

ActewAGL Distribution consultation paper

The Gas Network - Our 5 Year Plan

ActewAGL

for you

A message from the CEO

The Gas Network - Our 5 Year Plan

ActewAGL and its predecessors have been serving the Canberra region since 1915 when the Kingston Power House was built. In 1981 natural gas supply commenced in Canberra, offering our valued customers greater choice. We are proud of the quality service we continue to provide 100 years later, to more than 190,000 customers in Canberra, Queanbeyan, Bungendore and Nowra.

We own and manage almost 4,900 kilometres of natural gas pipelines, 2,400 kilometres of overhead electricity lines and 2,800 kilometres of underground cables through a part of our business called ActewAGL Distribution.

We recognise the responsibility of providing such important services to our region and know that the way we operate our business, and the price we charge for our services, can have a significant impact on our community.

This document provides a summary of how we are planning to operate our gas networks business for the five years from July 2016 to July 21. We want to hear your thoughts on how this plan may impact on you and what else we should be considering as we plan for the future.

I encourage you to get involved. Please take the time to read this document. Your feedback can be provided by email or letter, or by attending one of our community forums. Information on how you can have your say is on the back page of this document or learn more by visiting our website actewagl.com.au/consumerengagement

I look forward to hearing your views on our plan for the future; we will listen.



Michael Costello, AO
CEO, ActewAGL

19 February 2015

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Our 5 year plan

ActewAGL's vision is to be known as a leader in the utilities industry, safe, reliable, competitive and community focussed.

The ActewAGL Distribution gas business has established several strategic objectives to support this vision.

- To maintain alignment with the needs of our customers and ongoing developments in the gas market and broader energy market
- To have a long term focus (beyond this five year plan), recognising the long lives of our assets and the long term investments our customers make in energy appliances and infrastructure
- To address the long term interests of all stakeholders
 - Customers
 - Community
 - Specific interest groups
 - Our owners and our staff

What's this document for?

This document discusses ActewAGL Distribution's proposed plans for the gas network between the five years 2016-17 to 2020-21. ActewAGL Distribution is responsible for the pipelines and other infrastructure required to transport gas through its network to your premises and read your gas meter.

We need to finalise our five year plan so that we can submit it to the Australian Energy Regulator (Regulator), the independent national energy regulator, in June 2015. This booklet is a first step in providing information for you to better understand our plans and provide us with your thoughts. We want to listen to the views of our community. The back page provides information on how you can tell us what you think of our plans for the future. You also have an opportunity to register your on-going interest in being part of this discussion and keeping in touch with us as we continue to develop our plan.

ActewAGL Distribution currently has 135,000 residential and business gas customers and manages 4,900 kilometres of natural gas pipelines.

Over the past five years we have managed an annual operation expenditure of approximately \$25.5M. For the five year period ended 30 June 2015, ActewAGL's capital investment in the gas network will be over \$92M.

The typical residential customer's gas consumption continues to decline due to a number of factors including greater accessibility to energy efficient appliances and buildings. The current average use for a residential customer in the ACT is 45GJ per annum compared to 50 GJ per annum around five years ago.

Our five year plan is an important part of achieving these strategic objectives and has seven key priorities.

Our five year plan sets out our commitment to deliver a reliable, safe and affordable gas supply. It explains how we plan to operate and grow the network, and what our priorities are in the short and long term.

The detailed five year plan will be reviewed by the Regulator. The Regulator will make a decision on whether our proposed

operating expenditure, capital investment and energy prices are reasonable for the people of Canberra, Queanbeyan and Bungendore, while allowing ActewAGL Distribution to continue to meet its ongoing obligations and commitment to connect customers and meet their demand for gas.

We are, of course, planning beyond a five year horizon, however focusing on the priorities for the next five years is an important part of the planning and provides a good opportunity to update our customers and hear your thoughts.

Figure 1: 5 year plan summary



Our changing business environment



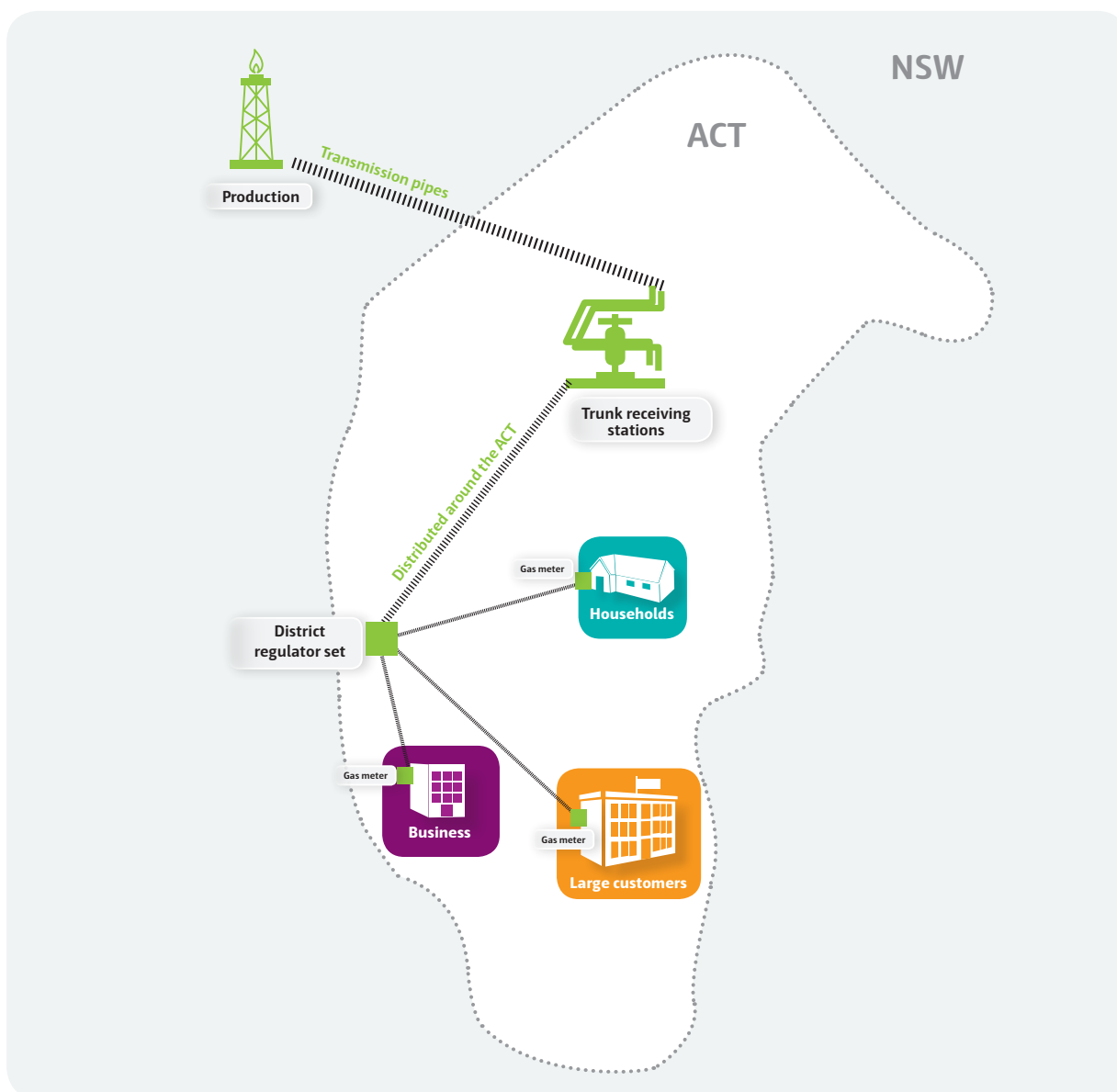
Responds to potential changes to the Australian gas market, impact of new technology and the possible impacts on our customers.

There are several stages to delivering natural gas from its source in the Moomba Gas Fields or the Bass Strait to the appliances in your home or business.

Today's average consumer is using less gas each year due to more efficient appliances and greater energy awareness.

We are keen to continue promoting gas as an alternative energy fuel choice and to keep downward pressure on our network charges by promoting growth. Continued growth is one of the important strategies that will help reduce the overall network charges for customers over the long term.

Figure 2: the gas transmission and distribution network



ActewAGL Distribution is responsible for the transportation of gas through our gas distribution network to the customer's premises. This includes operating and maintaining our network, connection services, and reading meters at more than 135,000 customer premises in the ACT, Queanbeyan and Bungendore.

ActewAGL Distribution provides network services to a number of energy retailers, in a similar way that Telstra provides telephone line services that are used by a large number of telecommunication companies.

Your gas retailer includes our network charges in your gas bill. The current gas retailers using our Canberra region network are ActewAGL Retail, Origin Energy and Energy Australia.

Gas is a 'fuel of choice', rather than an 'essential service' in the ACT. This means that households and businesses have the choice to access gas by connecting to our network and can switch from gas to other energy sources, such as electricity. Gas is very popular with approximately 80 per cent of local households and businesses currently connected to our gas network.



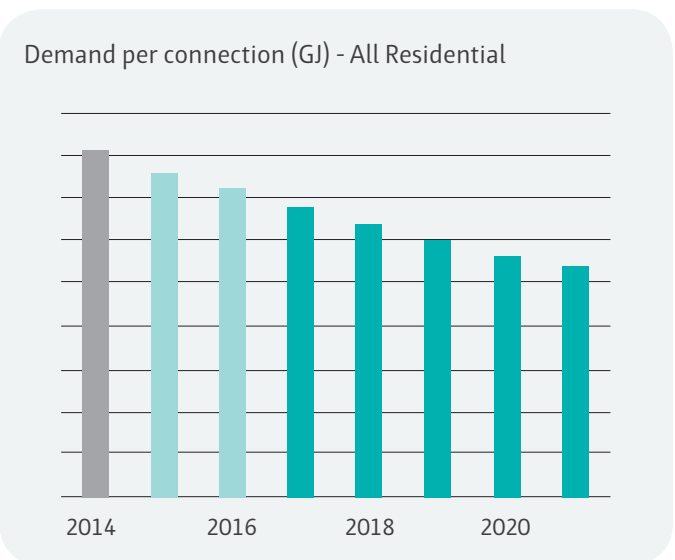
The gas market is changing.

In eastern Australia producers are developing new conventional gas and coal seam gas fields, establishing gas export facilities and selling this gas to international markets. This is expected to create new demand for wholesale gas which is linked to international oil prices and is likely to increase the price of Australian gas before it even leaves the gas fields.

We anticipate the impact of the forecast rising wholesale gas prices is likely to lead to a decline in gas demand as households and businesses become more sensitive to these prices and look for ways to reduce their energy bills.

Our experiences are that today's customers are using less energy as appliances and buildings become more efficient and households and businesses seek to minimise their energy costs through changes in behaviour. Canberrans are also seeking more environmentally friendly energy solutions, which is informing their fuel choices.

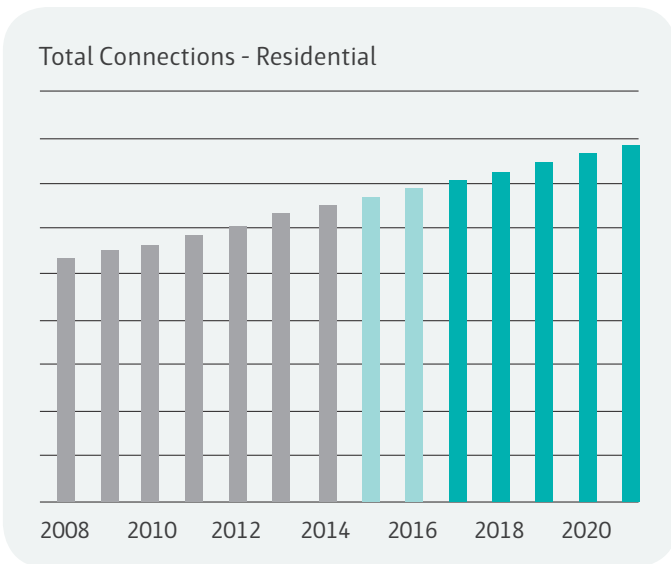
Figure 3: anticipated decline in gas use in the future.



Source: Core Energy Demand Forecast Preliminary Report 2014



Figure 4: anticipated increase in residential connections.



Source: Core Energy Demand Forecast Preliminary Report 2014

Although the number of connections each year continues to grow, this is not enough to offset the reduction in per user consumption. It is expected that overall demand for gas, particularly for residential customers, will continue to decline.

We are proposing changes to our services and pricing structure to respond to these market changes including promoting new technologies such as cogeneration and tri-generation facilities to connect to our network.

There are many opportunities to grow our business in the future besides Canberra’s natural growth. These can include applications such as co-generation (using gas to generate electricity and heat, such as commercial scale generators or residential fuel cells), tri-generation (heat, power and hot water), gas air conditioning, transport applications such as compressed natural gas vehicles including trucks, buses and cars, and a host of other applications that provide an alternative fuel source to electricity.

What makes up your gas bill?

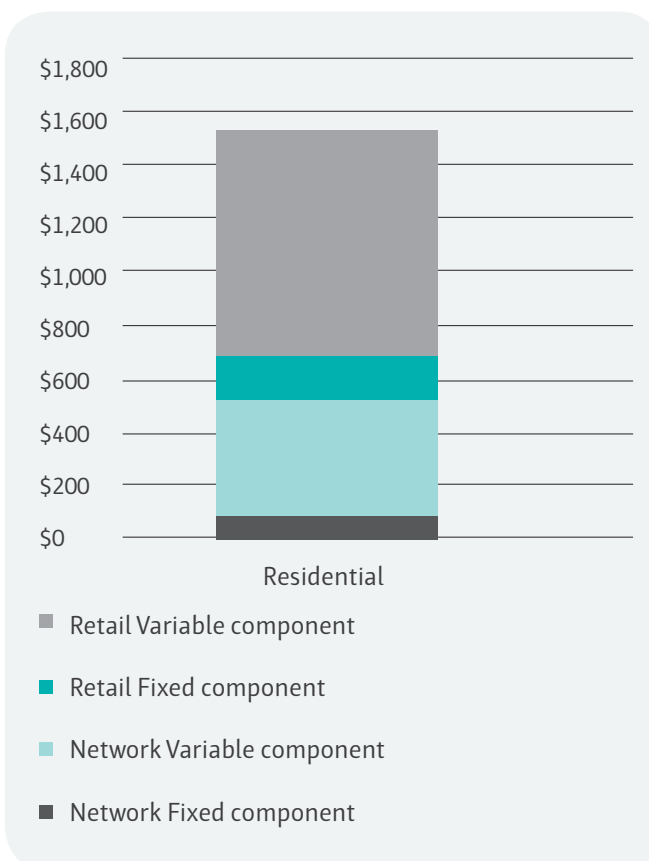
How much gas a household, business, or large building uses depends upon many factors, such as what the gas is used for (for instance hot water, heating or cooking), how well insulated the building is, and how many people live or work at the premises. In the Canberra region, the amount of gas used varies from year to year depending upon how mild or cold the winter has been.

A typical customer bill in the ACT is shown in figure 5 and 6. Your bill you're your retailer includes our distribution charges. Your bill has a fixed and variable component where the variable component is based on your gas consumption. The diagrams show the break-up of our fixed and variable charges passed on to you by your retailer.

Our cost of providing gas network services is shared across all customers, from households and businesses to major gas users such as government departments, large industry, swimming pools and research institutions.

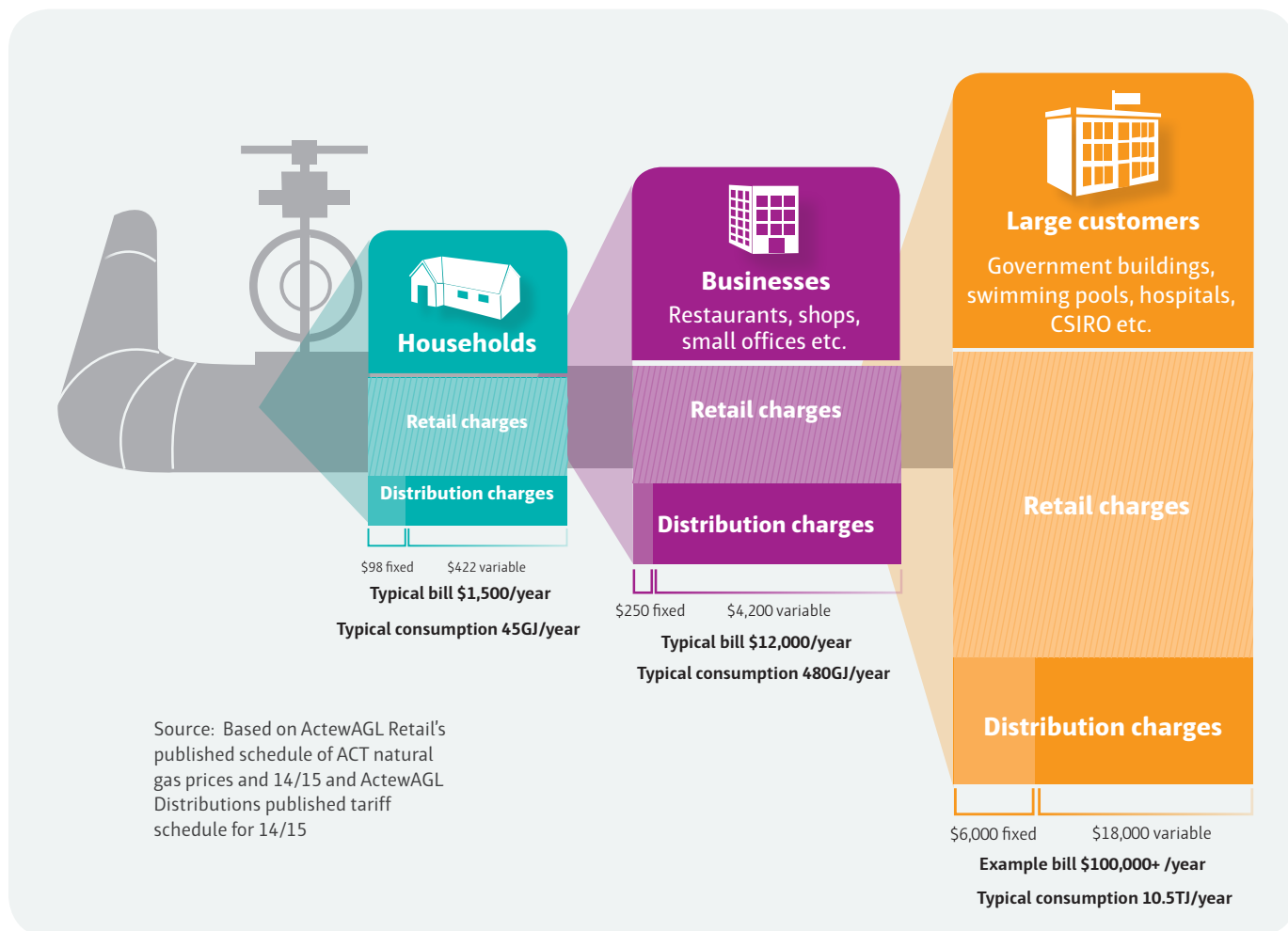
The costs of the gas network are largely fixed once the pipelines have been built, so as more gas users connect to the network, these costs are shared across a larger customer base, which typically reduces the amount each individual customer has to pay over the long term.

Figure 5: breakdown of typical customer gas bill.



Source: ActewAGL Retail's published schedule of ACT natural gas prices for 14/15 and ActewAGL Distribution's published tariff schedule for 14/15.

Figure 6: typical split of retail and distribution charges within a customer's gas bill.



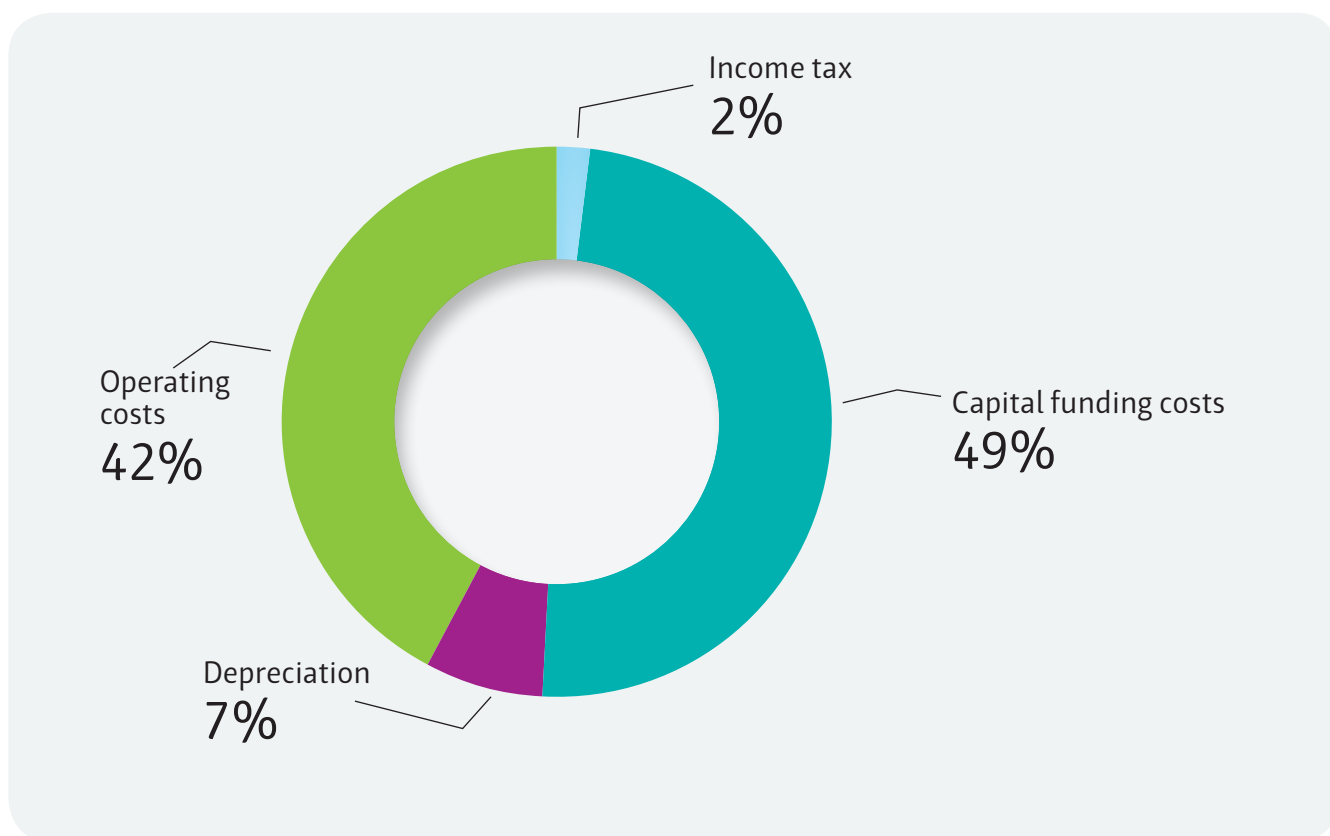
The costs of running the gas network are made up of the following components.

- Operating costs – the day to day costs of running and maintaining the gas network as well as government charges
- Funding costs – that is the expense of interest and borrowings for our past and forecast capital costs, that is our long-term investment in maintaining and growing the network
- Depreciation – recovering the costs of assets over the lifetime of each asset
- Taxation

Together, these costs represent how much revenue ActewAGL Distribution needs to raise to operate the gas network. The relative sizes of these components are shown in figure 7 below.

Within each of the areas of operational costs and capital costs, we make decisions about the best way to deliver our services and meet customer expectations. There are trade-offs to be made. Increased levels of service and investment to ensure high levels of reliability of gas supply come at a cost that impacts directly on the price we need to charge to our customers.

Figure 7: cost components of running the gas network.



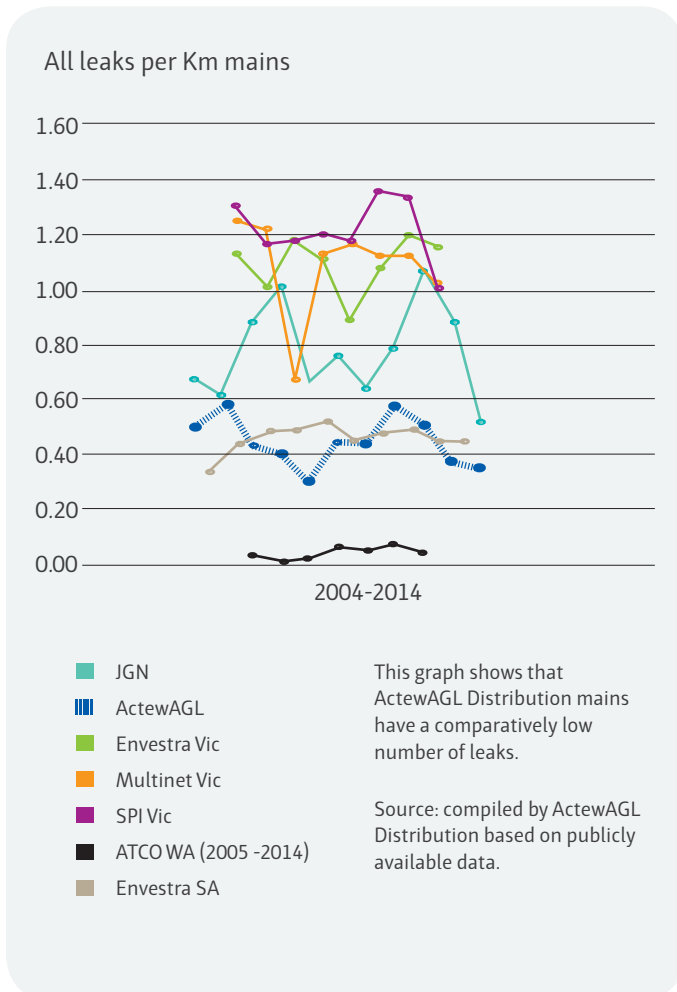
Meeting our customers' expectations



Delivers a level of safety, reliability and service we are proud of and customers expect.

Over many years our customers have told us that safety and levels of service are important. Our surveys of the Canberra community have indicated that our customers value higher levels of service and reliability over lower costs.

Figure 8: leaks per km mains

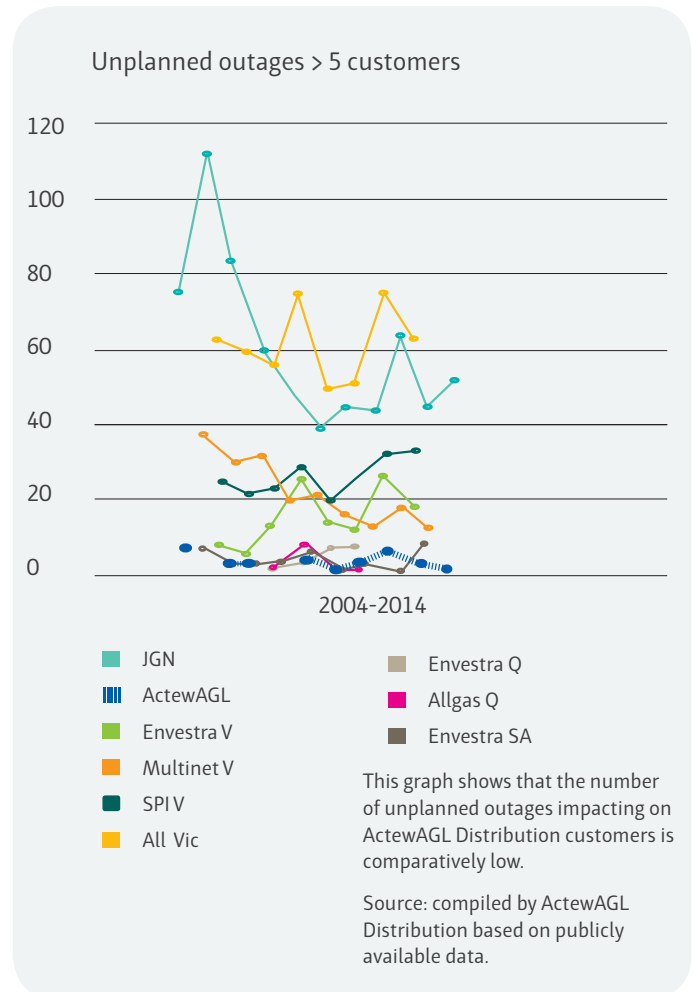


At the same time, customers have reminded us that cost is an important factor to many in our community. This is something we consider carefully when we propose prices to the regulator.

Our five year plan seeks to get the balance right between levels of service and safety and the impact on the price of gas.

When we compare our past performance in areas of safety, reliability and response to incidents against other energy utilities in Australia, we see that we provide a high level of service.

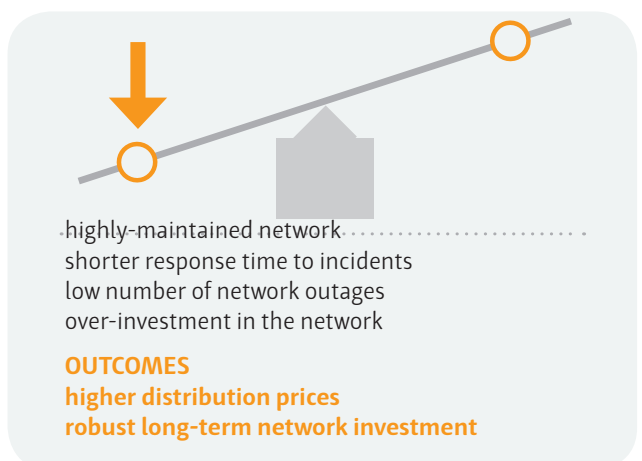
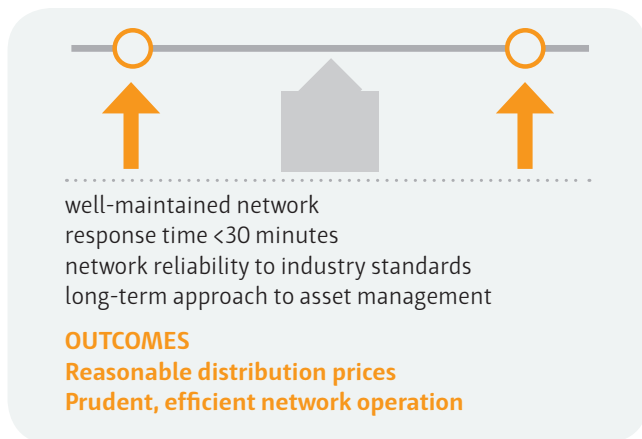
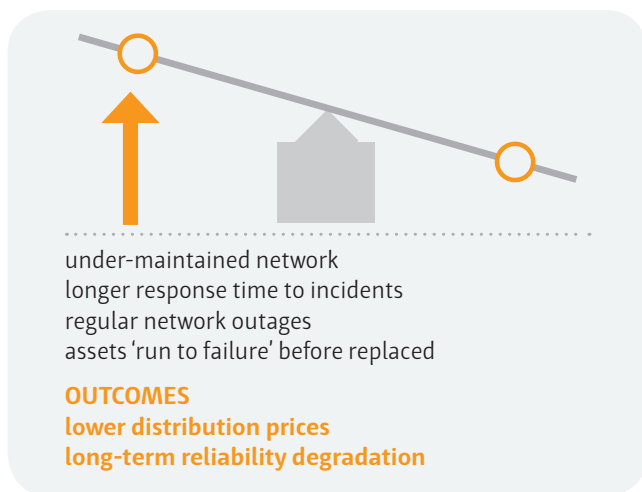
Figure 9: unplanned outages



ActewAGL Distribution is committed to excellent customer service and does not compromise on ensuring the safety of our workforce and the broader community. However, it is important that we do not over-invest in service delivery and safety to the extent that we are imposing unreasonable costs on our customers.

Figure 10 below demonstrates how the trade-off between service standards and reliability may impact upon the prices we need to charge.

Figure 10: service standards, reliability and price trade-offs



This is an area we would like to hear from the community on before we finalise our Plan. We will also continue to do research and run community consultation about the trade-off between safety, service levels and the price of gas distribution.

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK



How important is the quality of service we provide to you?

What are your views on the trade-off between reliability and cost of gas distribution? In your experiences, is the current reliability level appropriate?

REMEMBER: Providing higher levels of service or reliability costs more and may impact on the price of gas distribution services.



Gungahlin to Amaroo pipeline - cost versus reliability example

In 2014 we constructed 2.9km of secondary steel pipeline from Gungahlin to Amaroo and installed a new district regulator. This was required to upgrade capacity of the network in response to the growing number of households in that area. Without the upgrade there was the risk of a gas shortage occurring on 1 in 20 winters affecting up to 10,000 household customers.

The cost of the upgraded pipeline was \$3.7m. The impact of this investment on a typical residential customer bill is approximately \$1.67 per annum over the five year period ending 30 June 2014. (Calculated based on real project costs modelled against known customer data in the period 2010-2015)

Response time to incidents – cost versus response time to incidents example

Currently we have 20 staff that carry out operation and maintenance of the entire gas network with a maximum of 14 team members available to respond to incidents, this includes an after hours callout roster to provide coverage 24 hours, 7 days a week. The current response time is 30 minutes and we are mandated to respond within 60 minutes. Incidents can include reported gas leaks, or gas smells and damage to gas pipelines caused when someone accidentally hits the network or pipelines while excavating.

The total cost of running this operations and maintenance team is \$4.5m per year. If we were to reduce our staffing levels, and associated costs, by 15% this would result in an increased response time to greater than 60 minutes and extend the subsequent time to restore damage to the network, this would save a typical residential customer approximately \$2.14 per annum. (Calculated from real annual operational costs experienced in the five year period 2010-2015 and modelled against known customer data for the same period)

Our investment priorities



Meets the infrastructure needs of our growing region.

As the population of Canberra and the region increases more network infrastructure is required. Additionally, we need to replace existing infrastructure once it nears the end of its useful life. Delivering on our priorities of quality service delivery, reliability and safety across our network, as the region grows, drives how we invest over the next five years and beyond.

Investment priorities are split into operational expenses (day to day requirements) and capital investment (longer term infrastructure).

Over the past five years, our operating expenditure has been \$128m (including \$30m in government levies) while we have invested approximately \$92m in capital projects.

We are still finalising our investment plans, and feedback from our customers is an important part of this planning process. Below is a simple summary that indicates how we invested over the past five years across operational expenses and capital investment.

How your money supports our network

Figure 11: breakdown of capital investment.

FOR EVERY \$100 CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN THE GAS NETWORK...

\$46

CONNECTS NEW CUSTOMERS



The ACT is a growing city and it is important that gas be accessible to new residential developments as well as new business operators. We invest significantly in new infrastructure to meet the changing needs of our community and economy.

\$28

GROWING OUR CAPACITY



As the number of customers and demand for gas grows, we need to install bigger pipes and new gas pressure equipment to cater for the peak periods in demand, such as the very cold days in winter, when everyone has their heaters on.

\$25

REPLACE AGING INFRASTRUCTURE



To maintain the reliability and safety of the network for the long term we need to continually refurbish and replace infrastructure as it ages. This part of our capital expenditure continues to increase.

\$1

OTHER NON-NETWORK ASSETS



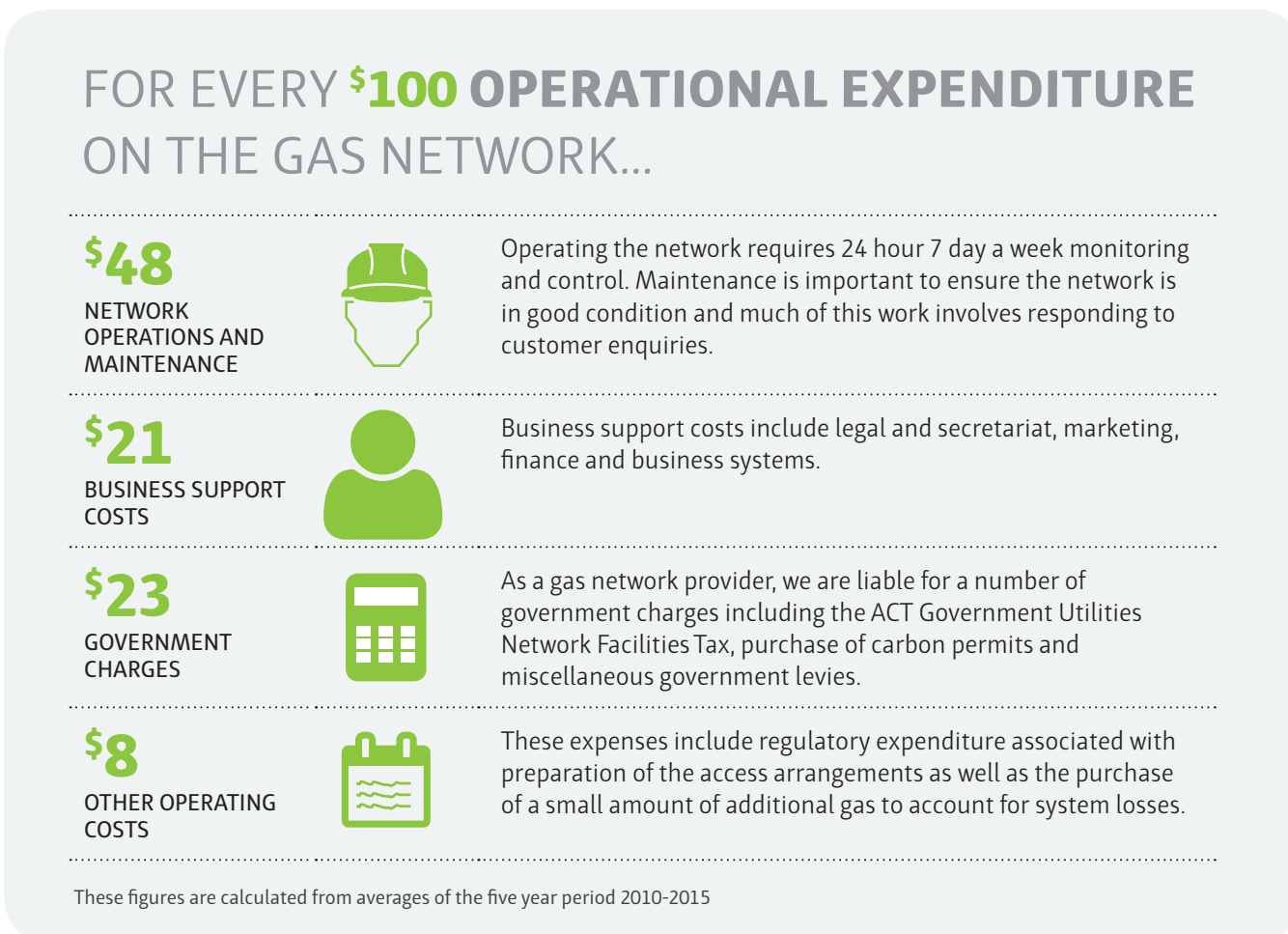
To help us deliver the capital investment program, we also invest in areas such as information technology and GIS systems.

These figures are calculated from averages of the five year period 2010-2015

Over the next five years to 2020-21 we have the following capital investment priorities which reflect the expanding growth in our network.

- Connecting new customers, particularly in the areas of West Belconnen, Molonglo suburbs of Prospect and Denman and the Gungahlin suburb of Moncrieff.
- Growing our capacity by upgrading the Fyshwick station to manage higher flows and installing new pressure control facilities in Watson.
- Replacing old assets will focus on undertaking integrity assessment and reviewing existing meters.

Figure 12: breakdown of operational expenditure.



Over the next five years to 2020-21 we have the following operational expenditure priorities.

- Maintaining the network, particularly trunk and primary mains and associated pressure reduction facilities
- Supervising the work of others that has the potential to damage our network, such as building sites (500 jobs per annum).
- Responding to 200 incidents per annum
- Routine overhauls and operational checks across the network, including 798 major meter sets

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK 

Are there areas of operational service delivery you think we could do better?

Are there areas of the gas network that you think we should invest in as a priority?

FIND OUT MORE? If you want more information on the types of services and infrastructure required to manage the gas network, visit our website at actewagl.com.au

Changing the way we charge for our services



Ensures that natural gas remains a viable energy source for our region by attracting more customers.

With the changing nature of the gas market and the forecast increase in Australian gas prices, we are working hard to minimise the impact of our distribution costs on you, our household and business customers. For households, the distribution costs are about half of the total gas bill, while for larger gas customers such as businesses and government buildings the distribution costs account for less than half the total bill.

The Regulator determines the revenue that it considers ActewAGL Distribution needs to earn for the five year period, to meet our obligations to efficiently provide gas distribution services, and approves the prices we can charge customers for our services. The Regulator takes into consideration the prudent costs of running the distribution business and the amount of gas expected to be delivered through the network over the coming five years.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{amount of} \\ \text{revenue} \\ \text{ActewAGL} \\ \text{Distribution} \\ \text{is approved to} \\ \text{collect} \end{array} \div \begin{array}{l} \text{number of} \\ \text{customers} \\ \text{and volume} \\ \text{of gas} \\ \text{supplied} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} \text{average gas} \\ \text{network} \\ \text{distribution} \\ \text{fees per} \\ \text{customer} \end{array}$$

Once the network is built and these costs are known, there is an opportunity to reduce the average distribution fees we have to charge per customer over the long term by increasing the number of customers we have and the amount of gas that is delivered through our network.

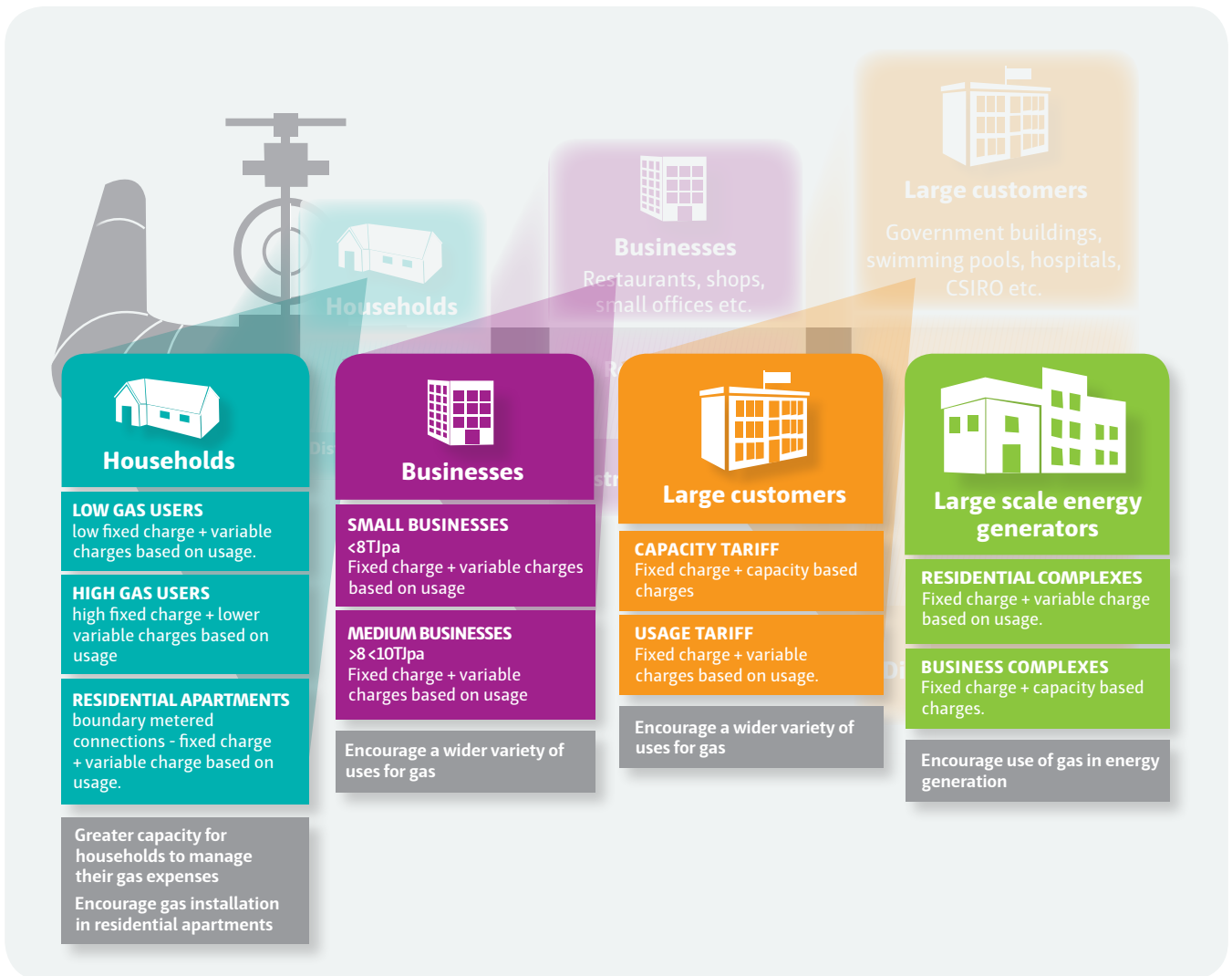
Prices for gas distribution networks include both fixed charges, for accessing the network, plus a variable charge based on how much gas a customer uses.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Gas network} \\ \text{distribution} \\ \text{charges} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} \text{fixed} \\ \text{charge} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \text{Variable} \\ \text{charge} \\ \text{(based on} \\ \text{usage)} \end{array}$$

To help attract new customers, promote more gas usage and respond to changes in the energy market, we are considering changing the way we structure our charges. A new price structure will provide us with flexibility to target defined market segments to promote increased gas usage and attract new customers to our network.

We are interested in your thoughts on our proposed price structure after which we will be able to determine the potential impact of this proposed structure on typical customers' bills.

Figure 13: proposed tariff structure for the 2016-2021 period.



The table above summarises the way we propose to structure our prices in the future, by tailoring them more specifically to each type of customer.

You can review our current tariff structure online at actewagl.com.au Our proposed new tariff structure is different to our current tariff structure by:

- Introducing new tariffs for low and high residential gas users to lower the barriers to access gas for low users and promote more gas use from higher gas users.
- Introducing a new tariff for single meter installations on high rise residential buildings to continue promoting gas connections at these dwellings for cooking and heating.

- Introducing new tariffs for business customers to recognise that business customers' gas needs are different to those of residential customers.
- Introducing a new tariff for large scale energy generators which has been identified as an emerging market to promote growth.

Customers will have an opportunity to access our tariffs by nominating the tariff which best suits your needs through your retailer.



Investigates ways to provide more support to vulnerable customers, who struggle to pay their gas bills.

In this 5 year plan, we will also find more ways to provide support to our vulnerable customers.

Our commitment to the community is important to us, and we want to support those who may be struggling to pay their energy bills. We recognise that Canberra's housing costs can often be expensive and during the winters, it is important to keep ourselves warm. We want to help households avoid large energy debts and we recognise that the social and health impacts of going without heating are unacceptable.

Working with organisations that support the vulnerable people within our community, we will seek to be more proactive about initiatives that can make a difference. This may include exploring appropriate tariff structures and investigating options for pre-paid metering.

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK



If you are a householder would you prefer a lower fixed network fee and higher variable fee (based on usage), or rather a higher fixed fee and lower variable fee?

As a business customer, would a higher fixed network fee (and lower variable charges) make it more economical to use more gas appliances in your business?

How important is gas price stability for your business or household?

If you have experienced difficulties paying your gas bill, what would have been helpful from a gas distribution perspective?

FIND OUT MORE? For more detailed information on the existing fee structure and how the fixed and variable fees are calculated, visit our website at actewagl.com.au



The Regulator sets ActewAGL's gas revenue requirements



Ensures enough revenue to allow us to maintain our service standards for existing and future customers.

Our five year plan will be submitted to the Regulator in June 2015, and the Regulator will make a determination on whether our proposed revenue allowance is enough to operate our business efficiently, while being fair and reasonable to our customers. Over the past five years our average annual tariff revenue has been \$66m. While our plan is still being finalised, we anticipate that the impacts of inflation and the increased requirements for capital expenditure will be off-set by lower funding costs, resulting in only a small increase in the revenue we require.

- Capital investment – how we plan to invest in the gas network for the long term, and the costs of that investment, including funding costs and depreciation
- Operating expenses – how efficiently we operate and maintain our network, what levels of service, reliability and safety do we provide
- Our prices and demand – what types of pricing options we provide and forecasts of how many customers we will have and how much gas they will use in the future

Our five year plan addresses these elements, with a focus on how these areas relate to the service we provide our customers.

Once the annual revenue allowance is calculated, we develop the specific tariffs for each customer class. This involves considering the forecast demand and predicted customer numbers to derive potential tariffs for the five year period 2016-2021. There is flexibility within the five year period to adjust tariffs to achieve the final allowed revenue. For example tariffs could be relatively smooth over the period, or alternatively could be adjusted earlier or later in the period to meet that revenue limit. How the tariffs change over the five

year period is what we call the price path. We will consider your views as we determine our preferred price path for the next five years.

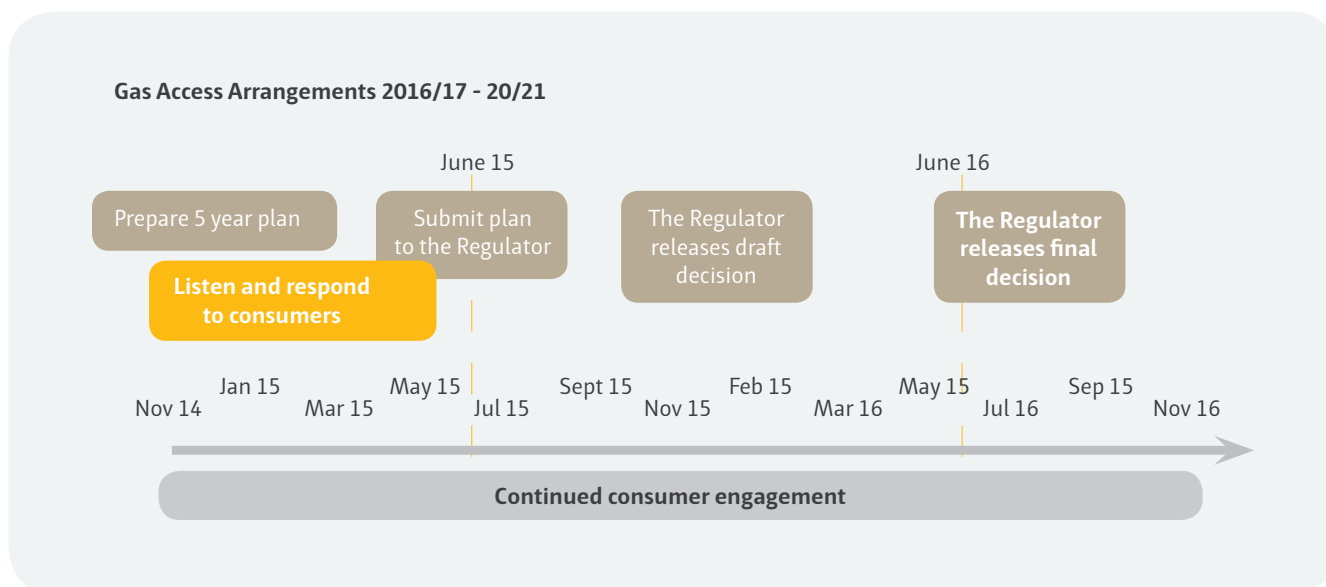
Before we finalise our plan we want your feedback on what we are proposing. Once the plan is submitted to the Regulator, there will be further opportunities for the communities of Canberra, Queanbeyan and Bungendore to continue to provide their feedback to us as well as directly to the Regulator.

The Australian Energy Regulator

regulates the Australian energy markets and networks, including utilities such as ActewAGL. It is not economically viable or socially feasible for there to be more than one gas network in our suburbs and cities, so gas networks across Australia are monopolies managed by distribution network operators. An important role of the Regulator is to regulate the operation of these distribution network operators (such as ActewAGL Distribution) to ensure they are operating efficiently and charge appropriate prices for their services.

The Regulator will review our five year plan to check that it meets the National Gas Law requirement to 'promote the long-term interests of customers'. The outcome of this review will determine the prices ActewAGL Distribution can charge to deliver gas to our customers.

Figure 14: regulatory timeline.



When reviewing our proposal, the Regulator also checks to see if we are working in the best interests of our customers.

One of ways the Regulator reviews our plan from the point of view of the gas consumers within our region is through their Consumer Challenge Panel.

The Consumer Challenge Panel (CCP)

assists the Regulator to make better regulatory determinations by providing input on issues of importance to consumers. Regulatory determinations are technical and complex processes which can make it difficult for ordinary consumers to participate.

The expert members of the CCP bring consumer perspectives to the Regulator to better balance the range of views considered as part of its

What you have told us so far?



Commits to listening, providing more information, and increasing the options for our community to comment on what we do.

ActewAGL is proudly local and maintains strong relationships with our customers through on-going discussions with local business, employment and professional groups.

We also provide direct opportunities for our customers to give feedback on how we are performing through our customer complaints call centre, direct interactions with customers in the field and our annual customer feedback survey.

Independent surveys undertaken by researchers at the Australian National University known as 'willingness to pay' surveys have told us that you value reliability and service levels highly, even if it comes at a greater cost.

Consumer focus groups undertaken during 2014 told us more about the views of our customers.

- Reliability of service is the most important factor with safety considered an essential part of running our business
- Concerned about increasing energy costs
- How network fees are calculated and applied to different customers is complex and confusing
- There is concern about potential over-investment in the network, while others noted that Canberra has ageing infrastructure

- Interested in more information on how we operate the distribution network.

Energy Consumer Reference Council

In 2014 we established the ActewAGL Distribution Energy Consumer Reference Council (ECRC) made of representatives of a range of consumer sectors within the ACT including our vulnerable customers, the business community, environmental organisations and the general community.

The ECRC will give us more direct input and provide an important on-going contribution to the work of ActewAGL Distribution across both the gas and electricity businesses. In particular the ECRC has been working with us to consider this plan.

As we gather feedback from our customers on this document and our five year plan, we will provide this information to the ECRC for their consideration.

The ECRC will be involved in listening to the community and considering how our proposed prices are developed to reflect community input.

More information on the ECRC, including copies of presentations and papers presented to the Council is available at actewagl.com.au/consumerengagement



Inaugural ActewAGL Distribution Energy Consumer Reference Council meeting, December 2014

How can you have your say?



Commits to listening, providing more information, and increasing the options for our community to comment on what we do.

We will listen to what you have to say. There are a number of ways you can provide us with your feedback on our five year plan.

Provide your comments directly to us by writing to or emailing us at the contact details below

Peter Cunningham

Branch Manager, Distribution Strategy and Compliance,
ActewAGL Distribution.

PO Box 366
Canberra ACT 2601

consumerfeedback@actewagl.com.au

To allow us to consider your views as part of preparing our submission to the Regulator, please provide your comments by **Friday 27 March 2015**.

Participate in one of our community workshops

In partnership with some of the members of our Energy Consumer Reference Council, ActewAGL is hosting two workshops:

Monday 16 March 2015.

6.00 – 7.30pm

Ground floor ActewAGL House, 40 Bunda Street, Civic

Thursday 19 March 2015.

3.00 – 4.30pm

ActewAGL Distribution Greenway Depot
Oakden St, Greenway

To register your participation in these workshops, please book online at actewagl.com.au/consumerengagement or email consumerfeedback@actewagl.com.au

Writing directly to the Regulator

The Australian Energy Regulator will seek submissions from stakeholders on ActewAGL Distribution's five year plan. Submissions can be lodged directly with the Regulator at various stages in the five-year review process. Information on how to contact the Regulator can be found at aer.gov.au

Stay in touch

Community feedback on our five year plan will be used to finalise our proposed pricing structure and determine what prices we will propose to the Regulator for each customer type. If you would like to continue to be part of this discussion and have input into the next stage of developing our plan and associated prices, please provide your contact details to: consumerfeedback@actewagl.com.au

WE WILL LISTEN



Comments and feedback received on this draft plan will be considered by our team working on the regulatory submission as well as the members of the Energy Consumer Reference Council. An important part of the final stages of preparing the plan for submission to the Regulator is to consider how we have incorporated feedback from our customers and the broader community.

To learn more about our community engagement program visit actewagl.com.au/consumerengagement

