



Ausgrid Regulatory Reset – 2024-2029

Customer and stakeholder engagement report

Input to 2024-29 Regulatory Proposal

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Bd infrastructure Pty Ltd

ABN 84 161 384 596

www.bdinfrastucture.com

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Executive Summary

About this report

Ausgrid operates the poles, wires and streetlights delivering electricity to homes and businesses across Sydney, the Central Coast and Hunter region. Every five years it is required to submit a proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) that details proposed business operations and service delivery for the upcoming five-year period (the Reset). The next Reset will cover the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2029.

On 1 September 2022, Ausgrid published a Draft Plan for this Reset period. Feedback on this Draft Plan has helped the business prepare a Regulatory Proposal that will be submitted to the AER in January 2023.

The AER expects Ausgrid and all Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSPs) to engage extensively with customers and stakeholders and show evidence that the Regulatory Proposal is in customers' long-term

interests, and evidence how customer's preferences have shaped the proposal. These expectations are articulated in the AER's Better Resets Handbook. However, customer engagement is more than just a compliance issue for Ausgrid. It is the means through which the business derives its purpose, delivers social value, and makes critical operational and investment decisions.

Between November 2021 and October 2022, Ausgrid undertook a broad and ambitious engagement program to inform and shape the Regulatory Proposal. This report documents Ausgrid's ambitions for the first 3 phases of Reset engagement up to October 2022, the methodology used, the feedback received and the main themes that are expected to be addressed in the Proposal to respond to customer feedback. Further engagement is continuing, conducted both by Ausgrid and the AER itself.

The report has been written by bd infrastructure, who has worked closely with the Ausgrid Reset team to advise on and support the customer engagement program. Specifically, bd infrastructure supported the co-design of the Engagement Framework and delivered the Lived Experience and Small Business engagement streams.

Ausgrid has been supported by several other specialist consultancies and organisations in the delivery of this engagement program:

- **MosaicLab** designed and facilitated the Voice of Community Panel (VoC Panel) process.
- **Gauge Consulting** facilitated the Engagement Framework co-design process and supported MosaicLab with the Panel.
- **Ethnic Communities Council of NSW** delivered the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) engagement stream.
- **Nous Group** supported the delivery of the event-affected customer engagement stream.
- **Indigenous Energy Australia** are supporting with the delivery of Indigenous engagement stream.
- **EdgeRed** helped with customer data analysis.



Ethnic Communities'
Council of NSW Inc.

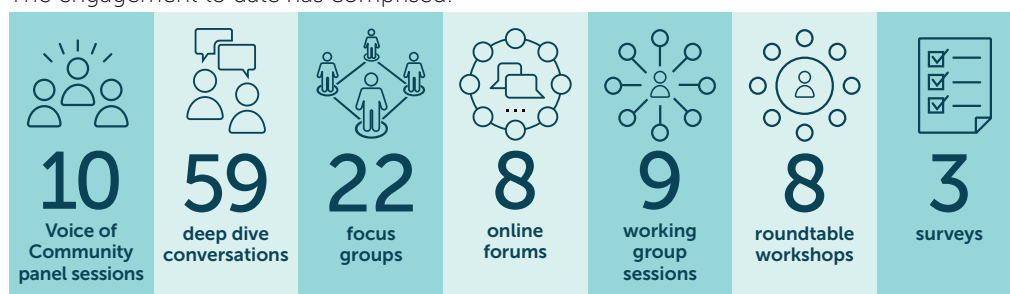


Engagement journey

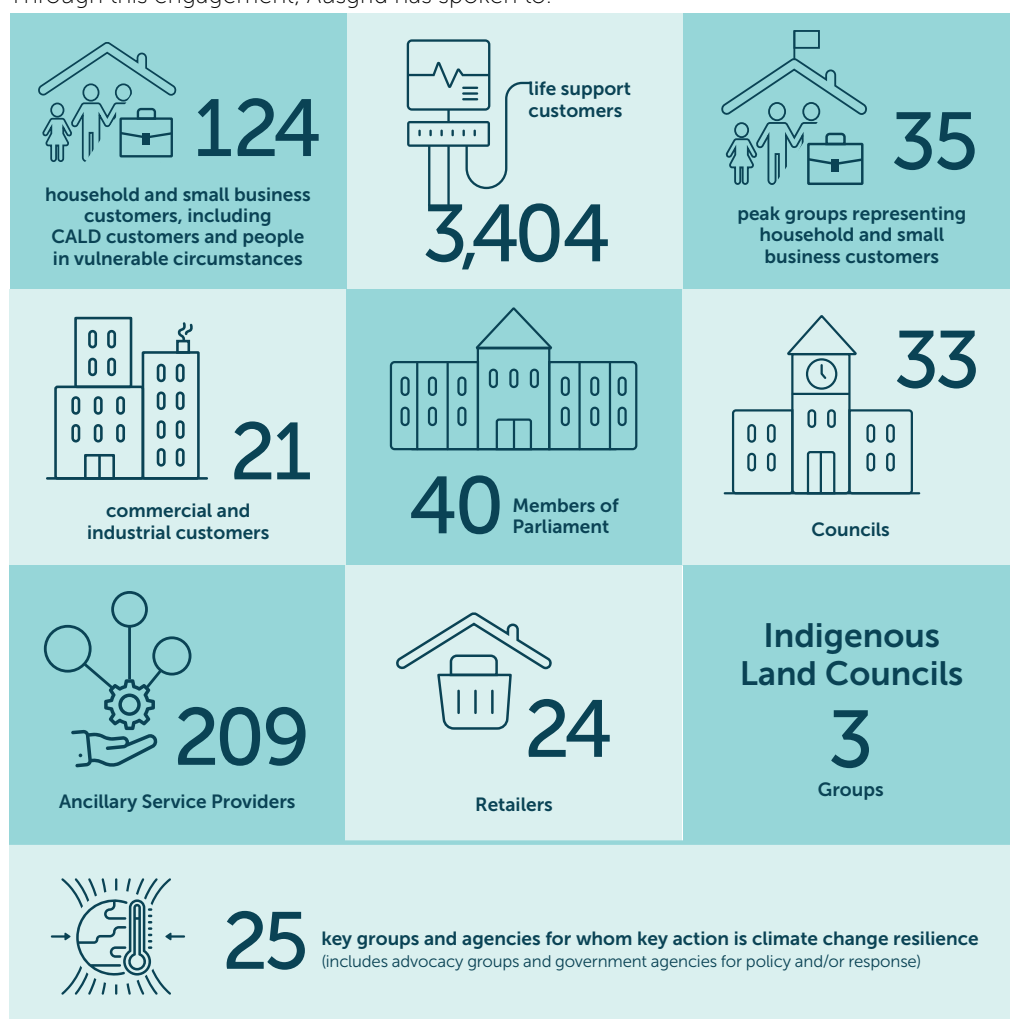
Ausgrid has undertaken a broad and ambitious engagement program that acknowledged the complexity of the energy transition and the challenges in enabling a diverse customer base to participate. The engagement process has been iterative, comprising early co-design of the engagement approach with customer advocates and then three engagement phases punctuated with evaluation.

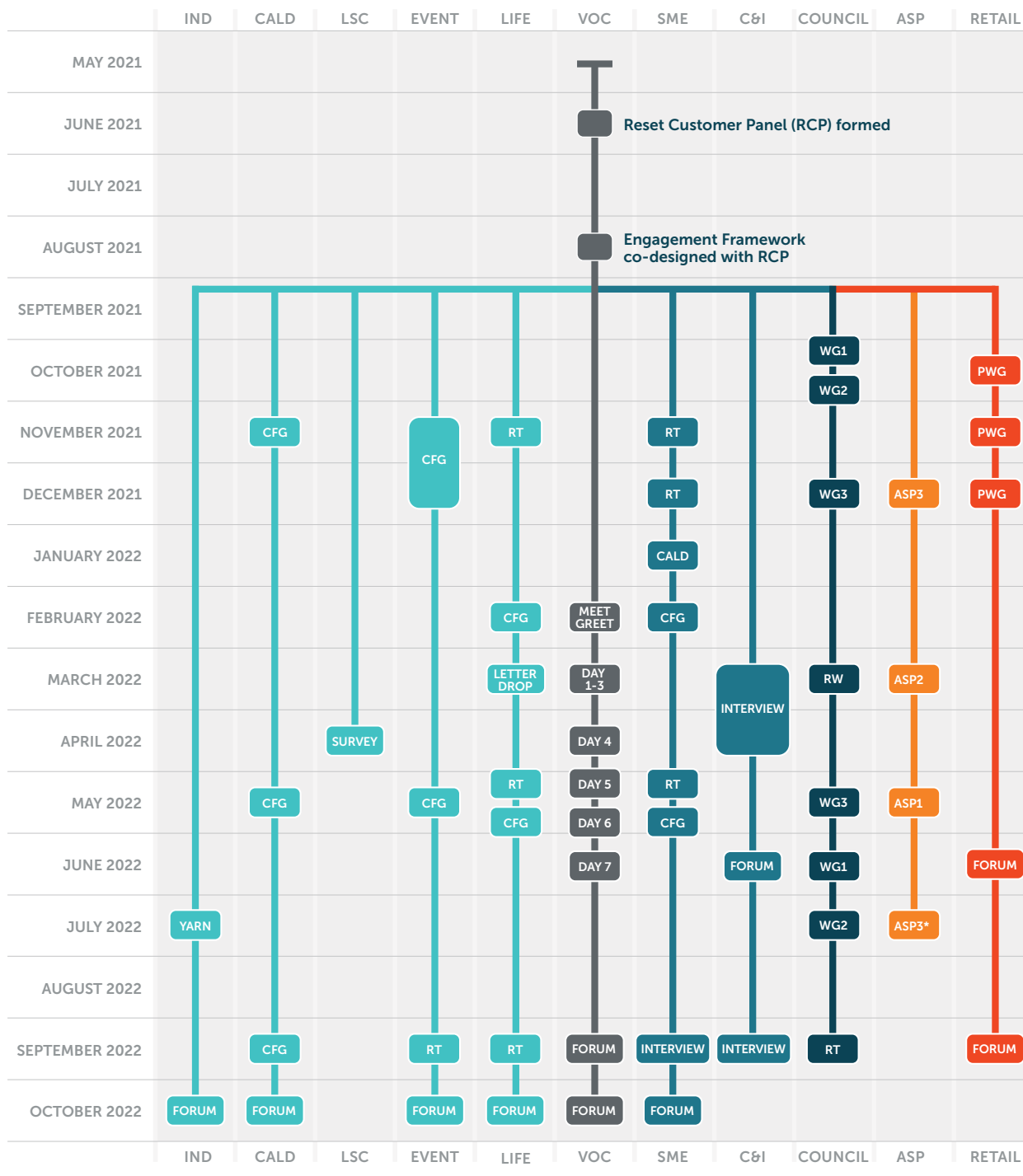
The program comprised a series of workshops, focus groups, interviews and surveys that informed an extensive deliberative process to delve deep into the core trade-offs at the heart of the Reset. These activities helped the organisation understand customers' aspirations for energy, the network and the organisation, and involve them in shaping and then balancing key decisions pertinent to the business's next five years.

The engagement to date has comprised:



Through this engagement, Ausgrid has spoken to:





Key		Streams		Activity	
■	Residential	IND	Indigenous	CFG	Customer focus group
■	Business	CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse	SURVEY	Online survey
■	Energy	LSC	Life support customer	RT	Round table
		EVENT	Event affected	Interview	Deep dive interview
		LIFE	Lived experience	Forum	Customer forums
		VOC	Voice of Community panel	ASP1-3	Ancillary Service Providers forum
		SME	Small to medium business	ASP3*	Ancillary Service Providers meeting and forum
		C&I	Commercial and industrial	PWG	Pricing working group
		COUNCIL	Local council	WG1	Innovation and sustainability working group
		ASP	Ancillary Service Providers	WG2	Vegetation working group
		RETAIL	Retail	WG3	Public lighting working group
				RW	Resilience workshop

Engagement journey

What customers said

The energy industry is going through a transition. More and more customers are actively participating in the generation and storage of electricity through rooftop solar, or making investment decisions that significantly impact their demand for electricity, for example by adopting electric vehicles. While many customers are more empowered than ever before, this also creates complexity.

During the preparation of the Draft Plan

Ausgrid heard overwhelmingly, that customers appreciated learning more about the industry and that they valued being asked to participate in future decision making.

Ausgrid also heard customers say they feel the sector is too complex and overwhelming to engage with, or that they are excluded in some way from participating in the transition. This could be due to a lack of information or finances, or other barriers such as being a renter or living in a high-rise apartment.

Despite the challenges the transition to net zero brings, Ausgrid's engagement demonstrated that customers are overwhelmingly positive that the transition is the right thing to do. But it is also clear that customers are challenging the government and industry to do more to ensure the transition is affordable and fair.

The transition to a net zero energy system is not the only thing on customers' minds. Customers shared views on their experiences interacting with Ausgrid and other energy companies on the reliability of the system, and how factors such as climate change and cyber threats could impact that reliability.

In response to the Draft Plan

All customer groups said they thought the Draft Plan was value for money, though that was caveated by uncertainty around rising energy prices. Customers consider Ausgrid to have broadly got the balance right between investment areas, with Transforming the Grid, Building Resilience, and Reaching net zero consistently considered the top priority investment areas. Ausgrid's proposal for an even price path was preferred by most customer groups, as it would help to manage uncertainty amid rising energy prices.

Ausgrid found high support among all customer groups for a proactive approach to net zero investment, with many believing this proactivity is aligned to community values. There was also a high level of alignment on what communities might value in community batteries, and this feedback will help Ausgrid to build the social case for investment in net zero technology.

Most customer groups preferred resilience investment to be focussed on reducing the number and length of outages, with an emphasis on initiatives targeted before events take place. The VoC Panel preferred investment to be made before, during and after events as it would benefit all customers.

There was a high level of alignment in targeting investment spending on the most vulnerable customers, and a strong customer preference veering close to 'do all you can' when it comes to resilience investment.

Views on mandatory export tariffs were more mixed but still, on the whole, favourable. Only CALD communities expressed the view that such tariffs would be unfair to those who had invested in rooftop solar. This difference reflects the need for communication, as customers who had more time and information to consider the implications of changing tariffs were supportive but noted the need for significant communication to inform the community.

Customers who said the Draft Plan could be improved upon cited a preference for increasing the investment in innovation above the \$50m proposed.

What Ausgrid set out to do

Context

The 2014-19 regulatory period marked a turning point for Ausgrid. Both the AER and customer advocates had been critical of the efforts made by the NSW DNSPs to meaningfully engage customers in the development of price proposals to that point, prompting the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) to conduct an evaluation of NSW DNSP consumer engagement for the following regulatory period of 2019-24. Overall PIAC saw a measurable improvement in the engagement quality during this Reset period but called for engagement programs to have greater influence on the proposals.

Since the 2019-24 Reset, Ausgrid has been doing much to transform its customer engagement, refreshing the Customer Consultative Committee (CCC), establishing the Network Innovation Advisory Committee (NIAC) and the Pricing Working Group (PWG) to guide decisions in customers' interests. Ausgrid has also established a successful BAU VoC research program to capture customer feedback and derive insight.

Through this work, Ausgrid developed a deep understanding of customers' keen interest in ensuring energy prices are affordable and that the network is safe, smart, sustainable, and resilient. Yet, as Ausgrid started to work on developing the 2024-29 Draft Plan, it was clear that customers' interests and needs were changing as the energy sector underwent a fundamental transition.

The imperative for a low carbon future continues to increase. More extreme weather, including bushfires, flooding and storms affect the network, placing the issue of network resilience firmly on the energy agenda. The way energy is delivered is changing, with new technologies such as solar and batteries enabling homes and businesses to become both producers and consumers of energy. On a macro scale, large scale electricity generation is shifting from carbon intensive resources to renewables.

Patterns of use are also changing, as customers electrify everything and increasingly work from home. Good customer service remains critical with an ever-present expectation of individualised and personalised service and a varying acceptance of new technology. And, amid this rapidly changing environment, energy prices are set to increase significantly over the coming period, placing affordability firmly front of mind for all customers.

Objectives

Customer engagement and advocacy is providing DNSPs a means to navigate the complexity and uncertainty of this changing environment and has become the kernel of regulatory proposal development. Ausgrid has embraced the AER's ambition to see price proposals demonstrate long-term customer benefit, by evidencing informed customer influence in their development. Through the 2024-29 Reset engagement, Ausgrid set out to:

Build trust and confidence: Ausgrid's ambition is for customers to have trust in the engagement process and understand the rationale behind decisions, even if all positions are not agreed to. Above all, the business strives to ensure customers have confidence that it has genuinely listened and that investment decisions are in the long-term interests of customers.

Reach diverse audiences: Ausgrid aimed to achieve a breadth and depth of views and allow customers to meaningfully contribute, hearing from all types of customers across the spectrum of experiences and using a variety of channels to ensure all customers had appropriate access to engagement. Through this, it seeks to gain an improved understanding of customers' preferences and have these shape the Draft Plan and Regulatory Proposal.

Drive cultural change: Ausgrid aimed to build organisational capability to deliver quality engagement and customer outcomes and understand customer needs and aspirations. They achieved this through extensive staff and senior leadership participation in both the preparation and delivery of engagement.

Be industry leading: Ausgrid aimed to deliver an engagement program that builds on successful industry practices and of which staff could be proud. They utilised the AER's Better Resets Handbook, the AER's note on Resilience and the Consumer Challenge Panel (CCP) 17's evaluation of engagement, as well as extensive conversations with other DNSPs and even international utilities to understand what best practice engagement could be.

Commitments

The Reset engagement design was mindful of the needs and interests of customers and their ability and capacity to engage. Many of Ausgrid's customers face cultural, resource, knowledge or structural barriers to participate in engagement processes. Some customers are familiar with the energy sector, have the resources to participate and are confident to speak up. Others have a lower level of understanding of energy issues and are not even aware of Ausgrid's relevance to them. They can also be less confident to participate in traditional ways, or have limited time, may not speak English as a first language or have limited access to technology. To address these barriers, Ausgrid developed the following commitments.

Engage broadly: Our customer base is broad: from the 'citizen consumer' to the 'home user' to major businesses and industry. We will adopt a variety of approaches to reach them all. We will also respond to the diversity of our customers' culture, language, demographic and socio-economic status and work with third parties and trusted community leaders to help us reach the 'missing voices'.

Listen, ask and provide feedback: We will listen to what customers have to say about their values, aspirations and understanding before we launch into topics that we consider important. We will ask them how they want to engage with us and why they choose not to engage – it could be because they are satisfied with the current state. We will provide authentic feedback on how we've acted on what we've heard so that people feel that engaging with Ausgrid is worthwhile.

Commit resources to engage well: We will provide the funding, the people and the resources to make sure we engage broadly and deeply through the Reset process. We will engage in places and spaces, and through methods that suit our customers. We will hold events at the right time of day or week; and address customers' practical barriers to taking part – for example by arranging transport to take people to events, translating materials, contributing to childcare costs; providing mobile devices to those who don't have them, and giving incentives in return for time provided.

Offer "go to" and "come to" approaches: We will provide the space for people to engage to the best of their ability and capacity. 'Come to' approaches are generally more traditional and formal, and suited to groups with high levels of knowledge and capacity. 'Go to' approaches are more proactive on Ausgrid's part, less formal and happen in places and formats that are more familiar to the target stakeholder.

Provide clear and understandable information: Energy is a complex topic. We will build customers' energy literacy and understanding by providing clear, visually appealing and jargon-free information. In conjunction with our neighbouring network Endeavour Energy, we will tailor language to the drivers and interests of consumers and translate key information into our network's three main languages: Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese.

Recognise the impacts of Covid-19: The pandemic has affected us all and caused stress and anxiety for many. We will recognise cumulative hardship and stress caused by lockdowns when we design our approaches and adapt our engagement approaches to take account of the need for digital and virtual engagement while public health orders are in place.

Approach

The program was designed to be delivered over five key phases linked to the overarching Reset program:

Phase 1 took place between March and September 2021 and involved working with the CCC to establish the Reset Customer Panel (RCP). Ausgrid then worked with the RCP to co-design the engagement framework for the wider engagement program.

Phase 2 took place between October 2021 and June 2022. Initially, engagement sought to understand customers' values and aspirations relating to the future of energy and the energy network. It took the form of several conversations, focus groups and workshops with customers and their representatives and targeted the perspective of people in vulnerable circumstances and other 'missing voices'. In particular, this phase established the Lived Experience customer stream that aimed to reach 'outlying' customer interests that lie in the margins of common customer pain points and which Ausgrid must respond to these if it is to fulfil its role as an Essential Service Provider. Ausgrid also engaged extensively with members of CALD communities and with small and medium business owners and representatives.

Then, between February and June 2022 Ausgrid established and ran the VoC Panel as the 'deliberative core' of the Reset engagement. The Panel was charged with considering how Ausgrid should *"plan for the future while being fair to customers today"* and, over the course of eight sessions, delved deeply into the trade-offs at the heart of the Reset. Ausgrid intertwined the Panel's deliberations with the insights

from the wider group of customers by first giving Panel members these customers' perspectives at the start of the process, and then testing the Panel's draft recommendations with the wider group of customers before concluding.

Throughout Phase 2, Ausgrid also engaged separately with commercial and industrial customers, councils, retailers and Ancillary Service Providers (ASPs).

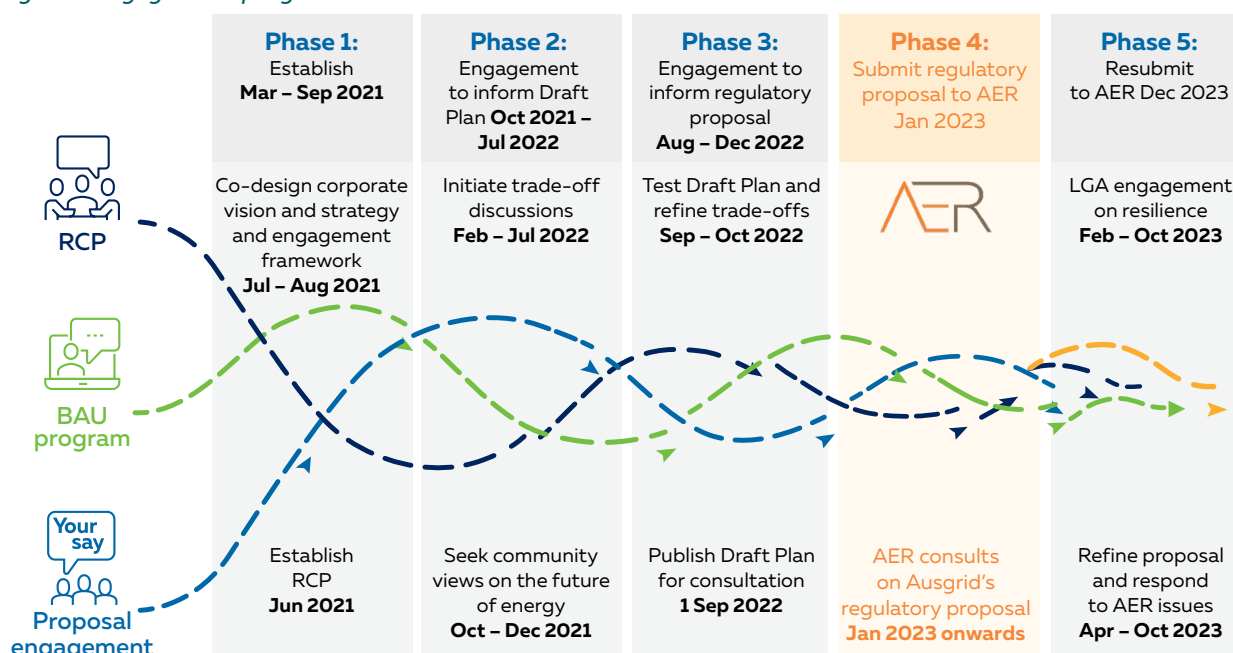
Members of the RCP observed all engagement sessions.

Phase 3 began with the publication of the Draft Plan on 1 September 2022. It recalled the VoC Panel on September 17 and on October 15 2022, as part of a Townhall session convened by Ausgrid and the RCP. The session brought together VoC Panellists with representatives of the Lived Experience, SME, CALD, C&I and Indigenous engagement streams to check back on how their recommendations had been incorporated with the Draft Plan and to provide advice to the RCP as it negotiates the final Regulatory Proposal. The final engagement journey is illustrated below.

Phase 4 comprises the AER's consultation on the regulatory proposal.

Phase 5 comprises ongoing customer engagement on resilience investment in response to the regulatory framework and the AER's Issues Paper as well as further overall retesting and validation with the Town Hall given rising electricity bills and affordability concerns.

Figure 1 Engagement program.



Assembling the team

The engagement program was ambitious and required expertise from within the Ausgrid business, from customer advocates, and from specialist suppliers. Ausgrid assembled a specialist team of engagement, energy and community experts to deliver the various streams of engagement.

- **The Ausgrid Reset team** led the engagement, bringing together the elements and ensuring the RCP provided challenge and advice on the design and implementation. Ausgrid also led engagement with commercial and industrial customers, Life Support Customers, Members of Parliament, Councils and the energy sector, utilising their existing VoC program.
- **bd infrastructure** supported the co-design of the Engagement Framework and delivered the Lived Experience and small and medium business engagement streams.
- **MosaicLab** designed and delivered the VoC Panel process.
- **Gauge Consulting** facilitated the Engagement Framework co-design process and supported MosaicLab with the Panel.
- **Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW** delivered the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) engagement stream.
- **Nous Group** supported the delivery of the event-affected customer engagement stream.
- **Indigenous Energy Australia** are supported with the delivery of the Indigenous engagement stream.
- **EdgeRed** helped with customer data analysis using artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse large volumes of data.



What was heard

Draft Plan preparation

During the preparation of the Draft Plan, Ausgrid engaged broadly on the Reset engagement topics, listening intently to what residential and business customers valued, needed and expected. The business also engaged deeply with the VoC Panel, taking the issues they felt met the remit they were tasked with and delivering a set of key recommendations. These views and insights helped Ausgrid to shape the propositions that were outlined

and costed in the Draft Plan, that were then taken back to customers in September and October 2022 to test and validate.

Alignment on the big issues

A large degree of alignment emerged on the big issues facing energy customers. These are summarised below.

Figure 2 Draft Plan preparation – aligned views.

A speedy and smart progression to net zero:

Despite the affordability challenges that many customers face, all customers want to see a faster progression towards achieving net zero and see Ausgrid, as their electricity network, as a key enabler of their own and the broader communities' efforts to get that transition right. The community considers the costs of not achieving net zero as the greater risk. This is not an ambition to achieve net zero at any cost, but a belief that through innovation and trials, through localised or community solutions there are efficient, fair and affordable ways to achieve the transition.

Reliable energy supply: It was made clear to Ausgrid that in considering what is value for money and in efforts to meet all customers' need for affordability Ausgrid needs to put itself in customers' shoes. For many customers the cost of an unreliable service is greater than an increase in price that delivers the reliability they need. Many customers of course invest in their own reliability solutions where the costs of losing power are high, but for some there are few cost-effective or practical solutions, and these customers value reliability highly.

Localised responses to resilience: Customers showed a clear desire for community based and small-scale initiatives to improve the resilience of those that are likely to be worst impacted by climate change. Generally, the community would like more equitable access to a secure and reliable supply of electricity and see this as being increasingly critical as electricity powers more and more of our everyday lives.

A fair approach to charging for initiatives: Fairly costing and charging these initiatives is something the community would like to see evolve. They recognise that a system based on everyone paying the same, or postage-stamp based pricing, doesn't fairly distribute the cost of initiatives to those who benefit. Nor does it allow customers who are able to pay more to make a greater contribution to net zero and other initiatives they value, without putting the price up for those vulnerable customers that can't afford it.

This desire to be part of the solution was not limited to household customers, large commercial and industrial customers shared this view, and wanted to be partners in reducing the overall cost of network services, through their own investments in generation and storage, and recognised that their transition to net zero could help or hinder the affordability of energy, depending on where and when they made these investments.

Many and varied insights

In addition, wide and varied views were offered that demonstrated a nuanced appreciation of the challenges facing Ausgrid and the energy sector. These are outlined below. The boxes in red indicate recommendations from the VoC Panel – though some were also mirrored by other customer groups.

Figure 3 Draft Plan Development – many and varied insights.

<p>Energy costs are difficult to manage, so energy needs to be more affordable</p> <p>All customers</p>	<p>Outage information is crucial and Ausgrid needs to enhance communication and engagement</p> <p>All customers</p>	<p>There should be a way to contribute more for those who can afford to, without impacting those who cannot</p> <p>Residential, Lived experience, CALD</p>	<p>Improve reliability for those most impacted by extreme weather. Upfront investments when confident in the impacts of climate change. Invest to reduce long-term costs</p> <p>All customers except C&I</p>	<p>Improved connection experience for customer-funded contestable construction projects</p> <p>C&I customers</p>
<p>Resilience and reliability are key</p> <p>C&I</p>	<p>Indigenous knowledge is a foundation to managing our impact. We should strengthen our relationships with Indigenous communities as the first step towards reconciliation</p> <p>Indigenous staff and advisors</p>	<p>Speaking to a real person is important</p> <p>Lived experience and SME</p>	<p>Services need to be simple and easy to engage with</p> <p>Lived experience and SME</p>	<p>Services need to be empathetic to individual and diverse needs</p> <p>Lived experience and SME</p>
<p>Ausgrid should be investing to reduce long term costs</p>	<p>Improve visibility of costs to consumers</p> <p>And residential customers</p>	<p>Regulatory reform for an innovative grid</p> <p>And Lived experience</p>	<p>Maintaining and improving emergency response is important</p>	<p>Improve cyber-security</p> <p>And C&I</p>
<p>The community is looking for a trusted partner to provide information and deliver localised solutions whose benefits go beyond company profits</p>	<p>Flexible two-way pricing provides for a fairer transition to net zero emissions</p>	<p>Identify opportunities for co-funding models; and promote a better balance between green cities and a safe and reliable network</p>	<p>Proactively prepare the network for net zero</p>	<p>Ausgrid should prioritise innovation</p>

Considered preferences

As the engagement progressed it was possible to discuss potential solutions with the VoC Panel and seek panellists’ preferences. This was due to the capacity and knowledge the customers had obtained through the engagement process.

Before the Draft Plan was published Ausgrid put indicative investment areas to the VoC Panel at a session on 4 June. In presenting these options, customers were shown costs (where possible)

and had a Ready Reckoner tool that allowed them to determine the bill impacts. Based on previous consultation, the dial (in green) was set based on the preferences customers had expressed. Ausgrid was however conscious about anchoring bias so made it additionally clear that customers did not need to agree with the starting position. The dial in yellow shows where customers moved the dial to if they felt the dial had been incorrectly placed.

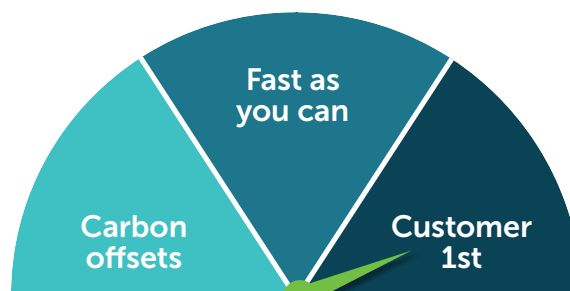
Table 1 Draft Plan Development – VoC Panel Preferences.

Preferences	Dial
<p>Ausgrid’s role in community batteries</p> <p>The regulatory framework restricts the role Ausgrid and other networks can play in the delivery of community batteries and other similar community-based solutions. Ausgrid is trialling community batteries currently and wanted to understand if the community valued this and saw a role for Ausgrid in the delivery of these solutions.</p> <p>Based on early engagement, Ausgrid heard a desire for these community-based solutions, but also a clear direction that local councils and other community-based organisations were critical to partner with to ensure these were the right solutions for the local community.</p>	
<p>Valuing local solutions like community batteries</p> <p>Part of the issue with network businesses investing in solutions like community batteries is how to decide which community batteries they should invest in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only solutions that make sense economically from a network perspective, or• Solutions that have some network benefit, but where the value to the community is also considered. <p>Customers thought Ausgrid should consider investing even if the value was weighted highly towards the community and the network benefit was small. This may present issues from a regulation point of view but does emphasise the degree to which communities are looking for local solutions. It also echoes the feedback that organisations should take a philanthropic, and not purely commercial, view of customer outcomes.</p>	

Ausgrid's net zero targets

There are different ways of achieving net zero. Ausgrid wanted to know how far it should pursue its own net zero plans, through the purchase of renewable energy for their buildings, transitioning their fleet of vehicles to electricity and other similar measures, versus focusing on making sure the network is ready and able to facilitate customers adding on solar, batteries or electric vehicles.

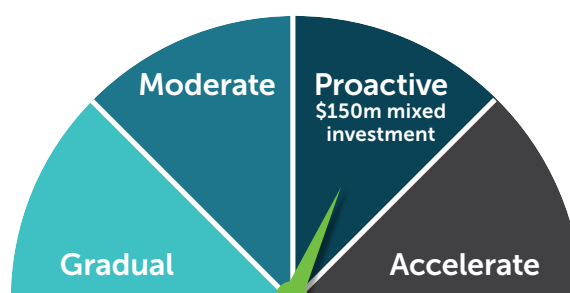
Customers were clear, net zero plans and targets are important, but the top priority for Ausgrid needs to be facilitating its customer's net zero ambitions.



Ausgrid's net zero investment

In light of the preference to support customers' net zero ambition, Ausgrid wanted to know how much it should invest, and to what extent it was acceptable for some customers not to be able to install solar or make other investments due to a lack of capacity in the network to support those investments.

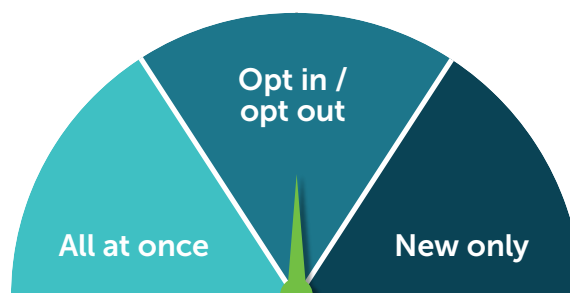
Customers agreed the approach should be to proactively invest to avoid approximately 85% of customers being curtailed. They arrived at this decision having considered the extent to which they saw tariffs as a fair way to mitigate costs, having decided that a mandatory approach to export charging was unfair, they agreed a proactive approach to investment was required.



Two-way Tariffs

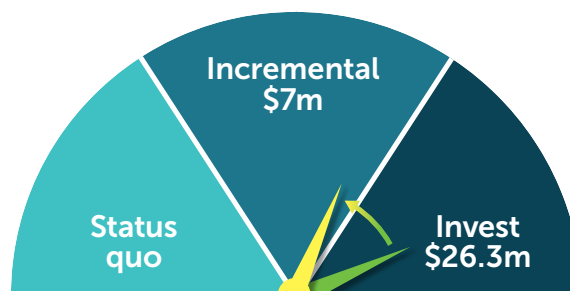
Having decided that two-way tariffs were necessary to manage the costs of the network, customers considered how tariffs should be implemented to ensure the fairest transition to net zero.

They decided that an opt-in or opt-out solution was fairest to begin with, but that ultimately all customers should have price signals that encourage or discourage use or export of electricity based on the time of day.



Improving customer service

Customers were presented with a package of solutions at different cost levels. The VoC Panel was clear that the value of the higher spend was not a priority for them, but other customer groups like commercial and industrial customers did value some of the solutions, in particular the introduction of API's (data sharing systems) to share outage information, and stakeholders like ASP's highly valued self-serve functionality and access to data.

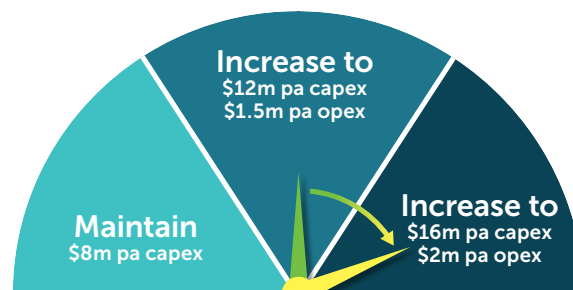


Innovation

Customers were very clear that they want networks like Ausgrid to be more innovative. They saw current regulations as a barrier to this but encouraged the use of trials and local solutions to enable a fairer and efficient path to net zero.

Ausgrid proposed to increase its innovation fund and expand the scope from net zero focused trials to resilience trials and to also include trials that utilise operation funds like community education campaigns.

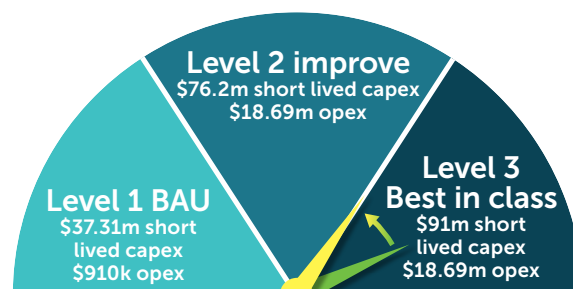
Customers suggested Ausgrid should go further, highlighting the extent to which customers see trials and innovation as the way to ensure the future electricity network works for the community as a whole.



Cyber security

The increased threat of cyber-attacks has the potential to target customer and company data and the potential to cause disruption through outages. All customers had a strong desire for Ausgrid to do more and improve their cyber security program in light of the increasing risk.

There was a real split across all customer groups as to how far Ausgrid should go. A minority of customers expected Ausgrid to achieve best in class while most felt that improving to security standard SP2 was better value for money, unless Ausgrid could provide a benefits case to the AER for an increased level of security. This was the most contentious issue for both household and commercial and industrial customers.



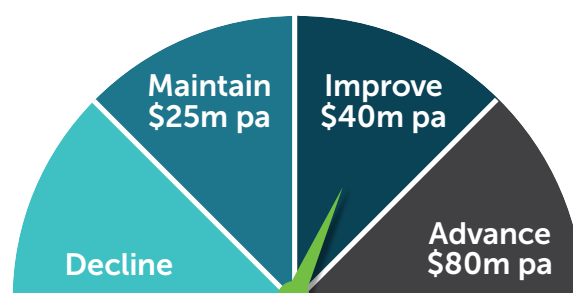
Managing reliability in the face of climate change

Climate change is expected to bring more frequent and more extreme weather events, and with this longer and more frequent outages. This is expected to impact some communities more than others, and frequently communities that already experience a lower level of reliability than the average customer.

The challenge is, that when investing in solutions that impact one area, the cost is shared by all customers. Is that fair?

Ausgrid wanted to know both whether that approach was fair, and how much they should be investing.

Customers were clear that improving reliability for those worst impacted by climate change was fair, and they would like to see reliability improved for worst served customers more generally if it wasn't cost prohibitive.



Draft Plan response

Through these conversations, Ausgrid was able to refine its draft plan and investment areas. This Draft Plan was published on 1 September 2022 and is summarised below.

Figure 4 Draft Plan on a Page

Draft Plan on a page



Alignment on the big issues

Not every investment topic was raised in depth with every stakeholder group. Instead, topics were tailored to each group's interests and needs. Nonetheless, when responses are considered side by side, they reveal a high degree of alignment and consistency. These views are summarised below and mapped out in Table 2.

Figure 5 Draft Plan Feedback – Alignment on issues.

Getting the balance right

The Draft Plan was considered value for money across all customer groups, though that was caveated by uncertainty around rising energy prices.

All customer groups consider Ausgrid to have broadly got the balance right between investment areas, with Transforming the Grid, Building Resilience, and Reaching net zero consistently considered the top three investment areas for Ausgrid.

Ausgrid's proposal for an even price path was preferred by most customer groups, as it would help to manage uncertainty amid rising energy process.

net zero

There is high support for a proactive approach to net zero investment among all groups, with many believing this proactivity is aligned to community values.

The views on mandatory export tariffs were more mixed though. Despite previous support for an opt out approach to tariffs, when the proposed reward and charge levels were available, and the subsequent impacts on different customer types presented, customers on the whole, favoured a shift to mandatory tariff assignment after an introductory period. Conditional on an information campaign explaining the decision and the opportunities. Only CALD communities expressed the view that such tariffs would be unfair to those who had invested in rooftop solar.

Changes to peak window charging did not elicit cause for concern.

Resilience

Most customer groups preference resilience investment to be focussed on reducing the number and length of outages, with an emphasis on initiatives targeted before events take place. The VoC Panel preferred investment to be made before, during and after events as it would benefit all customers.

There was a high level of alignment in targeting investment spending on the most vulnerable customers, though it was noted that choosing between the most vulnerable and the most affected was, in many ways, a 'false choice' as the two often happen together.

The Be the Boss app results, completed by people who had little or no involvement in in-depth engagement, validated this response, with most responders choosing an investment option that veered close to 'do all you can' for resilience investment. Be the Boss App. results also aligned with the Draft Plan proposal for an 'advanced' level of cyber security.

There was also a high level of alignment on what communities might value in community batteries, and this feedback will help Ausgrid to build the social case for investment in net zero technology.

The top six benefits cited by all groups were:

- Support wider renewable energy deployment.
- Reduce the need for new poles and wires.
- Sustainability of materials.
- Individuals use the battery for storage.
- Increase use of local solar.
- Back up supply.



Table 2 Draft Plan Feedback – Alignment of Views.

Engagement question	Voice of Community Panel	Commercial and Industrial	Small Business	
ABOUT THE PLAN				
Does the Plan offer value for money?		Yes Concerned about the length of time for new connections.	Yes This cost is just one of many. What would it mean in the context of broader electrification?	
Which price path?	Even price path in the Draft Plan 71.4% preferred this price path.	Even price path in the Draft Plan A steady increase is easier to manage and budget for.	Even price path in the Draft Plan Easier to manage costs when everything else is so variable.	
Has Ausgrid got the balance right between investment areas?	10% lament 15% live with 60% like it 15% love <i>But I did not circle the highest score because there are so many uncertainties, so not fully confident (I am anxious about the future price).</i> <i>The Draft Plan doesn't reflect the panel's preference for a higher level of investment in innovation.</i>	Broad support Some C&I customers felt resilience spend was a little high. However, they are happy to see Ausgrid invest in this area as it is a big risk / cost item for them. Upfront and proactive investment will deliver savings and benefits in the longer term.	Broad support Some scepticism about what net zero will mean for coal communities, and around technologies such as EVs. Otherwise, broad support for more renewable energy, better community services and spending on cybersecurity.	
Which investments would you prioritise?				

	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	Lived Experience Peak groups	Climate change	Councils
	Yes There was support across the CALD groups for resilience investments amid a general concern about the rise of electricity costs within the context of increased cost of living.	13% lament 75% live with 13% love Peak groups' support was qualified about the possible impacts of rising energy costs with the concurrent increases to cost of living.	46% live with 46% like it 8% love	80% live with 20% like it
	No consensus The Vietnamese group preferred the path in the Draft Plan as it offered a 'slow and steady' increase. Most people in the Mandarin group preferred the AER path as it was 'safe and formal'. The Arabic group did not achieve a clear response, with one person believing strongly that increases should not be passed on to customers.			
	1. Transforming the grid. 2. Delivering net zero. 3. Building resilience (climate). Innovation, safety and reliability were also seen as important. Customers stated that given increasing climate-driven disruptions, an investment in a climate-resilient electricity system is a must. Many mentioned the reliance achieving resilience or net zero on innovation.	1. Transforming the grid. 2. Delivering net zero. 3. Building resilience (climate). Would like more information what Ausgrid is doing to mitigate impact of costs such as insurance.	1. Delivering net zero. 2. Building resilience (climate). 3. Building resilience (cyber).	

Engagement question	Voice of Community Panel	Commercial and Industrial	Small Business	
BUILDING RESILIENCE				
What outcomes should Ausgrid value when it makes decisions on resilience investment?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support during and after an event. 2. Reduce the number and length of outages to support those most affected. 3. Impact high number of customers. <p><i>Opportunity to take leadership role and build community and stakeholder involvement in growing resilience together.</i></p> <p><i>Benefits all customers and it meets the concept of fairness.</i></p>	Views varied with different levels of value placed on responding to events before, while and after they occur. C&I customers are interested in working with Ausgrid to deliver back up sources of energy. Communication to all customers is key for resilience.		
Where to target the resilience investment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Areas where people are more vulnerable. 2. Areas where extreme weather impacts the most. 3. Areas expected to have the biggest increase of events. <p>This is more of an equity thing – communities need to connect more in this secular society, and this is being dealt with elsewhere...but again preparation...reduces long-term costs.</p>			
What community battery features do communities value most?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support wider renewable energy deployment. 2. Reduce the need for new poles and wires. 3. Sustainability of materials 4. Individuals use the battery for storage. 5. Increase use of local solar. 			
Cyber security				

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	Lived Experience Peak groups	Climate change	Councils	Be the Boss
<p>The Arabic and Vietnamese groups prioritised pre-event investment with the idea that early investment saves money down the track.</p> <p>Smart networks, microgrids, backup power, longer lasting poles and increase segmentation of the network, were all seen as important.</p> <p>PPE, temporary messaging and education campaigns were cited as less important.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce the number and length of outages to support those most affected. Impact high number of customers. Support during and after an event. <p>'Number of' and 'length of' outages are separate things. Sometimes the length of an outage is more impactful than the number. Keep rural customers in mind.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce the number and length of outages to support those most affected. Support during and after an event. Impact high number of customers. <p>Also focus on resilience at key comms sites (such as at the tops of hills).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce the number and length of outages to support those most affected. Support during and after an event. Impact high number of customers. <p>Lower the overall impact of the majority. Consider the impacts of rural communities – use vulnerability mapping.</p>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Areas where people are more vulnerable. Areas where extreme weather impacts the most. Areas expected to have the biggest increase of events. <p>It was noted that responses could mean different things in different places.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Areas where extreme weather impacts the most. Areas expected to have the biggest increase of events. Areas where people are more vulnerable. <p>These are 'false choices'. Outage and vulnerable areas are always considered together. Areas predicted to have more outages should be part of long-term planning. Critical infrastructure is increasingly reliant on power and digital connectivity. There are strong interdependencies for critical infrastructure systems & essential services.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Areas where people are more vulnerable. Areas expected to have the biggest increase of events. Areas where extreme weather impacts the most. <p>Unclear about why there should be a choice between those most impacted and those most vulnerable. The choices are too binary.</p>	Towards 'do all you can'
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support wider renewable energy deployment. Increase use of local solar. Increase solar hosting capacity. Reduce the need for new poles and wires. Back up supply. <p>Community batteries should benefit everyone. Is 'Back up supply' about managing outages, or sharing the load?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase solar hosting capacity. Support wider renewable energy deployment. Increase use of local solar. Reduce the need for new poles and wires. Individuals use the battery for storage. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increase use of local solar. Support wider renewable energy deployment. Back up supply. Increase solar hosting capacity. Reduce the need for new poles and wires. 	
				Towards 'advanced'

Engagement question	Voice of Community Panel	Commercial and Industrial	Small Business	
NET ZERO INVESTMENT				
How comfortable are you with taking a proactive approach?	<p>27% live with 20% like it 53% love</p> <p><i>This is a real turning point in the pathway – so many decisions made now will impact future generations by either closing down or opening up options. It's exciting but also needs critical thinking!</i></p>			
TRANSFORMING THE GRID				
Mandatory approach to export tariffs	<p>21% live with 14% like it 64% love</p> <p>It's a much smaller difference than I thought when we made our panel recommendations, and it looks like it will be effective. The 'free tier' of exports helps add balance – good idea.</p>			
Peak window change		<p>Accept the change</p> <p>Simplification is good. Industrial load is 24/7 so the peak window is of minimal consequence.</p>	<p>Unaware of their tariff</p> <p>For businesses that operate 24 hours, the peak makes no difference and does not provide enough of an incentive to change their behaviour.</p> <p>More concerned about the difference between business and residential pricing.</p>	
Approach to innovation				
CUSTOMER SERVICE				
Level of customer service				

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	Lived Experience Peak groups	Climate change	Councils	Be the Boss
		<p>7% live with 53% like it 40% love</p> <p>There seems to be research behind the approach. It is in line with customer values – and communities' equitable access to DER is critical to decarbonising electricity. Ausgrid needs to lead the investment.</p>	<p>4% lament 25% live with 68% like it 4% love</p>	Towards 'proactive investment'
<p>Unfair</p> <p>All groups thought that introducing an export tariff all at once could be unfair to those who had invested. Suggested a transition period with early information for customers with installed solar. All groups understood the reason for the change but were concerned that it discouraged use of DER when it seems the rest of the world is encouraging take up.</p>	<p>11% lament 56% live with 11% like it 22% love</p> <p>Some concern about the impact of export tariffs for customers who already have solar. Some noted that it could prompt them to disconnect solar or go off-grid. Tariffs should incentivise when to export. Ausgrid should be more explicit about how the tariff is about balancing fairness across those with and without solar.</p>		<p>21% lament 50% live with 25% like it 4% love</p> <p>Although the financial impact of the proposal is small it will elicit a strong emotional response [from solar customers].</p>	
				Towards 'drive change'
				Towards 'tailored'

Advice to the RCP

The Town Hall session ended with participants providing the RCP with advice on how to represent customers' interests under each of the Draft Plan investment pillars, as it enters into any discussions with the AER. This advice is presented in participants' own, unedited, words in the Town Hall report. However, Ausgrid understands this to mean the following.

Table 3 Draft Plan Feedback – VoC Panel Advice to the RCP.

L-scale	Advice
Pillar 1 – resilience 0% 0% 10% 60% 30%	Cost: \$204m; Bill impact 2029: \$5 of the \$38 The resilience program is well balanced. Keen to prioritise community-based solutions and involve the community in them – including in a commercial sense. Improve communications during emergencies; and be mindful of the importance of tree canopy when considering tree trimming. Partnership delivers outcomes. Improve indigenous engagement
Pillar 2 – customer service 0% 19% 37% 19% 25%	Cost: \$20m; Bill impact 2029: \$1 of the \$38 Why is the customer experience amount so high – higher than what the panel proposed? The spend would need to significantly improve customer satisfaction. If there are cuts to be made, make them in this area.
Pillar 3 – innovation 0% 20% 5% 50% 25%	Cost: \$50m; Bill impact 2029: \$2 of the \$38 Lots of support for innovation as a way of accelerating decarbonisation, improving resilience and reliability and lowering costs in the long run. Keen for Ausgrid to partner with research organisations and community organisations around innovation and to engage in innovative practice across all facets of the company. Lament it scores reflected the desire for an increased level of innovation spending.
Pillar 4 – net zero 0% 0% 17% 61% 22%	Cost: \$110-\$153m; Bill impact 2029: \$6 of the \$38 Work in partnership to deliver net zero and educate others on how they can play their part. Need to outline what is fair and reasonable around charging – customers are not being charged to export, they are being rewarded for shifting their usage and smoothing out load on the grid. Prioritise community batteries in areas with high density, heritage limitations, lots of renters, ... so that they can benefit from renewables and reduced cost.
Pillar 5 – cyber 0% 10% 10% 37% 42%	Cost: \$106m; Bill impact 2029: \$11 of the \$38 Wise cyber investment can mean greater network stability/resilience. Cyber security will only become more important – we should stick with L3 if there is no negative impact on the customer. Invest now, to prevent a greater spend later – prevention is better than a cure!

L-scale	Advice
Pillar 6 – IT system upgrade	Cost: \$143m; Bill impact 2029: \$12 of the \$38
0% 😞 Loathe it – 0-20% 0% 😞 Lament it – 20-40% 16% 😞 Live with it – 40-60% 53% 😊 Like it – 60-80% 31% 😊 Love it – 80-100%	General support for depreciating over a longer time – around 10 years but with firm guidelines and clarity about what is being delivered and how it can benefit organisation and customers.
Pillar 7 – other	Changes to other parts of the bill and household expenses
0% 😞 Loathe it – 0-20% 0% 😞 Lament it – 20-40% 25% 😞 Live with it – 40-60% 50% 😊 Like it – 60-80% 25% 😊 Love it – 80-100%	Would not want to see much change in balance between the six pillars Need to consult again if external factors change significantly. Don't lose sight of what's important over the long term even if it takes longer to pay off or see benefits. Increase community engagement overall, particularly with indigenous communities.



Other feedback

Through the course of the regulatory engagement process, Ausgrid sought feedback from two customer groups on issues that related exclusively to them: the first was CALD customers to get input to a CALD strategy; and the second was Councils on matters related to street lighting. The outcomes of these discussions are below.

CALD strategy

Table 4 Input to CALD Strategy.

Question	Response
What should we consider when improving the services we deliver to culturally and linguistically diverse consumers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information needs to be available transparently and readily. The information should include detailed and straightforward plans and strategies that educate all members about future spending and expenditure. Good language service provision should involve not only interpretation but also cultural competence. A culture-centred approach will promote inclusion and empower customers from multicultural backgrounds to access greater levels of information. Ausgrid could employ multilingual staff: to make customers feel more at ease and confident they will be understood.
Are there specific events/ services where it is more important they can access information in language from us than others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about outages, updates about the grid, safety messages and messages that affect life support equipment are vital. Electricity bills help communicate the information customers need to engage confidently in the electricity market. Customers need access to the knowledge about retailers and bill reading to make informed choices that are responsive to their personal and cultural beliefs. Provide multi-language important notices, especially if there would be a risk for safety or a prolonged outage.
Are there important dates in different communities' cultural calendars that we should consider when planning outages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outages should be avoided at weekends, public holiday, during summer and at night (5-8pm) when demand peaks for cooling, water heating and cooking. Lunar New Year is a significant celebration for Vietnamese people. They need electricity for ancestor worship rituals and family reunions. For Muslims, in the holy month of Ramadan, they engage in praying and fasting during the day, so electricity supply should be maintained for their night activities until Eid al-Fitr, the fast-breaking festival. Avoid Chinese New Year and Moon Festival Day, also known as Mid-Autumn Festival. Both festivals are important for Chinese family reunions.
What additional information can we provide on our website to assist communities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausgrid should improve the website to allow for ease-of-use and non-technical language so that CALD customers can comprehend terms in the often complex field of energy. Ausgrid could consider having a mobile app so in an emergency time, at least they could check the app to figure out what was really going on with the electricity connection.
Are there other communication channels we could consider for safety and outage messaging i.e. community radio?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receiving messages on their phones and via Facebook is preferred. This is easier than accessing communication through community organisations and local business networks. Customers expect immediate updates via text alerts, real-time outage maps and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
Is providing these services more important than keeping prices low?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some customers are happy to pay for extra services, but not be charged for essential ones. Others felt price was the priority. Participants were feeling the pressure of the rising living costs for almost everything. If having multilanguage information adds to the bill the short answer was NO. There are many auto translators such as Google Translate that could do the job if needed.

Street lighting

Street lighting is a critical service provided to Councils that adds to the amenity and importantly safety of the community. Ausgrid continually engages with Council's to improve Street Lighting services, but also agreed to publish alongside the Draft Plan a 'Public Lighting Consultation Paper'. To prepare this paper

and ensure it reflected the views of the Council's we engaged with them to understand their pain points and ideas for improvements. One key area of discussion was the existing charging structure which Council said was a significant cause of frustration.

Capital charges – brackets

Loathe it :	Lament it :	Live with it :	Like it :	Love it :	Unsure :	Tr
+	+	+	+	+	+	
		<p>at the end of the day Ausgrid will charge what is commercially viable.</p> <p>Understand reasons good to understand overall impact at some stage</p> <p>Its still an increase in costs</p> <p>Seems reasonable.</p>	<p>Simplification of pricing is preferred so long as overall costs to Council are not impacted (understand there are swings and roundabouts but we need to know if increase ends up being more than near-negligible increase shown in slides today)</p> <p>Restricted option seems to indicate better outcome for Councils, developers may think differently.</p> <p>Like that the pricing is simplified with fraction of a percentage impact on cost to Council. However, there is no incentive in minimising bracket lengths.</p> <p>Very Minimal Impact</p>		<p>Note - Could there be a perverse incentive for councils to request longer bracket outreaches, particularly on tree lined streets if they are the same price as short outreach brackets?</p> <p>Will need to understand the quantum of impact for my Council.</p> <p>Would need to take this back to other officers to discuss internally</p> <p>I'm a sustainability officer. This is a question for finance.</p>	

Capital charges – decorative luminaires

Loathe it :	Lament it :	Live with it :	Like it :	Love it :	Unsure :	Tr
+	+	+	+	+	+	
	<p>1. Council wishes to remove decorative fitting moving forward. 2. Keeping in mind Council has an obligation to reduce its environmental impact, a rationalised price provides no incentive to minimise the size of luminaire used, which may increase energy consumption and light pollution</p>	<p>Its still an increase in costs</p>	<p>Like the simplification but again would be good for magnitude to be provided</p> <p>we are trying to limit the decorative luminaires across the LGA</p> <p>reasonable approach for the decorative fittings.</p>		<p>Again, not a question for a Sustainability officer. Plus - I have no idea what number of decorative items we have at the moment?</p> <p>Our LGA has a larger than average quantity of decoratives I would need to look closer at this in regards to our situation.</p>	

Capital charges – floodlights

Loathe it :	Lament it :	Live with it :	Like it :	Love it :	Unsure :	Tr
+	+	+	+	+	+	
		<p>Simplification appears to be a sensible approach, however longer-term price impacts due to behaviour changes or hardware choice changes needs monitoring</p> <p>Its still an increase in costs</p>	<p>Same note as before, gut feeling is that simplification is better.</p> <p>limits the impact on the broader range</p>		<p>- Not in a position to say anything.</p>	

Maintenance charges

Loathe it :	Lament it :	Live with it :	Like it :	Love it :	Unsure :	Tr
+	+	+	+	+	+	
			Proposal is acceptable	The cost impacts will be reduced as legacy lighting will be replaced over time.	If it's a cost saving, I'm sure Council will be happy.	
			provided the savings long term are realised			
			Considering we are moving away from legacy lighting. A more convincing proposal than the others.			
			This looks to be a positive			
			Simplification of costs is supported.			

Minor capital works

Loathe it :	Lament it :	Live with it :	Like it :	Love it :	Unsure :	Tr
+	+	+	+	+	+	
			Proposal is acceptable	The cost impacts will be reduced as legacy lighting will be replaced over time.	If it's a cost saving, I'm sure Council will be happy.	
			provided the savings long term are realised			
			Considering we are moving away from legacy lighting. A more convincing proposal than the others.			
			This looks to be a positive			
			Simplification of costs is supported.			

Other streetlighting items

- Temporary lighting solutions that can be provided by Ausgrid for protracted outages.
- It's a partnership approach to a public benefit service that needs to be discussed at a service provider level – The smart controller retrofit cost for early adopters needs to be considered as well so it is not cost prohibitive.
- I am currently chasing up Ausgrid on two Minor Capital Works that have been going on for 6mo+. What are the current lead times on these works?
- Explore Data Sharing (GIS) with Councils for public lighting, where lights are located and asset class/ luminaire – also believe that Council would be willing to share GIS data as well – especially to see visibility of where works are occurring on public roads (and when), locations of pedestrian crossings etc, which crossings have been assessed for safe illumination .
- Consideration of the impacts of likely CPI increases in next regulatory period and consideration and communication / transparent business case for upfront payment options for LED upgrades.
- Access agreement for use of the Zhaga Book 18 port.
- Congrats for Ausgrid's efforts in the Public Lighting Space.

How Ausgrid engaged

Phase 1 – Engagement design

Strategic design

Reset Customer Panel

Ausgrid's Reset engagement journey began with a co-design process with its CCC to develop a governance arrangement that would ensure breadth and depth of customer consideration in the development of the Draft Plan. The co-design process was made up of two workshops facilitated by bd infrastructure and Gauge Consulting that resulted in the formation of the RCP in June 2021. The RCP provided deep consideration of the Draft Plan and Proposal and delivered an independent report to Ausgrid on 29 August 2022 and will deliver a second independent report to Ausgrid in January 2023 confirming its views on how well the Draft Plan and Proposal have been shaped by the customer and community engagement.

The RCP members are:

- Tony Robinson (Chair)
- Louise Benjamin, independent consultant
- Gavin Dufty, St Vincent De Paul
- Mark Grenning, Energy Users Association Australia
- Jan Kucic-Riker, Public Interest Advisory Centre
- Iain Maitland, Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW
- Mike Swanston, independent consultant

Engagement Framework

One of the RCP's first activities was to co-design an Engagement Framework for the Reset development together with members of the CCC and NIAC. The Engagement Framework was ambitious, setting out a multi strand approach that sought to involve customers across a spectrum of interests, needs and levels of understanding. It aimed to attain customer participation at the involve, collaborate, and empower levels of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum, by removing barriers to participation.

The co-design process took place between June and August 2021 and was facilitated by Gauge Consulting and bd infrastructure. The process comprised an internal workshop to align team thoughts, three online workshops to develop the building blocks of the framework (target customers, engagement barriers and evaluation), and off-line 'check-in' meetings on the engagement narrative and questions. The Engagement Framework was updated in February 2022 at the end of the first phase of engagement.



Reset topics

The Engagement Framework sought to answer the question ‘what do we need customer’s perspectives and direction on’ as well as ‘who do we engage’ and ‘how do we engage’. The engagement topics and questions for the Reset engagement process were

derived from existing customer insights, internal team discussions and extensive discussion with the RCP. As a result, the team identified six themes to guide the customer engagement process, outlined in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Reset engagement topics.

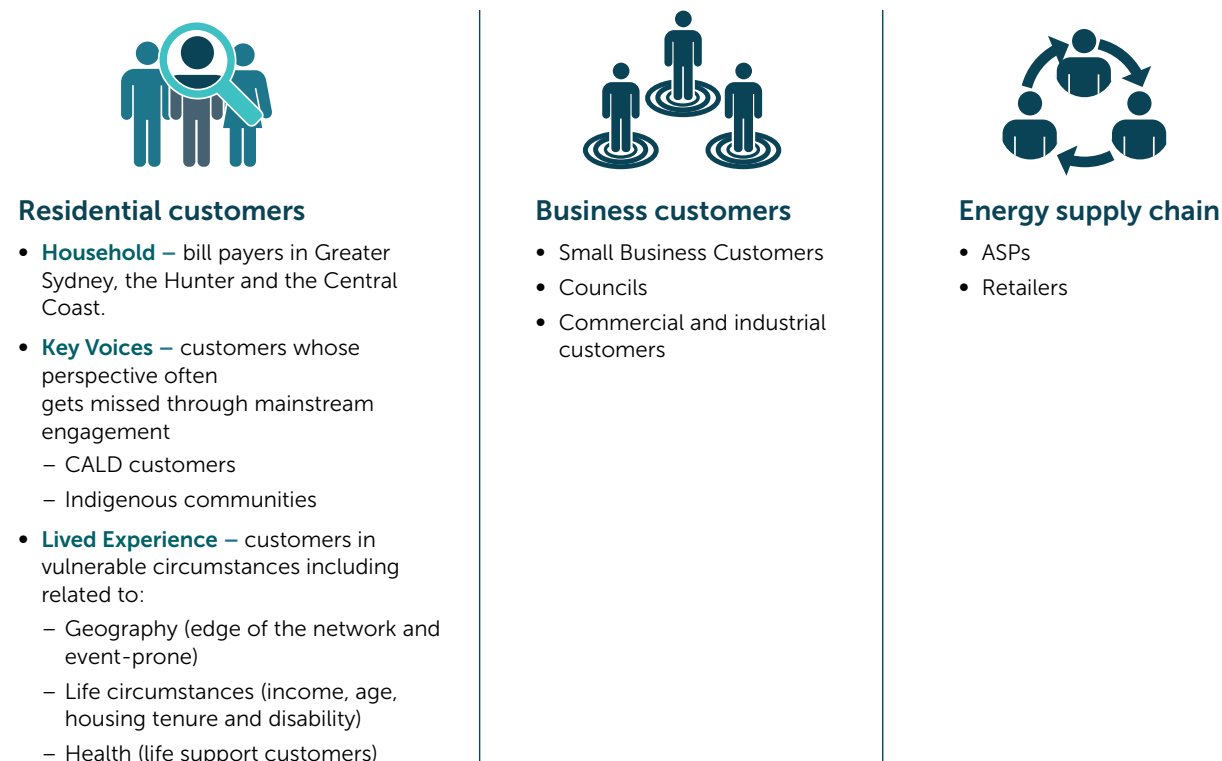


Customer streams

The Engagement Framework grouped customers and stakeholders into several streams so that approaches could be formulated that would enable people to engage with Ausgrid through methods that suited

them. As engagement got underway, these streams changed slightly in response to information and discussion. The streams that ultimately underpinned the engagement program are illustrated in Figure 7:

Figure 7 Reset customer streams.



Structuring residential customer engagement

Ausgrid's residential customers are diverse, covering a broad range of geography, demography, and network reliability. Ausgrid knew, that a 'one size fits all' approach to engaging them would not help to understand the full breadth of perspectives and achieve the depth of consideration necessary to make truly customer-informed trade-offs and decisions.

Residential customer engagement was therefore broken into three streams.

1. **The VoC Panel** which formed the 'deliberative core' of the engagement, bringing together a randomly selected group of customers to deliberate on the topic of How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to today's customers?
2. **Lived Experience customer engagement** which sought to understand the needs and interests of customers who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances brought about through:
 - **Life circumstances** caused by income, housing tenure, age (older and younger customers) and disability.

- **Geography** due to living at the edge of the network or in areas prone to floods, storms and bushfires.
- **Health** particularly life support customers.

3. **Key Voices engagement** which sought to reach customers often missed by traditional engagement approaches. These included CALD customers, and Indigenous customers. The team also set out to engage young people as part of this stream but switched to involving youth voices in the Lived Experience stream.

The perspectives of the Key Voices and Lived Experience streams fed in and out of the VoC Panel, ensuring the recommendations arising from the Panel's deep deliberation were tested against the specific perspectives of people at the margins of the customer base.

In addition, an Engagement Hub was established to host material and surveys aimed at the broader community, and Members of Parliament were engaged as key representatives of customers.

Detailed design

VoC Panel

The VoC Panel was designed and delivered by MosaicLab with support from Gauge Consulting. It brought together 45 customers from three key parts of the Ausgrid Network – the Hunter, the Central Coast and Metropolitan Sydney.

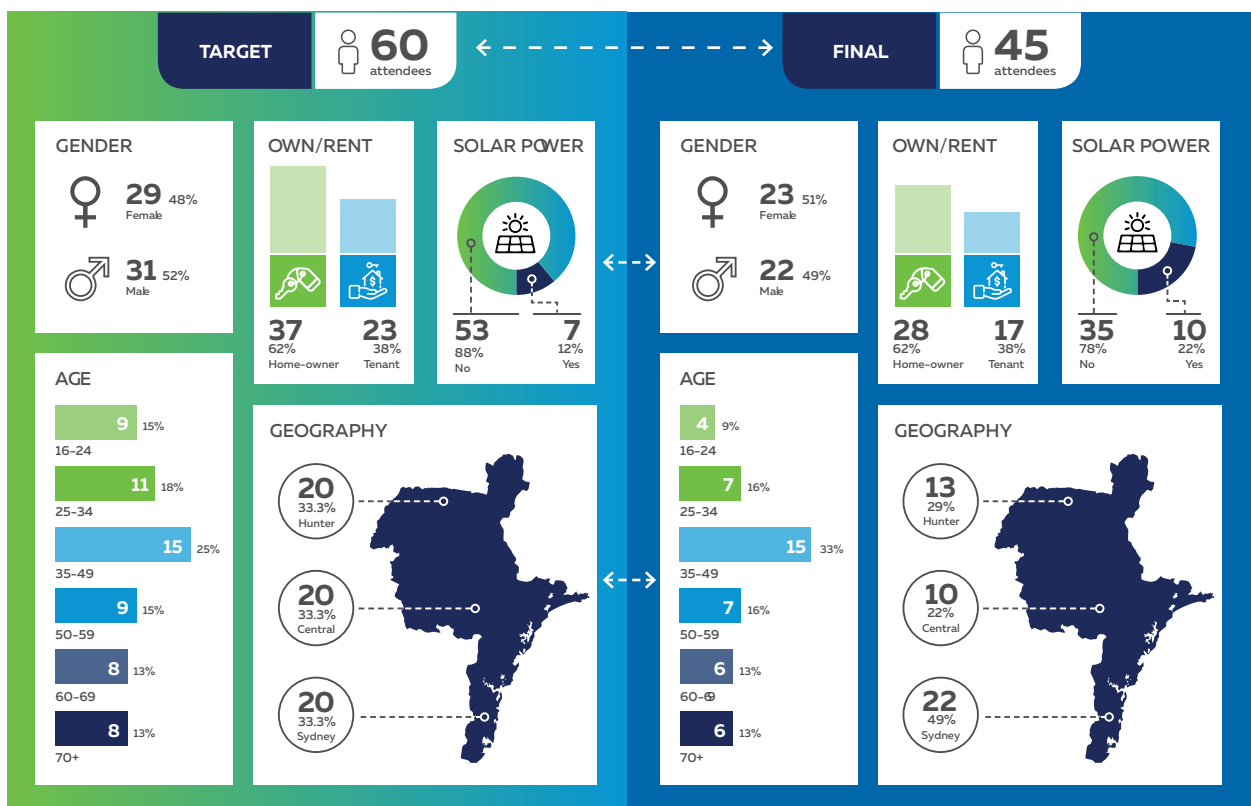
The Panel formed the ‘deliberative core’ of the engagement process, taking on board the insights from the wider customer streams, in addition to other expert views to consider and make recommendations on the question (refer to pullout box on right).

Panel members were recruited through a random selection process to ensure they represented both men and women; a diverse range of ages; homeowners and renters; and solar and non-solar customers. These demographics reflected the make-up of Ausgrid’s customer base. The team over-recruited for the Panel knowing that dropouts were likely. The target number of participants was 60 and the final Panel numbered 45. The target and final composition of the Panel is outlined in Figure 18 below.

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community. The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to today’s customers?

Figure 8 VoC Customer Composition.



Lived Experience customers

The Lived Experience stream was delivered by Ausgrid with support from **bd infrastructure**.

Designing the Lived Experience engagement

The team began by mining customer data, network outage information, and industry research to identify what was known about these customers and where the gaps were in our knowledge.

Through this the team learned that:

- concern about the cost of energy has become more intense since the pandemic,
- low-income households pay proportionally more for energy and are sensitive to price change,
- older people are feeling less financially secure or positive about the future than they were three years ago,
- young people and renters are feeling financial stress due to Covid, and face barriers to adopting Distributed Energy Resources (DER),
- low-income households have less information about DER and are less able to invest in these technologies,
- customers in southwest Sydney and the Upper Hunter live in some of Australia's most disadvantaged areas,
- customers at the edge of the network experience lower levels of reliability but also other vulnerabilities related to events, income and housing.

However, the team also realised:

- more needed to be understood about young people's and renters experience of the energy network and outages, and their aspirations for a fair transition to net zero,
- Ausgrid's response to disruptive events, such as bushfire and floods, could benefit from talking more to communities that have direct experience,
- customers' vulnerabilities are multi-layered, so understanding how life, health and event-based circumstances intersect would help us better respond to their needs, and
- there was very little information about the needs and expectations of our Indigenous customers.

Informed by this research, and building upon the Engagement Framework, Ausgrid designed the Lived Experience engagement to be:

- **Relationship-based.** Reset engagement has traditionally, and rightly, relied on research techniques to reach and engage customers. However, the team decided to work through established and trusted networks for the Lived Experience Stream to reach customers in vulnerable circumstances. It was felt this approach would potentially build partnerships that would help Ausgrid service customers' interests over a longer term.
- **Geographically targeted.** The team decided to focus the Lived Experience engagement in the Upper Hunter and southeast Sydney where multiple vulnerabilities tended to overlap. Stakeholders operating in these areas and state-wide were mapped to develop a list of peak bodies, not for profit organisations and service providers. The aim was to engage these organisations to understand what they were hearing from their clients, and then work with them to reach their clients and invite them to customer discussions.
- **Focussed on key experiences.** The team decided to pull out separate engagement streams to understand the Lived Experience of two key groups of customers – those relying on life support equipment, and communities impacted by natural disasters or extreme weather events ('disruptive events').
- **Integrated with the VoC Panel.** The team also aimed to integrate the Lived Experience and VoC Panel processes by providing the initial Lived Experience engagement outputs to the Panel, and then testing the Panel's draft recommendations with the Lived Experience stakeholders and customers.

Key Voices engagement

The key voices stream aims to reach customers whose perspective often gets missed through mainstream engagement. It has focussed on CALD customers who can face language barriers to accessing services, and Indigenous communities whose perspective is often overlooked in Ausgrid's business planning. Ausgrid initially planned to include young people in the Key Voices stream but, after establishing that young people face vulnerabilities relating to income and housing tenure, their voice was incorporated with the Lived Experience stream.

CALD customers

Ausgrid partnered with the **Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW (ECCNSW)** to deliver the CALD engagement.

Ausgrid's network area is considered the most diverse in Australia given the wide range of language groups represented. Hearing from all language groups was therefore impossible, so the business needed to prioritise. This engagement focussed on the three largest language groups in the Ausgrid network: Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Arabic. In consultation with ECC NSW Ausgrid agreed to engage with the:

- Mandarin community as the largest group in total across the network area, but a much more dispersed group, with significant numbers of Mandarin speakers in many of the Local Government Areas (LGA)s in the network.
- Arabic community as one of the newer groups with the most highly concentrated communities, with the vast majority residing in just one LGA within the network area.
- Vietnamese community as the second most densely populated group, with the majority of the community residing in the same LGA as the Arabic communities.

The below table shows the top 10 LGA's within Ausgrid area that have the highest proportion of people that speak a language other than English at home, these 10 LGA's account for 77% of Ausgrid's CALD customers. It also shows the top six languages other than English spoken in the Ausgrid area and how these communities are spread across these LGAs.

Table 5 LGAs in Ausgrid area with highest proportion of people who speak a non-English language at home.

LGA	CALD population	Cantonese	Mandarin	Arabic	Greek	Italian	Vietnamese
Bayside	40,403 (42% total pop)	5,935	10,477	9,127	11,011	2,386	1,467
Burwood	15,145 (41%)	3,169	7,454	1,351	933	1,612	626
Canterbury-Bankstown	140,122 (40%)	13,633	17,206	59,684	18,577	6,030	24,982
Georges River	51,715 (35%)	14,540	21,065	5,246	7,870	1,946	1,048
Strathfield	11,095 (28%)	2,803	4,033	2,022	602	754	881
Canada Bay	22,367 (25%)	3,466	8,657	1,505	1,948	6,207	584
Ryde	29,422 (25%)	8,160	14,731	1,995	1,176	2,589	771
Willoughby	16,359 (22%)	5,519	8,965	462	388	729	296
Sydney	34,983 (17%)	6,589	20,365	1,412	1,925	2,200	2,222
Randwick	22,409 (16%)	4,166	10,155	1,220	4,516	1,644	708

Indigenous communities

Energy is fundamental to a functioning society and economy, and therefore linked to most social and economic indicators. Indigenous communities throughout Australia – and throughout Ausgrid's network – have significantly poorer social and economic outcomes compared to non-Indigenous populations.

By 2018, only two of the seven "Closing the Gap Targets", which have been set to measure Indigenous progression, were on track. This indicates that current approaches to improving Indigenous outcomes – such as housing affordability and comfort, energy affordability and security, income, and education – are not working.

Early in the Reset development process, Ausgrid recognised that it could have a positive impact on Indigenous communities by leveraging the interconnected nature of its power and distribution assets and shifting its own cultural awareness of Country.

Supported by **Indigenous Energy Australia**, Ausgrid has started to identify how its services relate to the outcomes that communities are pursuing with a view to working backwards to understand how Ausgrid can support community, rather than seeing how the community can fit into Ausgrid's strategy.

The steps to do this have included:

- Identifying which Aboriginal communities intersect with Ausgrid's network.
- Identifying the aspirations and challenges of these communities via desktop assessment of community challenges via Aboriginal Affairs community portraits and community engagement.
- Selecting challenges based on impact and brainstorming potential solutions that Ausgrid could contribute to.

The team also engaged with Ausgrid's Indigenous employees about how Ausgrid could better recognise and acknowledge Country in business operations.

Ausgrid's work in this area has only just begun and will continue throughout and beyond the next regulatory period. It has resulted in five key ideas that will need to be developed through community engagement.

Through this process though we have identified 3 key Indigenous communities that are keen to work with Ausgrid, the next steps are to:

- Engage communities further and start refining or redeveloping solutions.
- Identify quick wins.
- Begin solution development.



Business customers

Small business customers

In September 2021 Ausgrid started to plan how it would engage small businesses in the Reset process to understand their changing needs and views. The team began by reviewing Ausgrid's complaints data to see if it identified key 'pain points' being experienced by small businesses in the network. This identified relatively high numbers of complaints in three areas, and these formed the target areas for our SME engagement. These were:

- Inner West Local Government Area (LGA)
- Former Pittwater Area LGA
- Cessnock LGA.

The team planned to engage SME owners through focus groups to better understand their interests and aspirations for the energy sector. For each of these conversations, discussion guides were developed focusing on four engagement themes:

- Energy cost and affordability
- Network resilience and outages
- Customer service
- Becoming net zero
- Commercial and industrial customers.

Ausgrid began this stream by mapping commercial and industrial segments to identify customers with a

range of needs and business models. This resulted in the identification of six key sectors the team wanted to engage:

- Manufacturing
- Large retailers
- Government
- Telecommunication
- Renewable technology installers
- Food manufacturing.

Councils

Ausgrid's network spans 33 LGAs. Councils are themselves, commercial and industrial customers, partners in the provision of streetlighting and conduits to end use customers. The relationship with Councils is therefore central to Ausgrid's business operations. Internal discussion at the start of the Reset process identified four topics that are particularly relevant to Councils: public lighting, network resilience, innovation and sustainability, and vegetation management. The team established Working Groups for three of these topics (which carried on from Ausgrid's ongoing council engagement) and partnered with Essential Energy, Endeavour Energy and Resilient Sydney to engage councils on the issue of resilience.

Engagement Hub

At the start of the engagement process, the team set up an online engagement platform at ausgrid.engagementhub.com.au. This was used to complement face to face engagement by hosting forums, surveys and event registrations. The hub also provided information on, and background to, the Reset.

The hub was used extensively for the VoC Panel to store background information and capture off-line questions and discussions in a password-protected section. The platform is divided into segments aimed at the main customer cohorts and themes.

Figure 9 Engagement Hub Structure.



Phase 2 – Draft Plan development

Voice of Community panel

The Panel met eight times over the course of three months, in regional groups and as a whole; and in online and in-person formats. A full outline of the methodology used is described in the VoC Process

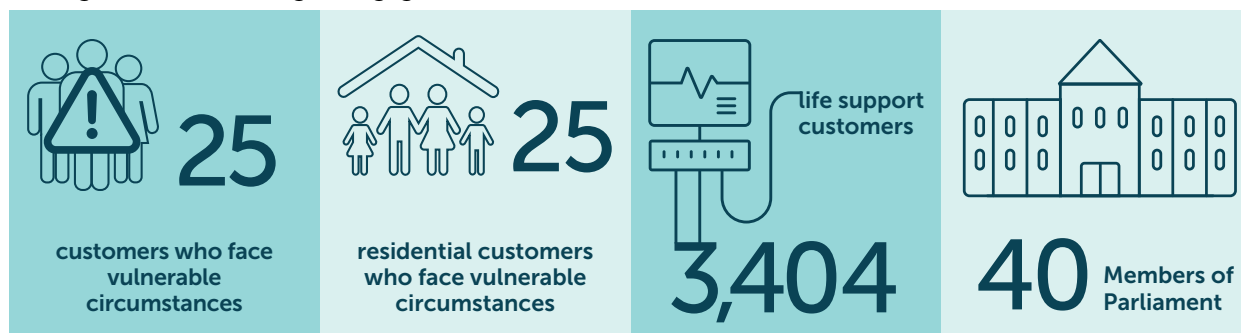
Report in Appendix A. However, Table 6 below provides an overview of the Panel process and indicates through the gold stars ★ where the Panel interacted with the broader engagement.

Table 6 VoC Panel program.

Day and date	Objectives	Format
Meet and Greet 6pm to 9pm Tuesday 22 February	An opportunity to connect, share concerns and clarify role, process and journey, and establish working together agreements. Meet the Ausgrid Board including Chairman Helen Nugent and CEO Richard Gross.	Together Online
Day 1 9am to 5pm Sunday 27 February	To hear from Ausgrid's chosen speakers and unpack the wider engagement report. Ausgrid's chosen speakers were selected to provide a variety of perspectives on a range of key issues, and included speakers from the AER, CSIRO, RCP, Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), the Electric Vehicle (EV) Council and the Small Business Association of NSW amongst others. Request speakers for Day 2.	Together Online ★
Day 2 6pm to 9pm 15, 16, 17 March	Hear from the requested regional speakers, including local council representatives from Central Coast Council and the City of Sydney, experts on small scale community projects like Yackandandah, Ausgrid Community Battery experts and Macquarie University.	Regional groups Online
Day 3 6pm to 9pm 22, 23, 24 March	To unpack insights further from a regional perspective, deliberate around the themed issues and discuss insights. Understand what is different about each region and how that might impact on the recommendations the Panel makes to Ausgrid.	Regional groups Online
Day 4 9am to 5pm Saturday 30 April	To share insights together, further deliberation and dialogue around the themes and begin drafting the Panel's initial ideas.	Together Face to face
Day 5 9am to 5pm Saturday 14 May	Review a document from Ausgrid responding to the Panel's initial insights, explaining what Ausgrid takes those insights to mean and how or whether Ausgrid or others could action the insights. Consider the response from Ausgrid, as well as responses from other stakeholders and customers (specifically CALD and Lived Experience customers), and redraft them into stronger recommendations.	Together Face to face ★
Day 6 6pm to 9pm 24, 25, 26 May	To sense-check the draft recommendations at a regional level and review.	Regional groups Online
Day 7 9am to 5pm Saturday 4 June	Final Ausgrid response to drafted recommendations received. Review response and consider implications for the cost of electricity, finalise recommendations via a walkthrough of the final report, and handover to Ausgrid Chairman and CEO.	Together Face to face

Lived experience

Through this stream, Ausgrid engaged:



Initial engagement

Stakeholder conversations

Early engagement aimed to understand the values and aspirations of people living in vulnerable circumstances as they related to the distributed energy network.

To do this, the team initially planned three 'roundtable' workshops with stakeholders advocating for low-income households, renters, older people, and younger people. The first workshop was aimed at State-wide organisations, the second at the Upper Hunter stakeholders and the third at stakeholders in Southeast Sydney.

Public health restrictions and lockdowns related to the Delta and Omicron Covid-19 variants meant there were challenges in recruiting participants to the third workshop. So, instead, deep dive conversations were carried out with stakeholders representing vulnerable customers in Southeast Sydney and tenants. We also met with organisations representing visual and hearing-impaired customers, to bring a disability perspective into our understanding of customer vulnerability.

Table 7 outlines the initial stakeholder engagement events delivered as part of the Lived Experience stream.

Table 7 Lived Experience Stakeholder Conversations.

Event	Date	Attendees
Roundtable 1 – State-wide	Monday 29 November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COTA NSW • Older Women's Network • Financial Counselling Australia • Financial Counselling Hunter Valley • Public Interest Advocacy Centre • NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) • Resilience NSW • Thriving Communities Partnership • Uniting Communities • Youth Action
Roundtable 2 – Upper Hunter	Tuesday 7 December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compass Housing • Muswellbrook Council • Upper Hunter Community Support
Deep dive conversations	Wednesday 19 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Eastern Community Support
	Thursday 27 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision Australia
	Tuesday 8 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deaf Australia
	Wednesday 9 February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants Union of NSW

The Round Table conversations focussed on four of the Reset engagement themes: value for money, customer experience, resilience, and future network. The key engagement question was: **What is the lived experience of customers who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances and how should Ausgrid respond to improve their experience?** For each of the selected Reset engagement themes two questions were posed: **What are you hearing about this topic? How should Ausgrid respond?**

The event was held on Microsoft Teams, and we used the online collaboration tool Mural to capture responses.

Customer conversations

Participants from the roundtables and deep dive conversations were asked for help in reaching and inviting clients to customer discussions. Initially two customer discussion groups were planned in each

of the target areas: one with low-income groups and one with young people.

Stakeholders were sent communications about the discussion groups and asked to distribute the material through their information channels and social media. The information directed potential participants to sign up via an online form/screener survey. The team also asked stakeholders for contacts at other local organisations that would be able to help publicise and recruit participants for discussion groups. In this way, the team reached social housing clients through Mission Australia's tenant groups.

Due to the pandemic, and because the engagement coincided with the lead up to Christmas, the response to the team's outreach was low. The team therefore pivoted to hold two cross-network groups with customers experiencing a range of vulnerabilities, and one with members of the Greater Sydney Youth Panel. These are detailed in Table 8.

Table 8 Lived Experience Customer Conversations.

Discussion	Date	No of customers	About the customers
Customer discussion	Monday 7 February 2022	4	Of the four attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 were aged over 60 • 2 were social housing residents • 3 earned less than \$530 per week • 1 lived in the Hunter • 1 was a registered life support customer (sleep apnoea).
Youth discussion	Tuesday 8 February 2022	3	Members of the Greater Sydney Commission's Youth Panel living within the Ausgrid network aged between 21 and 27.
Customer discussion	Thursday 10 February 2022	3	Of the three attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 was aged over 60 • 1 was a social housing resident • 2 earned less than \$530 per week • 2 lived in private rental accommodation • 1 was in the Upper Hunter at the edge of the network.

A customer discussion guide was used to ensure a consistent and structured approach to the Reset engagement, and online videos from Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) and University of New South Wales (UNSW) were used to explain key concepts such as net zero, DER and network resilience. The team worked to remove barriers to participation by helping with technology and providing gift card incentives as a thank you.

While participation numbers were not large, the quality of the discussion was high and reflected the diversity and complexity of Ausgrid's customer base. The team heard from customers in metropolitan Sydney and the Upper Hunter Region, sharing customer experiences from both highly urbanised and rural parts of Ausgrid's network. The low numbers reflected the challenges around engaging during lockdown and, in hindsight, more could have been done to promote the events. However, the insights gained were validated against existing business as usual data sources.

Event-affected communities discussion

Supported by **Nous Group**, Ausgrid held four focus groups with people in communities affected by extreme events. The aim of these sessions was to understand the impact of disruptive events on these communities and identify opportunities for Ausgrid to support them in building resilience to these events in the future.

Two of these communities overlapped with the rest of the Lived Experience stream (Cessnock in the Upper Hunter and Canterbury Bankstown) but Ausgrid also spoke to people in Hornsby / Pennant Hills and Nelson Bay on the Central Coast.

For each session, a diverse mix of residential customers, commercial and industrial customers and first responders were recruited. This included older customers, customers from CALD backgrounds, and customers from low-income households. All participants reported lived experience of disruptive events. The four focus groups took place over a six-day period between Friday 26 November and Monday 13 December. Each focus group lasted 90 minutes and had a minimum of five participants.

The focus group participants comprised:

- 12 residential customers
- 3 small and medium size enterprise owners
- 2 hospital representatives
- 4 first responders.

Life support customer survey

In August 2021, the Australian Energy Foundation (AEF) published the results of research funded by Energy Consumers Australia to identify ways Life Support Customers could be best supported by the energy industry they rely on.

To access the customer voice, AEF partnered with electricity distributors – including Ausgrid – to engage life support customers via online surveys. 4,000 Life Support Customers participated in an initial survey, of which 3,600 consented to have their responses analysed for this study. 550 participated in a follow-up survey, and 500 consented to analysis for the AEF study.

Ausgrid wanted to understand which of these eight recommendations were important to customers so that it could better plan our services now and into the future. To do this, the Ausgrid team surveyed about half of the life support customers in the network receiving 3,404 responses at a 17 per cent response rate.

The survey aimed to:

- Understand current drivers of satisfaction
- Understand current importance of key factors that drive satisfaction
- Understand resilience of Life Support Customers
- Investigate future initiatives that are aligned to customer needs.

MP engagement

Early in the engagement design, Ausgrid identified that local MPs are often the first port of call for customers experiencing difficulties in relation to the energy network. All Federal and State MPs in the network were surveyed in February 2022 resulting in responses from three Federal members, 37 from State members. 28 Members named their electorates which are illustrated in Figure 10.

Figure 10 Participating State MPs.



Follow up engagement

Integration with the VoC Panel

Following Day 4 of the VoC Panel, Ausgrid re-engaged the Lived Experience stakeholders and customers to get feedback on the Panel's initial recommendations.

Ausgrid was asked to provide 'light touch' responses to these recommendations; customers in vulnerable circumstances, and those who advocated for them, were also asked to respond from their perspective of their experience of the energy network. In particular, they were asked to suggest what they thought the Panel should keep in mind as they explored these recommendations further. These conversations also incorporated people who had participated in Phase 1 of our CALD and small business engagement.

The Panel came up with eight initial recommendations though not all were put to this wider group of customers/stakeholders due to time constraints and the relevance of each recommendation.

Stakeholder roundtable

A second roundtable workshop was held on Wednesday 4 May to get feedback on the Panel's draft recommendations. The roundtable was held virtually on Microsoft Teams and involved 15 organisations as follows:

- Australian Energy Foundation
- Business Hunter
- Business NSW
- Cessnock Council
- Compass Housing (UDIA Hunter)
- Financial Counselling Hunter Valley Project
- GSC Youth Panel
- Mona Vale Chamber of Commerce.
- Muswellbrook Council
- NCOSS.

- Older Women's Network
- St Vincent De Paul Society
- Wesley Mission – Financial Counselling
- Customer Challenge Panel observer
- RCP observer.

Some of these organisations were involved in the Small Business engagement stream but we thought it important that the Panel also receive a small business perspective on their ideas. All participants had been involved during the first phase of the Lived Experience engagement.

Participants were broken into small groups according to three customer perspectives – life circumstances, small business and regional communities. The groups were asked to consider each recommendation or group of recommendations, and outline what they thought the Panel should keep in mind as they developed the recommendation further. The roundtable used the digital collaboration tool GroupMap to capture thoughts.

Customer discussions

During the week commencing 2 May 2022, discussions were held with 12 customers who participated in our Phase 1 Lived Experience and Small Business engagement activities.

These were initially planned as group discussions, but due to some participant's availability and the tight turn around to gather responses before Day 5 of the VoC Panel on 14 May 2022, two customers were engaged via one-on-one interviews. Table 9 provides an overview of these discussions.

A discussion guide was formed to ensure the conversations were held consistently. They dealt with the same recommendations as the roundtable and, with the aid of initial prompt questions, asked participants to suggest what they thought the Panel should keep in mind as they developed the recommendation further.

Table 9 Follow up Lived Experience / SME Customer Conversations

Date	Discussion format	No of participants	Participant overview
Wednesday 4 May	Group discussion	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 retired homeowner over 60.• 1 social housing tenant on a low income and over 60.• 1 renter under 30.• 4 customers impacted by network events.
Thursday 5 May	One-on-one interview	1	Low-income customer living in rental accommodation at the edge of the network in the Upper Hunter.
Thursday 5 May	Group discussion	3	2 in Sydney, one in the Hunter.
Friday 6 May	One-on-one interview	1	Homeowner under 30 in the Hunter.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse customers

Through this stream, Ausgrid engaged:



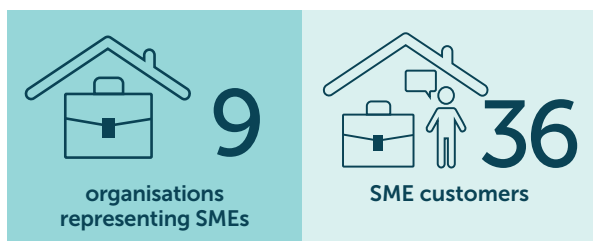
In November 2021, ECC ran in-language focus groups to gauge customer values in relation to the future energy network. In May 2022, the ECC reconvened these customers to respond to the VoC Panel draft recommendations. These CALD discussions are outlined in Table 10 below.

Table 10 CALD Customer Conversations.

Date	Language	Number	Participant profile
Phase 1			
6 November 10am – 11.40am	Vietnamese	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Bass Hill, North Ryde, Sefton, Russell Lea, Homebush and Kogarah.
2 November 7pm – 9.30pm	Arabic	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All from Canterbury Bankstown.
10 November 7pm – 9.30pm	Mandarin	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Burwood, Willoughby, Earlwood, Revesby, Sydney and Georges River.
Phase 2			
4 May 7pm – 8.15pm	Vietnamese	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 male and 2 female . From Canterbury Bankstown, Georges River, Inner West, and Ryde LGAs. Aged between 30 and 50+. 2 homeowners and 3 renters.
5 May 4pm – 5.15pm	Arabic	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 male and 2 female. All from Canterbury Bankstown LGA. Aged between 40 and 60+. All participants were renters.
5 May 7.30pm- 8.40pm	Mandarin	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 couple, 1 male, 3 female. From Canterbury Bankstown, Burwood, Willoughby, and Georges River. Aged 30+, 40+ and 50+. Four homeowners, and one renter.

Small business

Through this stream, Ausgrid engaged:



Reaching SMEs through peak groups and business chambers

It was understood that engaging peak groups and local business chambers would help Ausgrid to reach small businesses in the target areas and more generally.

- **Peak groups.** A list of peak SME and industry organisations that provide policy advice and/or services to small and medium businesses was developed. 33 of these groups were approached between November 2021 and January 2022 with an invitation to a peak business round table discussion.

- **Business chambers.** Ausgrid worked with Business NSW and Hunter Business NSW to approach local chambers of commerce. With their assistance, the team identified 12 business chambers in the target locations. Business NSW and Hunter Business NSW approached some of these chambers on Ausgrid's behalf to invite them to a regional roundtable discussion, though some were contacted by the Ausgrid team.

Outreach occurred during November and December 2021. Due to the Omicron outbreak and the lead up to Christmas, the response from peaks and business chambers was lower than anticipated. *In total the team identified and reached out to more than 33 peak and local business organisations and held five deep dive conversations with nine state-wide and local organisations* as a result. These are listed in Table 11 below.

Table 11 Draft Plan Development – SME Stakeholder Conversations.

Date	Type of meeting	Attendee
24 November 2021	Deep dive conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business NSW • Hunter Business
24 November 2021	Deep dive conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Business Association of Australia
30 November 2021	Deep dive conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Small Business Organisations Australia
1 December 2021	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mona Vale Chamber of Commerce • Inner West Council • Cessnock Council
21 December 2021	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small to Medium Size Business Australia • Small Business Association Australia

Reaching SMEs directly

Ultimately, Ausgrid wanted to talk to small businesses directly. To do this the team:

- profiled SME businesses in each of the target areas against Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) categories to identify the most common industries.
- cross referenced these industries with the NSW COVID Safe Check-ins Data Set 2021 to generate a shortlist of target business addresses for each LGA.
- sent more than 2,300 postcards to the identified businesses which contained a QR code linked to a focus group survey / sign up page.
- posted on more than 35 Facebook SME community groups in the target locations
- sent information to business chambers and peak organisations to issue to their networks.

Small business customer discussions

Despite extensive efforts to publicise the discussion groups, provide gift card incentives and schedule the groups at times that suited business owners, discussion group numbers were small. This was largely due to the outbreak of the Omicron Covid-19 variant which impacted the capacity of small business owners to participate.

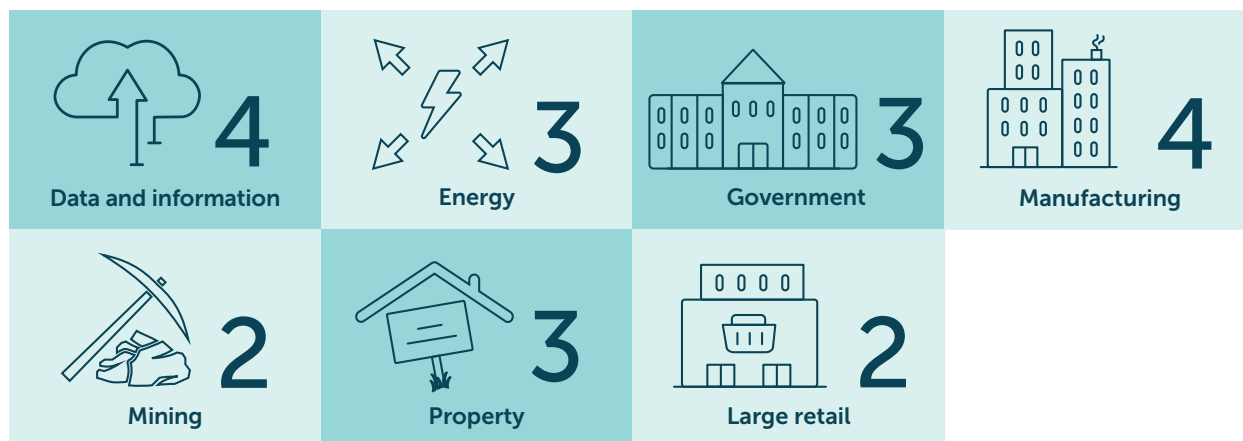
Fifty-five owners responded to the survey, mostly prompted through the Facebook posts, but many were found not to be in the Ausgrid network or did not respond to further contacts. As a result, the team spoke with five business owners across two focus groups in February 2022. These were:

- a medium-sized printing and manufacturing company located in Sydney's Inner West
- a sole-trade optometrist from Sydney's Inner West
- a medium-sized mechanic from Sydney
- a day surgery in Sydney's CBD
- a small agricultural business in the Hunter region.

The team brought these customers together again in May 2022, to gauge their response to the Voice of Community Panel draft recommendations. These are outlined in Table 3 above.

Commercial and industrial customer discussions

Through this stream, Ausgrid engaged a total of 21 commercial and industrial customers in following sectors:



Twelve interviews with commercial and industrial customers were held over March and April 2022. These helped to identify eight overarching topics that are being responded to. These were:

- Reliability is key
- Costs are difficult to manage
- Electrification is a challenge (for some)
- Outage information is critical
- Reduce emissions across the grid first
- Customers are partners in reducing network costs
- Improve connection times
- Provide escalation process.

The team then organised two commercial and industrial forums in June 2022 to verify these themes and test options:

- **Reliability** – responding to climate change
- **Costs** – getting the tariff right
- **Outage information** – balancing cost and service level
- **Ancillary Network Service Fees** – fixed fees for cost certainty.

These two forums were attended by 12 customer organisations.

Councils

Through the engagement, Ausgrid engaged all 33 Councils in its network as shown in Figure 11.

During the Draft Plan engagement, the following sessions were held:

- The **Public Lighting Working Group** met on 7 December 2021 and 18 May 2022 and was attended by a total of 27 Councils and 2 ROCs.
- The **Innovation and Sustainability Working Group** met on 28 October 2021 and again on the 30 June 2022 and was attended by 22 Councils.
- The **Vegetation Management Working Group** met on 14 October 2021 and was attended by 18 Councils, and again on the 18 July 2022.
- The **Resilience Workshop** was held on 16 March 2022 and was attended by 15 Councils and 1 ROC in Ausgrid's network.

Ancillary Service Providers (ASPs)

ASPs are organisations licenced to perform works on the electricity network, they provide services such as connecting new customers and other electrical services that fall outside the scope of Ausgrid as a regulated distribution business.

On 9 December Ausgrid held a regular forum attended by 126 Level 3 ASPs where information about the Regulatory Reset was provided. Some

questions about the Reset were included in the post-forum survey, to which 17 responses were received.

On 2 March Ausgrid held a forum for Level 2 ASPs where 705 were invited and 57 attended. The main comments received related to the need for more consistency and information on pricing.

On 11 May 2022 a similar forum was held with Level 1 ASPs which was attended by 26 companies. Information about the Reset was also presented at this event.

Retailers

Through this stream Ausgrid has engaged six retailers.

Ausgrid reached out to all retailers to seek interest in engaging in the regulatory process and met with four retailers to discuss detailed engagement preferences. These were: Origin Energy, Red / Lumo Energy, EnergyAustralia and Nectr.

Ausgrid also engaged retailers through its PWG in October, November and December 2022. At these forums, the 2025 to 2029 Tariff Structure Statements and trials for new tariffs that became effective from 1 July 2022 were discussed.

In particular, discussion focussed on the Residential two-way tariff, Residential Flex Load Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging tariff and Community Battery tariff. Retailer attendance at the PWG meetings is detailed in Table 12 below.

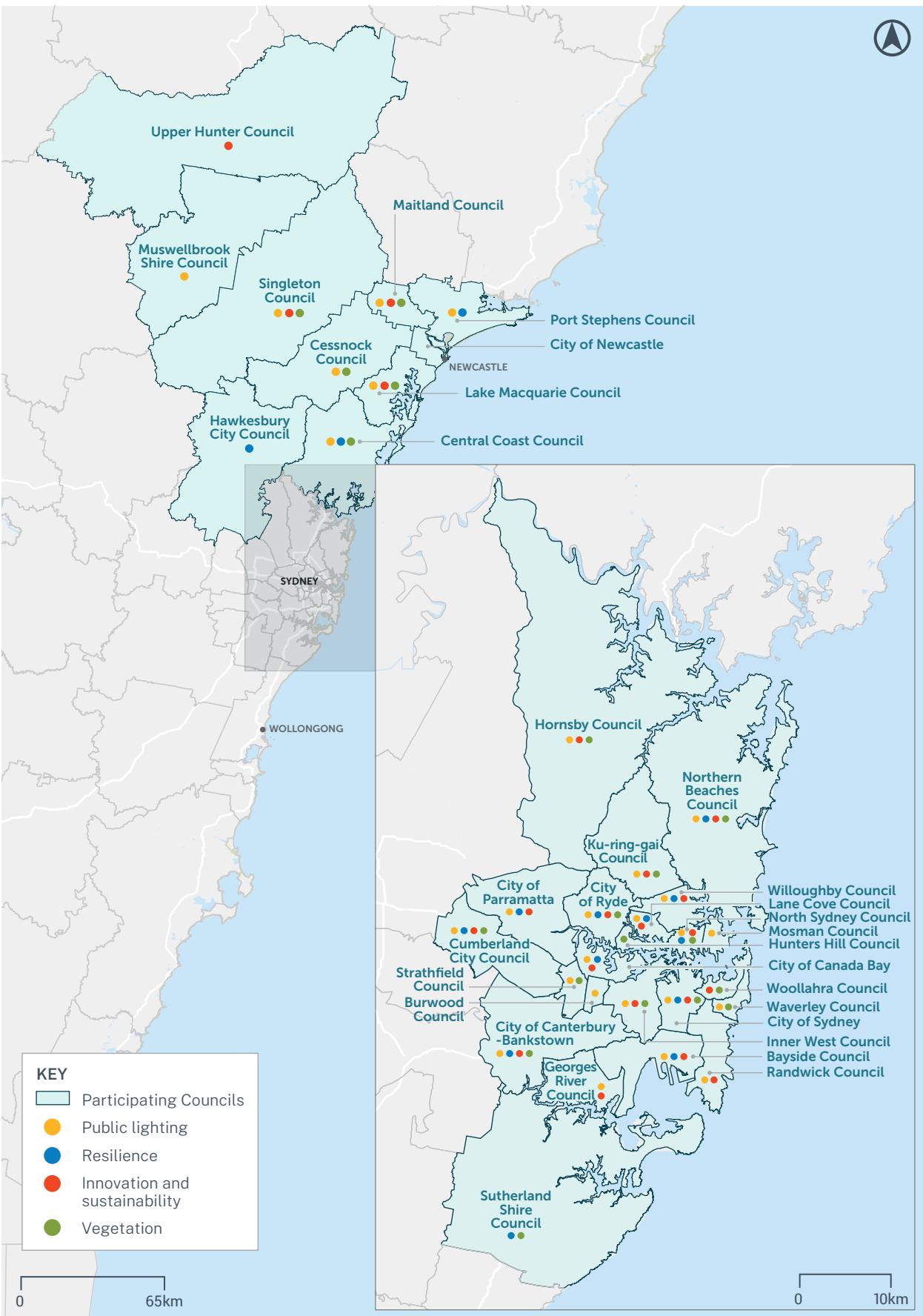
Table 12 Pricing Working Group Meetings.

Date	Participating Retailers	Number of participants
22-Oct-2021	Energy Australia, Origin Energy, Red Energy	9 people from 3 retailers.
24-Nov-2021	Energy Australia, Origin Energy, Red Energy	9 people from 3 retailers.
17-Dec-2021	AGL, Discover Energy, Energy Australia	4 people from 3 retailers.

A retailer forum took place on 20 June at which 18 retailers attended. The forum discussed:

- 1 July 2022 tariff changes
- Proposed tariff reforms for the Pricing Directions Paper 2024-2029
- Updates on tariff trials
- Updates on controlled load trials.

Figure 11 Participating Councils.





Following feedback, Ausgrid has started a monthly newsletter to keep all retailers informed on tariff development and the Reset process. The newsletter topics are outlined in Table 13.

Table 13 Monthly retailer newsletter topics.

Month	Topic
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausgrid's Reset timeline and key consultation timeframes Approach to Resilience
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upcoming retailer forum Smart metering information request Update on legacy metering
May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upcoming retailer forum Mobile data information request ANS fee change update CALD program information request Tariff trial update
June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 July Tariff changes Retailer forum feedback Controlled Load availability update
July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upcoming Retailer forum on Draft Plan Tariff trial update 2022 storm update
August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email to all retailers to share the Draft Plan, Pricing Directions Paper and other published materials for feedback
September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knock before you disconnect Controlled load provisions
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on submissions received on the Draft Plan and Pricing Directions Paper Retailers experiencing financial difficulty
November / December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upcoming submissions to AER timetable 2023-2024 Tariff trial update Smart meter rollout Christmas shutdown periods

Phase 3 – Draft Plan engagement

Engagement program

Following the publication of the Draft Plan came a further round of engagement with both stream customers and the VoC Panel. The purpose of the Phase 3 engagement was to engage customer representatives on trade-offs behind the investment areas in the Draft Plan, to blend the voices from across the streams of engagement and understand where there was consensus and where views were held by specific customer groups. The stream engagement comprised:

- **VoC Panel:** One recall sessions to test the investment proposals
- **Town Hall:** Combining representatives from the VoC Panel and from across the full range of engagement streams
- **Lived experience:** An online round table workshop with peak groups representing customers in vulnerable circumstances, and an online round table workshop with stakeholders operating in the climate resilience field
- **CALD:** Three focus groups with Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Arabic speaking customers
- **Small business:** 30 face to face interviews with small businesses in Tuggerah, Cessnock and Lakemba

- **Wider public:** Be the Boss app promoted through social media and yoursay website and an easy use submissions process involving online form and editable pdf.
- **Commercial and industrial:** Online interviews with six businesses
- **Councils:** Two online workshops with Council representatives, including one on street lighting
- **Retailers:** One online forum.

Voice of community

The VoC Panel was recalled twice during the draft engagement period: once online to take a deep dive into climate resilience, net zero and export tariffs; and then again in person, for a whole day Town Hall, to understand different customer perspectives and provide suggestions to the RCP. These two sessions are summarised in Table 14. At the Town Hall, panellists were joined by representatives of the stream engagement to consider the Draft Plan's overall balance and to provide thoughts to the RCP on each of the investment 'pillars'.

Table 14 VoC Panel program – Phase 3.

Day and date	Objectives	Format
Day 8 9am to 5pm Saturday 17 September	Deep dive session to understand communities' preferences and willingness to pay for key aspects of the Draft Plan, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate Resilience• Net zero• Export pricing	Together Online
Day 9 9am to 5pm Saturday 15 October	Town Hall workshop to understand different customer perspectives and provide suggestions to the RCP and Ausgrid to finalise the Proposal.	Together face to face

Lived Experience

Two round table workshops were held during the engagement period following publication of the Draft Plan. The first comprised customer peak groups, and the second organisations working in the field of climate adaptation and resilience.

Peak Group Roundtable

The Peak Group Roundtable was held on 14 September 2022 and was attended by nine peak groups as follows:

- Business Hunter
- Cessnock Council
- Business NSW
- COTA
- Greater Cities Commission Youth Panel
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- Sydney Community Forum
- Vision Australia
- Uniting Communities
- AER Consumer Challenge Panel (observer)
- EWON (observer).

Changing Climate Roundtable

The Climate Change Roundtable was held on 21 September 2022 and was attended by 21 organisations:

- Australian Road Research Board
- Committee for Sydney
- Department of Planning and Environment
- Energy Charter

- Energy Consumers Australia
- Infrastructure NSW
- NBN
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- Energy Networks Australia
- Energy Users Association of Australia
- Hunter Water
- NSW SES
- Race for 2030
- Resilient Sydney
- Resilience NSW
- UDIA
- Optus
- Telstra
- Transport for NSW
- Water NSW
- SSROC
- Lane Cove Council.

In addition, customers who attended the Phase 1 Lived Experience and event-affected focus groups participated in the VoC Town Hall on the 15 October.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse customers

During Phase 3, three further in language focus groups were held. The ECC educators who ran the focus groups also attended the Town Hall on the 15 October to provide the perspective of CALD communities. The CALD discussions are outlined in Table 15 below.

Table 15 CALD Customer Conversations.

Date	Language	No of participants	Participant profile
7 September 7pm-8:40pm	Vietnamese	4	All returning participants
6 September 6pm -7.40pm	Arabic	3	All returning participants
5 September 2022 7:30pm – 9pm	Mandarin	5	All returning participants

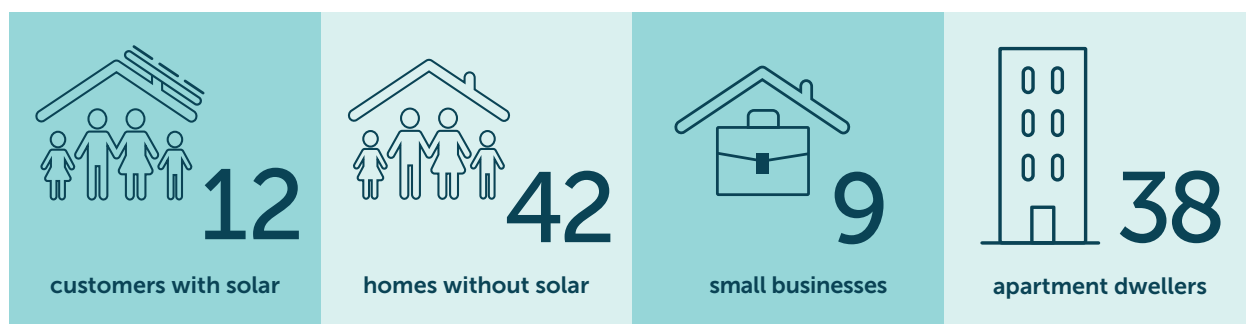
Wider public

During the engagement on the Draft Plan, the Engagement Hub was updated with the Draft Plan document and engagement reports, as well as fact sheets on the main themes of the Draft Plan, both in English, Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese. To make the Draft Plan more accessible, two videos were used to communicate the main investment areas and the engagement process undertaken during the Plan's preparation.

Be the Boss

Customers and stakeholders were invited to make submissions to the Draft Plan via the Hub. But a more accessible "Be the Boss" App was also created that enabled users to indicate to Ausgrid how they would allocate investment in the areas of Resilience, net zero, Innovation, Cyber Security and Customer Service. In total, 2507 people played the Be the Boss game. And 102 people completed all questions.

Figure 12 Be the Boss Response Numbers.



Small business customers

By the time the Draft Plan was launched public health restrictions had eased so it was possible to conduct face to face engagement with Small Business. Our evaluation of earlier activities had indicated that going to small business was a much better way to achieve a high level of engagement, given business owners are often pushed for time and capacity.

Three business locations were identified to conduct in-situ face to face interviews:

- Lakemba, a highly diverse area in Greater Sydney;
- Cessnock, a regional centre at the edge of the network, and
- Tuggerah, an industrial area in the Central Coast.

Using Google Maps and searches, the team identified several businesses to target in each area, phoning ahead where possible to book in a 20 minute interview. However, the team also found that several interviews were possible as 'walk ups' on the day. The interviews were focussed around the investment areas in the Plan likely to be of interest to small business.

The team managed to conduct a total of 30 interviews: 7 in Lakemba, 11 in Cessnock and 12 in Tuggerah.

Commercial and industrial customer discussions

During the Draft Plan engagement Ausgrid conducted interview with six Commercial and Industrial Customers.

- NBN Co
- Opal Packaging
- Qenos
- Telstra
- Transport for NSW
- Woolworths.

Councils

Two workshops were held with Councils during the Draft Plan engagement period.

- The first aimed to gain feedback on the Draft Plan in general. This took place on 27 September 2022 and was attended by 19 Councils.
- The second focussed on Public Lighting. This took place on 29 September and was attended by 19 Councils.

Retailers

Ausgrid held a Retailer forum on 20 September 2022 to get feedback on the Draft Plan. This was attended by eight retailers. At the forum Ausgrid asked for feedback on changing the peak charging window for residential customers; the streamlining of tariffs; embedded network tariffs, and export tariffs for solar customers.

Evaluation and verification

Phase 2 evaluation

Evaluation surveys

At the end of most of our engagement activities Ausgrid surveyed customers and stakeholders involved to gauge how they experienced their participation and to understand how we might make improvements.

with better customer outcomes delivered daily through ongoing initiatives to respond to customer feedback. Customer voices shaped the corporate strategy alongside staff and other stakeholders and there is a strong desire to demonstrate respect for what customers have said by responding meaningfully.

Evaluation workshop

On Friday 25 February, the Reset team held a workshop with members of the RCP and CCC and key Ausgrid staff to evaluate the first few months of the engagement program. As a result, three key changes of approach were agreed:

- **Take a new approach to small business:** The team discussed the challenges facing small businesses in the wake of the Covid pandemic and resolved to ensure that future small business engagement would take place face to face where possible. Phase 2 engagement with small business merely reconvened the SMEs we engaged in Phase 1. However, Phase 3 – which will involve the display of the Draft Plan – will involve a lot more face to face engagement with small business by going to business locations rather than inviting businesses to participate with us.
- **Prioritise important topics where customers can influence the 2024-2029 Draft Plan:** It was noted at the evaluation workshop that the team hadn't heard much regarding customer incentives and resilience responses. The team resolved to design 'back up' engagement approaches should customers not naturally raise these two issues. In the event, both issues have emerged through our VoC Panel recommendations and our commercial and industrial engagement streams.
- **Drive cultural change:** The evaluation workshop resulted in an action to involve staff more in engagement activities to drive cultural change in customer service. The VoC Panel process alone involved 25 staff, including six Executive team members and four Board members including the Chair. Many more assisted with providing information and support services. More than 100 staff were involved in the RCP process and other engagement streams. Staff pride in the engagement conducted has been palpable

Feedback validation

As well as incorporating validation of finding as part of each engagement stream, we also wanted to validate what we hearing with advocate, Ausgrid's broader customer base and the wider industry. The evaluation workshop noted the high quality of discussions, but the small number of customers involved. The feedback was undoubtably valid, but was it reliable? To test the validity of the feedback, the team resolved to undertake several validation exercises.

Customer feedback data validation

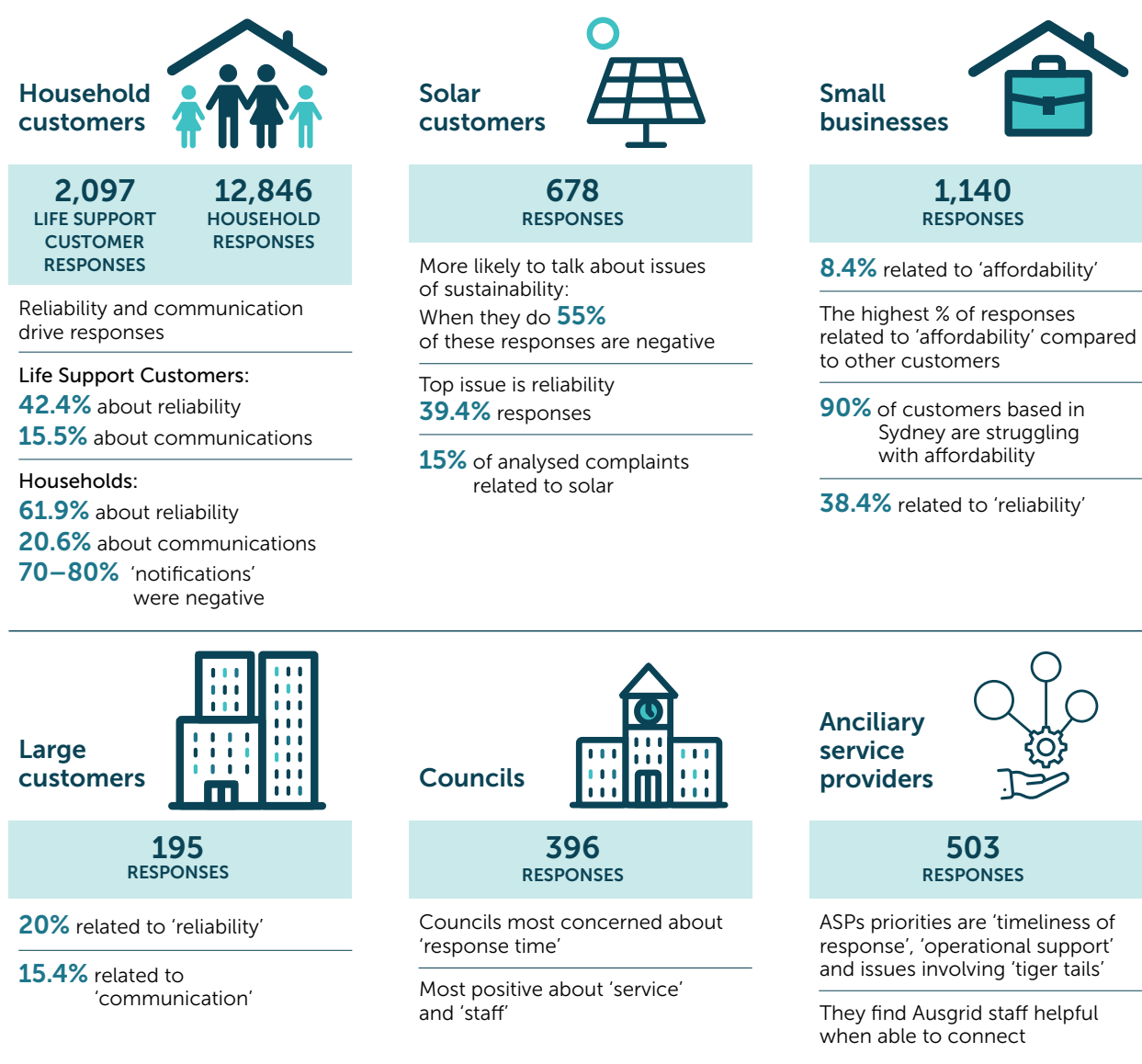
The team decided to examine three years' worth of Voice of Customer data to see whether our Phase 1 insights could be correlated with what had been heard from customers through other channels. This work aimed to validate Reset engagement insights against high volume data sources, and leverage ongoing business-as-usual engagement to deliver new insights.

Ausgrid engaged Edge Red to use AI to analyse around 40,000 customer database records captured between 2019 and 2022, and more than 20,000 complaints including around 3,000 records that had recorded quotes from customers. This verified the following insights gained from our engagement activities:

- Reliability and customer communication is important for household customers and commercial and industrial customers
- Affordability is a top concern for small businesses
- Response times are key issues for Councils and ASPs.

A summary of the customer insights is outlined in Figure 13.

Figure 13 Customer Data Validation Insights.



Light touch response to the Voice for Community Panel draft recommendations

Ausgrid also decided to ask the wider group of customers to provide a 'light touch' response to the VoC Panel draft recommendations as a means of correlating the outputs of our deep engagement with those of our broader engagement. This was successful, and the combined and correlated feedback garnered are presented in this report.

Check-in with energy sector colleagues

Finally, the team decided to check whether what it was hearing from customers also aligned with the feedback being received by counterparts in the energy sector. This was done by hosting a session of the Communications and Customer Engagement Working Group (CCEWG) run by Energy Networks Australia. This took place on Wednesday 11 May, was attended by 20 representatives of energy transmission and distribution companies from across Australia and facilitated by Ausgrid and bd infrastructure.

At this workshop Ausgrid used the online collaboration tool GroupMap to share some of the feedback received from our stakeholders and customers, and asked participants to 'like' comments they too had heard and add further comments outlining what they are hearing from their customers in each of our Reset topics.

The session demonstrated alignment across several of Ausgrid's insights, particularly:

- **Customer service:** alignment on targeted information, supporting vulnerable customers and ongoing engagement beyond the Reset.
- **Future network:** alignment on growing customer interest in future network, but potential disengagement on how they can take part.
- **Price and affordability:** alignment on this as a key concern.
- **Resilience:** alignment on the need for proactive communications around outages, and the importance of reliability.



Overall lessons learned

Ausgrid's ambitious engagement program, the complexities of the energy transition and the changing economic and political environment made this engagement program one of the most challenging but also rewarding programs we have had the privilege to facilitate.

Achieving real breadth and depth of engagement presents not only opportunities but challenges, particularly in times of pandemic lockdown and economic turmoil and in light of the increasingly complex energy environment. Throughout the process, Ausgrid reflected upon and adapted to accumulating lessons to ensure its engagement reflected the emerging needs and preferences of customers.

Some of the lessons learned are outlined below.

Foreseeing ongoing complexity

Ausgrid's biggest lesson was not fully appreciating how significant contextual challenges would remain throughout the engagement process. Ausgrid planned the engagement on the assumption that issues would become progressively more resolved as the program reached the final stages. However, as customers guided the business to deeply consider unprecedented issues (such as network resilience), the team needed to return to customers several times to check, test and verify. Ausgrid now finds itself embarking on extensive engagement to test preferences and Willingness to Pay for resilience investments at a stage in the proposal's development that would traditionally involve handing over engagement to a formal Regulator-led process.

Balancing planning and implementation

Phase 1 of the project comprised a great deal of time on designing the make-up and remit of the RCP and codesigning an Engagement Framework. This tried to ensure each customer group had a 'home' in the process by establishing multiple engagement streams.

The result was a hugely ambitious program that put time pressures on the later stages and meant engagement with some sectors needed to be deprioritised. This was done for sectors where there was sufficient day-to-day engagement – for example with the transport sector.

Tackling the breadth and depth of engagement

The stream engagement also presented the challenge of how to understand and prioritise the feedback from such a wide variety of voices. This led to the approach of going backward and forward between the CALD and Lived Experience engagement streams and the VoC Panel, so that each engagement stream was hearing from the other, ensuring all perspectives were taken into account. Not surprisingly, the two groups learned at different rates which made it difficult to get considered feedback from stream customers on the VoC panel's emerging recommendations.

The energy industry is becoming more complex, meaning the time required for everyday people to consider and make recommendations is greater than ever before. Despite engaging with a Citizen's Jury process that involved 44 hours of face-to-face time, the team found it hard to fit in everything it wanted to. Some of the trade-off discussions Ausgrid had hoped to have ahead of publishing this report were continued as part of the Draft Plan consultation engagement.

The complexity of the environment also means that this deliberative approach is really essential to understanding the reasons and nuances behind customer preferences and decisions. Approaches that provide customers with less time to consider things i.e. focus groups, are valuable but provide high level and theme-based insights rather than enabling any real trade off conversations.

With the benefit of hindsight, Ausgrid might have refocused engagement design on ensuring approaches facilitated more deliberative style conversations among and between particular customer groups, rather than small group conversations at points in a process. This approach would have enabled Ausgrid to respond to the ongoing complexity of the subject matter and take all customers on the journey.

That said, when Ausgrid's proposed investments were laid out in the Draft Plan, and it became important to 'test' the impact of these investments on particular customer groups, bringing the Panel and wider group of customers together at the Town Hall worked well. The combination of 'lay' perspectives – both considered (VoC) and partial (stream) – together with expert perspectives of the RCP, brought a richness to the end deliberations.

Engagement in lockdown

As Ausgrid embarked on the execution of the engagement framework in January 2022, NSW had just entered another phase of lockdowns because of new Covid-19 variants. While we have all become used to online calls, and their advantages in terms of convenience and removing the challenges of distance, there are also limitations. During Phase 2, Ausgrid found that small businesses were particularly challenging to connect with in this environment, as many were facing very difficult times due to ongoing closures and uncertainty about the future. However, this was rectified in Phase 3, when the easing of public health restrictions enabled the team to successfully conduct face to face interviews at business premises.

For many stakeholders the prospect of yet 'another zoom call' was just a step too far, resulting in low participation rates and higher than expected dropouts or last-minute cancellations. To overcome this, Ausgrid validated findings against existing VoC program insights, and held an insight sharing session through the Energy Networks Australia (ENA) s engagement working group. The purpose of this session was to validate what Ausgrid was hearing against other networks' insights – noting some networks were engaging as part of the same Reset cycle, and others shared from their ongoing customer insights programs.

Engagement reach and fatigue

Ausgrid also tried to reach vulnerable customers by working in partnership with established community and advocacy organisations. This was to avoid the use of market research techniques to recruit customers, which we have observed often struggle to reach people in vulnerable circumstances and can attract people who attend paid engagement events merely to supplement income.

Ausgrid found that it takes time (more than it had) to form partnerships that can, in turn, reach end use customers. This, together with the strains that the pandemic was placing on these organisations, meant that we didn't reach our intended audiences as effectively as we'd hoped.

In addition, as the programme progressed and the 'ask' of our customers failed to diminish, we experienced a degree of engagement drop off. By the time the Recall session came about, the VoC panel numbers had diminished to around a quarter of the original 45 – though many participants were unable to attend the session for very legitimate reasons.

That said, those who remained in the process were intently engaged on the subject matter and eager to continue their learning and involvement in energy matters. Our learning throughout this whole process demonstrates that quality of conversation is better than quantity, particularly when the issues become in depth and complex.





Appendices

A. Voice of the Community Process Report



AUSGRID REGULATORY RESET 2024 - 2029

VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY PANEL

Process Report

February - June 2022

LIMITATIONS OF USE

This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of Ausgrid.

The sole purpose of this report is to provide a report of the methodology and process undertaken for the Ausgrid Voice of Community Panel.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by the Voice of Community Panel project. Ausgrid can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a team of engagement practitioners and facilitators based in Victoria. We work with government agencies, community groups, industry and commercial organisations and support them to have meaningful conversations that lead to action. Our processes bring diverse people together to solve complex problems and make a positive difference to decision-making.

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REMIT

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community.

The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2021 - 2022, Ausgrid embarked upon a series of engagement activities to support the submission of their 2024 - 2029 Plan to the Australian Energy Regulator. This plan in turn informs Ausgrid's Regulatory Proposal.

The engagement process involved multiple phases, including the Voice of the Community Panel phase which began in February and concluded in June 2022. This report details this deliberative phase, where a panel of customers considered the following remit:

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

The project was initially activated in September 2021 by the Ausgrid team and bd infrastructure (with support from Gauge Consulting). bd infrastructure then brought in MosaicLab and Gauge Consulting to design and deliver the Voice of the Community Panel deliberative process.

The Voice of the Community Panel consisted of a randomly selected, diverse group of customers across three of Ausgrid's regions; greater Sydney, Central Coast and the Hunter Valley. The panel included people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and a range of ages. They came together to respond to the remit and consider a range of information on topics including energy distribution (Ausgrid's role in the supply chain), how Ausgrid operates, future planning and costs, and service levels that customers can expect. The panel met online and in person and were provided opportunities to listen to different customer perspectives and ideas, and hear from internal and external experts.

The panel agreed on 10 final recommendations that will be used to inform Ausgrid's 2024 - 2029 Plan and Regulatory Proposal. Ausgrid have committed to use the recommendations to the maximum extent possible and will clearly articulate where the panel's decisions have influenced the development of their final proposal. Where a decision or recommendation of the panel is not incorporated, Ausgrid will clearly explain why.

In total, the panel had 45 active participants. 60 people were originally randomly selected for the panel; however throughout the course of the panel a number of people were unable to participate (this is normal and expected, and generally due to changes in circumstance such as job or family arrangements), leaving a total of 45 participants.

Participants came together over eight sessions, commencing with the meet and greet via Zoom on 22 February 2022, and participated in seven panel days in the following four months. An additional short briefing was added after day one to support new panel members from the Central Coast region. Three of the panel days were run as separate regional sessions, and three full days were in person. At the conclusion of their final session on Saturday 4 June 2022, the panel handed over their report to the Ausgrid CEO Richard Gross and Chair of the Board Helen Nugent.

The report, authored by the panel, contained:

- a brief introduction
- a definition of fairness
- 10 recommendations that captured the title, description and rationale
- one minority report that outlined some further commentary that select members of the panel felt should be noted.

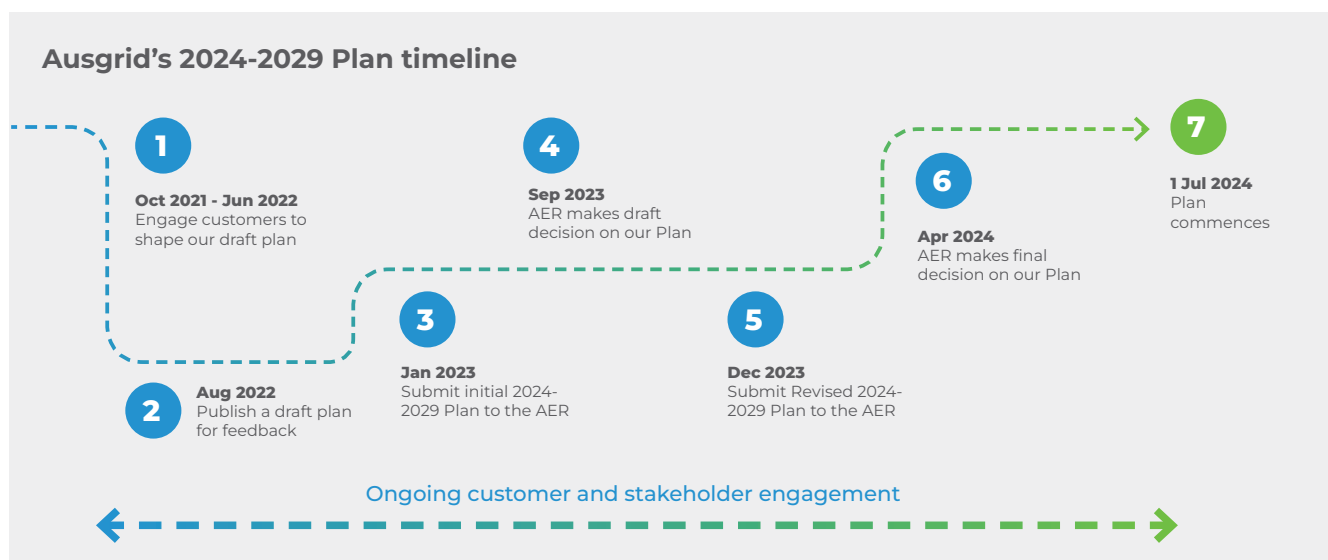
This report outlines the Voice of the Community Panel process. It summarises the design and implementation of the deliberative engagement process and includes the results of pre and post-deliberation surveys undertaken to collate feedback from panel members.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

Every five years, Ausgrid (NSW's largest energy distributor) is required to submit a five-year plan to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). AER is the independent regulator of the wholesale electricity and gas markets in Australia. The purpose of this submission is to set out the services Ausgrid will provide for customers and the funding required to deliver those services. This in turn determines the cost of Ausgrid's services to customers (or the price Ausgrid charges retailers).

The AER is interested in how Ausgrid's 2024 – 2029 plan reflects the views of customers and how it meets customers long-term interests. The plan includes capital expenditure, operational expenditure, incentive schemes and tariffs.



Prior to commencing the Voice of Community Panel process, Ausgrid worked with bd infrastructure to engage small business customers and residential customers in vulnerable circumstances. Ausgrid also held discussions with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) businesses and households, and communities impacted by disruptive events. In total these conversations included 33 organisations, 30 small business customers and 47 residential customers. The types and number of discussions held are listed below.

DISCUSSIONS WITH

- People who have experienced vulnerable circumstances
- Small businesses
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people and communities
- People and communities who have experienced natural disasters or disruptive events

- **LIVED EXPERIENCE:** 18 organisations and 11 residential customers.
- **SMALL BUSINESS:** nine organisations and six small business owners.
- **CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE:** 10 business owners and 18 CALD residential customers.
- **NATURAL DISASTERS:** Six organisations, three small business owners and 12 residential customers.

Summaries of what these customers told Ausgrid were provided to the Voice of Community Panel in the early stages of the deliberative process, and are included as Appendix 1: bd infrastructure prepared 'letter' to the panel.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PANEL?

A community panel is a name for a deliberative forum. These processes work on the premise that people can deliver smart, long-term decisions which earn public trust if they are given enough information and time to weigh up the pros and cons and consider the trade-offs associated with an issue.

Deliberation is built around several core principles which are listed below.

INFLUENTIAL

Deliberation requires decision makers to give weight to and implement the outcomes to the greatest extent possible. This forms a foundation for building trust with your community.

Deliberation isn't about asking people their opinion and then disregarding their views, which significantly reduces trust and results in poorly supported outcomes.



DELIBERATIVE

Deliberation goes beyond conversation and dialogue. It requires those deliberating to weigh up options and come to judgement on a problem.

Deliberation isn't about people giving you a wish list or a list of ideas. It results in clear direction for organisation decision makers.



INFORMATIVE

Deliberation requires that people have detailed, in-depth, and balanced information before they come to judgement. This includes hearing different perspectives, including the views of experts and interest groups.

Deliberation isn't about asking people for uninformed views. It allows you as organisation decision makers to know that the recommendations being provided to you are based on evidence and have considered all sides of the issue.





REPRESENTATIVE

Deliberation requires that the deliberating group is representative of the whole community. The group is usually selected using an independently conducted, random, stratified process.

Deliberation isn't about allowing anyone to turn up and people to 'self-select', like the participants at a public meeting. It allows you as decision makers to have a high level of comfort, because you know what everyday people who are broadly representative of your customers or community think is reasonable (once they are informed). This is more valuable than knowing only what interest groups and highly articulate and invested people are lobbying for.

TIME

Deliberation requires that the deliberating group is given sufficient time to become informed about the issues, weigh up options and come to judgement. Long form processes are usually 4-6 full days. An online (equivalent) process or a short process can be held over 2-3 days, if you are scaling down.

Deliberation isn't about holding a short workshop or evening meeting.



BLANK PAGE REPORT

Deliberation requires that participants respond to the remit by writing their own report. Starting with a blank page, they refine and agree on their final recommendations, then present their report directly to decision makers for consideration.

Deliberation isn't about providing options or a draft report. The organisation doesn't gather feedback on their own ideas. Instead, the organisation hears directly from their customers or community without any interpretation from consultants or staff.

CLEAR REMIT

Deliberation is about the deliberating group responding to a remit - or primary question - that goes to the core of the issue, shares the dilemma, and promotes open discussion. The remit question is clear and written in plain English.

Deliberation isn't about responding to easy issues. It allows the organisation to receive solutions to complex problems.



TRANSPARENT

Deliberation is a public process that seeks to build trust in democratic decision making and as such all aspects should be made public, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Members of the public should be able to observe the deliberating group in action and the report of the group should be made public immediately after it is handed to the key decision maker. All information considered by the group should be considered public and be on the project website. Communication activities such as sharing videos of the process and interviews with participants can also help to increase transparency.

Deliberation isn't about working behind closed doors. It allows the public to see that it has been a fair process.



INDEPENDENT FACILITATION

Deliberation is designed and facilitated by independent, professional facilitators with experience in deliberation. Facilitation enables individuals to work through a designed set of activities (conversations) to collectively and productively produce an outcome (recommendations). Facilitators ensure that all group members are given equal opportunity to participate.

Deliberation isn't about the group being led to a pre-determined result.



INCLUSIVE

Deliberation requires that barriers to participation are removed so that anyone feels they could participate in a deliberation. Some barriers are easily managed, for example, paying people an honorarium to cover the costs of their participation (travel, childcare etc). Also, support can be provided to people living with disabilities and meetings can be held in accessible venues. Other barriers, such as people not having the time or considering that this is, (ie. 'not for them') are harder to remove.

Deliberation isn't about excluding people and it ensures that the organisation hears from a true cross-section of its community.



Expert facilitation is a vital element to foster vibrant deliberative dialogue and a supportive, open environment. The table below summarises some of the key roles of facilitators in a deliberative process.



Design a process that is participatory and engaging, enables the group to meet their remit, and builds in key elements. These elements include relationship building, critical thinking, information sharing and group agreement.



Encourage participants to express themselves freely.



Encourage active participation from all group members.



Protect process integrity, transparency and independence.



Ensure no one individual dominates.



Keep the group moving through the process at an adequate pace in order to deliver a report during the time allocated.

AUSGRID VOICE OF COMMUNITY PANEL

OVERVIEW

This deliberative engagement process saw 45 randomly selected participants from Ausgrids customer base in Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter Valley come together to consider the question:

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community.

The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

The panel met via Zoom initially and then came together in person for three full Saturday sessions. Panellists shared their own stories and experiences, discussed different ideas and perspectives, and worked collaboratively using information from a range of sources including speakers, a background report and Ausgrid response documents (which responded to the panel's outputs and questions). The panel was asked to consider the information and work with each other to write a report that responded to their remit.

The panel focussed on developing a set of recommendations for Ausgrid's 2024 - 2029 Plan and regulatory reset. Each of these recommendations included:

- a title heading
- a description
- the rationale/reasoning behind the recommendation.

The recommendations were worked on across four of the panel days through a series of conversations and activities. All panel members had the opportunity to write and/or review and refine each recommendation. In the final decision making process on Day seven, 41 panel members agreed by supermajority (80% of the panellists or more) that they would accept all 10 of the recommendations.

One minority report was submitted by a small group of panel members encouraging Ausgrid to take further action on cyber security protection.

The process involved:



45 **randomly selected** participants that descriptively matched the Ausgrid customer base



a **clear question (remit)** to focus the deliberations



access to a broad range of **information** from a variety of sources relevant to the remit



conversations and Q&A with Ausgrid and panel identified **key speakers** (see information inputs section)



44 hours per person of **discussion and deliberations** across nine panel sessions (five evening sessions including the briefings, four full days)



support from facilitators experienced in delivering deliberative processes



an online portal that provided a central place for participants to access relevant information inputs as well as a discussion forum



group agreement, where a super majority (80% or more of the panel said they could live with it or better) was needed for a recommendation to be included in the final report



the development of **10 final recommendations** and **1 minority report**.

ROLES

Several groups were involved in this project, as outlined in the table below.

Panel members	<i>Randomly selected community members</i>	To work together to respond to a remit and provide recommendations to Ausgrid's plan.
Ausgrid	<i>Host</i>	To support the process, provide expertise and knowledge as requested by the panel, observe the process, answer specific questions directed to them, and respond to the panel's final report.
MosaicLab facilitators	<i>Independent facilitators</i>	<p>To provide a supportive, inclusive and productive space that enabled panel members to deliberate, respond to their remit and make recommendations within the time available.</p> <p>To provide support as needed, to ensure panel members could participate in sessions.</p>
Gauge Consulting	<i>Independent facilitator</i>	<p>To provide a supportive, inclusive and productive space that enabled panel members to deliberate, respond to their remit and make recommendations within the time available.</p> <p>To provide support as needed, to ensure panel members could participate in sessions.</p>
Sortition Foundation	<i>Independent recruiters</i>	To manage the recruitment process (including random selection and stratification) and to ensure it was fair and unbiased.
Expert speakers	<i>Content experts</i>	To provide expert knowledge into the process and answer questions from the panel members.
Observers	<i>Stakeholders and representatives of the host organisation</i>	To observe the panel deliberations, increase transparency of the process and follow the observer 'code of conduct'.
bd infrastructure	<i>Consultants overseeing the engagement process</i>	To oversee the entire engagement process and undertake the wider engagement process.

RECRUITMENT

Sortition Foundation managed the recruitment process for the panel via a random, stratified selection process. This ensured the selection of panellists was conducted independently of Ausgrid and the facilitation team.

An expressions of interest (EOI) period was conducted in November 2021 – January 2022 and respondents were asked to nominate their interest in the panel.

Sortition Foundation sent 24,000 invitations to randomly selected addresses across the Ausgrid network areas in the Hunter Valley, Newcastle, Central Coast and Greater Sydney. Everyone aged 16 years or over living or working at an address that received an invitation was invited to register interest, except for:

- current Ausgrid staff
- current Ausgrid board members.

The people who registered their interest were placed in a 'pool' which was randomly stratified by Sortition Foundation to select the final panel. This included randomly selecting 20 from the Hunter region, 20 from Central Coast and 20 from Greater Sydney to fulfill stratification goals.

Stratified selection against stratification goals ensured that the final panel selected was descriptively representative of the demographics of the overall service area population (i.e. forming a 'mini-public' of citizens). Stratification goals were based on demographic statistics for people aged 18 years and over in the municipality, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data.

The stratification goals for this process were based on:

- location (address)
- home-owner / renters
- solar or no solar
- age range
- gender.

Sortition Foundation used a digital stratification tool for the random stratification step, which limited human intervention in the selection process, adding further independence to the process.

Due to a need to ensure a good sample from the Central Coast region, a secondary selection process was undertaken. This regional area proved difficult in terms of getting adequate representation. Residents from this region were randomly selected from the EOI pool to match the demographics of, and replace, participants from that area who had been selected but withdrawn from the process.

60 people were initially recruited by Sortition Foundation to the Voice of the Community Panel. It is normal to over-recruit for a deliberation panel, as it is usual for numbers to reduce during the process for a range of reasons. Some of the 60 people selected were unable to commit to the process or dates as planned as their circumstances had changed since registering their interest, hence why the active panel members reduced to 45 people during the process. No-one left the panel process due to misgivings with the process, but instead due to other time commitments or life changes.



Ausgrid

About our
Community
Panel
participants

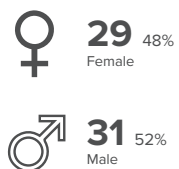
TARGET

60
attendees

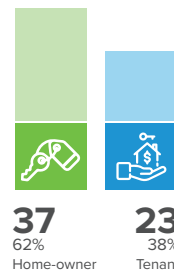
FINAL

45
attendees

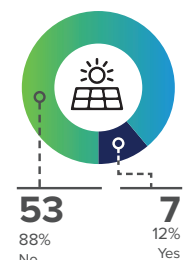
GENDER



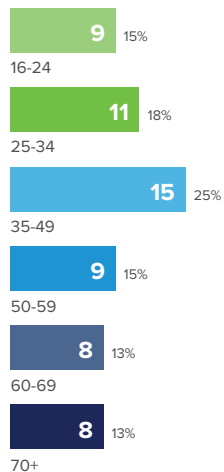
OWN/RENT



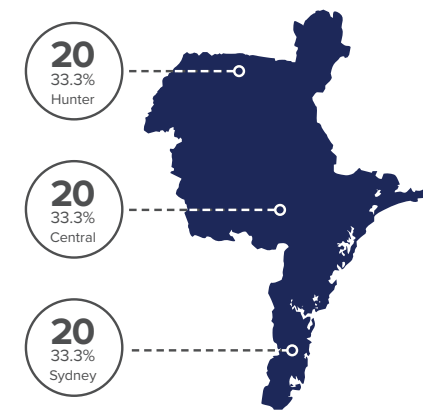
SOLAR POWER



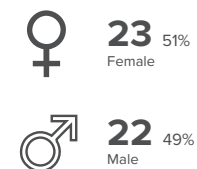
AGE



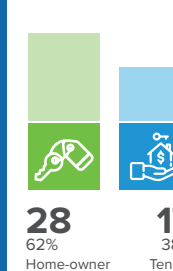
GEOGRAPHY



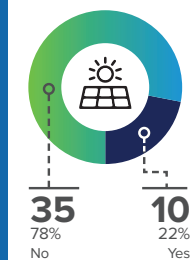
GENDER



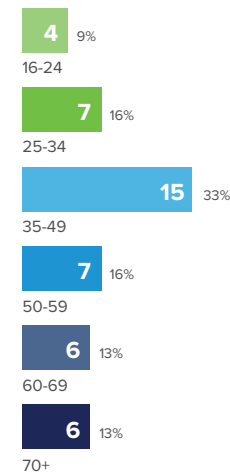
OWN/RENT



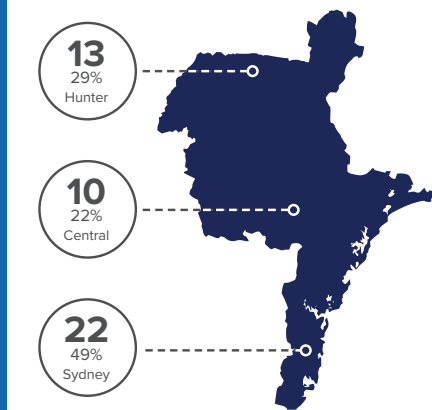
SOLAR POWER



AGE



GEOGRAPHY



PROCESS ROADMAP

The roadmap below provides an overview of the Voice of Community Panel process.

Meet and Greet 6-9pm	Day 1 9am-5pm	Additional Briefing - Central Coast	Day 2 6-9pm	Day 3 6-9pm	Day 4 9am-5pm	Day 5 9am-5pm	Day 6 6-9pm	Day 7 9am-5pm
Tues, Feb 22	Sat, Feb 27		March 15,16,17	March 22,23,24	Sat, April 30	Sat, May 14	May 24, 25, 26	Sat, June 4
An opportunity to connect, share concerns and clarify role, process and journey. Establish working together agreements.	To hear from Ausgrid's speakers and unpack the wider engagement report and request regional speakers.		To hear from regional speakers.	To unpack insights further from a regional perspective, deliberate around the themed issues.	To share insights together, further deliberation and dialogue around the themes and drafting initial ideas.	To receive a light touch Ausgrid and consumer response to drafted ideas, redrafting of ideas into stronger draft recommendations.	To sense-check the draft recommendations at a regional level and review.	Final Ausgrid response to drafted recommendations, finalise recommendations via a walkthrough of the final report, and handover to Ausgrid.
Full panel online	Full panel online		Regional online	Regional online	Full panel in-person	Full panel in-person	Regional online	Full panel in-person

DETAILED PROCESS TIMELINE



MEET AND GREET

22 February 2022 | 6pm – 9pm | 45 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Formal welcome and introduction from Helen Nugent, Ausgrid Board Chair.
- Learning about how the panel will operate (make decisions).
- Introduction to the context of this project and challenges for the panel to consider when looking at energy distribution – Rob Amphlett Lewis, Chief Customer Officer, Ausgrid.
- Overview of information inputs (inc. background report, panel handbook and online portal).
- Safety moment: Indoor electrical safety from Ausgrid.
- Understanding how to access the panel's online portal.
- Opportunity to become acquainted with fellow panel members.
- Opportunity to ask questions of Ausgrid.
- Setting agreements about how the panel work together.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to register on the online portal, say hello and introduce themselves. They read background information provided and completed a photo consent form and pre-deliberation survey.



PANEL DAY 1

Sunday 27 February | 9am – 5pm | 46 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Welcome to Country, Uncle Allan Murray.
- Learning about critical thinking.
- Overview of the electricity system and its context.
- Hearing from and questions for Ausgrid.
- Safety moment: video from Ausgrid safety reps.
- Delving into the background information.
- Speed dialogue with 12 guest speakers (curated by Ausgrid to bring a diverse set of views).
- Panel identifies their information gaps and speakers they want to hear from in regional groupings.

Online task between sessions:

Read answers to questions from Meet & Greet session and Panel Day 1.



EXTRA BRIEFING – CENTRAL COAST

Wednesday 9 March | 6 – 8.30pm | 6 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Formal welcome and introduction from Helen Nugent, Ausgrid Board Chair (video).
- Refining agreements about how the panel work together.
- Learning about how the panel will operate (make decisions).
- Introduction to the context of this project and challenges for the panel to consider when looking at energy distribution – Rob Amphlett Lewis, Chief Customer Officer, Ausgrid.
- Overview of information inputs (inc. background report, panel handbook and online portal).
- Opportunity to become acquainted with fellow panel members.



PANEL DAY 2

Tuesday 15, Wednesday 16 & Thursday 17 March | 6 – 9pm | Online

Participants: Hunter 13, Central Coast 11, Sydney 22

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Opportunity to get to know fellow regional panel members.
- Safety moment: Rap about zap.
- Speed dialogue with panel selected regional speakers.
- Discussion about insights and remaining information gaps.

Online task between sessions:

Read insights from Day 2 and consider “What is important for your regional context?”



PANEL DAY 3

Tuesday 22, Wednesday 23, Thursday 24 March | 6 – 9pm | Online

Participants: Hunter 12, Central Coast 9, Sydney 25

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: spot the hazard.
- Panel-led conversations on the topics and issues that are standing out to them.
- Continuing to create connections and understanding of the task through discussions on the remit and specific challenges.
- Panel-led matching of insights to the big challenges to be addressed in the remit.

Online task between sessions:

Read information gaps answered by Ausgrid.



PANEL DAY 4

Saturday 30 April | 9am – 5pm | 42 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Panel consideration and discussion of insights from all regional areas.
- Safety moment: safety equipment table in the room.
- Continuing to discuss the remit identifying and interrogating specifically what is hard in addressing it.
- Brainstorm of initial ideas to address remit.
- Drafting of initial recommendations and definition of fairness.
- Access to Ausgrid representatives who can speak to the costs and bill impacts of ideas.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to complete a 'levels of comfort' survey on initial draft recommendations and definition of fairness.

The initial, draft recommendations were shared with Ausgrid and stakeholder cohorts previously engaged with Ausgrid's process. Ausgrid prepared a response to the recommendations summarising what they understood the Panel to mean and things Ausgrid was wondering about. These were shared with the panel prior to Day 5.



PANEL DAY 5

Saturday 14 May | 9 – 5pm | 38 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: quiz.
- Presentation by Ausgrid of light response to draft recommendations.
- Panel consideration of 'levels of comfort' survey response, Ausgrid response and stakeholder reflections.
- Brainstorm around additions to recommendations and definition of fairness.
- Re-drafting definition and recommendations.
- 'Levels of comfort' survey conducted.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to complete a 'levels of comfort' survey on draft recommendations and definition of fairness. Results were shared with the panel prior to Day 6. Draft recommendations and definition were shared with Ausgrid for response prior to Day 7.



DAY 6

Tuesday 24, Wednesday 25, Thursday 26 May | Online

Participants: Hunter 11, Central Coast 9, Sydney 19 participants

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: Can't get no traction video.
- Discussion of unique, regional insights in relation to energy distribution.
- Reflection and discussion of the panel 'levels of comfort' survey.
- Deep-dive into specific trade-offs and discussion around clarity for recommendations where Ausgrid was unclear on meaning/intent.
- Capturing changes to recommendations from a regional perspective.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members provided Ausgrid response document for review prior to Day 7.



DAY 7

Saturday 4 June | 9 – 5pm | 41 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: panellist top safety advice.
- Presentation by Ausgrid on response to draft recommendations.
- Questions and answers with Ausgrid.
- In small groups panel members worked through feedback and regional insights and raised any clarifications needed with the panel.
- Ausgrid staff were available to support the panel to understand the impact of their recommendation on the customer bill as they reviewed and refined their recommendations.
- The panel made their final decision on their recommendations, definition of fairness and introduction.
- The panel finished their report and presented it to Ausgrid.
- Final reflections and closing circle.

INFORMATION INPUTS

The panel considered a wide variety of information inputs from a variety of different sources.

KEY INPUT	DESCRIPTION						
BACKGROUND REPORT	Prepared by Ausgrid to outline core information in relation to the challenges being discussed and the panel's remit. The document aimed to overview key contextual information and challenges, dilemmas and opportunities for the future of Ausgrid.						
Q&AS WITH AUSGRID REPRESENTATIVES	Ausgrid project representatives spoke to the panel about their remit, the process and the core issues being considered. The panel could also request that an Ausgrid staff member answer questions during panel sessions if needed.						
LETTER TO THE PANEL FROM BD INFRASTRUCTURE	bd infrastructure prepared a summary of prior customer engagement and customer recommendations passed on to Ausgrid.						
PRESENTATIONS	<p>Presentations were made to the panel by the following Ausgrid staff:</p> <table> <tr> <td> <i>Day 1 – Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation </td><td> <i>Day 5 – Ausgrid light response</i> Shannon Moffitt Regulatory Strategy Manager Jess Hui Director Strategic Projects </td></tr> <tr> <td> <i>Extra Briefing- Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Kate Hawke Customer Engagement Manager </td><td> <i>Day 7 – Ausgrid response</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation </td></tr> <tr> <td> <i>Day 4 – fact checker and number crunchers available</i> Fiona McAnally Regulatory Analytics Manager Mark Ragusa Head of Asset Risk and Performance </td><td> <i>Day 7 – number crunchers available</i> Junayd Hollis Executive General Manager – Asset Management </td></tr> </table>	<i>Day 1 – Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation	<i>Day 5 – Ausgrid light response</i> Shannon Moffitt Regulatory Strategy Manager Jess Hui Director Strategic Projects	<i>Extra Briefing- Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Kate Hawke Customer Engagement Manager	<i>Day 7 – Ausgrid response</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation	<i>Day 4 – fact checker and number crunchers available</i> Fiona McAnally Regulatory Analytics Manager Mark Ragusa Head of Asset Risk and Performance	<i>Day 7 – number crunchers available</i> Junayd Hollis Executive General Manager – Asset Management
<i>Day 1 – Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation	<i>Day 5 – Ausgrid light response</i> Shannon Moffitt Regulatory Strategy Manager Jess Hui Director Strategic Projects						
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<i>Day 4 – fact checker and number crunchers available</i> Fiona McAnally Regulatory Analytics Manager Mark Ragusa Head of Asset Risk and Performance	<i>Day 7 – number crunchers available</i> Junayd Hollis Executive General Manager – Asset Management						
PANEL HANDBOOK	A handbook was prepared by Ausgrid with information about the panel task and logistics.						
AUSGRID ONLINE PORTAL	Panel members were able to access an online portal hosted by Ausgrid 'yoursay' engagement platform in between sessions to stay in touch with one another, access information, and ask questions.						
BILL READY RECKONER	The bill ready reckoner was designed to help panel members understand a range of revenue requirements and impact on an average bill of different customer types for Ausgrid. It was provided as an editable excel sheet as well as a static document.						
PARTICIPANT PACKS	<p>Ahead of the jury, participants received an online pack containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom cheat sheet. • Guide to working online. <p>They were also provided an opportunity to participate in a technical support session before the Meet and Greet.</p>						

SPEAKERS

Across the nine sessions there were two opportunities for speakers to discuss ideas with the panel members.

DAY 1 – EXPERT SPEAKERS

PERSPECTIVE	SPEAKER NAME	ORGANISATION AND ROLE
Ausgrid network	Fatima Bazzi	Ausgrid, Head of Portfolio Planning & Insights
Ausgrid business	Fiona McAnally	Ausgrid, Regulatory Analytics Manager
Regulator – Reset process	Adam Young	Australian Energy Regulator (AER), Assistant Director Distribution
Advocates - the role of the RCP - recommendations for focus areas for the panel	Mike Swanston	Reset Customer Panel (RCP), The Customer Advocate
Government policy - the Net Zero Roadmap	Sophia Vincent	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), Director of Energy Consumer Policy
Retailer relationship and interactions with networks	Travis Worstelling	Energy Australia, Regulatory Affairs Lead
Net zero and the impacts for networks	Dr John Gardner	CSIRO, Senior Research Scientist
Resilience, the impacts of climate change and implications for networks	Dor Son Tan	Energy Networks Australia (ENA), General Manager Networks (Acting)
Electric vehicles and considerations for networks	Ross De Rango	Electric Vehicle Council, Head of Energy and Infrastructure
Incentive schemes - the work AusNet did to design a customer service incentive scheme	Tony Robinson	RCP, Independent Chair of the RCP
Vulnerable customers and the experiences and perspectives the panel should consider	Gavin Dufty	RCP, GM Policy and Research St Vincent de Paul
Small business perspectives the panel should consider	Angela Vithoulkas	Small Business Association, Creative Director & Executive Producer

DAY 2 – PANEL NOMINATED SPEAKERS

SYDNEY SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
Adam Young from AER who can talk about AusGrid getting funds from Government	Adam Young	Adam Young Assistant Director Australian Energy Regulator
Specialist on community batteries in metro (not from AusGrid) from overseas where this has been done - pro's, con's, practicalities, challenges, costs for implementation (e.g. rate of return)	We reached out to ANU, who have recently done interesting work in this space with Yarra Valley and Citipower / Powercor. When ANU hadn't responded we followed up directly with Citipower, who recommended Matthew, as a front runner in this space. Whilst Matthew isn't Metro or overseas, he is independent of Ausgrid and from a different region.	Matthew Charles Jones Founder Totally Renewable Yackandandah.
DER best practice from overseas - Dr Sara Fuller (panellist's contact)	Dr Sara Fuller	Dr Sara Fuller Associate Professor at Macquarie University
State/Federal Government members regarding planned policy and legislative effects on the future of the grid and individual tax	Gabrielle Upton: Parliamentary Secretary for the NSW Premier	Gabrielle Upton: could not attend at last minute.
Local council Yvette Andrews (e.g. Strata or rental representative) - are they looking at community DER initiatives etc.?	Yvette Andrews	Yvette Andrews Manager, Strategic Community Consultation at City of Sydney.

CENTRAL COAST SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
An expert with practical experience setting up this technology re: trials on northern beaches and Liverpool (understands the technical and cost viability)	Jonathan Dore	Jonathan Dore Distribution system operator services lead at AusGrid
CSIRO for impact of environmental conditions on Ausgrid assets	Dr John Gardner	Dr John Gardner Senior research scientist at CSIRO
Central Coast Council staff member re: central coast specific perspective around the energy issues and planning for the region (CEO or person heading development area)	Lynda Hurst (Central Coast Council) who recommended Jared Philips	Jared Philips Section manager, Centres planning & urban design, Central Coast Council
Not for profit organisation representatives	Rhiannon Cook	Rhiannon Cook Manager, policy and advocacy at St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW)
A speaker from another country with similar population spread and who had successfully and recently implemented new technology to improve their grid.	Reached out to contacts in Germany and at SSEN in the UK, but unable to secure an International speaker. Sara was recommended by a fellow panellist.	Dr Sarah Fuller Associate professor at Macquarie University

HUNTER SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
Researcher from University of Newcastle (environmental, scientist or engineer for example). Also could be from Tighsville TAFE	Newcastle University's Dr In-Young Yeo (on leave) recommended Dr Allen who we have not been able to get a response from. Newcastle TAFE co-ordinator didn't respond. Stuart, while not based in an educational institution is an experienced climate scientist.	Stuart Browning Risk Frontiers' atmospheric scientist and climate risk specialist.
Project manager from the Community Battery at Lake Macquarie	Alida Jansen van Vuuren	Alida Jansen van Vuuren Distribution System Operator Manager at AusGrid. Alida is responsible for the delivery of Community Battery trials at AGD.
Battery Science specialist on the various types of options we have. not just Tesla, but tesla could work.	Approached Dr Marnie Shaw from ANU has worked with Citipower in this area but was not able to get a response. Citipower recommended Matt as an advocate of these systems with a real community perspective.	Matthew Charles Jones Founder Totally Renewable Yackandandah.
Salvos/Vinnies to talk about the socio/economic disadvantages	Gavin Dufty, recommended Rhiannon Cook from St Vinnie's NSW, she is not available on the day - but will attend tomorrow's session and you will be able to see notes from that session. Rhiannon recommended Helen as the Deputy Ombudsman.	Helen Ford Deputy Ombudsman Energy & Water
Engineer - remote management Matthew Jolliffe (Wallsend) Ausgrid Senior Distribution Planner	Matthew Jolliffe	Matthew Jolliffe Senior Distribution Planner at AusGrid

WHAT THE PANEL ACHIEVED

Responding to the remit, the panel delivered or achieved the following:

- One definition of fairness.
- 10 recommendations.
- Each recommendation received 80% or above approval from the panel.
- One minority report.

Ausgrid has promised to use the Voice of Community Panel's recommendations to the greatest extent possible when preparing their 2024 – 2029 Plan and Regulatory Proposal (according to the collaborate level of engagement in the International Association of Public Participation engagement spectrum).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following 10 recommendations were written and decided by the Ausgrid Voice of the Community Panel:

1. Advocate and lobby for reform to energy regulations to improve service to customers.
2. Incentivise the adoption of cost-effective renewable energy, balancing the speed and uptake of technologies, while leading by example.
3. Enhanced community engagement and communication.
4. Visibility of Ausgrid costs to customers.
5. Maintain and improve current emergency procedures.
6. Ausgrid to collaborate on research & innovation on emerging technologies and best practices.
7. Executing collaborative innovation and research.
8. Investing in capital expenditure (Capex) to reduce future operational expenditure (Opex).
9. Influence customer behaviour with a flexible two-way pricing mechanism in order to optimise electricity supply and demand, balancing time of use, time of feed-in, and reliability.
10. Review minimum level of reliability of supply.

To read the panel's final report, including a full description of each recommendation, go to the Ausgrid website

<https://ausgrid.engagementhub.com.au/ausgridengagementhubcomauhouseholds>

PANEL MEMBER FEEDBACK

Panel members were invited to complete a survey at two points in the process:

- After the meet and greet session (52 of the participants responded to the pre-deliberation survey).
- After panel completion (43 of the participants responded to the post-deliberation survey).

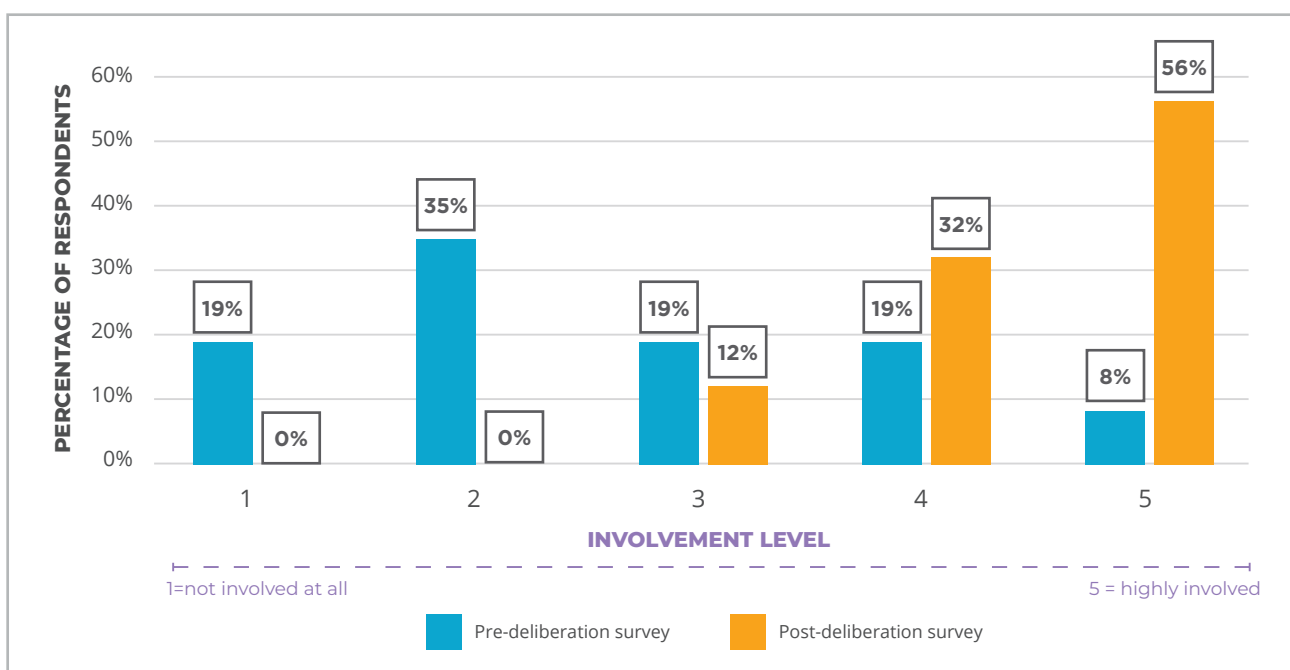
Feedback received has been summarised in the sections below.

INVOLVEMENT IN CIVIC AFFAIRS

The panel members that responded said they were much more likely to participate in civic activities (i.e. get involved in government decisions that affect them) after being involved in the panel process.

At the beginning of the process, 54% of the group either were not involved in civic activities in the past or had had very little involvement and 27% said they had been involved or very involved in the past. By the end of the process, 88% said they thought they would be involved or highly involved in government decisions that affected them in future. This is a **61-percentage point increase** or a **225% growth** in the number of participants who said they would be involved or highly involved in civic affairs.

PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How involved are you currently when it comes to government/authority decisions that affect you?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	Now you have had this experience, how involved might you be in the future when it comes to government/authority decisions that affect you?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not involved at all and 5=highly involved



INFLUENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Two pre-deliberation questions were asked to understand the level of confidence the panel members had in influencing decision making before commencing the process.

Pre-deliberation question A: Panel members were asked how confident they had been in the past that community input would influence Ausgrid's decisions. At the start of the process, 48% said they were very doubtful and doubtful that community input would influence Ausgrid's decisions in the past. 12% said they were confident or very confident.

PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION A	In the past, how confident have you been that community input will influence this organisation's decisions?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident

Pre-deliberation question B: The panel members were then asked to rate their level of confidence in Ausgrid implementing the work of the panel. 35% responded that they were confident or very confident, and 10% were doubtful or very doubtful.

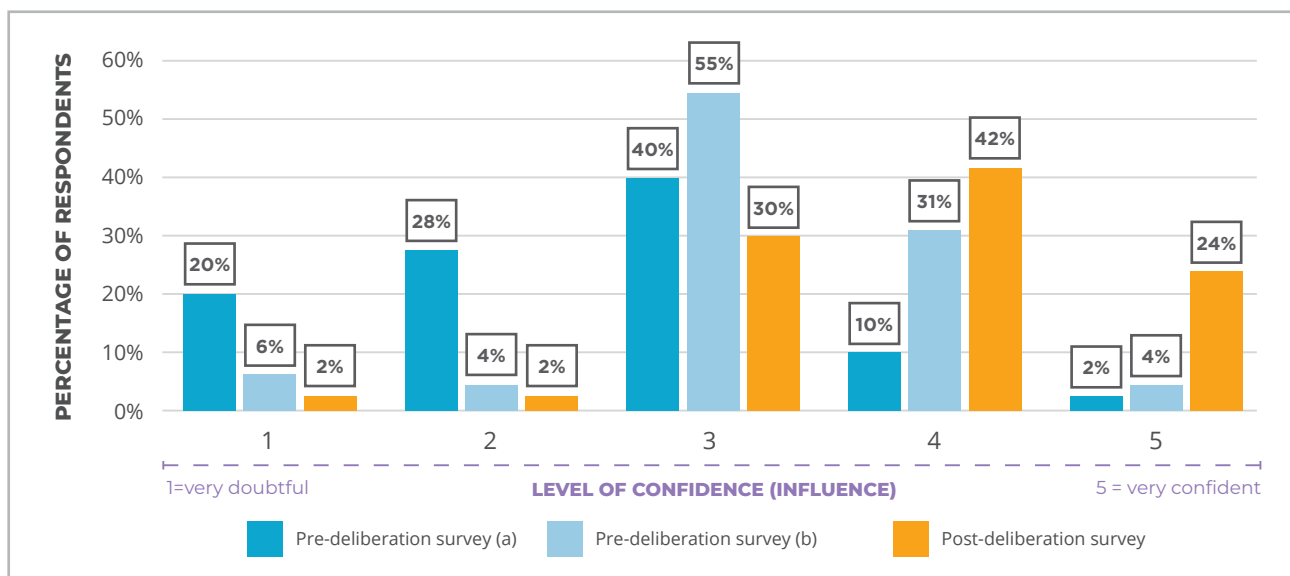
PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION B	How confident are you that your recommendations on this current issue will be implemented by Ausgrid?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident

Post-deliberation question: Following the panel process, 66% of panellists were very confident or confident that the work of the panel would be implemented and only 4% were very doubtful or very doubtful.

This represents a **53-percentage point increase** or **442% growth** in the number of participants who were confident or very confident when compared to pre-deliberation question A (past confidence in community influence over Ausgrid's decisions).

It also represents a **30-percentage point increase** or **86% growth** when compared with the response to pre-deliberation question B (confidence in Ausgrid implementing the panel's recommendations).

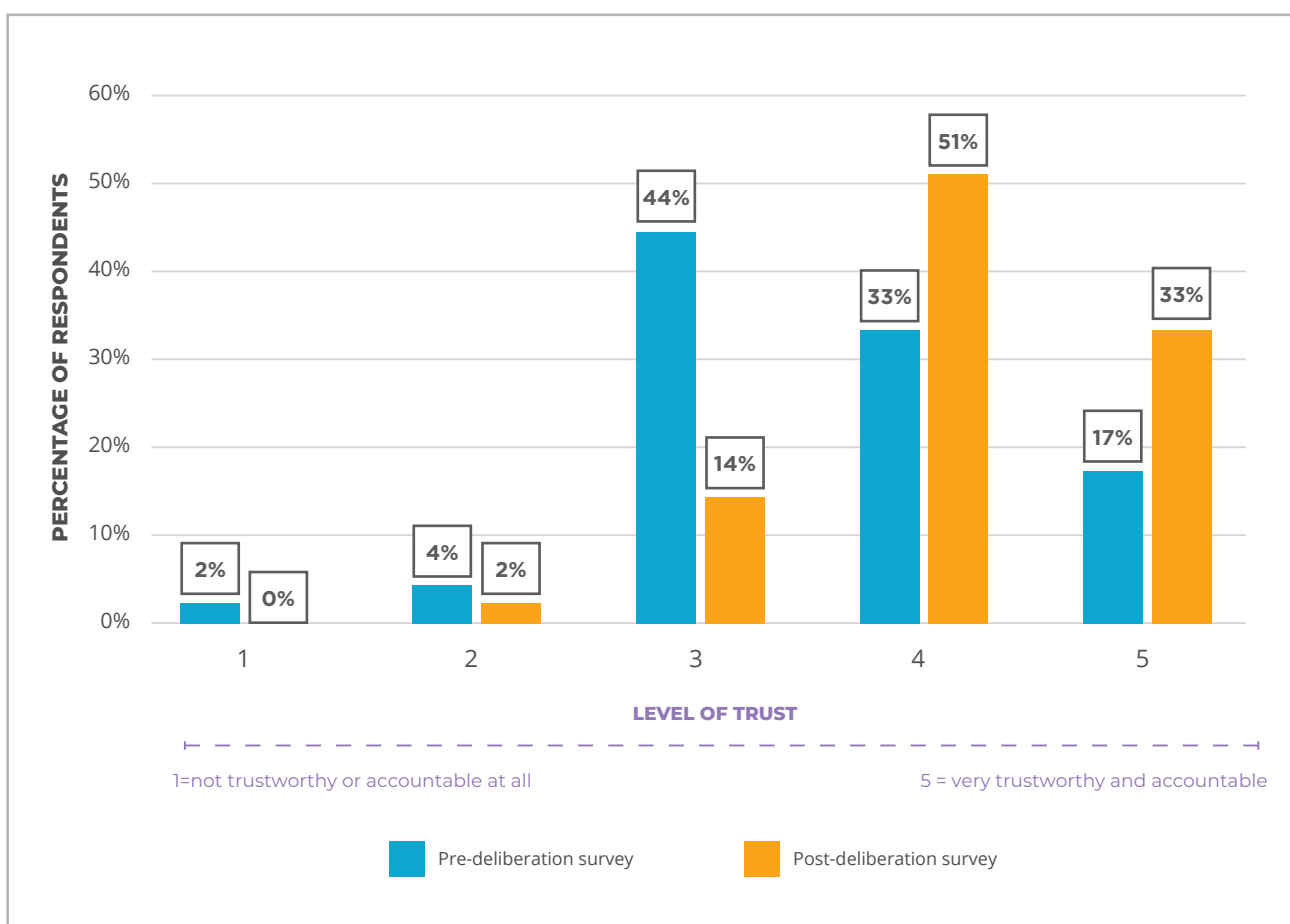
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	Now that you have been through the process, how confident are you that your recommendations will be implemented by Ausgrid?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident



TRUST

Overall, the panel's level of trust in Ausgrid improved by the end of the deliberative process. 83% of panel members felt that Ausgrid was very trustworthy and accountable or trustworthy and accountable by the completion of the process, compared with 50% at the commencement of deliberations. This is a **33-percentage point increase** or **66% growth** in the number of participants who said they they trusted Ausgrid.

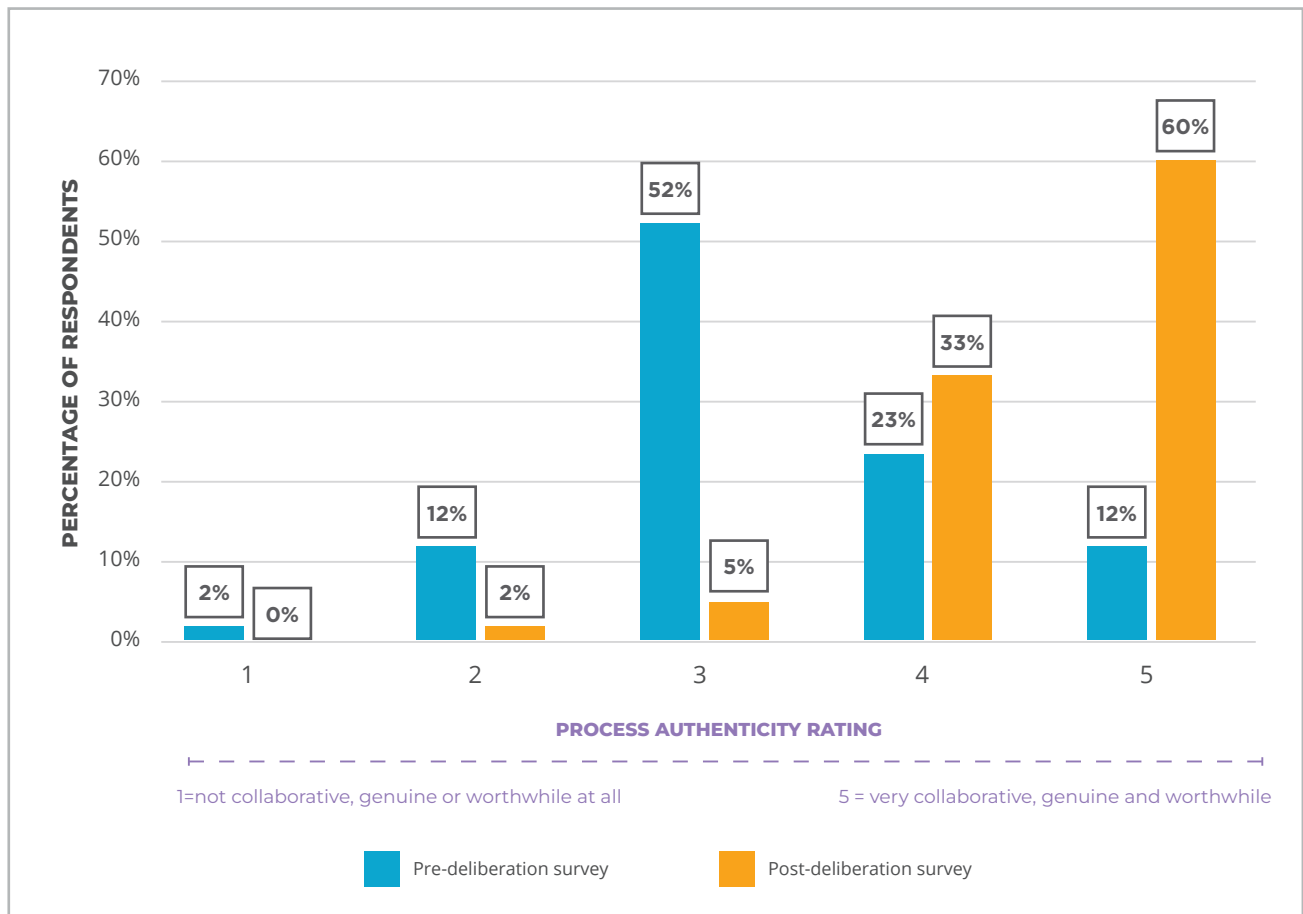
PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	In your view, how accountable or trustworthy do you think Ausgrid is?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How accountable or trustworthy do you think Ausgrid is now that you have been through this experience?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not trustworthy or accountable at all and 5=very trustworthy and accountable



COLLABORATION & OVERALL PROCESS AUTHENTICITY

Before deliberations commenced, panel members were asked to indicate how collaborative, genuine and worthwhile they thought Ausgrid had been in the past with their community engagement activities. 35% felt that Ausgrid had been 'collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' or 'very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' in the past. 93% of panellists felt that this process was 'collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' or 'very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' by the end of the panel sessions. This is a **58-percentage point increase** or a **166% growth** in the number of participants who said they felt this process was collaborative, genuine and worthwhile (compared to views of past engagement).

PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How collaborative, genuine and worthwhile do you think Ausgrid's community engagement activities have been in the past?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How collaborative, genuine and worthwhile do you think Ausgrid's engagement activities have been through this experience?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not collaborative, genuine or worthwhile at all and 5=very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile



CLEAR, USEFUL AND BALANCED INFORMATION

Throughout the deliberations, panel members raised their level of knowledge of Ausgrid and the services that they provide to their customers. It is important to hear post the panel process how this information helped them with their task. **93% of panellists** felt that the information was 'very clear, useful and balanced' or 'clear, useful and balanced'. This question was only asked at the end of the process and hence there is no comparison.

POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How clear, useful and balanced was the information provided to you during this process? (i.e. to what extent was it helpful in supporting you to respond to your remit).
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not clear, useful or balanced and 5=very clear, useful and balanced



UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE

Three questions were asked at the completion of the Ausgrid Voice of the Community Panel to better understand the overall experience of the process. All questions were asked in the post-deliberation survey.

Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



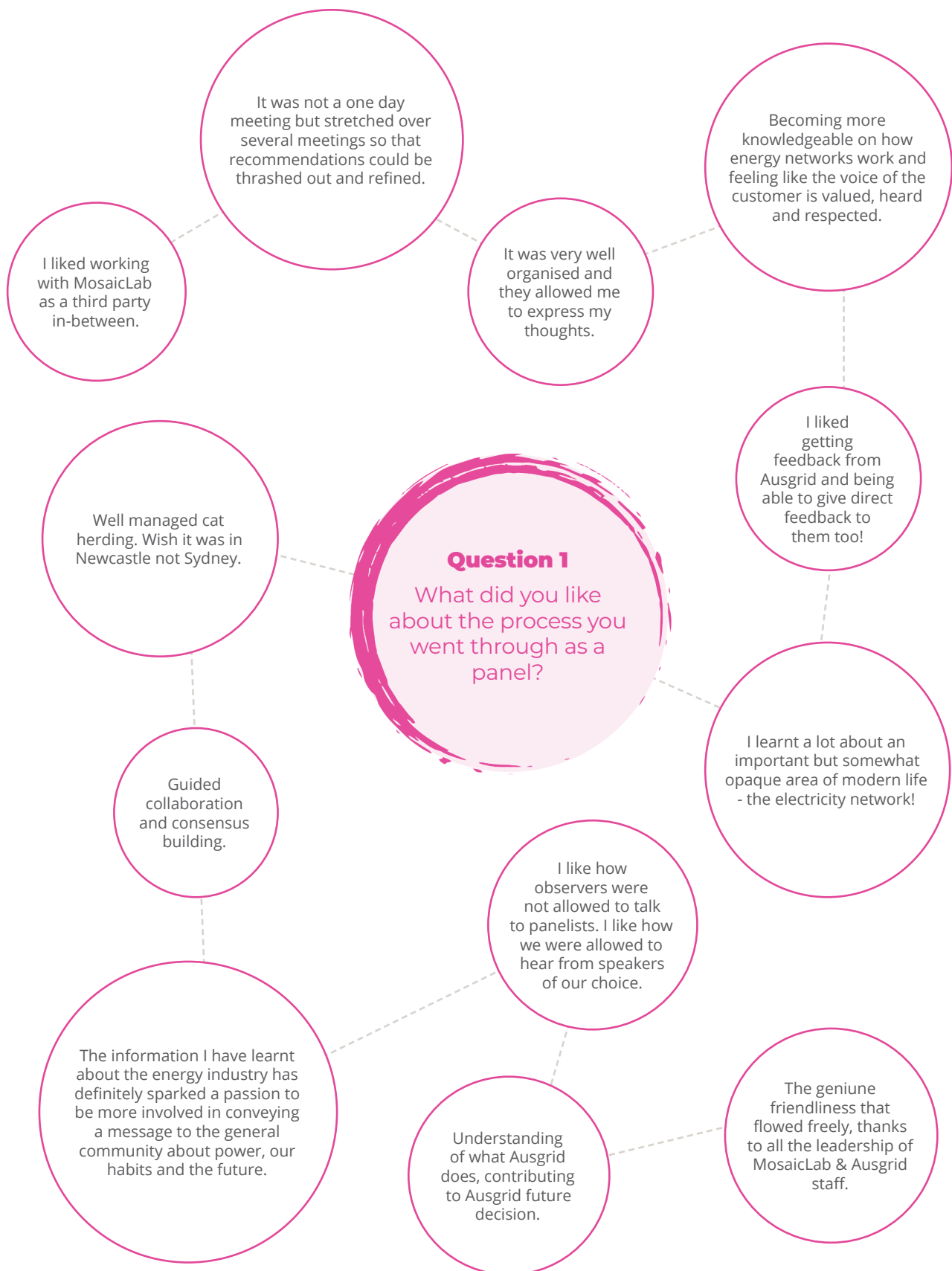
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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.

Thoroughly enjoyed the experience and would love to be involved in anything moving forward with the recommendations.

Liked the process and the people.

Panel members who routinely interject while someone else is speaking should be called out by the facilitators and cautioned. Otherwise they are emboldened even more.

More challenging and time consuming than expected.

Thankyou was an amazing experience :)

The MosaicLab team Nicole, Claire, Scott, Noa, Katie etc were brilliant at facilitating the whole process and ensuring it ran smoothly.

A brilliant exercise in not only herding cats, but keeping them focused on their ultimate goal, and achieving it on schedule! Well done to the facilitators, very impressive - Nicole, Scott & Claire take a bow!

Question 3

Any other comments about the process?

Although it was all very interesting and important work, sometimes it felt like information overload without enough time to digest everything.

Overall a great process and I would be keen to participate again in the future.

The remit was very limited. I didn't feel that it got to the heart of what Ausgrid really wanted to know. We got there in the end to a large degree but specific questions would have enabled us to get their earlier and with more clarity.

Overall it was a fantastic experience and I am grateful to be able to have participated. Nicole and Scott from MosaicLab in particular were just unreal throughout the whole process and a huge thanks to Kate from Ausgrid for all of her hardwork and long evenings!

The microphone feedback was extremely annoying to my ears.

It was fab.

...continued overleaf

Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



NEXT STEPS

The panel's recommendations were presented by the panel to Richard Gross, CEO of Ausgrid and Helen Nugent Chair of the Board.

Recall sessions have been planned for the evening of September 21 and October 8. These sessions will provide an opportunity for the panel to hear how Ausgrid have incorporated their recommendations into the draft plan and to test and provide feedback on the plan.



Letter to the Panel

Dear Panel member,

We are bd infrastructure – a small, independently owned consultancy firm.

Since September last year, we have been working with Ausgrid to engage small business customers and residential customers in vulnerable circumstances as part of the preparation of the Reset Proposal. We are writing to share some insights from these conversations.

We are also sharing the outcomes of discussions that Ausgrid has held a with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) businesses and households, and communities impacted by disruptive events.

In total, these conversations have involved 33 organisations, 30 small business customers and 47 residential customers.

- **Lived Experience:** 18 organisations and 11 residential customers.
- **Small business:** 9 organisations and six small business owners.
- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse:** 10 business owners and 18 CALD residential customers.
- **Natural Disasters:** Six organisations, three small business owners and 12 residential customers.

The conversations in the first three streams focussed on the topics of:

price and affordability

network resilience and outages

transition to net zero

customer service

The natural disasters stream touched on the network resilience topic, but also customer service.

Through this engagement, Ausgrid has invested in strong relationships and partnerships with organisations that advocate for customers and communities, and has reached a rich and representative group of people. Everyone was generous with their time and ideas for how to improve the electricity network, now and into the future.

The tables below summarise what customers told Ausgrid through this engagement. Based on this summary, we've created three descriptions that reflect what customers in each stream might say about Ausgrid in five years time if all their feedback was taken on board. This might help you with your deliberations.

However, this letter does not represent how Ausgrid can or will respond. That is for you to shape.

Our best wishes to you as you work through this exciting future network planning process. We can't wait to see and share what you come up with!

To make sure we, and the VoC Panel, could consider the full range of perspectives from across our customers, we worked with our partners bd Infrastructure to talk with a broad range of people. Here's bd's report, summarising what we heard. Thx Ausgrid



Yours faithfully,
Rachel, Laura, Jaime and Alex

bd infrastructure

What should Ausgrid look like in five years?



Lived experience customers:

Ausgrid takes responsibility for the wider electricity system even though their role is confined to distribution. They have every customer at their heart. They seek to support and care for their customers and reach out to us with empathy.

Every facet of Ausgrid's customer service is accessible to the broad customer base. They take a leadership stance on social issues like housing tenure and a fair transition to net zero.

They partner with community organisations to help people access the benefits of solar and renewables.

They help to strengthen community resilience, by sharing intelligence and advice with local services about preparing and responding to outages and disruptive events.

Ausgrid helps people transition to net zero solutions that best suit their individual circumstances, even if this is outside the conforming view of good business for a distribution network.



Small and medium business owners:

Ausgrid values us for the role we play in our communities and economy, and for our significance to its customer base.

Ausgrid respects our entrepreneurial spirit and helps us to build our business cases for distributed energy resources and the transition to net zero.

Ausgrid is known within the electricity sector for the tailored approach to dealing with small business – they provide dedicated business advice and customer service channels and work alongside peak bodies to assist in future business planning.

They acknowledge the diversity of business types and priorities, knowing that some of us plan for a week ahead while others have sophisticated management systems. We really appreciate that Ausgrid never underestimates the impact outages have on business operations and they always provide us with information tips to manage outages.

Ausgrid respects the foresight and practicality of business owners and our suggestions – we like that they don't wait for a regulatory submission period to implement our ideas as business improvement actions.



Culturally and linguistically diverse customers:

Ausgrid embraces the cultural diversity of its customers. Ausgrid knows our communities have different interests, needs and abilities to transition to the future network.

Some communities need information and will take their own next steps. Others need deeper partnership and support.

Ausgrid is intentional about helping us share the benefits of solar and other renewable energy sources.

Ausgrid recognises our communities share information in different ways and always provides the information we need to our first languages.

Information about DER and network outages is provided in an accessible way and Ausgrid's customer-focussed approach is the envy of other networks.

Engagement highlights



	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Purpose	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to hear from low-income households, people with disabilities, young and older people, and renters. People in the Upper Hunter and southwest Sydney were targeted, because several types of vulnerabilities overlap in these areas.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand small business' experiences of the electricity network. We focussed our conversations on the Upper Hunter, Pittwater and Sydney's Inner West, and worked through small businesses associations, chambers of commerce and councils in each area.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand CALD communities' experiences of the electricity network. Ausgrid worked with the Ethnic Communities' Council to hold discussions in Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand the impact of disruptive events on communities and identify opportunities for Ausgrid to support building resilience in the future. Ausgrid worked with Nous Group to hold these discussions in four areas.
Price and affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income households face multiple pressures. Electricity consumption is increasing, and the pressures of prices continue to be felt by low-income households. • Housing tenure is a major barrier to a just energy system. People on low incomes are more likely to rent or live in low quality stock. This limits options to keep bills low through energy efficiency measures, solar panels and batteries. More affordable homes sometimes lie at the end of the network where supply can be less reliable. • The current system is complex and is becoming more complex. Focusing on individual choice or action to meet net zero targets (switch suppliers, install solar, be energy efficient) adds burden to already stressed households. Equal access to affordable electricity is a human right, not a consumer choice. • A health and wellbeing lens should be applied to energy concessions and rebates to address a broader array of vulnerabilities. • The current system is complex and is becoming more complex. This disadvantages people who can't engage with billing or customer service systems for reasons of accessibility, crisis, language or literacy. • New technology and customer information can be inaccessible. Billing systems, smart meters, and websites often can't be accessed by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of energy is a top priority for small business. This was further compounded by the pandemic. Ausgrid's reduced prices are not being felt by some small businesses or passed on by retailers and businesses want help finding the best offers. • Small businesses are concerned about fixed costs in their bills. Even when energy efficiency reduces use, customers perceive that retailers are increasing the fixed costs which can push electricity bills higher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of energy is a low or medium concern for CALD businesses. For some, affordability is an incentive to invest in solar but for others it is a barrier to individual action. 	



	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Network resilience and outages:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impacts of outages are much greater on people in vulnerable circumstances, particularly those in regional areas where outages can be more frequent and longer, and which are further away from services. The impact of a lost freezer of food on a low-income or rural household, or lost communications channels for people with sensory disabilities, can be profound. Young people want to see organisations to take action to address climate change and see the concept of a 'resilient network' as a Band-Aid solution to a major issue. Communities need power urgently after an outage. They need to connect with loved ones, manage their lives and plan their next steps. Many organisations are helping communities respond to extreme events. A combined effort could deliver safe spaces and refuge hubs at swimming pools, libraries and other community facilities. Outage and emergency information is inconsistent and doesn't go far enough. People don't just need to know 'where' and 'how long' but also 'what to do' and 'where to go'. People with a disability are highly impacted during outages as it affects their ability to connect through tech-enabled communications channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small business owners are highly invested in their enterprise and are highly sensitive to loss of income, revenue, bookings or reputation. Some businesses have plans and bookings months in advance and feel planned outages should provide for more notice than just 14 days', to allow businesses to better plan. Small businesses need more direction and advice to help during an outage. Not just information on when and how long, but what to do and where to go. Outages have indirect impacts for businesses: interrupted supply affects product quality, supplies can be ruined, servers take time to reboot; equipment needs to be recalibrated, electricians need to be called out, cancelled bookings ruin reputation. Small businesses want simple and practical advice from Ausgrid as detailed below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CALD businesses want Ausgrid to plan with their needs in mind – no planned outages during working hours; SMS, email and Social Media outage alerts; a dedicated business hotline to report outages; timely notifications that include the expected duration 	<p>What happens during disruptive events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fallen powerlines increase the risk to residents' safety. They can also delay efforts by emergency services to evacuate residents during disruptive events. Prolonged power outages affect access to emergency services. Residents rely heavily on electronic devices to receive updates from emergency services and, where necessary, request assistance. Prolonged power outages can increase the hardship experienced by the community, preventing residents from accessing basic amenities. Prolonged power outages delay a community's recovery from a disruptive event by preventing residents from accessing social and online networks.



	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Transition to net zero:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in vulnerable circumstances care about a low carbon future but their options to take action (time, housing type and tenure, priorities, money) are limited. Social and private renters can't invest in Distributed Energy Resources (DER) and landlords have little incentives to invest. • Not everyone can have solar but all can share the benefits of renewables. Youth representatives viewed decisions about DER as complex, requiring time and resource to get across the technical details. Customers have an appetite for DER resources that can be shared such as solar gardens and virtual power plants • Electric vehicles may not be right for rural communities. They are not suitable for country life even if charge points are provided. Their introduction could increase the cost of grid power and petrol, regional communities rely on. • Housing is key to low carbon future. Greater energy efficiency in social housing, and embedded networks in housing developments, could make inroads to net zero targets. • Accessibility of information and technology is a barrier – solar panels and smart metres are not accessible to people with sensory disabilities, is seen as unobjective and sales-based, information does not address consumer rights and is not in plain English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small businesses need information and resources to make the transition to net zero or see how they can play a part. This needs to include objective and impartial information on options (batteries, solar) and help to analyse the costs and benefits options. • Property tenure creates barriers for small businesses adopt energy efficacy and DER because many don't own their premises. There is a desire for opportunities to build co-investment in rooftop solar into leasing agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses owners are taking steps to become more energy efficient, but they look to Ausgrid and the government for support tailored to their needs. Businesses that rent premises support incentives for their landlords to invest in solar. • CALD customers are enthusiastic about reaching net zero and support DER technologies. Some communities need time to establish their roots in the local community first while others are ready to make the transition. Customers look to Ausgrid to support investment in DER technologies including subsidised batteries and solar. 	



The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances

The experiences of small businesses

The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities

Communities that have experienced disruptive events

Customer service: needs to be streamlined and accessible

- Streamlined processes and simple, accessible information would help a wide variety of customers.
- The deaf and blind communities are large and diverse and face a variety of accessibility challenges. Blind people can't access bills or smart metres, English is a second language for many Auslan users and information isn't available in that format.

- Small businesses want to feel as valued to Ausgrid as large customers and assisted to find the best approach for their retail plans, customer service and move to net zero.
- Small business owners want a tailored approach – such as customised information and a dedicated hotline they can use to get advice when an outage or maintenance occurs. They feel Ausgrid's providers doesn't always prioritise their customer service needs.
- Small business owners want an empathetic response from customer service representatives who can understand what may be going through.

- CALD customers expect supportive customer service and interpreting services.
- CALD customers have a very strong desire for education and information across a variety of topics: what to do during an unplanned outage, how to manage electricity consumption and cost, information about 'green' and DER technologies.

The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be active in initiatives to end energy poverty. • be part of developing energy solutions for the rental housing sector. • be part of addressing the structural problems in the energy network. • consider rebates to people with health conditions, or a single affordable scheme or tiered tariff structure for vulnerable customers. • work with other utilities and community organisations to simplify systems and create training packages to help customer access services and payment schemes. • ensure its digital systems comply with accessibility guidelines and interface with smart phone applications. • have different responses for different communities. • take action to address the root causes of climate change that lead to outages. • provide stand-alone power sources during outages, such community generators, and should co-design these solutions with communities. • partner with others to provide responses to outages • work with other organisations during outages to provide 'joined up' information and advice and share it with the local services that communities look to for advice • make sure outage communication is accessible and varied and provide longer lead times for planned outages. • address the issue at a systematic level, focusing on the impact of, not access to, DER. Tariff designs, community batteries and solar gardens are part of this. • consider those 'left behind' in the transition to Electric Vehicles. • help give renters more choice in embedded networks, and partner and advocate for greater housing and energy choice. • provide real people for customers to talk to, who is empathetic and empowered to help. • provide disability awareness training for call centre staff. • provide voice-based information for visually impaired customers • ensure its website works with screen readers and has a responsive live chat functionality • use captioned telephone technology and SMS alerts with Auslan videos
The experiences of small businesses	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support businesses to understand their energy bills, including Ausgrid's contribution, and how they can find the best energy offers. • work with local council small business teams to build capacity on how to respond to outages • provide better notice of planned outages and more useful information on what do to lower the impact (for example turning off the air conditioning to prevent tripping when the power is restored). • provide more information to small businesses on options for taking up Distributed Energy Resources. • improve responsiveness to small business needs (for example by reducing the long windows provided for meter reading and responding to simple requests for support). • Provide customer service training to maintenance contractors.
Communities that have experienced disruptive events	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the community in building resilience through: • resilient network infrastructure – residential customers expect Ausgrid to consider all options for cost-effective investment in resilient network assets. • backup power sources Residential customers would value greater access to backup power sources during disruptive events. • improved and personalised communication – customers desire personalised communication about the expected duration of unplanned power outages. • first responders expect greater strategic engagement with Ausgrid around planning for disruptive events.



REPORT PREPARED BY:

mosaicLAB

www.mosaiclab.com.au



PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to transcribe participants comments accurately a small number may not have been included in this summary due to the legibility of the content. Please email Claire Connell at claire@mosaiclab.com.au for any suggested additions.

This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of the Ausgrid project working group. The sole purpose of this report is to provide a report of the process undertaken by the Voice of the Community Panel.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by Ausgrid. Ausgrid can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a Victorian-based consultancy that specialises in community & stakeholder engagement, facilitation, negotiation, strategic planning and coaching.



B. Voice of the Community Panel Report



Ausgrid Community Panel Report

Remit:

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community. The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid.

Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to today's customers?

Introduction

This report has been prepared by a diverse mix of 45 residential customers from across Ausgrid region. We were chosen to represent the different regions and the needs of Ausgrid's customers across its network including those who rent, own home, or solar owners as well as age and gender in an effort to properly reflect the actual diverse customer base. This was further broken down into three regions, Hunter Valley, Central Coast, and the Greater Sydney area. During the eight meetings spread over four months from February to June 2022 (both online and face-to-face) we discussed the remit of: "How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?"

Through this panel we considered how Ausgrid could understand and respond to the various issues that have important implications and effects on electricity bills, the resilience of the network and the reliability of supply to the customers. The panel received input and information from industry experts, community representatives, and council from within Ausgrid and outside. The panel was

facilitated by an impartial outside organization who helped focus the panel on our remit and provided the information requested by the panel to make informed choices. Through the recommendations listed below the group has tried to address the various issues such as Net Zero, climate change, cyber attacks, and future innovation and technology.

How we define 'fairness'

Due to the myriad of different perspectives we are considering throughout this report, the following is a list of guiding principles of fairness for both today and tomorrow. This is in the absence of being able to provide a catch-all definition of fairness that applies to every aspect of this report.

Reliable access to energy is a basic human right. If wide-reaching solutions are not provided by the private sector within this regulatory period, it is Ausgrid's corporate social responsibility to prioritize community energy projects and incentives.

Fairness in terms of accessibility: The main priority of our recommendations is for every Ausgrid customer to have reliable access to energy supply, despite where they are situated (city or rural).

Fairness in terms of cost: In order to provide the fair distribution of power to all customers, the cost of the service is spread throughout the network to share the financial load evenly regardless of basic cost. This cost would also include supporting the implementation of new technologies.

'New technologies' means: Infrastructure that is not part of Ausgrid's current service offering.

A fair cost is measured by investing in medium to long term projects, for example, installing better materials for poles and wires to withstand environmental damages over time.

Fairness in terms of the environment: We should balance the environmental cost of energy supply and usage against the implementation of new technologies in the long term. We should strive to implement renewable technologies to minimise the impact of climate change with emphasis on corporate social responsibility ("**CSR**"). In this context, CSR means actively considering environmental costs and impacts, in addition to financial ramifications.

Finally, we should consider the costs, financial or otherwise, that these choices have on future generations, while balancing the upfront costs towards current generations.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Heading	Advocate and lobby for reform to energy regulations to improve service to customers.
Description	<p>The regulations by the Federal government, State government, AEMC (AER) NEM (any regulatory body) are too limiting to allow for Ausgrid to innovate resilience, affordability and to be fair.</p> <p>Ausgrid should establish what to advocate for in consultation with customers.</p> <p>We want Ausgrid to play a role in community benefits and network solutions. We also want Ausgrid to partner with local councils and technology providers to increase the uptake / implementation of community batteries, SAPS and solar gardens.</p>
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reducing costs to Ausgrid by bypassing time consuming/expensive regulations rather than putting that money into innovation in network management/technology.• Reform the framework which is limiting the extent to which Ausgrid can address emerging issues in response to things such as emerging technologies, climate change, affordability crisis.• Advocacy on behalf of consumers for change to key stakeholders.• Active community involvement can help Ausgrid influence change for existing regulations (this is within Ausgrid's ability). <p>We understand there are limitations to Ausgrid's ability to implement innovative</p>

changes, however we believe this recommendation should remain broad to cater for future limitations.

Ausgrid to implement their corporate / social responsibility by offsetting by offsetting their corporate carbon footprint by funding community energy solutions

Projects that don't provide a network benefit should still be pursued for the benefit of the greater good.

Recommendation 2

Heading	Incentivise the adoption of cost effective renewable energy, balancing the speed and uptake of technologies, while leading by example.
Description	<p>To head toward Net Zero Ausgrid should work with third party companies to help finance and support renewable energy alternatives.</p> <p>Ausgrid can work in cooperation with both local and federal governments in encouraging a controlled approach to the adoption of renewable technology.</p> <p>Ausgrid should continue their internal Net Zero efforts by adopting appropriate technology as it becomes economically feasible.</p> <p>Ausgrid should encourage retailers to work more with renewable energy suppliers.</p> <p>We need to consider the end-of-life of technology: disposal also has environmental impacts.</p>
Rationale	<p>It is important for Ausgrid to work with third party companies to find cost effective solutions to strive towards Net Zero.</p> <p>The way Ausgrid sets its prices and subsidies (who pays for what) can encourage/discourage the rate at which specific technologies are taken up by consumers.</p> <p>We want to encourage the adoption of a <u>mix</u> of technologies because each technology has different environmental impacts, and new technologies are always emerging.</p>

	<p>Ausgrid should introduce a pro-active and targeted mixed investment plan between \$100-\$150 million to achieve net zero and minimise barriers for 85% of impacted customers. This investment plan may be offset by the introduction of a two-way tariff system (see Recommendation 9).</p>
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Recommendation 3

Heading	Enhanced community engagement and communication
Description	<p>Ausgrid, in partnership with Retailers, providing cost effective clear and simple explanations of the factors impacting customer charges and the reliability of electricity supply.</p> <p>This is at an individual consumer level as well as aggregated. For example time of energy consumption, load used, surge, using smartmeters if possible. Advocate for the rollout of smartmeters and provide more information on smartmeters, and how to read existing meters.</p> <p>It needs to be highly relevant and targeted to them specifically, ideally using real-time information.</p> <p>Provide consumers with a description, in plain language, of what Ausgrid does and what it doesn't do, any large projects coming up and the costs and benefits of those projects to consumers, as well as overall performance of any plans Ausgrid has finished. As well as what retailers provide and don't provide.</p> <p>Use various communication channels to provide additional information on customer bills (e.g. via, email, sms, website, letter drop, social media (eg local facebook groups).)</p>
Rationale	<p>People have different abilities to find, access and understand this information. It is easy to disregard information when you don't see how it matters to you personally.</p> <p>Consumers can choose to change their usage behaviour if they have this information.</p>

Recommendation 4

Heading	Visibility of Ausgrid costs to customers.
Description	<p>Consumers to be able to get breakdown of the Ausgrid component of their bill via the Ausgrid website with granularity such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cost of Operations• Maintenance of existing• Investment<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ - In existing○ - In future capability <p>At a consumer level in relation to their region.</p> <p>Providing this breakdown is an initiative that Ausgrid can facilitate. Ausgrid to clearly communicate the location of the information through their social media, community media and programs.</p> <p>Ausgrid to continue to advocate to the AER/AEMC for the increased visibility on customers bills directly.</p>
Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To make any increase in costs more transparent and justifiable to consumers.• To inform and educate customers• Social Accountability

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To continue to advocate with the AER/AEMC to relax regulations to allow Ausgrid to put information on consumers bills. |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Recommendation 5

Heading	Maintain and improve current emergency procedures.
Description	<p>Maintain and improve current emergency procedures by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Invest in Ausgrid outage response and resilience program2. Incremental improvement in communication to customers with local information3. Keep the KPI's that measure<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. effectiveness of service delivery/response times.b. How easy it is to deal with planned outagec. How easy it is to get information about an unplanned outage
Rationale	<p>Maintain current level of service provided and make incremental improvements to critical areas like life support service (increase investment in mobile generators) and other areas of needs.</p> <p>Investment in this area links to recommendation 10.</p>

Recommendation 6

Heading	Ausgrid to collaborate on research & innovation on emerging technologies and best practices.
Description	<p>INNOVATION</p> <p>Find the most cost-effective technologies and how to implement them.</p> <p>Allow proven financial benefits of NIAC to be recycled back into new initiatives in the following year. (rather than pass on benefits to customers directly)</p> <p>We want Ausgrid to move from the proposed increase in spend (12m pa capex + 1.5m pa opex) to the higher increased spend (16m pa capex + 2m pa opex) to achieve increased innovation *IF* the annual bill cost difference is not a lot. We understand this is a 30c per year difference for an average non-solar household.</p> <p>CYBER</p> <p>Investment of \$2.96/pa as a base, giving Ausgrid the option to go to the AER to shift up to greater investment (example \$3.30/pa) if Ausgrid can show that it's needed or there are more benefits in order to protect the grid.</p>
Rationale	<p>Community projects around new tech (eg: Yackandanda battery) provides a shortcut to invaluable knowledge about what works and what to avoid.</p> <p>Ausgrid can reduce the cost of finding and implementing new technologies by collaborating or adopting solutions tested and implemented by other grid operators, other states, even other countries.</p> <p>Ausgrid had 2 billion cyber attack attempts in 3 months on their infrastructure.</p>

Recommendation 7

Heading	Executing collaborative innovation and research
Description	Work towards improving the network and net zero without being limited by legislation.
Rationale	<p>Other Australian collaborators: CSIRO, universities with a specialty faculty for energy/Net Zero, members from other states and providers in Australia, etc. should be added to the NIAC - to conduct scoping studies to identify international organisations undertaking innovative research implementation, piloting of new tech. (philanthropic perspective - where it's for the people, not just about money/profit, and data is transparent and able to be scrutinized). Collaborate with lived experience experts i.e. regular people who are representative of your consumer demographic).</p> <p>Look to international collaborations also, such as new innovations being applied in Switzerland and Sweden, overseas companies. Cost/benefit to be clear and proven on each investment/grant.</p> <p>Learn from the examples from the other states and how they've already implemented and/or rolled out their updates and changes to learn from their mistakes and take away the positives. This includes the other distributors across the country as well as state governments.</p>

Recommendation 8

Heading	Investing in capital expenditure (Capex) to reduce future operational expenditure (Opex).
Description	<p>Assets listed as Capex have long term benefits but are also investments. Ausgrid must balance these long term investments with the ongoing maintenance of Opex to ensure customers continue to receive reliable access to the network.</p> <p>We recommend Ausgrid spend at least \$5m p.a. Which is equivalent to \$1.72 p.a for homes without solar and \$1.99 p.a for homes with solar.</p> <p>If Ausgrid has a 75% or more confidence level in the data regarding occurrence of extreme weather, then we recommend Ausgrid make upfront investments.</p>
Rationale	<p>Conducting financial viability analysis for all major investment decisions will determine the value for money both short and long term. Ausgrid's predictions for the future will determine the cost sharing of assets across the customer base - who pays, how much, and when.</p> <p>There should be a collaborative approach with the regulator when investing in major projects to improve the outcome for the consumer and taxpayer.</p> <p>When sharing these costs amongst customers, Ausgrid should consider who benefits from the investment in the asset.</p>

Recommendation 9

Heading	Influence customer behaviour with a flexible two-way pricing mechanism in order to optimise electricity supply and demand, balancing time of use, time of feed-in, and reliability.
Description	<p>The hard challenge is that the cost of maintaining the distribution network is spread across all consumers in the network, regardless of their usage and feed in.</p> <p>The challenging cost of network maintenance and improvement is impacted by imports/exports and needs to be fairly distributed.</p> <p>Ausgrid should charge retailers a time of day (or real-time network congestion based) tariff for customers who export power to the grid, in a manner that optimizes consumer pricing and network stability and cost ie. solar exports are priced differently at different times of day depending on grid load/demand like the current time-of-use import tariff.</p> <p>This pricing mechanism should be opt-in based initially, with a view to transition to all-in as part of the next 5 year planning window.</p> <p>For example: A customer with existing solar & retail agreement should not be charged more than 25% of their existing export tariff</p>
Rationale	Network capacity build-out is driven by peak usage. Customers that contribute to increasing that peak should arguably pay for the privilege of impacting grid stability negatively.

Recommendation 10

Heading	Review minimum level of reliability of supply
Description	<p>By being bound to IPART minimum standards, reliability is lower than the average experience of consumers and rural consumers have an even lower baseline level of reliability.</p> <p>Ausgrid should communicate (via retailers & general public) the minimum reliability standards that Ausgrid is committed to, and that the difference between urban and rural consumers is almost double.</p> <p>Look at redistribution of support to network areas (urban vs rural) to build resilience and address network issues (outages, supply etc.)</p>
Rationale	<p>Maintaining a standard of supply that is equitable, for example population increasing in regions, expecting supply standards of cities.</p> <p>Investigate local grid & storage options to bridge geographical constraints. Invest in network reliability in highest risk areas, e.g. \$40 million PA long-live capex (Dial 15). This also relates to the following recommendations within the report:</p> <p>The panel would like Ausgrid to look for network solutions that reduce long-term opex (Dial 10).</p> <p>The panel would like Ausgrid to pursue an efficient mix of capital and operational investment opportunities to ensure the ongoing reliable provision of electricity (Dial 11).</p>

	<p>Ausgrid should make an upfront investment with some caution to deliver innovation and benefits for both opex and capex type investments (Dial 12).</p>
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Minority Reports

A minority report is a view from a small group (of at least 3 people) about a recommendation previously outlined in the report, or another important piece of content that these people felt was not adequately covered by the majority views. These minority views provide diverse views and are not held by the majority of the participants in the panel.

Minority Report 1

Heading	We recommend Ausgrid implements the best in class cyber security protection.
Description	<p>Our rationale is based on the scale of current cyber attacks, as well as the significant costs of even just one day of no energy. This could include financial costs and costs to lives.</p> <p>Ausgrid needs the best people to protect against the best cyber attackers and emerging technology and approaches for attacks.</p>

C. Town Hall report





VOICE OF COMMUNITY PANEL & WIDER COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

AUSGRID DRAFT PRICE PROPOSAL

What Was Said Report

20 October 2022



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VOC PANEL DEEP DIVE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION

DEEP DIVE WORKSHOP AIMS

On the 17th September 2022 the Voice of Community Panel workshop was jointly conducted by Nicole Hunter from MosaicLab and Scott Lappan-Newton from Gauge Consulting. This workshop aimed to understand communities' preferences and willingness to pay for key aspects of the Draft Plan, specifically:

- ♦ Climate Resilience
- ♦ Net zero
- ♦ Export pricing

Participants heard from guest speakers; Rob Amphlett Lewis, Kara Chan, Evan Riddell and Jonathan Dore.

DEEP DIVE WORKSHOP AGENDA 17TH SEPTEMBER 2022





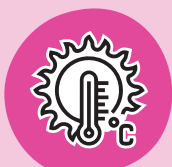
TIME	DETAILS
9.00AM	Welcome and getting started
	Topic 1 : Resilience
10.50AM	Break
11.20AM	Topic 1 : continued
12.00PM	Break
12.10PM	Topic 2 : Net Zero
1.10PM	Break
2.10PM	Topic 2 : continued
3.35PM	Break
3.45PM	Topic 3 : Export Pricing
5.00PM	Close

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES




TOPIC 1: RESILIENCE

CONCERNS

After a presentation about resilience and the types of climate threats that face the distribution network (presenter Kara Chan), the participants formed into small groups to discuss what worried them regarding the climate threats which Ausgrid might help with. The below table outlines the concerns as identified by the participants against each of the threats as well as a 'general/overall' category.

CLIMATE THREAT	COMMUNITY CONCERNS
Fire 	<p>A community battery explosion.</p> <p>Higher concern for regional areas where more resilience is needed. e.g., concrete poles, community batteries.</p> <p>Long outages.</p>
Flood 	<p>Better planning for back-up power in rural areas.</p> <p>Community access to electricity.</p> <p>Concrete poles.</p> <p>Damage to houses, infrastructure, immense and devastating impacts.</p> <p>Transport to community hubs for flood-isolated customers.</p>
Heat 	<p>Access to transport to community hubs.</p> <p>Animals don't matter (scaling issue - farm animals that are insured versus a singular family pet).</p> <p>Backup generators for venue for large group (e.g., libraries, shopping centres) deliver large gains for relatively low costs.</p> <p>Buildings that aren't designed to sustain heat extremes.</p> <p>Early warning for possibility of outage due to heatwaves.</p> <p>How hard will it be to get to the community hub? (Do you have to go through the heat to get to the cool?)</p>

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CLIMATE THREAT	COMMUNITY CONCERNS
Heat (continued) 	<p>Make black roofs on new houses illegal.</p> <p>More extreme cold is also a problem, and Australian houses aren't necessarily good with that.</p> <p>Vulnerable, including older, people with disability, what if there is outage in housing with high numbers of people who can't move easily to comm hub?</p> <p>What about the animals!</p>
Storms 	<p>Communications from Ausgrid affected e.g., updates.</p> <p>Concrete poles for high winds.</p> <p>Early warning to help people of possible outages (with link to information).</p> <p>More zap poles to take in the lightning bolts near townships.</p>
General/Overall 	<p>Climate change - overall issue and govt reluctance do anything about it.</p> <p>Climate change affecting the frequency, duration, and intensity of all extreme weather events.</p> <p>Community communication needs to be improved.</p> <p>Develop a map of areas of concern.</p> <p>Education as how to prepare for these climate threats.</p> <p>Have a clear plan.</p> <p>Lack of electricity access during the disaster for the affected community.</p> <p>Large scales of power outages due to infrastructure damages caused by these disasters.</p> <p>Maybe communications need to be in different languages - fear of people not getting the messages and therefore more at risk.</p> <p>Solutions like undergrounding can make things better for some threats but worse for others.</p> <p>The unpredictability is scary.</p>

OUTCOMES (WHAT AUSGRID SHOULD INVEST IN)

After some further information participants were asked to work in pairs first to identify if there were any missing outcomes. Participants were then placed in groups of four and were asked to really challenge each other around any missing outcomes. No further outcomes were added to the original three presented by Ausgrid.

Then each participant was asked to 'distribute 10 coins' across the 3 outcome areas. The more coins the more they would invest in that outcome. Any reasoning behind their decisions was provided to help explain their choices. These rankings (overall) and the reasoning are provided in the table below.

Outcome three 'better support services available to all customers before, during and after climate events' was valued more highly than the other two outcomes.

OUTCOME	REASONS FOR DISTRIBUTING MORE OR LESS COINS	OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF COINS
OUTCOME #1: SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE CLIMATE RELATED OUTAGES AND IMPACTS FOR THOSE PEOPLE MOST EXPOSED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I put most (4) in this because people most exposed are likely to suffer most impact and therefore the 'clean up' cost will be very high. This will also bring them up to the level with other groups who are not so severely impacted. More (5 votes) - Everyone deserves baseline level of reliability so need to bring these people up to reasonable base level. I score this second highest, because of the equity - everyone deserves minimum level of service from Ausgrid. I spent the most here because this is the area of greatest need, and the funding will make a huge impact to these groups/locations. I spent 4 coins here. I feel that most affected / exposed DO/ MAY need immediate support (EQUITY). I spent 10 on this option due to the fact only small number of people benefit and it increases cost to the consumer. Lack of cost verses benefit. 	41
OUTCOME #2: MODERATELY REDUCE CLIMATE RELATED OUTAGES AND IMPACTS FOR A HIGHER NUMBER OF PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I spent more on this option because it benefits more people and not as expensive to the end user. I spent slightly less than #1 here because the funding will make the most impact for the most people in #1. I spent 2 coins here. This is something that is/may be regional specific. I put equal amount for 2 & 3 (3 each) because more people are helped when they are impacted. This is my lowest score. I believe, Ausgrid has provided high level of service. I would like to see this is maintained and extra on research this to make sure that Ausgrid is on top on this. 	41

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OUTCOME	REASONS FOR DISTRIBUTING MORE OR LESS COINS	OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF COINS
OUTCOME #3: HAVE BETTER SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO ALL CUSTOMERS, BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER CLIMATE EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I spent less on this because if the prevention and preparation are done well then, less money needs to be spent here. ❖ Voted less - Has seen how poor infrastructure spending can lead to problems down the line. ❖ I spent the most (5) here. People are the most vulnerable during/post the events. Hence, they need the support more. ❖ I spent 4 coins on this as ALL customers are entitled to support services regardless of affect or disability (Equity). ❖ I put equal amount for 2 & 3 (3 each) because more people are helped when they are impacted. ❖ Anyone affected by climate events should be prioritized to support services but only in the areas most affected. It would help a lot more people and access to them would be easier. ❖ Spent more - Opportunity to take leadership role and build community and stakeholder involvement in growing resilience together. ❖ I spent 3 as these benefits all customers and it meets the concept of fairness. Emergency situations should be prioritized. ❖ Spent more - Education should be a focus, including to improve understanding of Ausgrid's role, so that community has greater empathy for the difficulty of Ausgrid's task. Where is corporate social responsibility in this conversation and outcome? 	54

INVESTMENT AREAS (WHERE AUSGRID INVESTS)

Participants were asked to think about resilience solutions and what value they placed upon them and where they best felt investments should be made. Participants were asked again, to distribute 10 coins across the three investment areas. What they valued more would receive more coins. Overall Investment area 3 'Areas where people are vulnerable and less able to cope with impacts of increasingly extreme weather' was the most valued investment area. 'Areas where extreme weather impacts the most' (investment area 1) was close behind with 6 less coins, and finally investment area 2 'Areas where there is expected to be the biggest increase in outages due to extreme weather' received the least coins, at 42.

INVESTMENT AREA	REASONS FOR DISTRIBUTING MORE OR LESS COINS	OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF COINS
INVESTMENT AREA #1: Areas where extreme weather impacts the most	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support those with IMMEDIATE NEED (second). I spent most because the adverse events impact many people with immediate and most needs. This could change in the future. My second highest score - they have been impacted the most at this moment (high certainty), investment should go here. Prioritised this area as there is potential these impacts could worsen - they are already vulnerable. I gave this lowest. The population size and needs to taken into account as well before spending money. Spent more - that spending would include the most vulnerable in that area. Common comments - First option brings more certainty and makes more sense to customers why you are investing there (than relying on modelling for predicted impacts as in second option). 	51
INVESTMENT AREA #2: Areas where there is expected to be the biggest increase in outages due to extreme weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (4) Preparation for weather events through planning, modelling and consulting can reduce impacts and costs long-term in case of weather events. #1 & #2 were equal for me, but less than #3: these are important too, but #3 to me is the most important. I spent equal amount (3 each) because we have no certainty into future events, we are only making educated guesses and we can't do everything. So, we prioritise based on data. My least vote went here, two reasons: - this is still prediction, it may change - people impacted may be able to cope better. Common comments - Second option enables us to get ahead and reduce impacts and long-term costs. 	42

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INVESTMENT AREA	REASONS FOR DISTRIBUTING MORE OR LESS COINS	OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF COINS
INVESTMENT AREA #3: Areas where people are vulnerable and less able to cope with impacts of increasingly extreme weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We really didn't talk much about this area and how it is currently handled or how it could be handled in the future. ♦ A bit like my virtual spend on the #1 in the last map: I spent more here because funding will have the biggest impact here, and these groups/locations have the least resources to draw on. ♦ (4) This is more of an equity thing - communities need to connect more in this secular society and this is being dealt with elsewhere...but again preparation...reduces long-term costs... ♦ My highest score went here - they are the group of customers who struggle the most. ♦ I give this the most because people's need to have priority. ♦ I spent equal amount (3 each) because we have no certainty into future events, we are only making educated guesses and we can't do everything. So, we prioritise based on data. ♦ I think that we need to make sure we help people who are vulnerable. ♦ I put the most points here because when I think of the last flood in our country all I can think of is all the people on the news using their own boats to get people safe. This is what needs to be prevented. ♦ There is overlap between the people who are vulnerable and the other categories - people might be vulnerable because they are already experiencing lots of risk (1), or because they are unprepared for the escalation of weather events (2), or for other reasons. ♦ Common comments - Third option will have greatest impact, because it's for people who need it most. 	57

TOPIC 2: INVESTING IN NET ZERO






A presentation on investing in net zero was given by Evan Riddell to the participants, in which a refresher on the main principles of net zero and Ausgrid's role was provided.

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

Participants were asked to express their level of comfort with Ausgrid's approach to utilise non network investment tools first, to better drive utilisation of the network before investing in the network.

Over half of the respondents indicated that they 'loved' the approach that Ausgrid was intending to take. One participant indicated that they could 'live with' the approach. There were no respondents who indicated they would 'lament' or 'loathe' the approach suggested. Reasons for the choice ranged from "It's a no brainer option - most cost-effective solution" to "It's nice and balanced".

13 out of 66 participants answered this question

0%		Loathe it - 0-20%	-
0%		Lament it - 20 - 40%	-
8%		Live with it - 40-60%	1 participant
38%		Like it - 60-80%	5 participants
54%		Love it - 80-100%	7 participants

LEVEL OF COMFORT - 5 POINT SCALE	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF COMFORT
Live with it - 40-60%	Still not sure how customers will KNOW HOW? to change when they use and export electricity in this model ;)
Like it - 60-80%	<p>I gave this a high % as in my opinion this makes a lot of sense. As we move towards new technologies, if we invest in the network now there is no guarantee that this will fit in the future.</p> <p>It's reasonable and it makes sense.</p> <p>I see this as the most balanced approach. As it takes into account cost to the consumer and gives a base to build onto into the future.</p> <p>Because I believe that in the future, we need also need different tools apart from the network.</p> <p>Best balanced option.</p>






LEVEL OF COMFORT - 5 POINT SCALE	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF COMFORT
Love it - 80-100%	<p>Utilising what already exists and what doesn't cost money leaves more room for other investment opportunities and reduces waste.</p> <p>It's a no brainer option - most cost-effective solution</p> <p>Smarter use of what we have; pricing incentives will probably be effective and fair as long as people have the knowledge and tools to make the changes they want/need to.</p> <p>Consensus was made and I agree/love it - great tools and priorities.</p> <p>It's nice and balanced.</p> <p>It is a balanced approach. We have to accept that some customers will have the knowledge but not the means to change. E.g. my block of unit does not have the correct meter which gave me the option of 'off peak' electricity.</p> <p>After Evans explanation of I believe this is a good option for Ausgrid in managing the system.</p>

WHAT TO INVEST IN?

Participants were asked about their level of comfort with Ausgrid's approach to invest in 'proactive investments' equating to \$110-153 million.

53% of the respondents indicated that they 'loved' Ausgrid's envisioned approach, with 27% indicating that they could "live with it". There were no respondents who indicated they would 'lament' or 'loathe' the approach suggested. Some of the responses from participants included "I can live with it, but I am not sure how this will impact on customer's bills" and "It just makes sense with a view to the future".

15 out of 66 participants answered this question

0%		Loathe it - 0-20%	-
0%		Lament it - 20 - 40%	-
27%		Live with it - 40-60%	4 participants
20%		Like it - 60-80%	3 participants
53%		Love it - 80-100%	8 participants

LEVEL OF COMFORT - 5 POINT SCALE	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF COMFORT
Live with it - 40-60%	<p>It is balanced investment.</p> <p>Balancing affordability to innovation.</p> <p>I can live with it, but I am not sure how this will impact on customer's bills.</p> <p>Just not sure how this investment affects Ausgrid's overall draft budget for 24-29 when they are getting less operating income.</p>
Like it - 60-80%	<p>I agree with the idea of investing in projects to reduce emissions. However, I would like a cost benefit approach used so that there are real outcomes instead of wasting money and increasing costs to consumers without accountability.</p> <p>I think this is still the right scale of investment.</p> <p>Like it - Ausgrid can't remain stagnant. It needs to "move on" and "look to the future" despite the additional costs.</p>

LEVEL OF COMFORT - 5 POINT SCALE	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF COMFORT
Love it - 80-100%	<p>This is the only viable option if we want to move with the times.</p> <p>We can't move forward and evolve without being proactive!</p> <p>This is a real turning point in the pathway -- so many decisions made now will impact future generations by either closing down or opening up options. It's exciting but also needs critical thinking! i.e., distribution is such a key part of the NZ puzzle.</p> <p>Just makes sense - allows Ausgrid to make changes if circumstances demand. They can also get ahead of the curve. It risks that there may be dead ends, but the benefits outweigh the downside.</p> <p>Proactive investment needs to happen, and Ausgrid is well-positioned to do it.</p> <p>Love it - innovation is the BEST key to resiliency, net zero and balanced investments for the greater good for all.</p> <p>It just makes sense with a view to the future.</p> <p>Although most expensive, I love the added bonus that this option means reducing or removing the needs for augmentation actions in the Justified Investment (1st) option.</p>

COMMUNITY BATTERIES

A presentation was given by Jonathan Dore about the features of community batteries.

Step 1: What do we value?

Participants were asked to choose the top 3 features that they value the most. They were also asked to record their thoughts on why they value those features. The results below show that 'supporting wider renewable energy deployment' was the most highly valued feature, and 'visual amenity' was not valued at all in the top 3 features.

IDEAS	RESPONSE	OUTCOME
Support wider renewable energy deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We need to get off coal sooner rather than later. ♦ Supports the drive to net zero carbon. ♦ If we are moving to zero, we need to start here. ♦ More the merrier. ♦ Reduce stress on the network. ♦ Low because a lot of people would not like their energy going to someone else if it wasn't deployed. ♦ Contribute to net zero. 	10
Reduce the need for new poles and wires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ This helps resilience. ♦ We've already more or less agreed that we don't want unnecessary network buildout ♦ Wouldn't this also save costs that can be spent on batteries, so it's a bit of a win-win? ♦ Med because they are ugly - if they have to use poles they should use concrete poles not timber - timber has to be replaced and it burns etc/dangerous. ♦ Infrastructure is ugly unfortunately. 	7
Sustainability of materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Good to see you are working on this. ♦ One thing to conserve energy but it's another to consider future material impacts and what happens to waste that is produced. ♦ Look back 20 years ago with how solar panels were and look at now with where they are. The technology has gotten better, cheaper, and more reliable. Community batteries are new like solar was decades ago. Community batteries will only get more efficient, cheaper and will use less materials over time with better technology and upgrades. This is a lower priority because the nature of technology is that it will only get better and might even change the materials used to store energy. Plus, a lot of things used in a CB can be recycled. Also, the mines where the raw materials come from already exist from mining something else. There's no new mines needed and there's plenty of raw materials. 	7

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IDEAS	RESPONSE	OUTCOME
Sustainability of materials (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ We need to be reminded that some resources are more damaging to our environment than others and we need to prioritise utilisation of materials that can be renewed (or re-engineered, re-purposed... etc). ♦ It's something to consider, but if it will help us move the whole grid to a more sustainable future, less sustainable batteries for 10-15 years are an acceptable trade-off. ♦ Low for me - it's good to have, but it should not be a showstopper. ♦ High because materials used in solar can last and have less maintenance. ♦ Moving towards new technologies we want to be sure that what we are investing in won't be redundant in a few years' time. 	7
Individual customers use the battery for storage: If chosen then leads to options of: (a) Benefits for non-solar homes and (b) Choice of energy retailer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Jonathon confirmed flexible options - a benefit. ♦ It would be nice to have, but when having to choose, I'd prefer Ausgrid focus on network stability and the macro view of renewables. ♦ This option could be higher as it is important as it would be the mid ones. ♦ This seems to be the 'value-add' of these batteries: they are doing something that isn't happening already. ♦ Use your energy when you need. ♦ This comes down to fairness. ♦ EQUITY. 	6
Increase use of local solar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ This should be main reason to use community batteries. ♦ High because that is the most economical way of producing electricity rather than coal or gas. ♦ It encourages generation near where it's used. 	6
Back-up supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ This is a more specialised usage for edges of the network, the cost probably isn't warranted in general Nina: Very important for the local community. ♦ Low - While this is good to have, the main intention is to use the green energy generated by local community. ♦ This will really benefit communities e.g., when there is a long period of dull weather. When the normal power supply is cut off due to natural disasters. ♦ Sometimes, personal responsibility comes in... we can't cover everyone all of the time. ♦ High because your own electricity is being backed up. ♦ Backup for hospitals and other community essential places is a good idea. ♦ It's a different proposition for hospitals and essential services. 	5

...continued overleaf

IDEAS	RESPONSE	OUTCOME
Increase solar hosting capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ This is only practical way to use solar after dark. ♦ Without solar hosting, then non-solar customer will not be able to choose solar power e.g., apartment residents. ♦ Need to ensure that we can prevent over-voltages becoming too regular and potentially causing disruptions or damage to the grid infrastructure. ♦ Again, it's what a battery can do that nobody else can! ♦ Low because people don't like their electricity being passed on to someone else - if they go to the expense of putting up solar panels and someone else doesn't why should they give solar to others. 	4
Visual amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ It's a box lol. ♦ Ugly and loud is certainly not great, but I doubt it's going to be much worse than any similar kind of plant works. ♦ I don't mind the visual aspect. But it could be made pretty (allow local graffiti artist to paint it). ♦ I have lots of non-visually amenable infrastructure in my street -- mobile phone towers, electrical substation and other stuff I don't even know what it is! so the ones I've seen on this panel are an improvement on all that! ♦ This would take up public space. Foot paths, nature strips. ♦ These community batteries can be visually appealing and can be features in our urban environment. ♦ Mid because would have liked this at the top but it's important in heritage areas in particular and people who love their heritage would not like them in their area - can these go underground to negate this issue? 	0

Step 2: How do we rate each feature?

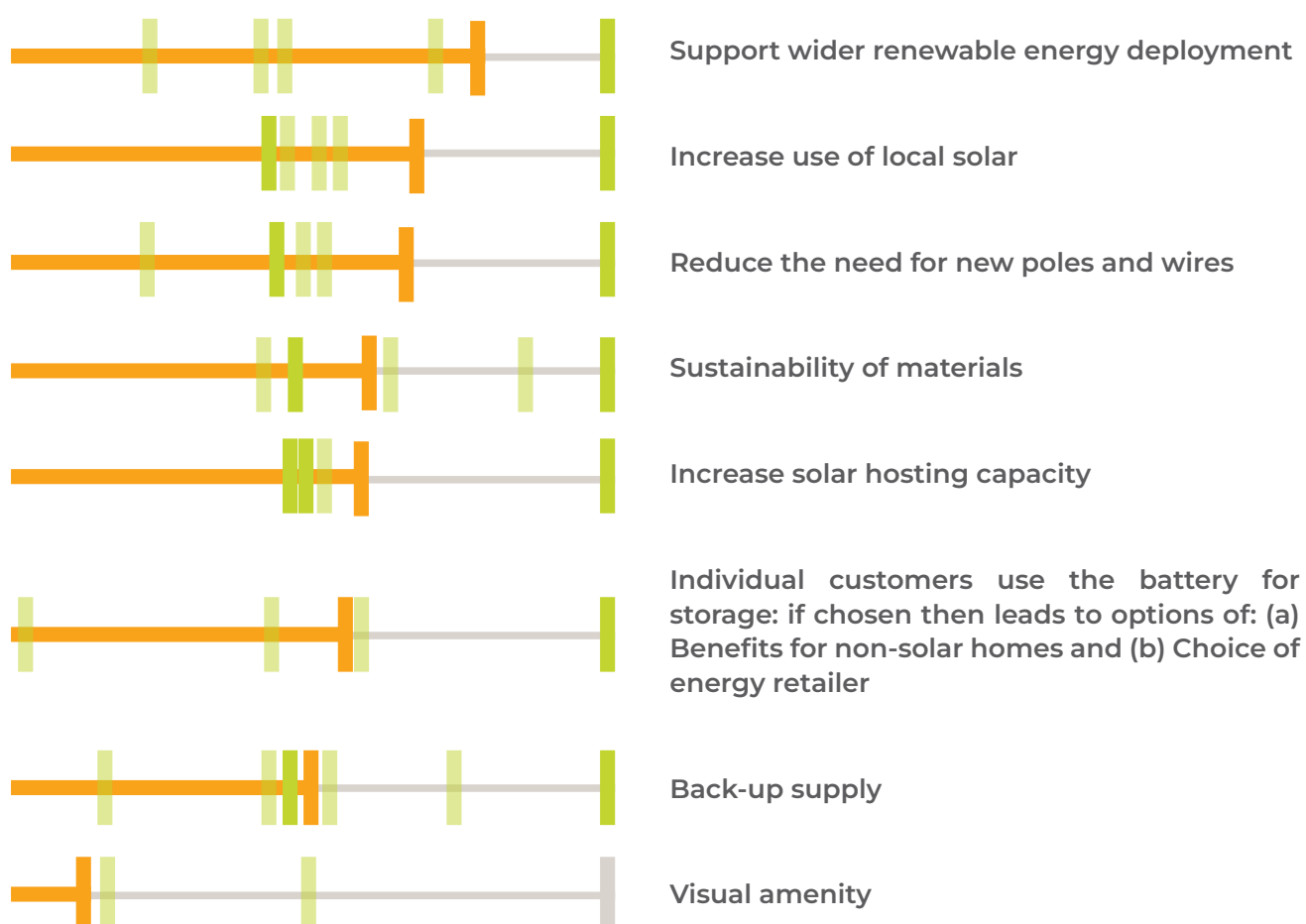
After the review of their top 3, each participant was then asked to rank **all** the features based on a rating of 1 = low value (far left), 2 = mid value (in the middle) and 3 = high value (far right). Note: The 3 most highly valued features from the previous step were the **only** features that could be rated at 3.

The following table shows two important results.

1. The orange line – this line shows the average rating across all respondents
2. The green lines – these lines show the ratings from all respondents. These green lines show us the range of responses. Please note: there are more participants than there are green lines - this is because a number of participants would have rated the feature the same and therefore the line appears as only one.

'Support wider renewable energy deployment' was rated the most highly on average across all respondents. The range of responses though went from just above the 'low value' to all the way up to 3 = highly valued.

'Increase solar hosting capacity' was the feature that even though it was rated, on average, at a mid-value, it had a narrower range of responses. This means most people agreed with the rating value of mid-range. The feature of 'increase use of local solar' was similar – it had a slightly higher average overall rating, and most people agreed with this value.



TOPIC 3: EXPORT TARIFFS

Participants were asked to comment on their level of comfort around Ausgrid shifting to a mandatory 'everyone now' approach for an export tariff due to commence in 2025. Over half the participant 'loved' that approach with only 3 participants 'living with it'.

The main reasons for loving this approach were because it is fair for everyone and the impact to customers is minimum. For those who 'liked it' the reasons were 'customers will have paid off their investments by then – it makes sense' and 'because 2025 is a little way off'. For those who could 'live with it' the reasons were similar – 'it is logical'; 'its fair for everyone'; 'by 2025 everybody having solar panels will be ready for the new approach'.

How comfortable are you with Ausgrid shifting to a mandatory 'everyone now' approach?

14 out of 66 participants answered this question



LEVEL OF COMFORT - 5 POINT SCALE	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF COMFORT
Live with it - 40-60%	<p>It is logical, but it will be widely misunderstood.</p> <p>Live with it is fair to everyone.</p> <p>I think that in 2025 everybody having solar panels will be ready for the new approach.</p>
Like it - 60-80%	<p>If most consumers will have paid off their investment by then, it makes sense, but communication to new and/or expanding customers will be key - also seems like some of the other pieces of the discussion are part of the story here, batteries etc?</p> <p>Like It - 2025 is a little while off and with the solar uptake the voltage overloads could cause damage. Should this be implemented earlier as a mitigation against damages, etc. but only if needed and in extreme cases where overloads exist too regularly.</p>

LEVEL OF COMFORT - 5 POINT SCALE	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF COMFORT
Love it - 80-100%	<p>I think this is the best decision for a sustainable system.</p> <p>Love it: I agree with the mandatory approach as this a fair outcome for everyone that benefits from using the network e.g., streetlights, public power needs. Everyone should help carry the cost.</p> <p>Love it - increased costs will never be popular with anyone but tariffs will happen regardless, just rip off the band aid.</p> <p>Fair.</p> <p>Love it - Ausgrid needs to move forward; need to support this transition to prevent cost of living issues down the line.</p> <p>Love it - it's a much smaller difference than I thought when we made our panel recommendations, and it looks like it will be effective. The 'free tier' of exports helps add balance - good idea.</p> <p>The impact to customers is minimum.</p> <p>It will happen eventually. Might as well make it happen right now for all solar users. The sooner the better.</p> <p>Love it because it will benefit everyone (solar+ non-solar customers) and it will ensure the homes with the high number of solar panels will participate which will generate some revenue for Ausgrid to invest in other areas.</p>

RECALL DAY WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION

RECALL DAY AND WORKSHOP AIMS

On the 15th October 2022 the Voice of Community Panel session was jointly conducted by Nicole Hunter from MosaicLab and Scott Lappan-Newton from Gauge Consulting. This workshop aimed to understand different customer perspectives and provide suggestions to the RCP and Ausgrid to finalise the plan.

Participants heard from guest speakers; Rob Amphlett Lewis, Tony Robinson, Alex McPherson and Fiona McAnally.

RECALL DAY+ AGENDA 15TH OCTOBER 2022

TIME	DETAILS
9.00AM	Welcome, Connecting and Context Setting
	Recap of the process so far, introduction RCP and AER
	Understanding different customer perspectives
10.45AM	Break
11.15AM	What's in the draft plan
12.30PM	Break
1.20PM	Have we got the balance right?
3.35PM	Break
4.20PM	Suggestions to the RCP
4.50PM	Next steps
5.00PM	Close



WELCOME, RECAP AND INTRODUCTION OF RCP AND AER


Rob Amphlett Lewis (Chief Customer Officer, Ausgrid) and Tony Robinson (Chair of the Reset Customer Panel, RCP) kicked off the day and spoke about Ausgrid's published draft plan and the importance of the participants' voices. The role of the RCP was outlined by Tony and the importance of this final day to assist the RCP in their oversight of the draft plan as it is finalised.

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

The participants were asked to form up into small groups. Each group was visited by a person speaking from a particular perspective. The participants were asked to gather their insights from the speaker. Each group was visited by three different perspectives from the wider engagement process. There were participants on the day that represented these broader perspectives:

- ♦ Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)
- ♦ Small businesses
- ♦ Lived experience (have experienced hardship in some form)
- ♦ Indigenous
- ♦ Weather/event affected
- ♦ Larger commercial and industrial customers

The below table are the insights from all the conversations matched against the different customer perspectives.

PERSPECTIVE	INSIGHTS
CALD 	Community batteries would be great! Better to share than everyone invest individually.
	Interest in neighbourhood co-operative investments.
	A lot of concern about price rises - do not want sharp increase - prefer gradual increase or steady - easier to cope.
	Chinese community. Solar tariffs (option preferred not immediate). Vietnamese community need time for payback period. Community battery is a big investment - higher uptake.
	Community also includes many small business owners.
	Chinese community prioritized longer lasting poles.
	Vietnamese community main focus = communication - decimation of information to vulnerable customers.
	Suggest fixed channel for other languages for communications and education - one place aids.
	Emergency communications need to be fast and in language.
	Suggestion: representatives for different cultures to support communications and activities with Ausgrid - ensuring information is spread.
	Priorities: Net zero / resilience/ innovation / cyber / digitalism.
	If translation costs are high, be strategic about how to use it - e.g. life support outage communications essential - otherwise google translate might be enough.
	Some doubt about predictions - technology might improve things.
	Export tariff change - surprise is not fair, people invested without knowing about this.
	Chinese community - concern about steep price increase only increase according to AER or draft plan (i.e. price change).
	Appreciate emphasis on fairness.
	What are Ausgrid doing about EV charging?

...continued overleaf

PERSPECTIVE

INSIGHTS

Small business



Customer are asking about sustainability.

Not aware of alternatives like solar forms (compared to e.g. solar panel on own roof).

Cost is naturally a concern - prices rising across the board.

The smaller the business, costs become more of a problem - do not have benefits scale.

Size of roof space available to the business - solar panels would only provide a fraction of power needed.

Cannot get solar because of old building at business premises and also only 20% of usage can be covered by solar on roof.

Many small businesses can only operate during peak hours - no choice to shift load.

Power outages are one issue (infrequently) but power drop / voltage fluctuation is an issue (frequent).

Power underground helps with stability of power.

Multinational customers require sustainability in production chain - so need to be able to guarantee carbon neutral - balance with costs.

Need to structure cost of green power into quote before charging customer.

Power cost doubled in last quarter because of administration issues with contract (due to covid) - had to renegotiate contract and fix costs at lower rate.

Balance of labour costs within power costs is hard but technology improvement has helped push \$ power down.

Lower transmissions cost (using \$100,000 p.a.). 'Solar and battery' - package deal - multiple business in complex - initiative to go solar renting and landlord to facilitate.

Reliance on digital channels of communications becomes issue when in areas with patchy reception.

There has always been big divides between city and country areas.

Keep referring back to real people - be flexible.





Any plan must be adaptable.

Accessibility to information for people relying on technology for communication e.g. deaf / HoH with and without implants.

Regular power outages lead to self-reliance of those on edge of grid - how can we boost resilience in these areas to bring people back to the grid?

Consider: Youth and renters unable to choose energy sources for their dwelling.

...continued overleaf

PERSPECTIVE	INSIGHTS
Lived experience 	<p>Reliance on digital channels of communication becomes issue when in areas with patchy reception.</p> <p>There has always been big divides between city and country areas.</p> <p>(Long Life) have had a variety of experiences and changes over time - times of shortage - income variability - changes in accessibility.</p> <p>Notifications - don't just say there will be an outage, say what you should do.</p> <p>Ausgrid needs to be prepared to change - no plan will last forever - continuous need or improvements and adopting new procedures.</p> <p>If retailer does not pass on rebates you are eligible for etc., you have to go find help, but it is complex and can be hard for this group to access.</p> <p>Ausgrid has to keep an eye on the outliers and edge cases - don't just focus on the 'average' customer - needs will vary a lot.</p>
Indigenous 	<p>Target affordability for first nation groups.</p> <p>(Cultural connection 11 communities - different groups within). Organizationally embedded understanding of culture, community needs including policies, procedures.</p> <p>Focus on prices and employment.</p> <p>Strong commitment in RAP for example setting up target.</p> <p>Be mindful moving forward to be respectful to sacred lands (and educational opportunities) to local kids.</p> <p>Long term relationships need to be nurtured.</p>
Weather / event affected 	<p>Community - level capacity to maintain relationships and feed back to Ausgrid and other (SES, councils) when individuals are affected.</p> <p>Heat - pole to home when sparking due to destruction of wire cover - should be Ausgrid's responsibility not customer as safety issue. Not rely on customer situation either (NB Hunter 3 x 40 days).</p> <p>Technological innovation in targeted areas of need to overcome issues in weather - effected communities.</p> <p>'Information is the currency of the disaster' - recorded messages make local then postcodes. 'Did anyone know about us?' Resilience issue = power out for long time is real problem.</p> <p>Consolidated information on extreme weather (with other services / agency - Ausgrid / water / ETI / Bushfire / social).</p> <p>Communication between stakeholders in emergencies (no ability sometimes to get messages due to inability to access power over days and home phones now relying on internet not landlines). Information is currency of disaster.</p>
Commercial and industries 	<p>Large business looks to ensure 'increase productivity and efficiency' from Ausgrid to minimize cost increase.</p> <p>Planning / communications essential for competitive environment and productivity gains.</p> <p>Priorities: reliability and security of supply particularly for businesses that cannot shut off.</p> <p>Competitive market means cost increase measures are a concern - higher energy prices and sales.</p> <p>Infrastructure needs to support new business locations ahead of openings - e.g. Coles / Woolworths stores planned 2 - 3 years in advance - reliability.</p> <p>A community battery explosion.</p>

DRAFT PLAN FOR 2024-2029

Alex McPherson, from Ausgrid, spoke to the participants about what was in the Draft Plan.

Key insights from this presentation were gathered by the participants and are listed below.

KEY INSIGHTS ABOUT THE DRAFT PLAN PRESENTATION

Maintaining the current service - needs clarification of what is involved.

Clarify some of the overlays or feed -ins e.g. how innovation and net zero interact. e.g. IT and cyber - how have you drawn the boundaries?

Missing information: What is the change in \$? i.e. what is the % increase from current spend?

Investors have not received dividends for three + years

Super funds are here for the long term. Not taking dividends builds equity for later.

Cyber increase is quite high, what exactly is this?

Cyber security is critical.

Consumer use of energy and source is another variable to consider.

Equity and efficiency: Ensuring each investment is used effectively when needed, e.g. customer service sharing information to consumers when interest rates and bills rise (again).

Hold on rate rise? Can we keep the same % of the 'pie' but reduce expenditure from \$38 to \$28?

Innovation and resilience: the emphasis seems to be mostly on batteries, when there are many other innovative options to invest in / explore further.

Can't forecast the future so if less than \$111 then that extra could be used towards the innovation.

Not much is being spent on innovation at present. More investment and research to give better money return prices, social context, environment.

Ausgrid is limited in what they can do to contribute towards net zero, hence only \$6 out of \$38.

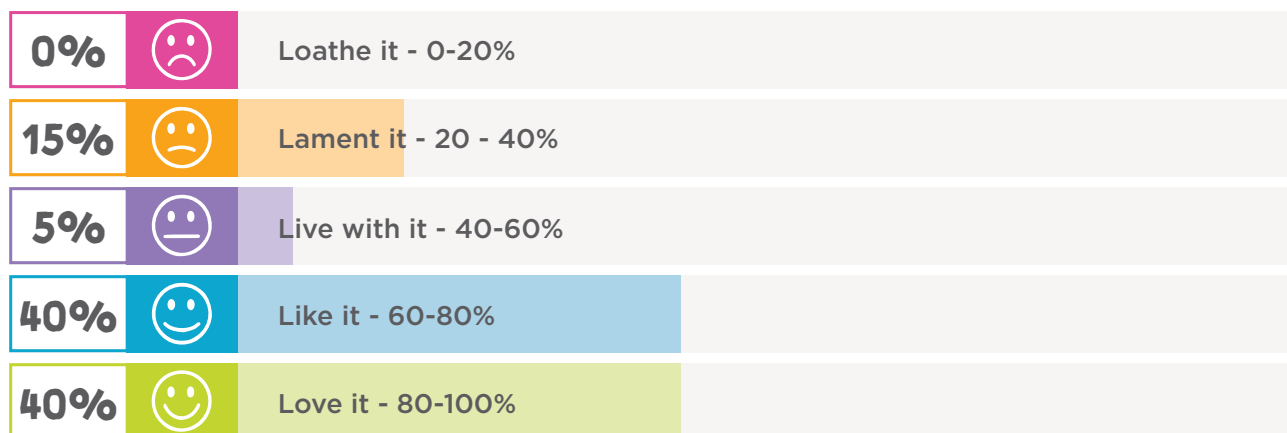
Ausgrid's role and influence is rel- limited - other parts of the supply chain (retailers / generators especially) have much more of a role.

Surprise that safety and reliability \$ is >B\$2 which is so much higher than other 'pillar'

Innovation needs to be thought of broadly, not just community batteries, e.g. make distribution more efficient i.e. voltage generation. Financial decision making (i.e. paying down debt) and Corporate Social Responsibility is really important to keep prices down for all customers. There is no average customer - Ausgrid needs to look at extremes at lower end because they cannot leverage now!

SATISFACTION WITH AUSGRID'S CONSIDERATION OF PARTICIPANT INPUT

Participants were asked how satisfied they were that Ausgrid had considered what they had told them. The below graph gives an indication of the spread of responses across the 5L spectrum.



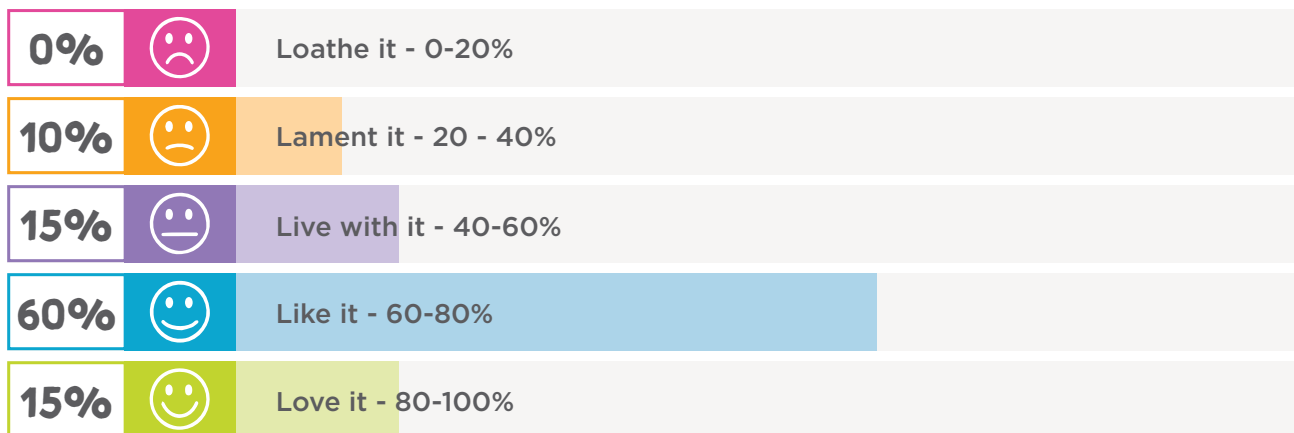
The reasoning behind people's choices, and in some cases, what would make people feel more satisfied, is listed in the following table. For those who were 'lamenting' the level of consideration it was because of the lack of innovation aspects in the plan, insufficient emphasis on resilience and communications around emergencies, and a comment about whether Ausgrid understood that the participants wanted community costs reduced.

For those participants who were more satisfied the reasons ranged from believing Ausgrid are doing their best, to there has been good time given to consider and discuss the options.

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF SATISFACTION
Lament it - 15%	<p>Innovation recommendation was largely ignored. I'd like to see more Corporate Social Responsibility content.</p> <p>Not sufficient emphasis on resilience and communications around emergencies / events.</p> <p>I am not sure if they have understood that we would prefer to spend the money to lessen community costs and become more independent (community batteries).</p>
Live with it - 5%	<p>A number of different views have been taken with consideration. What % could more be taken?</p>
Like it - 40%	<p>More consideration of impact on diverse (especially income diversity) customers in the different modelling of price increases.</p> <p>Representatives' attendance and observation welcome. Each refinement session to session shows they are listening.</p> <p>Securing customer information is important.</p> <p>Ausgrid has understood and considered most thoughts except community batteries</p> <p>I believe Ausgrid are doing their best and close to the same page.</p> <p>I still think more needs to be considered in relation to innovation.</p> <p>Focus groups to approach CALD communities.</p> <p>The fact that there are different groups / panels to consider. All have different needs / feedbacks.</p>
Love it - 40%	<p>Every decision and bullet point has been well considered and justifiable with data while aligning reasonably well with our recommendations.</p> <p>Extended time frame Representative of the wider community. Time given to consider and discuss options.</p> <p>Seniority of Ausgrid representatives who have been present and involved, and they have sounded sincere in their interest. Process has been interactive - we hear responses form Ausgrid at each stage and they ask clarification and adjust.</p> <p>Good opportunities for regional customers to have their say even using technology. Listened to severe weather events and effect on customers. Opportunity to meet with all involved prior to finalization and work together with others.</p> <p>Thank Ausgrid for really wanting to hear our CALD voice.</p> <p>Great process - captured a wide variety of perspectives and complexities of the energy system.</p> <p>Ausgrid has come back to check their understanding. There are 2 follow up / recall sessions to give the panellists additional opportunity to voice any new concerns or change their minds</p> <p>The way they respond to their customers.</p>

LEVEL OF COMFORT WITH THE BALANCE OF THE DRAFT PLAN

Participants were asked how comfortable they were with how the Draft Plan 'looks to the future whilst being fair to customers today'. The following graph indicates the overall levels of comfort.



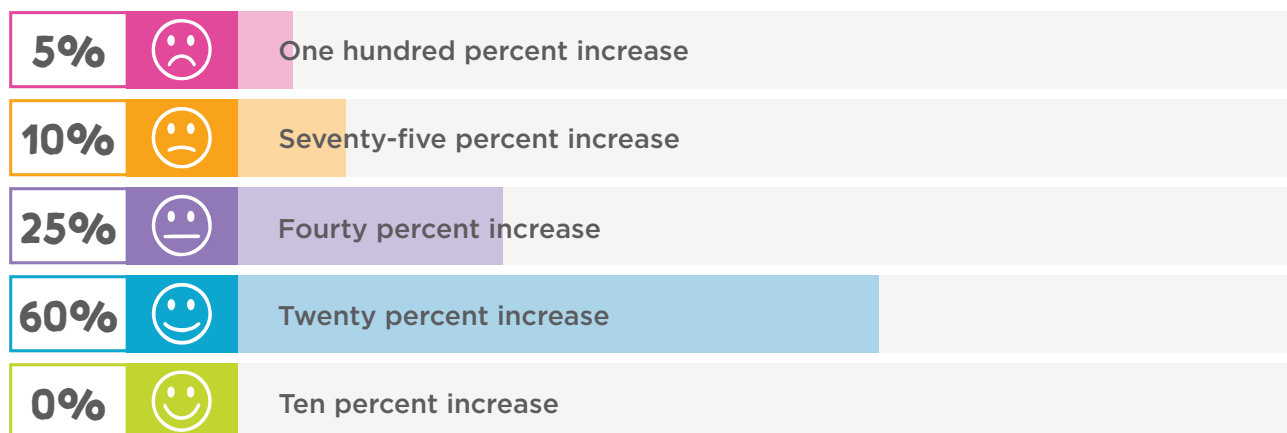
The following table outlines the reasoning people had for their level of comfort. The main reasons people 'lamented it' was that they felt the innovation aspects had been overlooked and therefore the future was hard to aim for, also resilience and emergency communication were seen as important investments to manage the future.

For those who were more comfortable with the balance (i.e. 'like it' or 'love it') they noted that it is a hard balance to make, there are many uncertainties in the future and therefore cannot be fully confident (i.e. didn't mark it as 'love it').

LEVEL OF COMFORT	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF COMFORT
Lament it – 10%	<p>We can hardly look to the future with optimism if we are not investing in innovation.</p> <p>Needs more investment in innovation, resilience and emergency communications. Even if it has to increase prices.</p>
Live with it - 15%	<p>The increase of price.</p> <p>I don't know if I will be comfortable with future increases?</p> <p>Inflation seems to be a massive contributing factor suddenly which will affect affordability to the plan.</p>
Like it - 60%	<p>Informed choices - different scenarios needed. Opt-in / opt-out.</p> <p>Think the balanced feedback may not have appropriate transforming the grid .</p> <p>We have heard that some of the subgroups (CALD etc.) find the proposal export tariff charges unfair without an opt-in process. Ausgrid has responded to our recommendations with increases in innovation / resilience spending (than they would have done before the Voc page 1).</p> <p>But I did not circle the highest score because there are so many uncertainties, so not fully confident (I am anxious about the future price).</p> <p>Can do better in corporate social responsibility.</p> <p>It is a fine line to balance and I feel that this will be fine-tuned and adapted based on circumstances.</p> <p>Some remaining issues about how this will impact on the least well-off people.</p> <p>Questions around fairness continue today but it is something at the forefront of everyone's minds so I am hopeful. The fairest decisions need to be made.</p> <p>More emphasis on innovation needed.</p> <p>The draft plan is fair to customers in most aspects.</p> <p>Taking into account what is needed for the future. Price increase cannot be avoided but still within reason.</p> <p>I would like to see more detail i.e. in the costing breakdown in different areas (low - individual - company) (sic)</p>
Love it - 15%	<p>The different area of focus and breakdown of cost spending give understanding and transparency to the public. This is a good corporate responsibility.</p> <p>Given all the competing pressure (external and internal) and the unpredictability of some of the key decision points, it is a winner!</p> <p>We need to future proof - cyber-attacks as we have seen recently are increasing. Safety in the workplace has to be important. It is a necessity and increases needs to occur especially moving towards more 'green' energy.</p>

RE-TESTING LEVEL OVERALL BILL

Participants were asked how much the estimated average annual overall bill would need to increase by before they would want Ausgrid to re-test its plan with them. The following graph shows that 60% of the participants thought that a 20% overall change in the average annual bill would require Ausgrid re-testing their Draft plan with the community. The 20% change stood out as the most preferred option across participants, although a quarter of the participants thought a 40% increase in the average annual overall bill would trigger a retest.



People's reasoning behind their choices ranged from – at the 20% change end - '20% increase may mean the draft plan needs tweaking especially if this is on a continual basis' and 'because we need to see if we can afford a higher increase'. For those who thought a higher change (eg. 75% or more) some of the reasoning was that there are some already known increases (up to 35%) so a 75% change would be unexpected and require a serious re-test.

CHANGE IN THE AVERAGE ANNUAL OVERALL BILL

WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF FOR RE-TESTING

20% increase 60% of participants

Overall impact greater in \$ terms

3 x inflation

Because we need to see if we can afford a higher increase.

20% increase may mean the draft plan needs tweaking especially if this is a continual basis.

With current increase already about to occur e.g. \$1000 increase \$300 to have even more of an increase prior to December 2023 need to view and compromise.

Other issues affected.

This is a greater increase considering adjustments have been made and other increases would make living impossible.

There is uncertainty in the cost and the current post covid situation 20-30% deviation is predicted.

With the inflation comparable.

40% increase 25% of participants

Very significant increase for a household and likely to cause significant hardship.

Even a 40% increase will have a huge impact on many people. With the possibility of massive inflation, it is important to reassess sooner rather than later.

This is only just over 12 months away!

40% will significantly increase cost of living for many families.

Think if it reached this level before 12/23 would think they might need to reconsider the final determination.

75% increase 10% of participants

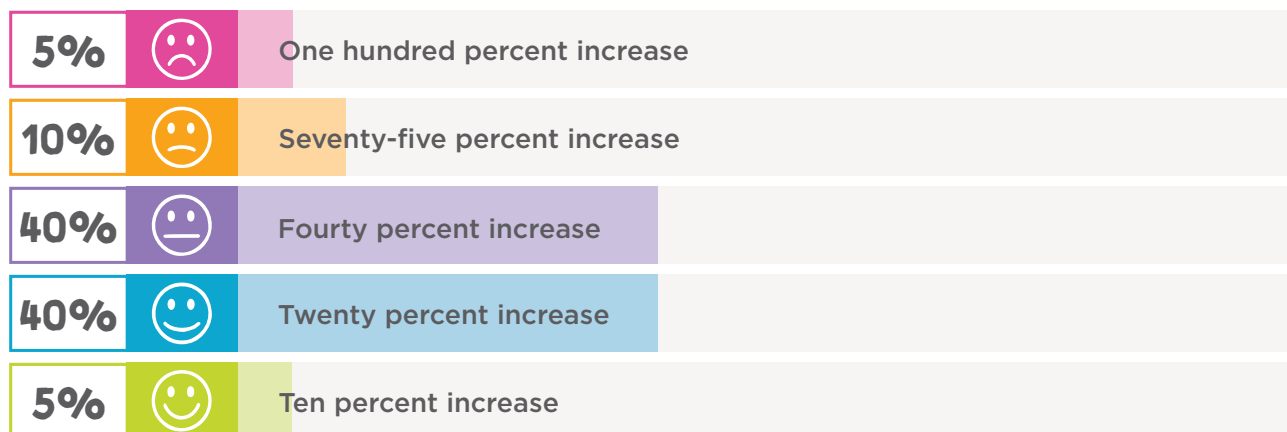
It is possible that 35% (wholesale costs) increases will happen anyway so 75% look like an unexpected scenario.

100% increase 5% of participants

At this level I would be concerned it is too high.

RE-TESTING LEVEL FOR AUSGRID'S PART OF THE BILL

Building on the conversation above, instead of looking at the overall bill, this question looked only at Ausgrid's part of the bill. Participants were asked to consider if Ausgrid's component (the part of the bill that they have more control over) changed, at what level would you think a re-test with community would be needed. The following graph outlined that an equal percentage of participants (40%) thought a 20% or 40% increase should trigger a re-test by Ausgrid.



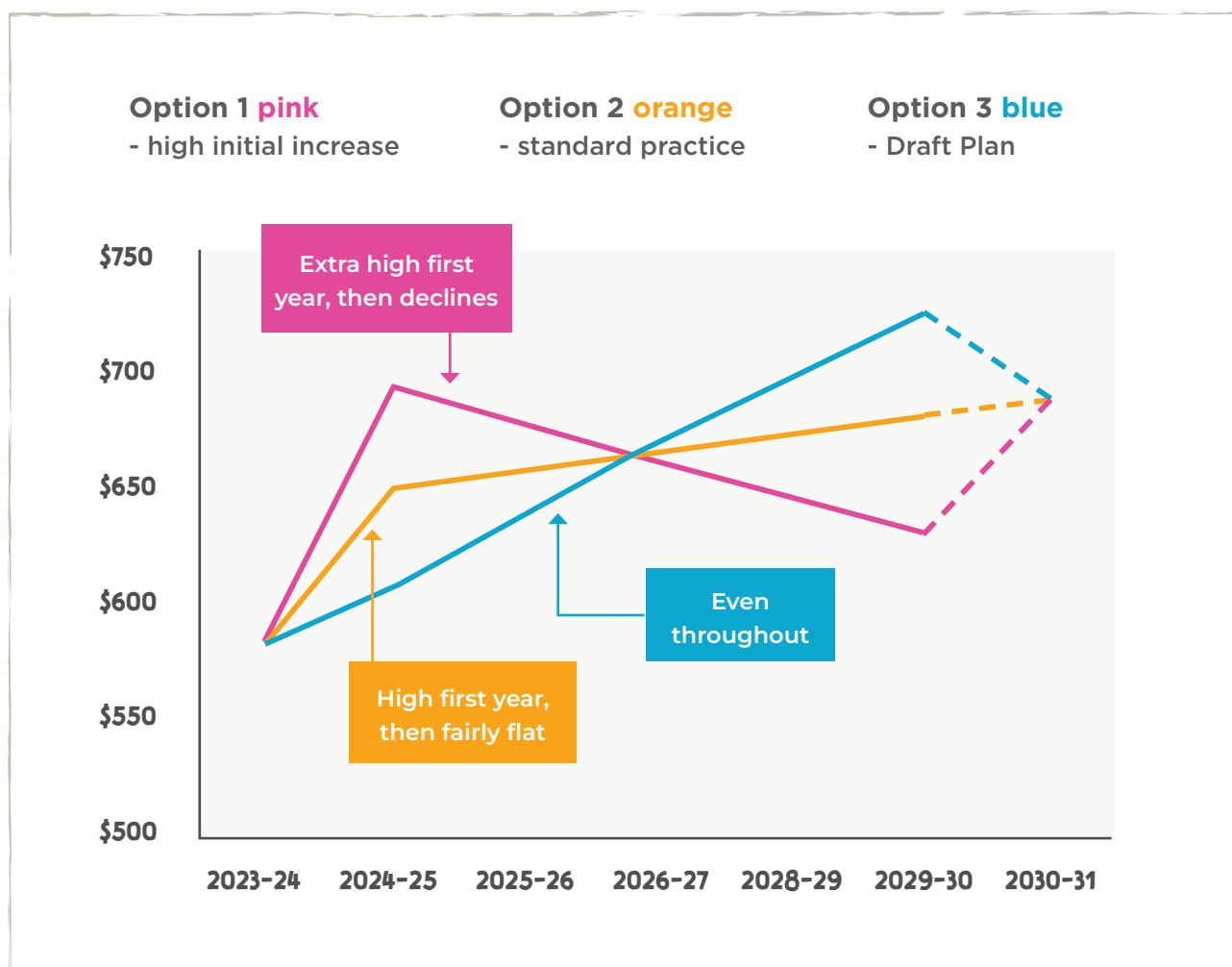
The reasons given for the 20-40% increase included interest rates are changing, that it would be equal to three times inflation, and if Ausgrid increases by 20% other components will also increase and the overall bill may have increased by 20% also.

For those who supported a higher change in the Ausgrid component of the bill they said they thought the \$38 in investment was small and building this up to better cover aspects like cyber security and innovation would be a good investment and wouldn't require re-testing.

CHANGE IN AUSGRID'S PART OF THE BILL	WHY PEOPLE CHOSE THIS LEVEL OF FOR RE-TESTING
10% increase 5% of participants	<p>Ausgrid's responsibility!</p> <p>We all have to work to a budget to keep within our income.</p>
20% increase 40% of participant	<p>Balancing with other increases</p> <p>20% is the max to be fair in 2029</p> <p>Interests changing.</p> <p>If Ausgrid increases by 20% other components will also increase. Overall bill may be increased by 20%</p> <p>This would be equal 3 x rate of inflation.</p>
40% increase 40% of participants	<p>Cost uncertainty 20 - 40% is expected post covid.</p> <p>This shows that Ausgrid needs to revise costs and efficiencies and re-evaluate future plans.</p> <p>Lesser impact in overall \$ terms so can give Ausgrid greater discretion to vary its own component.</p> <p>Think this is a place where they should reconsider and act accordingly.</p> <p>The balance of items might need to be revisited (e.g. not - zero vs innovation etc.).</p>
75% increase 10% of participants	<p>\$38 not as much - so willing to tweak \$75 worried about lack of innovation and cyber security.</p> <p>Due to only going \$75 given extreme weather events.</p> <p>As I understand it I believe it would be too expensive at this increase.</p> <p>innovation and cyber security.</p> <p>Due to only going \$75 given extreme weather events.</p>
100% increase 5% of participants	<p>As I understand it I believe it would be too expensive at this increase.</p>

PRICE PATH

Fiona McNally spoke to the participants about the price path options i.e. how the price changes over the next 5 years and leads into the next price proposal process. Participants were asked to vote on their preferred price path options. See below for the price path options.



The following graph gives a sense of the preferences of those participating in the room. The Draft Plan approach to price paths was preferred over the standard practice or an initial high increase.

0	0	High initial increase
6	28.6%	Standard practice
15	71.4%	Draft plan

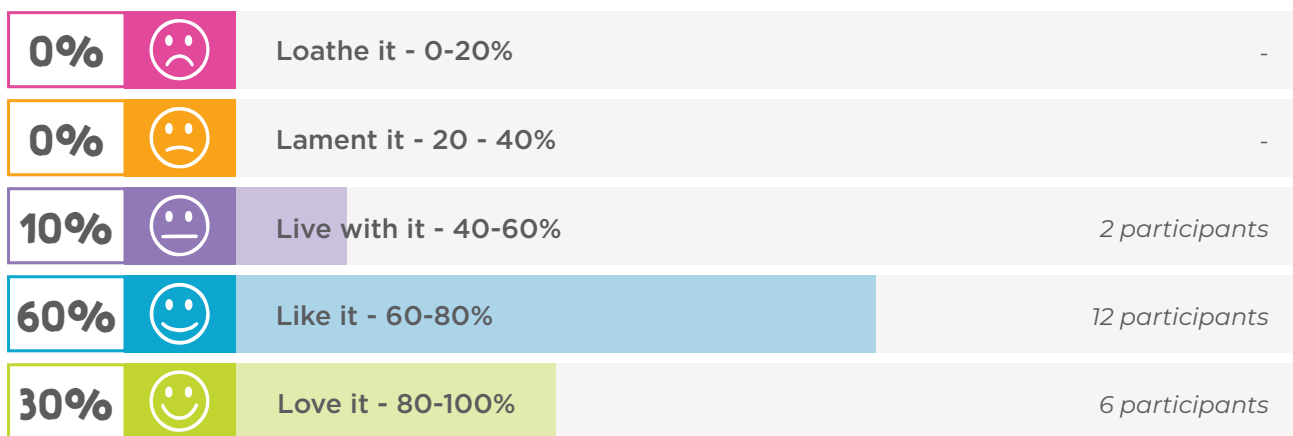
SUGGESTIONS FOR THE RCP

The participants provided feedback on each of the 6 pillars (plus other/external factors). Firstly, they provided feedback on how comfortable they felt with how this pillar was expressed in the draft plan currently, then using all the insights they had gained throughout the day, they provided suggestions for the RCP to keep in mind whilst overseeing the finalisation of the plan through to the AER.

Below are the 7 pillars with their responses and the suggestions.

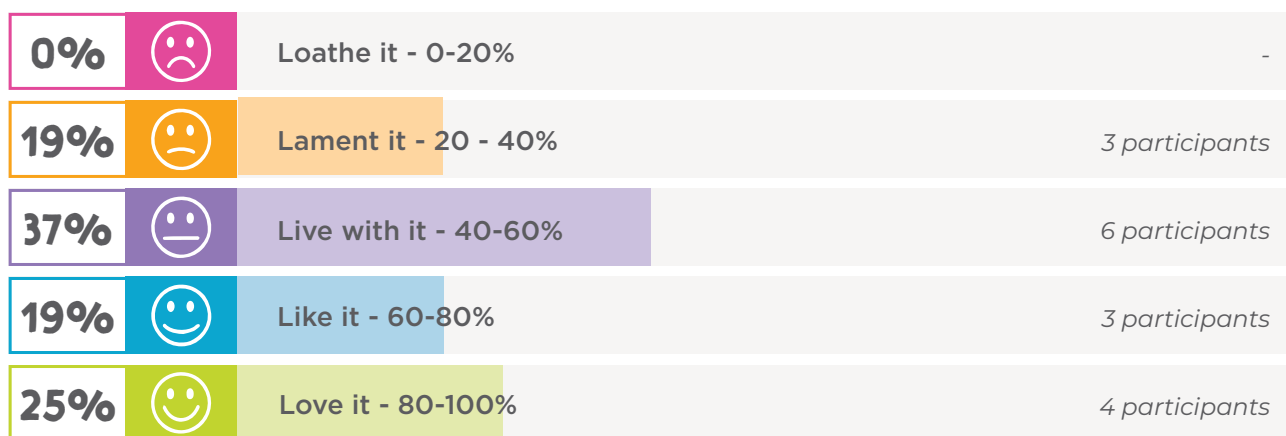
The suggestions include the direct written material from participants on the day. They have not been altered in any way.

PILLAR 1: RESILIENCE



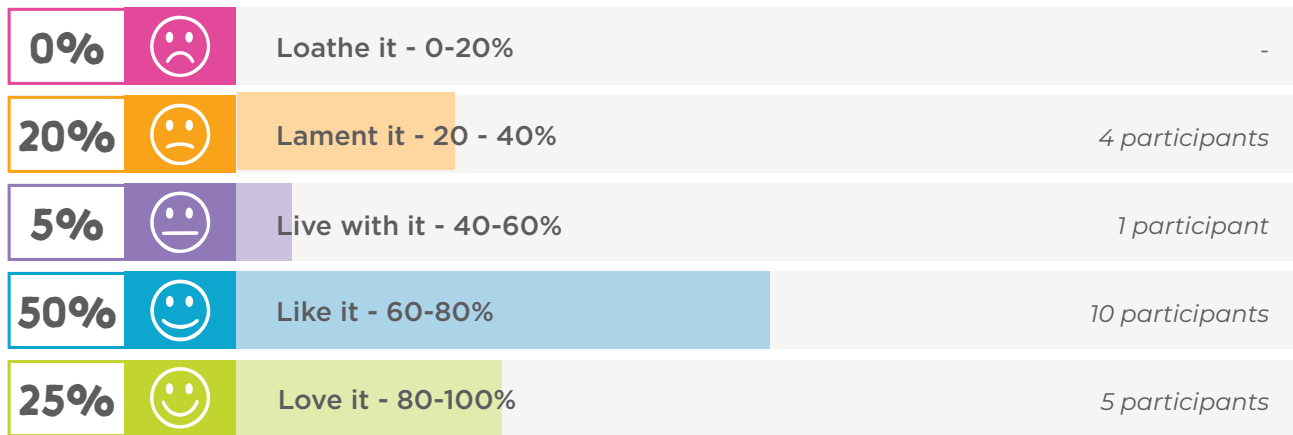
Topic	What we have done with what we heard.	RCP questions and concerns.	Panel Suggestions for the RCP
Resilience Cost: \$204m Bill impact 2029: \$5 of the \$38	<p>A program of investments. Benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain future climate change risk to the network and communities by installing network and community solutions. Reduced outages for worst served customers by creating redundancy in 100 areas to allow the network to get back on faster (network investment example). Provide community support before, during, and after events by deploying 5 mobile community hub caravans (community support example). <p>Community solutions such as education campaigns and mobile community hubs account for approx. - \$25m</p> <p>Improved network assets, back up generation, microgrids and other network based investments account for approx. - \$179m</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resilience is \$5 of the \$38 ... about 15% Customers have indicated that there is an expectation that Ausgrid take steps to prepare for climate change, in particular more severe and frequent storms, extreme bushfire risk and network stress on consecutive hot days. Their modelling suggests that new expenditure of about \$5 on the \$38, or 15% or the new work is needed. Does that feel right to you ? The investment can be targeted at being proactive - that is to 'harden the network' in highest risk areas, or to cover the risk of where the weather may or may not hit by extending an effective recovery response to respond during and after the event. Where do you think the balance should lie ? Responding to supply risks on hot days, such as local overloads, are infrequent and can be widely scattered, and as such, can be considered as not a priority for significant investment. However, we recognise the major health and community safety risks for loss of power on consecutive hot days. Should we raise the priority of this type of network investment ? 	<p>Urban areas already well served - so prioritise non urban areas</p> <p>The programme looks good, please reduce cost</p> <p>Seems like a good balance - diversity of strategies</p> <p>Consider environmental impact of solar panels in the future</p> <p>Community based solutions, demand or supply side, we want to be a part of the solution, potentially in a commercial sense.</p> <p>Strong emphasis on community/individual independence and response, relative to network hardening. Ensure solar pv/batteries don't rely on grid power - defeats object..</p> <p>Importance of better communication in emergencies - alternative ways of dealing with extreme heat</p> <p>Employ dedicated meteorologist to anticipate disasters</p> <p>Prioritise Community based solutions</p> <p>Needs to be aware of heat affect - not always about tree maintenance. Could also liaise with councils for "trees in urban areas"</p> <p>Heat issue - significant for people but Ausgrid is not always responsible for the solution with information people may resolve the issues for themselves.</p> <p>Look at cheaper effective solutions that do not involve Ausgrid workers - eg send people affected to a hotel for a few days versus sending out workers to fix the issue.</p> <p>Partnership is a way to save money to get better and cheaper outcomes eg CSIRO; Councils; Aged care providers through their workers</p> <p>Community engagement. Engagement with Indigenous communities in particular is really lacking.</p> <p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>21 respondents: 6 Love this, 12 Like it, 2 Can live with it</p> <p>Noteworthy that there were no negative responses</p>

PILLAR 2: CUSTOMER SERVICE



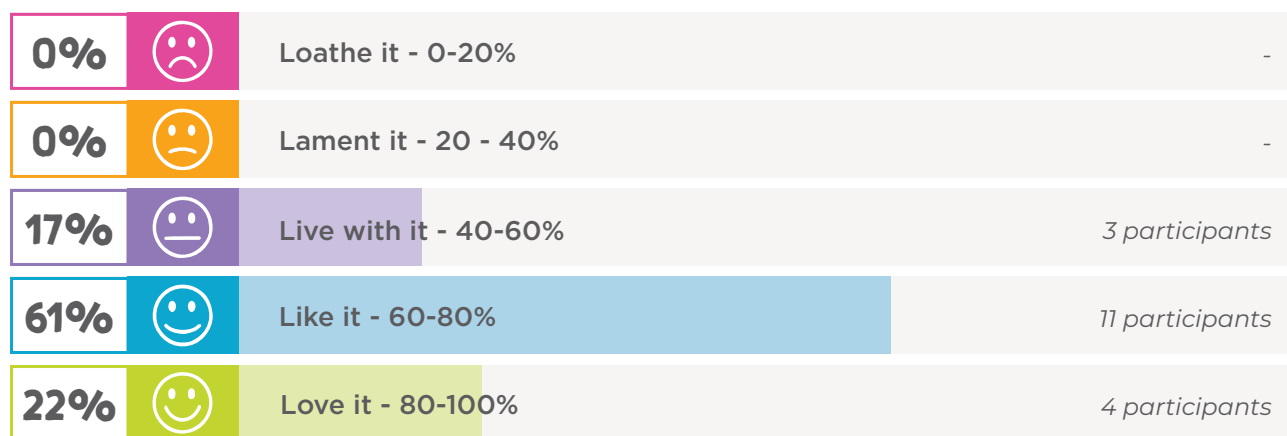
Topic	What we have done with what we heard.	RCP questions and concerns.	Panel Suggestions for the RCP
Customer Service Customer Service Cost: \$20m Bill impact 2029: \$1 of the \$38	Investments to improve the timeliness and accuracy of outage information - \$10m Website and SMS services improvements - \$2.5m Improving our connections process for large customers - \$7.5m Benefits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seamless experience for connecting customers when communicating with Ausgrid from enquiry to energisation 43 minutes saved per customer to seek information and get things done with us Proposing that the AER apply a Customer Service Incentive Scheme (CSIS) to us from 1 July 2024. Whereby we return up to \$43 million to customers if we do not improve our customer service. 	Concerns, perspectives or potential areas of challenge from the RCP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How comfortable you are that the Draft addresses your expressed concerns about call centre empathy, ability to speak with a person, support for vulnerable consumers (LSC, CALD, financially vulnerable etc)? Regarding the proposed CSIS – are there any areas that might need to be accentuated/altered/added? The difference between your (VoC) preference for a \$7m spend on improving customer experience and the Draft's \$20m proposal - do you agree with/understand Ausgrid's rationale/reasoning? 	Responses: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> LOVE IT: 4 LIKE IT: 3 LIVE WITH IT: 6 LAMENT IT : 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Money in draft plan is three times what the VOC proposed amount? Why? What are the benefits from this huge increase in money to be spent? Customer service improvement can lead to better customer retention that improve revenue CSIS is great, need to ensure human customer service experience. If cuts need to be made, this area should be reduced in funding. I would like to know that the investment is being used to significantly improve customer satisfaction. More of the focus on your residential customers even when you don't interact with them. Quick response in case of emergencies and in the language of customers

PILLAR 3: INNOVATION



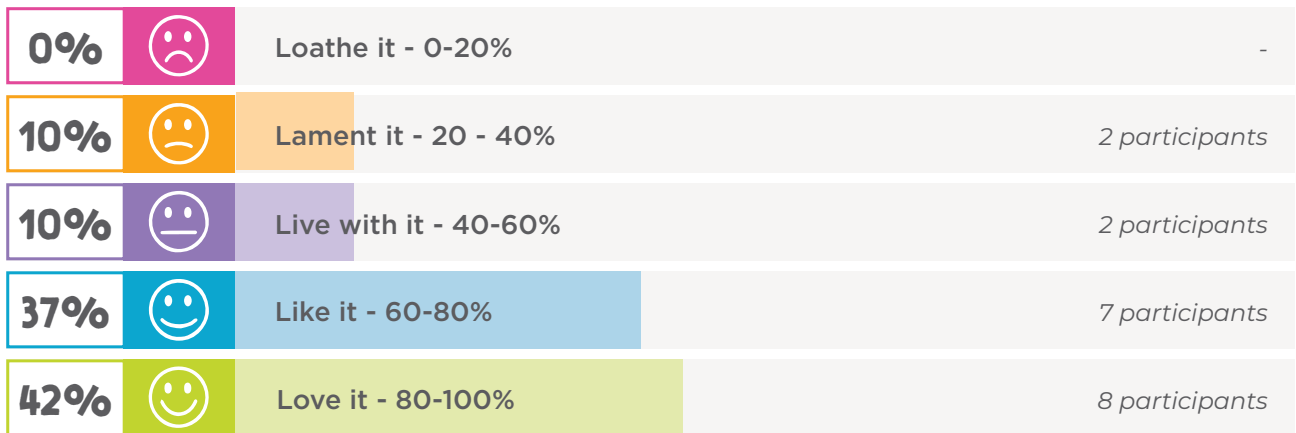
Topic	What we have done with what we heard.	RCP questions and concerns.	Panel Suggestions for the RCP
Innovation Cost: \$50m Bill impact 2029: \$2 of the \$38	<p>Trials based on 'innovation investment principles'</p> <p>Testing new innovative technologies that better integrate customer solar & EVs, conducting research and trialling advances in network equipment that have potential to improve safety & reliability</p>	<p>Concerns, perspectives or potential areas of challenge from the RCP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How NIAC is delivering benefits for customers • What is proposed in the \$50m innovation program in the Draft Plan? • Are the innovation principles correct and how should they be weighted? 	<p>Responses: 5 love it, 10 like it, 1 live with it, 4 lament it 22 people signed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more work with vehicle to grid implementation • Look at other avenues other than batteries and whether they have long term capabilities • Need to look at cable capacity • Lower the cost to increase reliability • Good idea to spend \$ on intelligent network as it would be cheaper to discovery of faults as well as more accurate info • spend more in accelerating decarbonisation • Not enough of spend • priority of decarn and resilience relative to fairness and lowering cost other ways / actions should address fairness • iInnovation can significantly reduce cost in the long term. Resilience and cost are equally important • intelligent network e.g partnership with CSIRO, Unis, etc to come up with community solutions • Ausgrid should engage in innovative practice across all facets of the company . community innovation should be the priority particularly partnership with social organisations. • Trialling should consider geographic and social economic focus (from 2 people) • all areas should be considered according to geographic and social economic conditions. • innovation is super important but I can see how you have doubts about Ausgrid being able to deliver on it usefully- good call. • Offer community the opportunity to be involved in solutions. • Put resilience up the list on weighting because resilience pays forward both in money cost and personnel capability. • innovation in intelligent network, where smart grid, access, and new technologies can be used to improve the system. • innovation principles 1. fairness 2. improve resilience 3. safety 4 lower cost to customer. • innovation principles 1 accelerating decarbonisation 2. improve resilience

PILLAR 4: NET ZERO



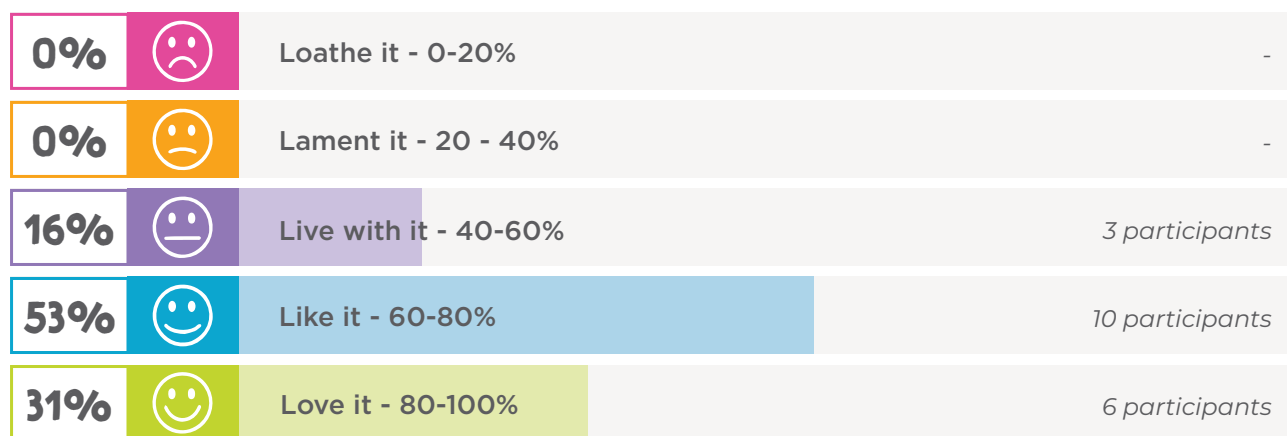
Topic	What we have done with what we heard.	RCP questions and concerns.	Panel Suggestions for the RCP
<p>Net Zero</p> <p>Cost: \$110-\$153m</p> <p>Bill impact 2029: \$6 of the \$38</p>	<p>New processes and tools, including upgrading our systems to give us better visibility of all parts of our network.</p> <p>Including, better understanding 2-way energy flows across the network and monitor potential electrical faults that can cause safety hazards, by investing \$24m in smart meter data.</p> <p>Benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove barriers, and enable customers to maximise their energy investments Connect 110,000 new solar customers ~ 1GW of clean energy 350,000 Electric Vehicles ~ 262,500 tonnes/CO2-eq emission reductions p.a. 100,000 residential battery systems ~ 1GWh of storage 	<p>Concerns, perspectives or potential areas of challenge from the RCP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We heard you want to mandate the new pricing platform as of 2025. Is this desire dependent on anything else? We understand customers need information to make the best use of new tariffs. How should Ausgrid encourage the uptake of smart meters that are needed to make best use of those tariffs? We heard that you want batteries but we need to be certain you understand that the benefits are uncertain and will, if realised, not be shared amongst every customer. Are you comfortable with that? If not does Ausgrid need to do more research and development on batteries? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Majority (11/18) "like it". 4 "love it", 3 "live with it". We recognised that Ausgrid is limited in what it can do in contributing in this area Partnership with other institution, government agency, council to faster adoption on Solar, EV, batteries Working with government and social housing to help educate everyone including the low income and vulnerable population on how they can be involved in the drive to Net Zero, how they can get a smart meter, etc. Remember to consider just Solar Panels or Batteries, explore other initiative that could contribute to Net Zero More education, explanation to the public about how the tariffs contribute to the cost. And why it is a reasonable and fair change. Things to emphasise: customers are not being charged to export, they are just being rewarded a little bit less; and they are being rewarded for shifting their usage and smoothing out load on the grid. Suggestion to prioritise community batteries in areas with high density, heritage limitations, lots of renters, ... so that they can benefit from renewables and reduced cost. Provide customers with more info on battery technology, e.g. lifespan, suitability. Double-check the numbers in the draft plan for mistakes/typos.

PILLAR 5: CYBER



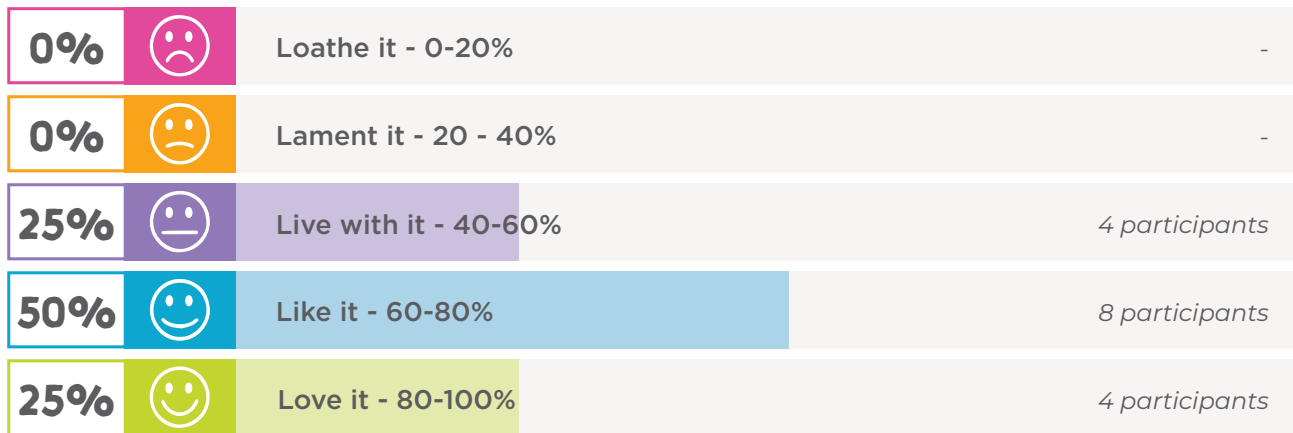
Topic	What we have done with what we heard.	RCP questions and concerns.	Panel Suggestions for the RCP
Cyber Cost: \$106m Bill impact 2029: \$11 of the \$38	<p>Ensuring our safeguards align with industry best practice.</p> <p>Gradually increasing our cyber compliance by reaching Cyber level 2 by mid 2027 and then progressively improving to Cyber level 3 by 2029.</p> <p>Benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced likelihood of a cyber incident affecting integrity of customer data and/or safe supply & restoration of energy 	<p>Concerns, perspectives or potential areas of challenge from the RCP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How important do you consider cyber security is compared with other issues Ausgrid is seeking to balance eg enabling export of roof-top solar, building a grid that is more resilient to climate change? What factors do you consider have changed since the VoC discussion that may lead you to have a different view to when you were part of the VoC? Do you think that Ausgrid has any choice in the level of cyber security it should seek? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ausgrid should ensure the cyber protection processes are well-researched and transparent to customers and stake holders. Cyber security is a necessity of the highest level. Wise cyber investment can mean greater network stability/resilience. To what extent is there a crossover between Cyber and IT - what is being spent where? Cyber security will only become more important - we should stick with L3 if there is no negative impact on the customer Invest now, to prevent a greater spend later. Prevention is better than a cure!

PILLAR 6: IT SYSTEMS UPGRADE



Topic	What we have done with what we heard.	RCP questions and concerns.	Panel Suggestions for the RCP
IT system upgrades Cost: \$143m Bill impact 2029: \$12 of the \$38	<p>Improving our capability through system upgrades, that enable us to be more efficient, and improve our ability to innovate in areas such as pricing.</p> <p>Making an upfront commitment to reduce our operating costs by \$32 million over the 2024-29 period.</p> <p>Benefits include:</p> <p>Maintain reliability of market transactions and billing processes in line with obligations to adjust to changing market drivers e.g. dynamic tariffs</p> <p>Maintain operational costs at current levels by offsetting cost increases in other areas of the business</p> <p>Improves customer experience by supporting simpler internal processes</p> <p>Enables Ausgrid to provide more innovative service offerings, such as dynamic supply and pricing options</p>	<p>Concerns, perspectives or potential areas of challenge from the RCP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the benefits from the proposed IT investment tangible enough for you to support the expenditure? • Should Ausgrid be held to account for any cost overruns in implementing the new I.T. system and if so, how? • Is it in your interest for the proposed investment to be depreciated over a longer period than five years? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Firm guidelines and clarity about what is being delivered and how benefit organization and customers 2. definite interest in distribution over cost over a longer period of time if environment (financial) alters significantly. 3. depreciate investment over shortest time. Keep IT accountable' 4. Essential but must be tightly managed. Ausgrid or (preferably) contractors for cost overruns. Depreciate over AER allows periods of 5. We can't afford to not upgrade system. 6. Important to do but is there any potential to recover in longer periods. 7. Important to do and make it friendly with all people 8. smart grids 9. depreciate over 10 year period 15 too long and 5 too short. Definite no over spend 10. If the system is not old you have to upgrade sooner rather than later. Can probably argue to recover costs over 10 years. But Prioritize on going development . Make sure not delayed for next time. 11. Consider recovery of costs over longer period of time. 12. Ausgrid should be accountable for any cost overrun. 13. Consider other improvements being implemented in other areas. 14. Support longer depreciation to reflect longevity of investment <p>love it - 6: Like it 10: Live with it -3.</p>

PILLAR 7: OTHER



Topic	What we have done with what we heard.	RCP questions and concerns.	Panel Suggestions for the RCP
Other Other parts of the bill and your household expenses are likely to change.	<p>Inflation and interest rate increases will impact Ausgrid's portion of your electricity bill, but other parts of the supply chain will also be impacted.</p> <p>The costs of transforming our electricity supply to renewable one will impact different parts of the bill.</p> <p>Many items in your household budget have risen recently and are likely to continue to rise.</p>	<p>Concerns, perspectives or potential areas of challenge from the RCP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What initiatives across the six investment areas should Ausgrid prioritize in the next five years? Which initiatives do you consider essential? Which can be pushed into the future? • How do potential changes in external factors* affect your perspective on Ausgrid's proposed investments? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o *i.e. inflation, interest rates, concessions, hardship support, roadmap costs, government subsidies • Should Ausgrid be required to get back to you if there are changes to these external factors? If so, what types of change should trigger the requirement to re-engage? 	<p>IT upgrade benefits: such as increased productivity and efficiency. Would this be able to reduce cost?</p> <p>Would not want to see much change in balance between the six pillars. Need to consult again if external factors change significantly. Should be pushed for government support for innovation, resilience and for financial support for low income consumers.</p> <p>Prioritise long term investments e.g. net zero - will take longer to see benefit but impacts every other aspect.</p> <p>Priority is EVs and community batteries to achieve net zero.</p> <p>IT is the priority as is cyber. Net zero needs to be dealt with and results will be seen long term.</p> <p>Prioritise safety and resilience, innovation and cyber over others.</p> <p>Increase community engagement overall, particularly with indigenous communities.</p> <p>Prioritise equity in decision making about where to locate community batteries and investment.</p> <p>Don't lose sight of what's important over the long term even if it takes longer to pay off or see benefits.</p>

NEXT STEPS

All the materials from both these workshops have been provided to Ausgrid as raw notes within 48 hours from the end of each workshop. This has been to ensure inclusion in further finalisation steps for the draft Plan.

They are also all provided here as a record of 'what was said' at each workshop. This report can be used as an addendum to the final Plan as evidence of the process and what was recorded.

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to transcribe participants comments accurately a small number have not been included in this summary due to the legibility of the content. Please contact Nicole Hunter at nicole@mosaiclab.com.au for any suggested additions.

This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of Ausgrid. The sole purpose of this report is to provide a record of conversations provided by participants.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by Ausgrid. In preparing this report, MosaicLab has relied upon the information provided by the participants at the forum. Ausgrid can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a Victorian-based consultancy that specialises in community and stakeholder engagement, facilitation, negotiation, strategic planning and coaching.



REPORT PREPARED BY:
mosaicLAB
www.mosaiclab.com.au

D. Conversation snapshots



D. Conversation snapshots

Throughout the stream engagement Ausgrid captured what was heard in a series of conversation snapshots, which summarised customer and stakeholder views and aspirations against each of the engagement themes. These snapshots allowed the team to look across all customer streams to gauge where views aligned and differed and to understand the breadth of customers' views.

In addition, the VoC Panel allowed Ausgrid to achieve a depth of understanding on the issues that a representative sample of customers felt were important and which wrestled directly with key business challenges and costed trade-offs.

The team aimed to ensure that the recommendations gained through the VoC Panel, were informed by insights arising from the broader engagement. This was done by briefing the VoC Panel on the outcomes

of the broad residential and small business customer engagement, and then asking that wider group of customers and stakeholders to reflect on the Panel's draft recommendations midway through the Panel process.

The team also spoke with Councils – and found that many of their priorities and values in relation to the energy network accorded with those of residential and small business customers – and discussed issues of relevance with commercial and industrial customers, and energy partners.

Feedback from the VoC Panel, residential and small business customer engagement (including our Lived Experience and Key Voices streams), commercial and industrial customers, councils and retailers and ASPs, is summarised in the following sections.

Voice of Community Panel – recommendations

The VoC Panel delivered ten considered recommendations after seven days of deliberation where they heard from several energy experts. Some of their recommendations relate to issues that are beyond the current remit of Ausgrid. But many speak directly to the challenges facing the business as it transitions to net zero. The VoC recommendations will materially influence Ausgrid's decisions over the next five years and are responded to in full in the

Draft Plan. Table 11 below summarises the Panel's recommendations.

In addition, the VoC responded to the Draft Plan during two Recall days on 17 September and on the 15 October. Through these workshops, the Panel provided advice to the RCP on how it could represent customers' preferences during its negotiations with the AER. A full report into the outcome of the Recall Days is Appended to the Regulatory Proposal.

Table 16 VoC Panel Recommendations.

Recommendation	Description
Advocate and lobby for reform to energy regulations to improve service to customers	<p>The regulations by the Federal government, State government, AEMC (AER) NEM (any regulatory body) are too limiting to allow for Ausgrid to innovate resilience, affordability and to be fair. Ausgrid should establish what to advocate for in consultation with customers.</p> <p>We want Ausgrid to play a role in community benefits and network solutions. We also want Ausgrid to partner with local councils and technology providers to increase the uptake / implementation of community batteries, SAPS and solar gardens.</p>
Incentivise the adoption of cost-effective renewable energy, balancing the speed and uptake of technologies, while leading by example	<p>To head toward net zero Ausgrid should work with third party companies to help finance and support renewable energy alternatives. Ausgrid can work in cooperation with both local and federal governments in encouraging a controlled approach to the adoption of renewable technology. Ausgrid should continue their internal net zero efforts by adopting appropriate technology as it becomes economically feasible.</p> <p>Ausgrid should encourage retailers to work more with renewable energy suppliers. We need to consider the end-of-life of technology: disposal also has environmental impacts.</p>

Recommendation	Description
Enhanced community engagement and communication	<p>Ausgrid, in partnership with Retailers, providing cost effective clear and simple explanations of the factors impacting customer charges and the reliability of electricity supply. This is at an individual consumer level as well as aggregated. For example, time of energy consumption, load used, surge, using smart meters if possible. Advocate for the rollout of smart meters and provide more information on smart meters, and how to read existing meters. It needs to be highly relevant and targeted to them specifically, ideally using real-time information. Provide consumers with a description, in plain language, of what Ausgrid does and what it doesn't do, any large projects coming up and the costs and benefits of those projects to consumers, as well as overall performance of any plans Ausgrid has finished, as well as what retailers provide and don't provide. Use various communication channels to provide additional information on customer bills (e.g., via, email, SMS, website, letter drop, social media (e.g., local Facebook groups)).</p>
Visibility of Ausgrid costs to customers	<p>Consumers to be able to get breakdown of the Ausgrid component of their bill via the Ausgrid website with granularity such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of Operations • Maintenance of existing • Investment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — In existing — In future capability — At a consumer level in relation to their region. <p>Providing this breakdown is an initiative that Ausgrid can facilitate. Ausgrid to clearly communicate the location of the information through their social media, community media and programs. Ausgrid to continue to advocate to the AER/AEMC for increased visibility on customers' bills directly.</p>
Maintain and improve current emergency procedures	<p>Maintain and improve current emergency procedures by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invest in Ausgrid outage response and resilience program 2. Incremental improvement in communication to customers with local information 3. Keep the KPI's that measure <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. effectiveness of service delivery/response times b. how easy it is to deal with planned outage c. how easy it is to get information about an unplanned outage.
Ausgrid to collaborate on research & innovation on emerging technologies and best practices	<p>INNOVATION</p> <p>Find the most cost-effective technologies and how to implement them.</p> <p>Allow proven financial benefits of NIAC to be recycled back into new initiatives in the following year (Rather than pass on benefits to customers directly).</p> <p>We want Ausgrid to move from the proposed increase in spend (\$12m pa capex + \$1.5m pa opex) to the higher increased spend (\$16m pa capex + \$2m pa opex) to achieve increased innovation</p> <p>*IF* the annual bill cost difference is not a lot. We understand this is a 30c per year difference for an average non-solar household.</p> <p>CYBER</p> <p>Investment of \$2.96/pa as a base, giving Ausgrid the option to go to the AER to shift up to greater investment (example \$3.30/pa) if Ausgrid can show that it's needed or there are more benefits to protecting the grid.</p>
Executing collaborative innovation and research	<p>Work towards improving the network and net zero without being limited by legislation.</p>

Recommendation	Description
Investing in capital expenditure (Capex) to reduce future operational expenditure (Opex)	<p>Assets listed as Capex have long term benefits but are also investments. Ausgrid must balance these long-term investments with ongoing maintenance to ensure customers continue to receive reliable access to the network.</p> <p>We recommend Ausgrid spend at least \$5m pa Which is equivalent to \$1.72 pa for homes without solar and \$1.99 pa for homes with solar.</p> <p>If Ausgrid has a 75% or more confidence level in the data regarding occurrence of extreme weather, then we recommend Ausgrid make upfront investments.</p>
Influence customer behaviour with a flexible two-way pricing mechanism to optimise electricity supply and demand, balancing time of use, time of feed-in, and reliability	<p>The challenge is that the cost of maintaining the distribution network is spread across all consumers in the network, regardless of their usage and feed in. The cost of network maintenance and improvement is impacted by imports/exports and needs to be fairly distributed.</p> <p>Ausgrid should charge retailers a time of day (or real-time network congestion based) tariff for customers who export power to the grid, in a manner that optimizes consumer pricing and network stability and cost i.e., solar exports are priced differently at different times of day depending on grid load/demand like the current time-of-use import tariff. This pricing mechanism should be opt-in based initially, with a view to transition to all-in as part of the next 5-year planning window.</p> <p>For example: A customer with existing solar & retail agreement should not be charged more than 25% of their existing export tariff.</p>
Review minimum level of reliability of supply	<p>By being bound to Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW (IPART) minimum standards, reliability is lower than the average experience of consumers. Rural consumers have an even lower baseline level of reliability.</p> <p>Ausgrid should communicate (via retailers & to the general public) the minimum reliability standards that Ausgrid is committed to, and that the difference between urban and rural consumers is almost double.</p> <p>Look at redistribution of support to network areas (urban vs rural) to build resilience and address network issues (outages, supply etc.)</p>

Lived Experience, CALD and small business customers

Phase 2

Engagement with customers from the Lived Experience, CALD and small business streams revealed several common themes which indicated support for net zero and a clear desire for a fair transition. This engagement also revealed strong preferences for how customers want to be communicated to by Ausgrid. These insights were provided to the VoC Panel and formed part of their deliberations. They are outlined in Table 12 below.

Table 17 Lived Experience, CALD and SME Customer Insights.

Customers told us		Themes			
Advice to reduce bills and consumption	Customer would like better information to help them understand and reduce their energy consumption and cost. They suggest better bill information, bespoke advice and smart meters.	Customer Experience	Value for Money		
No should be one left behind in the transition	Customers believe that no-one should be left behind in the transition and everyone should benefit from renewables. The complexity and structure of the energy system can work against bringing everyone on the transition.	Fair	Future Network	Sustainable	
Network ready and resilient	Customers expect Ausgrid to support the transition to renewables and ensure the network is prepared for more solar and a more volatile climate.	Future Network	Resilience		
Empathetic, personal contact	Customers expect empathy when they deal with Ausgrid. They want to be engaged, and to deal with real people when they need them on the issues that matter.	Customer Experience			
Targeted and timely information	Customers expect Information to be targeted, accurate, clear and timely. It needs to empower. Customer process should be simple and easy to follow.	Customer Experience			
Accessible information for all	Information needs to be accessible to the widest range of customers. It must be in a variety of languages, be accessible to people with a disability, and be provided in digital and hard copies.	Customer Experience			
Support for net zero	Customers support the transition to net zero and want to see action on climate change. They support more renewables and DER and want to be part of the transition. They expect organisations to play their part.	Future Network	Resilience	Customer Experience	Sustainable
Transparency	Customers want Ausgrid to be transparent about its role, its contribution to energy prices, the rationale behind decisions and pipeline of investments to become net zero.	Customer Experience			

Customers told us		Themes			
Responsiveness to the issues that matter	Customers want quick and respectful responses to their issues and enquiries.	Customer Experience			
The energy system must be fair	Customers want the energy system to be fair and to balance impacts and cost across generations, geography and life circumstance.	Fair			
Access to DER for all or the benefits it offers	Customers would like better access to DER and see it as an opportunity to reach net zero and reduce prices. But they face barriers associated with housing tenure and type, cost, and understanding the process.	Fair	Future Network	Customer Experience	
Energy prices remain critical	Energy prices continue to be front of mind for customers. Cost pressures are going up for residential and small business customers.	Value for Money			
Housing should not be a barrier	Customers believe that housing tenure and type is a barrier to making energy choices that allow customers to manage their energy cost or consumption.	Fair	Future Network		
Outage impact can be significant	The impacts of planned and unplanned outages can be significant, particularly for people in vulnerable circumstances. The impacts can be financial, health, and safety related.	Resilience			
Clear, prior and responsive outage information	Customers expect clear and prior information on planned outages, and responsive information on unplanned outages. This needs to be useful and provide advice on what to do, and where to go.	Resilience	Customer Experience		
Practical and personalised outage response	Customers expect practical and personalised responses to outages. This needs to be joined up across response organisations. Back-up generators and alternative power sources are often suggested.	Resilience	Customer Experience		
Reliability remains critical	Reliability continues to be important, and customers are concerned about how this will be affected by the effects of extreme weather and the transition to renewables.	Resilience			
Subsidies and rebates for those who lose out	Subsidies and rebates are often suggested by customers to overcome inequalities. Customers often think Ausgrid can issue subsidies.	Fair	Value for Money	Customer Experience	

Phase 3

During the Draft Plan engagement, two workshops were held: the first with Peak groups representing vulnerable customers and small business, and the second representing organisations in the climate resilience field. The Tables below provide a summary of those workshops.

Question	Peak round table
Value for Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People need to know about how inflation, interest rates and wider energy costs will affect bills. This is out of Ausgrid's control but not knowing adds uncertainty for customers and makes it difficult to say definitively whether the Draft Plan offers value for money in the context of overall cost of living pressures.
What do communities value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural and remote areas need robust strategies for continuation of supply. • Significantly reduce climate related outages and impacts for those people most vulnerable. • The number and length of outages are two different things. Long outages have a greater impact during the event, but a lower burden of recovery. • Investment decisions need to be taken based on priorities, levels of importance or significance attached to them.
Where to invest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current outage areas should be of immediate concern along with low SEIFA score areas while the third option should be a focus area for a longer period of time. They are not real choices.
Export tariffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the rationale though it will be unpopular with solar customers. • Give people a reason to contribute to a community battery so that solar customers don't just disconnect from the grid. • If export tariffs are required to make a fair balance between solar and non solar households, then the tariff can't be voluntary. • Price should be there to support the message that you should use as much as your own solar as you can and when you can (if you can) export excess solar to the rest of the community.
Community value features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to be clear what 'back up supply' means – avoiding outages for the community or helping smooth supply for the community? • Community batteries are not only practical in terms of renewable energy, but are also a symbolic step towards advocating for community-centred resource distribution. • Businesses in a local area could contribute excess solar in the same way as households to community batteries. • If they are called community batteries then there is a responsibility to help serve the community – otherwise maybe call them network batteries so they can support physical supply, back-up etc.

Indigenous engagement

Ausgrid's engagement with Indigenous communities is only just beginning and will be ongoing through and beyond the next price Reset. The aim is not to engage Indigenous communities on the issues that matter to the business, but instead seek to understand what the needs and aspirations are of those communities so that the business can respond in the ways that have an impact. This needs to begin however, with increasing the cultural awareness within Ausgrid.

The tasks for the Reset period will therefore be as follows:

- Implement a policy where Indigenous input is always taken for major capital projects and key corporate strategies.
- Establish a cultural competency strategy that ingrains measurable culture into the workforce, achieving an 80% competent level.

- Work with Indigenous communities to set an Indigenous workforce target that is at a minimum above the current industry standard, and that prioritises roles that are important to these communities.
- Map the Indigenous communities across the network and make this map available for Ausgrid employees.
- Include Indigenous naming on depot signage to reflect the Country on which they are situated.

Ausgrid has identified three communities that have agreed to work with the business to develop plans that deliver against their communities' aspirations. These communities are Metro, Bahtabah and Wonnaruah. These communities represent different and diverse localities across the network and we are excited about the impact these communities can have on how Ausgrid does things.

Commercial and industrial customers

Phase 2

Interviews

Initial engagement with commercial and industrial customers centred around the engagement themes. This gave rise to eight key insights as outlined in Table 13 below. These confirmed how important cost and reliability remain for commercial and industrial customers and indicated a desire for a better customer service and a targeted approach to reaching net zero.

Table 18 Commercial and Industrial Customer Interview Insights.

Customers told us	Details	Theme
Reliability is key	Many of Ausgrid's Large connection customers, or commercial and industrial (C&I) customers bear significant costs during power outages as backup power options can be prohibitively expensive or impractical. Others have both environmental and cost implications, particularly in relation to unplanned outages where the shutdown of machinery can't be managed in a controlled and efficient manner.	Resilience
Costs are difficult to manage	C&I customers are often exposed to the shift in wholesale generation costs long before it impacts household customers, the recent wholesale market increases, and other cost pressures mean the cost of electricity has become a key concern for many businesses.	Value for money
Electrification is a challenge (for some)	Depending on the nature of the business and its sector, the electrification of process and transport is an imminent if not ongoing project that delivers Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) benefits and potential costs savings. For these businesses the location, timing and payback of investment decisions are issues they would like Ausgrid to proactively assist them with. Not all businesses however are able to transform, particularly those with significant gas driven processes, and for some the transition will have only a minor impact on their business operations.	Future network
Reduce emissions across the grid first	All customers see the greater role that Ausgrid plays in enabling reductions of emissions by ensuring the network is not a barrier to its customers own net zero projects and ambitions. While supportive of Ausgrid pursuing its corporately stated net zero goals, this is seen as a lesser priority than ensuring the networks continues to support increased solar, EV's and other new technologies.	Future network
Outage information is critical	Customers greatest frustration was the lack of information they receive when outages are scheduled or unforeseen. The nature of the information they want to see included information on the progress of restoration, pre-emptive information that enables them to shut down machinery in advance, localised information to better understand the nature and scope of an outage.	Customer experience
Customers are partners in reducing network costs	C&I customers understand that they and the broader community benefit when network costs are lower, and that the decisions they make in relation to new connections, increased load in specific areas of the network or installing their own generation has the potential to either add or reduce network investment requirements and therefore cost. They want to partner with Ausgrid as they transition to net zero, to plan and enable these decisions to be as efficient for both parties as possible.	Customer experience
Improve connection times	Infrastructure planning processes are complex, and Ausgrid is often a single but critical piece in a chain of events. C&I customers become frustrated when it takes a long time to schedule Ausgrid works, and when those works take longer than envisaged.	Customer experience
Provide escalation process	C&I customers dealing with outages want to have a way of escalating their concern within Ausgrid. Many deal with the general call centre during these events, and the call centre does not always understand the nature and implication to the business of an outage, nor have the detailed level of information the business is looking for.	Customer experience

Forum

At the customer forums, the team asked for feedback on key decisions that were emerging through the Reset development. The response indicated support for targeted network investment to respond to climate change, and for enhanced cyber security. There were mixed views on changing the tariff window. The results are in Table 14.

Table 19 Commercial and Industrial Customer Forum Insights.

Forum question	Response
Improving resilience in the face of climate change	Most commercial and industrial customers said the business should invest to improve resilience in impacted locations and share the cost – even if that meant customers who had already invested to improve their reliability paid twice, and the investment carried some risk of redundancy.
Investing in response to the cyber threat	A slight majority of the customers spoken to supported enhanced cyber security. A few supported best-in-class security but many were unsure.
Investing in improved customer service	The majority of customers supported improvements in customer service ICT, with slightly more favouring incremental improvements over ambitious improvements.
Changing the tariff charging window	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half support shifting the peak period to one hour earlier. • A third support making the peak period 7 days a week, a third don't support this and a third are unsure. • Half are unsure about aligning shoulder and off-peak periods, a third don't support this idea, and few support it.
Ancillary Network Services – fixed v quoted fees	Most customers supported fixed ANS fees to create cost certainty, though several were unsure.

Phase 3

Customers were asked about Ausgrid's proposed investment areas in a series of interviews. These questions were consistent with engagement topics used across all engagement streams.

Interview question	Response
Have we got the balance right?	Support for proactive resilience investment, though some mentioned the level of investment was perhaps a bit high. Concern about the impact of interest rates on the basic costs.
Resilience investment	Support for investing before the event <i>"everyone focuses too much on solving issues after they've occurred, rather than preventing them from occurring in the first place"</i> . Government customers are interested in working with Ausgrid around resilience planning and funding. Communication during event to help businesses prepare.
Price path	A steady increase makes most sense. It would help with planning and managing costs. <i>"The smoother the better"</i> .
Peak window changes	Not much impact on C&I customers who operate 24/7. There was support for simplifying tariffs and for gaining foresight on tariffs changes.
Customer service	C&I customers link to and rely on the NMI But because Ausgrid doesn't provide these, customers can't track planned outages. In addition, connection timeframes are very lengthy.

Councils

Phase 2

Engagement with Councils focused on the key issues of vegetation management, innovation and technology, public lighting and resilience. The feedback on some of these issues was very specific but a lot aligned with what other customers said around the transition to net zero. Feedback themes are outlined in Tables 15 to 18.

Table 20 Council Feedback – Vegetation Management.

What Councils told Ausgrid		Theme
Tree pruning	<p>Tree pruning removes tree canopy and makes it harder for Councils to protect against extreme heat.</p> <p>Tree Cutting cycles were decreased in the last reg period to save money.</p> <p>Ausgrid should fund removal and replacement where inappropriate species are causing ongoing problems and keep getting severely pruned.</p> <p>Councils are unhappy with the way Ausgrid is pruning trees. Ausgrid's new contractors are being especially harsh.</p>	Resilient
Funding of ABC	<p>Upgrading LV bare wire to aerial bundled cabling (ABC) or undergrounded cables significantly reduces (or eliminates) the need for pruning. Currently all customer-initiated requests must be paid for by the customer.</p> <p>Council funding to upgrade Ausgrid assets has always been a hard sell, but Covid has really impacted Council budgets, so there is very little chance of financing these projects now.</p>	Value for money
Funding of ABC	Co-funding should be equitable across the network, it should target protection of significant trees, communities that are vulnerable to heat, or exposed to bushfire or storm risk. Councils want a proportional contribution based on the age of the asset.	Fair
Asset data	Councils need access to asset location data to better inform their street tree masterplans.	Future network

Table 21 Council Feedback – Innovation and Sustainability.

What Councils told Ausgrid		Theme
Driving the vision	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> drive the vision for the future and not just facilitate what the community wants have clear, evidence-based climate ambitions, and offer innovative solutions that deliver community demands take on a role to ensure that community demands for renewables are delivered. 	Future network
Support for net zero	<p>Councils would like to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more flexibility for peer-to-peer energy sharing / trading community batteries access to reliable and easy to understand data EV charging infrastructure the LED rollout accelerated, with smart city functionality the grid designed to be more resilient and to operate with DER more infrastructure underground. 	Future network
Ambition for sustainable technology	Ausgrid's plans for sustainable technology should go further, becoming net zero asap, rolling out technology like community batteries, supporting the EV transition and supporting energy sharing.	Future network
Transition to EVs	<p>Councils would like to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> access to charging for those without off-street parking methods to provide fast charging without passing the full cost to the charge point-developer (applying different tariffs) more opportunities for energy sharing no increase in off-peak pricing when EVs are being charged. 	Future network

Table 22 Council Feedback – Public Lighting.

What Councils told Ausgrid	Theme
<p>Closing off pre-2009 assets (allowing Councils to pay off early, assets invested in pre-2009)</p> <p>Councils consulted were not in a position to answer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whether pre-2009 assets should be closed off in the next regulatory period What price increase would be acceptable if pre-2009 assets were closed off Whether some councils paying slightly more and some slightly less was ok if the price list was rationalised by asset groups. <p>Price change should be no more than 3% if prices were to be rationalised.</p> <p>Slightly more than half agreed we should group assets that have the same input costs and result in the same prices.</p> <p>Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) believes that each council should have the ability to decide, but that paying off pre-2009 residuals may be beneficial for some councils.</p>	Value for money
<p>How to transition to a new state-based pole regime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copy from other jurisdictions. Provide standard charges and processes. Establish a facility access agreement. Include SLI Program in developing charges. Include SSROC in developing procedures on behalf of all councils. Investigate multi-purpose poles. Pre-approve ASP's. Review PUMS application. 	Value for money
<p>Pricing</p> <p>Transparency of pricing, including any changes in pricing is essential.</p> <p>A pricing model/methodology should be approved so new prices can be created within the regulatory period outside of the AER annual pricing process.</p> <p>Simplified pricing is a good idea if newer and common lighting types are properly cost reflective.</p>	Value for money
<p>Meeting future needs of councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplify approval processes. Reduce time to install light poles. Provide more transparency in pricing. 	Value for money
<p>Council ownership of street lighting</p> <p>Councils see advantages in owning and managing streetlights, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> choosing their own street lighting service provider increased flexibility, faster adoption of new technology better defined service levels ability to hold suppliers to account and eliminate conflicts for limited DNSP resources. 	Value for money
<p>Street lighting procurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councils want to be involved in all steps of the procurement process. They suggest Disclosure of Commercial Links / Conflicts Agreements to deal with conflicts relating to the consultants they chose to do this work. Councils would like contestable market options where services are not provided by Ausgrid. 	Value for money
<p>Public lighting code</p> <p>The issue of excluding or not complex repairs from the Public Lighting Code is under review.</p>	Value for money

Table 23 Council Feedback – Resilience.

What Councils told Ausgrid		Theme
Communicating outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and advisory materials that are tailored for communities – in languages and culturally relevant ways. • Utilities could provide clear, consistent, and timely information for councils to disseminate to their communities on how best to respond to emergency situations or outages. • In an energy emergency, people need accurate information, clear guidance, and well-co-ordinated efforts. • People and organisations need accurate information about restoration times to make good decisions about safety and local continuity. 	Customer experience
Preparing for outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a minimum, Ausgrid should provide staff to attend all Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) and Regional Emergency Management Committee (REMC) meetings. This preparatory work is important to ensuring that efforts are well coordinated in an emergency. Ideally, Ausgrid would be committing resources to undertake joint planning and emergency simulation. • Ausgrid should provide feedback into the local emergency management plan updates. • Investing in microgrids and SAPS will improve resilience. 	Resilience
Responding to outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fallen power lines pose a direct threat to residents' safety. They can also delay efforts by emergency services to evacuate residents during events. • Residents rely heavily on electronic devices to receive updates from emergency services and, where necessary, request assistance. • Prolonged power outages can increase the hardship experienced by the community by preventing residents from accessing basic amenities. • Prolonged power outages can delay a community's recovery from a disruptive event by preventing residents from accessing social and online networks. • Residential customers expect Ausgrid to consider all options for cost-effective investment in resilient network assets. 	Resilience
Non-network investments / network investments with non-network benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ausgrid should re-introduce a co-funding contribution to Aerial Bundled Cabling (ABC) to allow for greater urban canopy and protect the community from rising urban heat. • Councils are interested in collaborating to identify opportunities to grow the network of community refuges and resilience hubs, there are opportunities for DNSP and council to share infrastructure (design & implementation considerations, learnings). 	Resilience

Phase 3

What Councils told Ausgrid	
Resilience – what to invest in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are more vulnerable have fewer resources to cope with outages – they should be prioritised. Vulnerability mapping should drive investment and communication targets. • Need clear communications during unplanned outage to the community which are expected to be more than 1 hour. • The number of outages is reducing, however the duration of those outages in times of storm event needs to be reduced. • Avoid law of diminishing returns to avoid spending excessively to marginally improve what is already a highly reliable network- ask what people are prepared to pay for a small improvement in reliability? • Impact of outages on communities with high uptake of EV should be considered. • Better visual information to customers (map view with shading or icons to illustrate what kinds of issues have happened) to understand and identify where outages or issues are occurring and where crews are working across the network during disasters. • Ensure the electricity network is resilient and can service EV transition, 100% electric buildings, renewable transition, especially in LGAs experiencing growth (including doubling of population by 2040/ 2050).
Resilience – where to invest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas which overlap extreme heat, vulnerable persons, etc should be prioritised first. • I would have thought most affected areas and future areas to be most affected would be similar. • Unclear why need to differentiate between areas of worst impact and most vulnerable – could prioritise areas that have both? • What about grid extremities or grid vulnerabilities? Where the grid needs to be upgraded to cope with doubling of population, many of which will be from CALD communities. Ausgrid's community battery trials are occurring in locations where grid resilience is less. • Vulnerability mapping/overlay would be an effective way to present this. • In my view, Ausgrid should be looking at the network upgrade via a variety of factors, it appears as though we are being asked to choose between the investment choices as binary choices either/or – I would prefer that Ausgrid prioritise network investment to achieve multiple benefits – in line with asset replacement or upgrade cycles, areas that are exposed to increased risk and areas that have vulnerable people.
Community batteries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I understand that this can be very difficult to achieve – but a community battery paired with a kiosk that serves a new residential estate which has UG power, an islandable community battery could be very low risk as homes are not powered via overhead lines which are prone to storm damage could be feasible and provide benefit to residents during an outage. • In Willoughby LGA, there's a large proportion of renters who are mostly excluded from the benefits of going solar. Need to work out how to address that imbalance. • Batteries can be located in basements / buildings etc like zone substations to avoid visual impacts.
Export tariffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniformity – but it needs to be transitioned carefully. • A transition over time would allow time for people to install solar. • We don't have a lot of time to achieve significant reductions in community emissions. Need to go fast and hard in order to make a tangible difference by 2030. • The cost of installing solar for small customers means they expect to have a return on that investment over a reasonable period of time. Although the magnitude of the proposal has a small financial impact, it is likely to have a more strongly negative emotional response. The means to manage solar exports to respond to the pricing signal should also be communicated to small customers, so they don't feel helpless, and that the policy was simply imposed upon them. • Will this tariff revenue stream be used to invest in the network to support further solar uptake in the network? Does Ausgrid believe that no further limitations will be applied to customers on the size of solar systems that they propose to install? • Encouragement of uptake of personal solar to gain benefits. • Forward notice required for deciding on PV setup to install and also to allow installations some time to run on economics when installed, puts all in same boat. Older systems may need help in upgrading controls four times. • Good incentive for west facing panels and home storage, but the tariff cost impact is so negligible and obscure (behind retailer tariffs) that it may be ineffectual. Should be opt-in out and transition over time to allow for future uptake of solar. Everyone contributing will lessen the burden on a few – no one opts in for extra costs.

Energy supply chain

Retailers and ASPs

Retailers told the team that they want a no-surprises approach to being kept informed of changes in the business, and are particularly interested to understand developments in tariff charges.

ASPs said they were not able to respond to questions of price as that was a customer consideration, however they would like to see certainty in fee quotes to avoid the final cost being much higher than that costed.

E. Survey analysis



Ausgrid Reset evaluation survey analysis

June 2022, prepared by bd infrastructure

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Phase 1 participant feedback

1. Phase 1 – comparison across common questions

A total of 16 participants provided feedback on engagement activities. Overall, participant feedback suggests engagement activities were genuine and well delivered. Participants felt that:

- engagement activities were a good use of their time
- Ausgrid's efforts to engage with customers is genuine
- Ausgrid would use their ideas to help improve electricity services for customers
- the information received was clear and easy to understand
- they would participate in future activities.

Figure 1 below provides a data summary for relevant questions in the feedback survey.

Figure 1 Lived Experience participant evaluation



2. Phase 1: NSW Peak round table 1 follow up survey

Have you previously worked with Ausgrid as part of your current role (n=2)

Two participants had previously worked with Ausgrid.

Figure 2 Have you previously worked with Ausgrid as part of your current role (n=2)



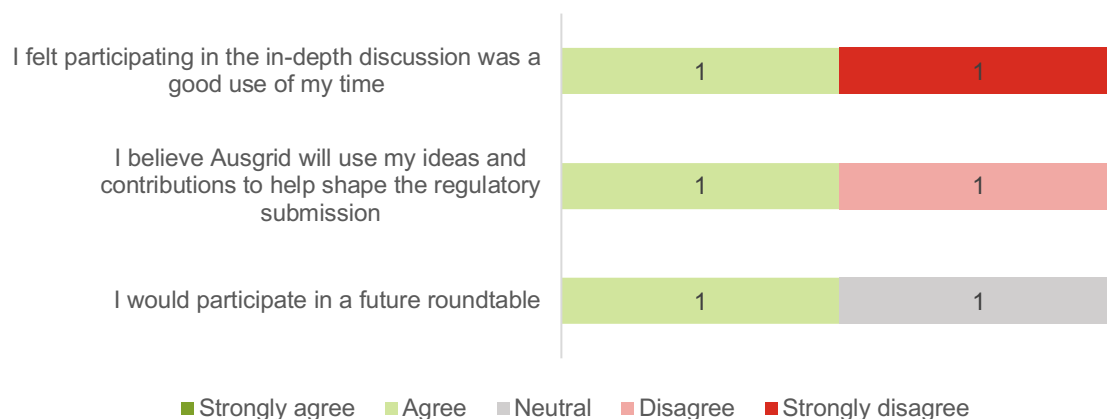
Please respond to these statements (n=2)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, participants had mixed views. One respondent agreed while the other respondent strongly disagreed.

There were mixed views on whether participants ideas and contributions would be used by Ausgrid to help shape the regulatory submission. One participant agreed while the other participant disagreed.

When asked if participants would participate in a future roundtable, one participant agreed while the other was neutral.

Figure 3 Please respond to the following statements (n=2)



Do you have any feedback on the format and roundtable approach? (n=1)

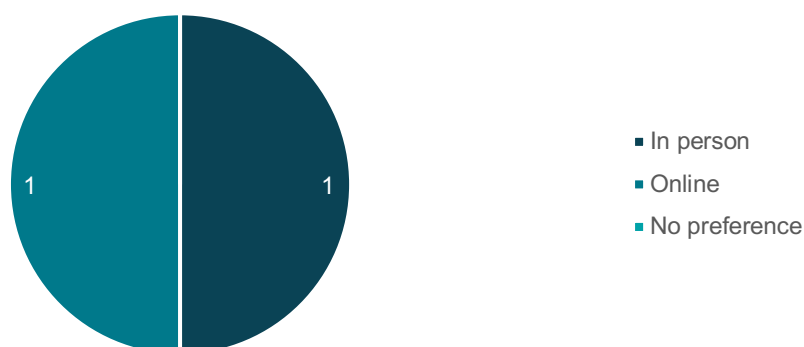
One participant provided feedback. They stated:

Technology worked satisfactory. Good support from the team.

I would prefer to participate in future roundtables: (n=2)

When asked how participants would prefer to participate in future round tables there was mixed views between online and in person.

Figure 4 I would prefer to participate in future roundtables: (n=2)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Energy cost and affordability’ topic? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

I expect some bill shock in coming times after lockdowns

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Supporting customers through outages’ topic? (n=0)

No participants provided further comment.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Fair transition to net zero’ topic? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

I would hope that new technology will result in equitable sharing of productivity between shareholders and various classes of customers

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Communicating with customers’ – our additional topic? (n=0)

No participants provided further comment.

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate

3. Phase 1: Upper Hunter Round Table

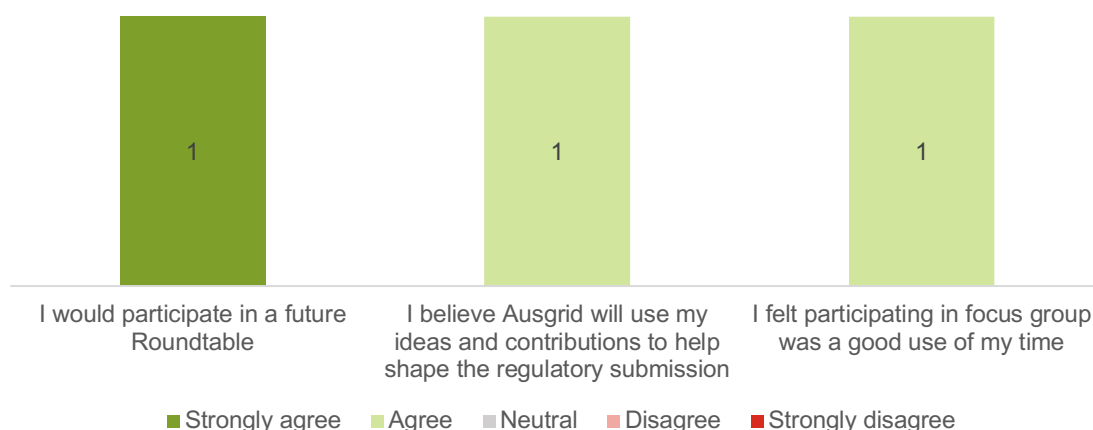
Please respond to these statements (n=1)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, the participant agreed.

When asked if Ausgrid will use their ideas and contributions to help shape the regulatory submission, the participant agreed.

The participant strongly agreed that they would participate in a future roundtable.

Figure 5 Please respond to the following statements (n=1)



Do you have any feedback on the format and roundtable approach? (n=1)

One participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

I thought this was a great approach

I would prefer to participate in future Roundtables (n=1)

The participant would prefer to participate in future Roundtables online rather than in person.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Energy cost and affordability' topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Supporting customers through outages' topic (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Fair transition to net zero' topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Communicating with customers' (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=1)

One participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Social and Affordable consumers are the biggest impact

4. Phase 1: LE ‘deep dive’ follow up survey

(Interviews with Tenants Union, Deaf Australia, Vision Australia and South Eastern Community Centre)

Have you previously worked with Ausgrid as part of your current role (n=3)

No participants had previously worked with Ausgrid.

Figure 6 Have you previously worked with Ausgrid as part of your current role (n=3)



Please respond to these statements (n=3)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, two out of three participants agreed. Only one participant was neutral on the matter.

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if Ausgrid is genuine in its efforts to engage customers, only one participant agreed and two were neutral.

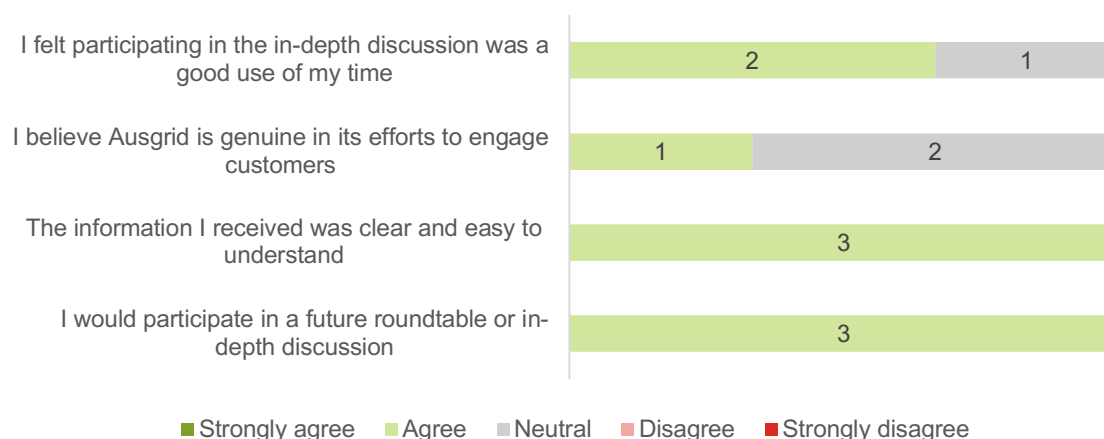
Key takeaway: there was mixed viewed regarding how genuine participants felt the engagement was.

When asked if the information participants received was clear and easy to understand, all participants agreed.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team developed supporting materials which were accessible for participants.

When asked if participants would participate in a future roundtable or discussion, all participants agreed.

Figure 7 Please respond to the following statements (n=3)



Do you have any feedback on the format and discussion approach? (n=2)

Two participants provided additional information. They stated:

A little more time would have been useful

Participants were engaged and knowledgeable on their topic areas. Process was streamlined and information provided clear and accessible.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Energy cost and affordability' topic? (n=0)

No participants provided further comment.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Customer service' topic? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

I encourage you to consult further with the deaf community to accurately understand how customer service could be improved so that deaf people do not have to bear the onus of communication all the time. Just kicking up a NRS number on your website does not equate [to] genuine accessibility or understanding of deaf customers.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Supporting customers through outages' topic? (n=1)

One participant provided additional information. They stated:

Do consider plain English sms and auslan videos.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Fair transition to net zero' topic? (n=2)

Two participants provided additional information. They stated:

We didn't really get to discuss this from the perspective of issues in land lease communities, of which there are a quite a few

Just re-emphasising the need to have this information accessible in auslan

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=0)

No participants provided further comment.

5. Phase 1: Lived experience household customers focus group

(This group included customers who have found themselves in vulnerable circumstances as well as three representatives from the Great Sydney Commission (now Greater Cities Commission) Youth Panel who represented young people in areas that cross over with Ausgrid's network.)

Please respond to these statements (n=9)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (89.9 per cent and 11.1 per cent respectively)

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if the participant's believed Ausgrid is genuine in its effort to engage with customers, one third of respondents agreed and two-thirds strongly agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: participants felt that Ausgrid's engagement processes is genuine.

Just under half of respondents (44.4%) agreed Ausgrid will use their ideas to help improve electricity services for customers, while 55.5% said they strongly agreed with this statement.

Key takeaway: participants believe Ausgrid will use their ideas to improve electricity services for customers.

When asked if the information participants received was clear and easy to understand, all participants agreed (44.4%) or strongly agreed (55.5%).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team presented information clearly.

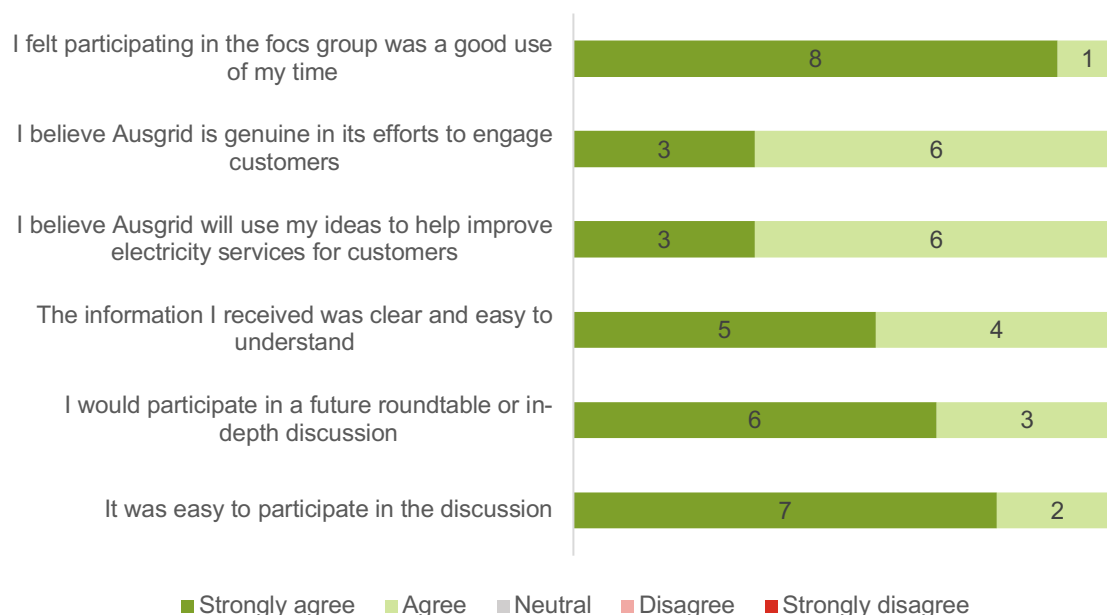
When asked if participants would participate in a future roundtable or in-depth discussion, one-third agreed and two-thirds strongly agreed they would participate in the future.

Key takeaway: participants are keen to be involved in future Reset engagement activities.

When asked if it was easy to participant in the discussion, 22.2% agreed and 77.8% of participants strongly agreed with the statement.

Key take away: The discussion format empowered participants to contribute.

Figure 8 Please respond to the following statements (n=9)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Energy cost and affordability’ topic? (n=0)

Three participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Progress has been made in Solar, Batteries and Green Hydrogen. When is use of this going to be put into practice by the providers?

Structure of Ausgrid and retailers.

Structure of Ausgrid and retailers [duplicate comment].

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Customer service’ topic? (n=9)

Three participants provided additional information. They stated:

It was good discussions about doing more to connect with customers during outages. Ausgrid took that onboard.

Good.

Good.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the ‘Supporting customers through outages’ topic? (n=9)

Two participants provided additional information. They stated:

I have recently been involved in conflict between suppliers, retailers and a customer with life maintenance equipment during a planned outage.

see above [assume related to outage comment].

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Fair transition to net zero' topic? (n=9)

Three participants provided additional information. They stated:

Is there any planned transition by providers and can this planning be passed onto the consumer?

Query carbon capture

Query carbon capture [duplicate answer]

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=9)

Three participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

It was great to feel heard on these topics. Great decision by Ausgrid.

Not at this time.

I felt the team listened

6. Phase 1: SME customer focus group

Please respond to these statements (n=3)

When asked if participating in in-depth discussions was a good use of their time, two out of three respondents strongly agreed and agreed, while one participant was neutral.

All participants strongly agreed or agreed that Ausgrid is genuine in its efforts to engage customers (33.3 per cent and 66.7 per cent respectively).

When asked if participants thought Ausgrid would use their ideas to help improve electricity services for customers, two out of three respondents strongly agreed and agreed, while one participant was neutral.

All participants strongly agreed or agreed that the information they received was clear and easy to understand (33.3 per cent and 66.7 per cent respectively).

When asked if participants would participate in a future roundtable or in-depth discussion, two out of three respondents strongly agreed and agreed, while one participant was neutral.

When asked if participating in the discussion was easy, two out of three respondents strongly agreed and agreed, while one participant was neutral.

Figure 9 Please respond to the following statements (n=3)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Energy cost and affordability' topic? (n=1)

Only one participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Re. solar panels and storage batteries, does Ausgrid provide extra information and advice or recommendations for reputable, reliable installers?

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Network resilience and outages' topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Customer service' topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback.

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Becoming net zero' topic? (n=2)

Two participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Without generation, I guess Ausgrid is just striving like BP or Qantas to become net zero in their offices and depots. No big deal. Last year it was "Office recycling", new name, same old thing, Net zero

Does Ausgrid recommend reliable installers of solar panels and storage batteries?

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=3)

Three participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

[I] felt outnumbered by Ausgrid staff, surely most could watch a recording

Reiterating, any recommendations on how to choose a reputable and reliable installer of solar panels and storage batteries?

Would be great to receive update on the findings

7. Phase 1: SME stakeholder discussion group

Please respond to these statements (n=2)

When asked if participating in the focus group was a good use of their time, all respondents agreed with the statement

When asked if Ausgrid is genuine in its efforts to engage customers, one participant strongly agreed and one was neutral on the topic.

When asked if participants thought Ausgrid would use their ideas to help improve electricity services for customers, one participant agreed and one was neutral.

All participants agreed that the information they received was clear and easy to understand.

When asked if participants would participate in a focus group, all participants agreed.

When asked if participating in the discussion was easy, all participants agreed.

Figure 10 Please respond to the following statements (n=2)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Energy cost and affordability' topic? (n=0)

No participants provided general comments or feedback on the following questions

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Network Resilience and outages' topic? (n=0)

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Customer service' topic? (n=0)

Do you have anything further to share with us about the 'Becoming net zero' topic? (n=0)

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=0)

Phase 2 participant feedback

1. Phase 2: LE and SME Stakeholders

Have you engaged with Ausgrid before this Reset as part of your current role? (n=3)

Two-thirds of respondents (66.7 per cent) who responded to the evaluation survey had engaged with Ausgrid prior to this Reset in their current role. One-third of respondents (33.3 per cent) had not engaged with Ausgrid prior to this Reset as part of their current role.

Please respond to these statements (n=3)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, two out of three participants agreed. Only one participant was neutral on the matter.

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if the participant's believed Ausgrid is genuine in its effort to engage with customers, all respondents agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: participants felt that Ausgrid's engagement processes was genuine.

Two out of three respondents agreed that the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset engagement were knowledgeable. One respondent was neutral.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team was a good fit for the activities undertaken.

When asked if the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset Engagement were approachable, all participants agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team were approachable, overall contributing towards a safe and respectful discussion space.

When asked if the Ausgrid team they dealt were clear about the purpose of the Reset Engagement, all participants agreed.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team conducted themselves with clarity and integrity, clearing identifying the purpose of the engagement processes.

When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with information that was easy to understand, two out of three respondents agreed while one respondent was neutral on the matter.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team developed supporting materials which were accessibility for participants.

When asked if the engagement activity took place at a time and in a format that suited them, all participants agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: for Lived Experience and Small and Medium Enterprise stakeholders, the online format of the engagement sessions worked well.

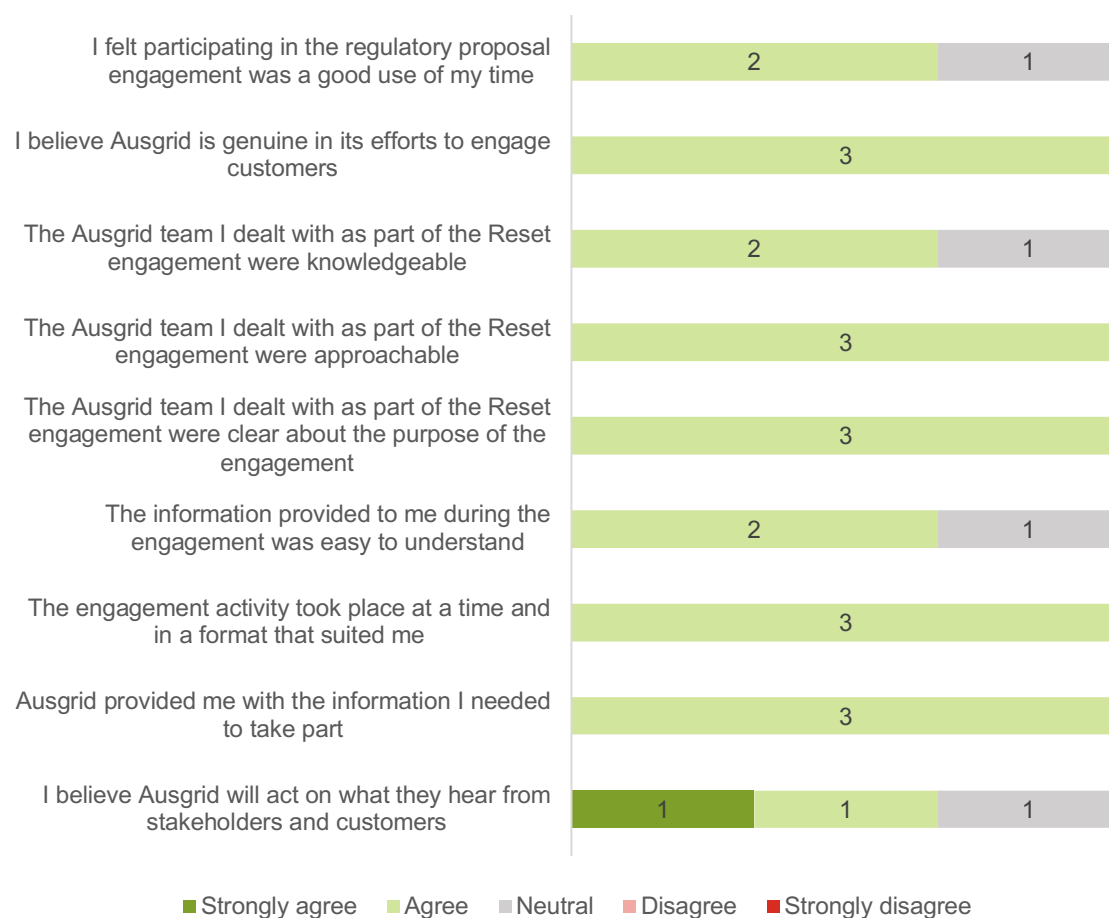
When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with the information needed to take part in the Reset proposal engagement, all participants agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: participants felt that they had the materials required to engage with Ausgrid on the Reset proposal.

When asked if participants believe that Ausgrid will act on what they heard from stakeholders and customers, participants had mixed opinions. Two out of three respondents thought Ausgrid will act on what they have heard, with one respondent strongly agreeing and the other agreeing. One respondent was neutral on the topic.

Key takeaway: while some participants believed Ausgrid will act on the outcomes from the Reset proposal engagement, other participants were not as confident this would occur.

Figure 1 Please respond to the following statements (n=3)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the topics discussed (n=1)

Only one participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

Coming from a regional area I appreciate the online participation

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=0)

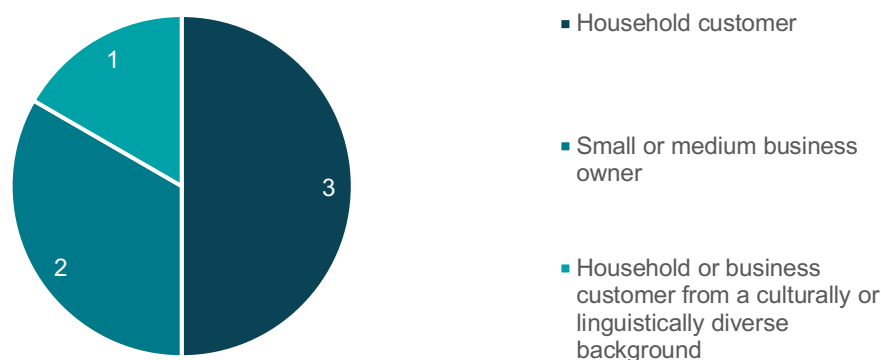
No participants provided general comments or feedback.

2. Phase 2: LE and SME Focus Groups

I recently participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a: (n=6)

Half of respondents (50.0 per cent) had participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a household customer, two thirds (33.3 per cent) had participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a small or medium business owner, while 16.7 per cent had participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a household or business customer from a culturally or linguistically diverse background.

Figure 2 I recently participated in an Ausgrid focus group as a (n=6)



Please respond to these statements (n=5)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (80.0 per cent and 20.0 per cent respectively)

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if the participant's believed Ausgrid is genuine in its effort to engage with customers, all respondents strongly agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: participants felt that Ausgrid's engagement processes was genuine.

All respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset engagement were knowledgeable (40.0 per cent and 60.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team was a good fit for the activities undertaken.

When asked if the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset Engagement were approachable, the majority of respondents (80.0 per cent) strongly agreed with the statement while 20.0 per cent agreed.

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team were approachable, overall contributing towards a safe and respectful discussion space.

When asked if the Ausgrid team they dealt were clear about the purpose of the Reset Engagement, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed (60.0 per cent and 40.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team conducted themselves with clarity and integrity, clearing identifying the purpose of the engagement processes.

When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with information that was easy to understand, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed (40.0 per cent and 60.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team developed supporting materials which were accessibility for participants.

When asked if the engagement activity took place at a time and in a format that suited them, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed (80.0 per cent and 20.0 per cent).

Key takeaway: for Lived Experience and Small and Medium Enterprise focus groups, the online format of the engagement sessions worked well.

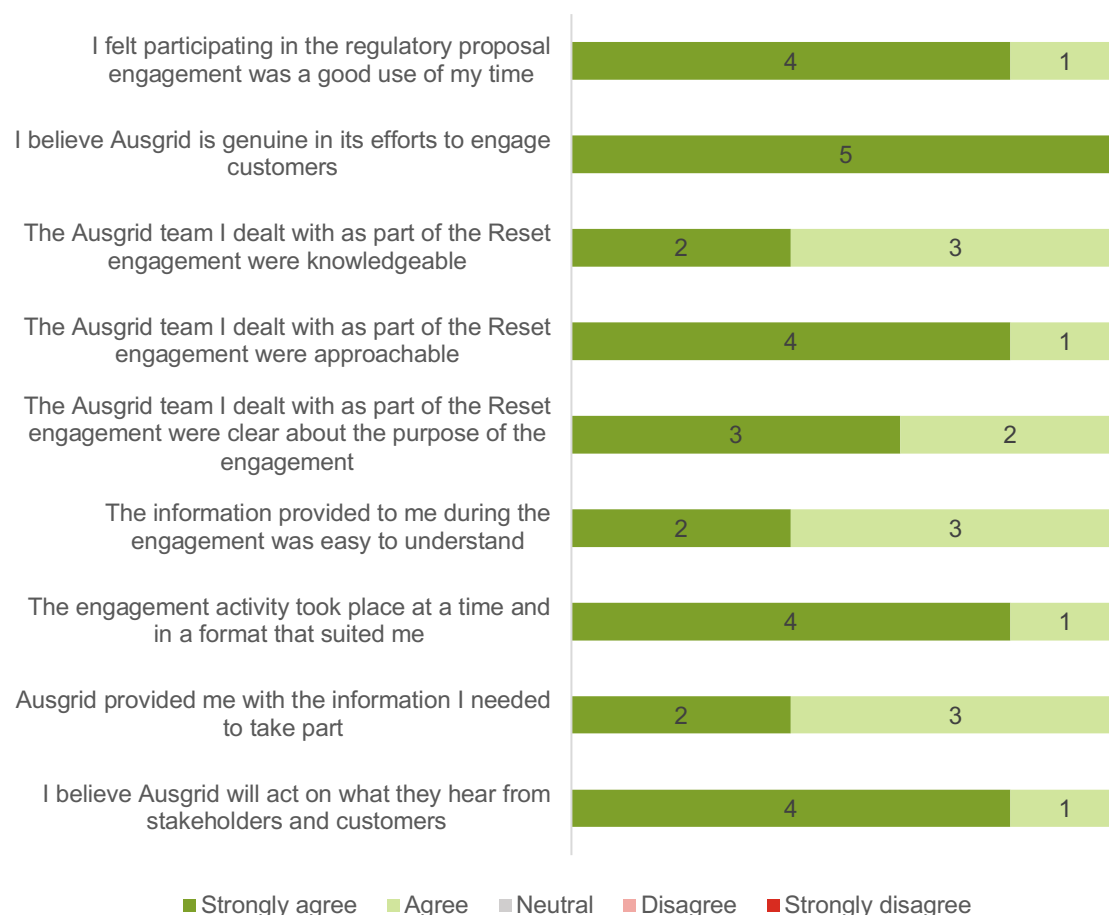
When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with the information needed to take part in the Reset proposal engagement, all participants either strongly agreed or agreed (40 per cent and 60.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: participants felt that they had the materials required to engage with Ausgrid on the Reset process.

When asked if participants believe that Ausgrid will act on what they heard from stakeholders and customers, the majority of respondents strongly agreed (80.0 per cent). The remaining 20.0 per cent of respondent agreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: all respondents believed Ausgrid will act on the outcomes from the Reset proposal engagement.

Figure 3 Please respond to the following statements (n=5)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the topics discussed (n=3)

Three participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

I liked the zoom and the use of written materials on the screen together with the verbal explanations

The facilitators were excellent

The format [was] well planned and the discussion approach well controlled

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=1)

One participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

It seemed to me that Ausgrid as a distributed of electricity were getting involved in generation and retail

3. Phase 2: Retailers and larger customers

Have you engaged with Ausgrid before this Reset as part of your current role? (n=9)

Three quarters of respondents (77.7 per cent) who responded to the evaluation survey had engaged with Ausgrid prior to this Reset in their current role. One quarter of respondents (22.3 per cent) had not engaged with Ausgrid prior to this Reset as part of their current role.

Please respond to these statements (n=8)

When asked if participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time, the majority of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (37.5 per cent and 50 per cent respectively). Only one participant was neutral on the topic.

Key takeaway: overall, participants felt participating in the regulatory proposal engagement was a good use of their time.

When asked if the participant's believed Ausgrid is genuine in its effort to engage with customers, there was mixed views. The majority of participants believe Ausgrid's effort was genuine, with 12.5 per cent strongly agreeing and 62.5 agreeing. 25.0 per cent of respondents disagreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: while many participants felt that Ausgrid's effort to engage with customers is genuine, some participants did not agree.

All respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ausgrid team they dealt with as part of the Reset engagement were knowledgeable (50.0 per cent and 50.0 per cent respectively).

Key takeaway: during the Reset proposal engagement, the Ausgrid Team was a good fit for the activities undertaken and had good content knowledge.

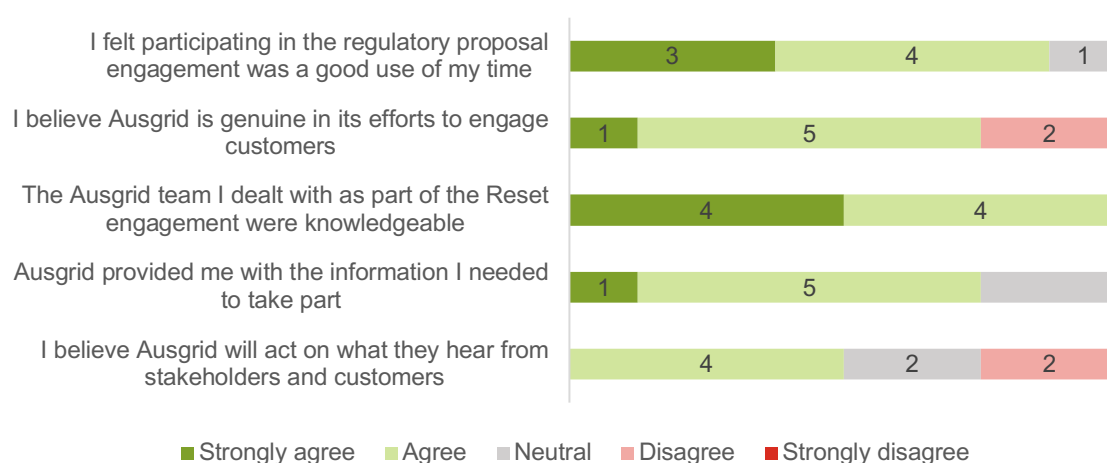
When asked if Ausgrid provided participants with the information needed to take part in the Reset engagement there was mixed views. The majority of participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement (12.5 per cent and 62.5 per cent respectively). 25.0 per cent were neutral on the matter.

Key takeaway: participants felt that they had the materials required to engage with Ausgrid on the Reset proposal.

When asked if participants believe that Ausgrid will act on what they heard from stakeholders and customers, participants had mixed opinions. 50.0 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement, while 25.0 per cent were neutral. A quarter (25.0 per cent) disagreed with the statement.

Key takeaway: while some participants believed Ausgrid will act on the outcomes from the Reset proposal engagement, other participants were not as confident this would occur.

Figure 4 Please respond to the following statements (n=8)



Do you have anything further to share with us about the topics discussed (n=1)

Only one participant had additional feedback to share. They commented:

I hope there is more detailed customer engagement sessions happening as part of the regulatory reset period. This forum is a limited opportunity to provide feedback and only a short-time provided to respond to questions that require further thought from a wider audience.

Are there any general comments or feedback you would like to share with us? (n=2)

Two participants had additional feedback to share. They commented:

More or new costs associated with solar

Great to see the engagement and the opportunity t[o] highlight areas for improvement for customers