs, if we forecast debt raising costs using our current benchmark. However, AusNet Services' preferred approach is to forecast debt raising costs using a single year revealed cost approach and exclude them from the EBSS.⁶

9.3 AER's assessment approach

Under the National Electricity Rules (NER) we must decide on:

1. the revenue increments or decrements (if any) for each year of the 2016–20 regulatory control period arising from the application of the EBSS during the 2011–15 regulatory control period.⁷
2. how the EBSS will apply to AusNet Services in the 2016–20 regulatory control period.⁸

The EBSS must provide for a fair sharing between service providers and network users of opex efficiency gains and efficiency losses.⁹ We must also have regard to the following factors when implementing the EBSS:¹⁰

- the need to ensure that benefits to electricity consumers likely to result from the scheme are sufficient to warrant any reward or penalty under the scheme
- the need to provide the network service provider with continuous incentives to reduce opex
- the desirability of both rewarding the service providers for efficiency gains and penalising them for efficiency losses
- any incentives that service providers may have to capitalise expenditure
- the possible effects of the scheme on incentives for the implementation of non–network alternatives.

⁶ AusNet Services, *Regulatory proposal*, April 2015, p. 255.

⁷ NER, cl. 6.4.3(a)(5).

⁸ NER, cl. 6.3.2(a)(3); cl. 6.12.1(9).

⁹ NER, cl. 6.5.8(a).

¹⁰ NER, cl. 6.5.8(c).

9.3.1 Interrelationships

The EBSS is intrinsically linked to our opex revealed cost forecasting approach. Under this opex forecasting approach, the EBSS has two specific functions:

- to mitigate the incentive for a service provider to increase opex in the expected 'base year' to increase its forecast opex allowance for the following regulatory control period.
- to provide a continuous incentive for a service provider to make efficiency gains - service providers receive the same reward for an underspend and the same penalty for an overspend in each year of the regulatory control period.

Where we do not propose to rely on the revealed costs of a service provider in forecasting opex, this has consequences for the service provider's incentives to make productivity improvements and consequently our decision on how we apply the EBSS.

9.4 Reasons for preliminary decision

9.4.1 Carryover amounts from the 2011–15 regulatory control period

We consider AusNet Services should receive EBSS carryover amounts of \$14.0 million (\$2015) from the application of the EBSS during the 2011–15 regulatory control period. Our calculation is in accordance with section 2.3 of the Electricity distribution network service providers EBSS.¹¹

In the 2011–15 regulatory control period, AusNet Services was subject to the Electricity distribution network service providers EBSS.¹² Under this scheme, the EBSS carryover amounts are based on the difference between:

- approved forecast opex which is set out in our determination for AusNet Services for the 2011–15 regulatory control period adjusted for differences in network growth
- actual opex for the regulatory years from 2011–12 to 2014–15 less excluded cost categories.

The formulas for calculating the carryover amounts are set out in this scheme.¹³

In net terms, the EBSS carryover we calculated (\$14.0 million) is different to the carryover AusNet Services proposed (\$24.2 million) for two reasons:

- we used a different amount when we adjusted for movements in provisions

¹¹ AER, *Electricity distribution network service providers - Efficiency benefit sharing scheme*, June 2008, pp. 4–6.

¹² AER, *Electricity distribution network service providers - Efficiency benefit sharing scheme*, June 2008.

¹³ AER, *Electricity distribution network service providers - Efficiency benefit sharing scheme*, June 2008, pp. 5–6.

- we excluded RIN compliance costs from the EBSS.

The adjustment for movement in provisions leads to lower EBSS carryovers. This is partly offset by the adjustment for RIN compliance costs.

Movement in provisions

When calculating the EBSS carryover amounts, AusNet Services removed the movement in provisions from its reported actual opex, consistent with our preferred approach. However, when it removed the movement in provisions, it included the movement in provision for superannuation for defined benefit schemes. However, defined benefits superannuation costs had already been excluded by AusNet Services from its EBSS carryover costs. By also excluding movements in provisions for defined benefits from the carryover amounts, AusNet Services excluded provisions for superannuation for defined benefits schemes twice: the first time when it reversed movements in provisions attributable to opex, and the second time when it excluded expenditure on superannuation for defined benefits schemes as a cost category. We have corrected this in our calculations.

RIN compliance costs

We have adjusted AusNet Services' reported actual opex to account for the increased cost of RIN compliance. As noted by CitiPower and Powercor in their regulatory proposals, the EBSS that applied to the Victorian businesses stated that adjustments must be made to the EBSS where there are compliance costs as a result of new or changed regulatory requirements:¹⁴

The opex forecast must include any necessary adjustments for changes in responsibilities that result from compliance with a new or amended law or licence, or other statutory or regulatory requirement.¹⁵

CitiPower and Powercor adjusted their EBSS carryover amounts as result of the increased RIN requirements they faced in 2014.

Consistent with the approach we have adopted for CitiPower and Powercor, we have also adjusted AusNet Services' EBSS carryover amounts as a result of these increased costs.

9.4.2 How the EBSS will apply in the 2016–20 regulatory control period

We will apply version two of the EBSS to AusNet Services. We consider the EBSS is needed to provide AusNet Services with a continuous incentive to pursue efficiency gains during the 2016–20 regulatory control period. As we typically rely on a single

¹⁴ CitiPower, *Regulatory proposal*, April 2015, p. 249; Powercor, *Regulatory proposal*, April 2015, p. 257.

¹⁵ AER, *Electricity distribution network service providers - Efficiency benefit sharing scheme*, June 2008, p. 7.

year revealed cost approach to forecasting opex, we consider the EBSS is also needed to provide AusNet Services with an incentive not to increase its opex in the expected base year.

Version two of the EBSS specifies our approach to determining the length of the carryover period, calculating the incremental efficiency gains, and adjusting forecast or actual opex when calculating carryover amounts. These are detailed below.

Length of carryover period

The length of the carryover period for the 2016–20 regulatory control period will be five years. This aligns the EBSS carryover period with the total length of AusNet Services' regulatory control period.

Incremental efficiency gains

We will calculate incremental efficiency gains differently depending on whether they are in:

- the first regulatory year
- the second regulatory year to the penultimate regulatory year
- the final regulatory year.

We will do this according to the formulas set out in version two of the EBSS.¹⁶

When calculating actual opex under the EBSS we will adjust reported actual opex for the 2016–20 regulatory control period to reverse any movements in provisions. Consistent with the approach we applied in implementing the EBSS for the 2011–15 regulatory control period, for regulatory purposes we consider actual opex net of movement in provisions best reflects the actual opex incurred by the service provider.

Adjustments to forecast or actual opex when calculating carryover amounts

The EBSS also allows for exclusions of categories of costs from the EBSS where we do not forecast them using a single year revealed cost forecasting approach. This is designed to fairly share efficiency gains and losses. For instance, where a service provider achieves efficiency improvements, it receives a benefit through the EBSS and consumers receive a benefit through lower forecast opex in the next period. This is the way consumers and the service provider share in the benefits of an efficiency improvement.

¹⁶ AER, *Efficiency benefit sharing scheme for electricity network service providers*, November 2013, pp. 7–9.

If we do not use a single year revealed cost forecasting approach, lower actual opex will not necessarily be passed through to consumers. Consumers should not pay for EBSS benefits where they do not receive the benefits of a lower opex forecast.

We propose to exclude the following categories of costs from the EBSS:

- debt raising costs
- demand management innovation allowance (DMIA)
- GSL payments
- losses on the scrapping of assets.

We agree with AusNet Services' proposal to exclude debt raising costs, the DMIA and GSL payments because the forecasts for these categories are not based on a single year of revealed expenditure.

We also propose to exclude losses on the scrapping of assets from the EBSS. Jemena proposed this in its regulatory proposal.¹⁷ Losses on the scrapping of assets are accounting records of the shortfalls between the proceeds from selling assets and their accounting written down values. Jemena stated that consistent with accounting standards, and subject to audit, these losses are reported as opex in its statutory accounts.¹⁸ The EBSS is designed to reward businesses for becoming more efficient over time and penalise them for becoming less efficient. It is the actual opex a service provider incurs that we are concerned about when measuring efficiency improvements. A loss on the scrapping of an asset is an accounting adjustment to expenditure, rather than an actual outlay made by a business in providing network services. Including it in the EBSS would mean AusNet Services would be rewarded or penalised for accounting adjustments. We do not consider this would be consistent with the aims of the EBSS.

In addition to the excluded cost categories we will also:

- adjust forecast opex to add (subtract) any approved revenue increments (decrements) made after the initial regulatory determination. This may include approved pass through amounts.
- adjust actual opex to add capitalised opex that has been excluded from the RAB.
- exclude categories of opex not forecast using a single year revealed cost approach for the regulatory control period beginning in 2021 where doing so better achieves the requirements of clause 6.5.8 of the NER.

¹⁷ Jemena, *Regulatory proposal*, 30 April 2015, p. 41.

¹⁸ Jemena, *Response to IR#011*, 14 July 2015, p. 2.