

Ausgrid Customer Consultative Committee Charter – 2016

This charter outlines the purpose, objectives, responsibilities, membership criteria, meeting procedures, planning and reporting for the Ausgrid Customer Consultative Committee.

THE CHARTER

Ausgrid's Customer Consultative Committee ('the Committee') has been established in accordance with section 89 of *The Electricity Supply Act (NSW) 1995*. The charter sets out the terms and conditions of the operation of the Committee. The Committee will review the charter every 3 years.

THE COMMITTEE'S PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of the Committee is to provide oversight and advice to assist Ausgrid in becoming a customer centric business that is sensitive to the needs and views of its various stakeholders.

The Committee will assist Ausgrid to become a better business by engaging with stakeholders to better understand their needs and views, and consider these perspectives in the decisions Ausgrid makes. The Committee and its members are also well placed to advise on how Ausgrid engages with its customers more broadly to achieve those same aims.

Within the Ausgrid Customer and Stakeholder Engagement Framework, the Committee will be the main consultative body providing customer and external stakeholder perspectives around:

- Ausgrid's business plans, policies, service plans, and service delivery
- Ausgrid regulatory submissions and the regulatory framework
- ensuring appropriate and effective customer and stakeholder engagement.

The Committee has the following objectives:

- assist the development of a climate of trust between Ausgrid and the community it serves by fostering an open, honest and collaborative approach to the planning and delivery of Ausgrid's services, tariffs and policies
- provide a transparent and open forum for stakeholders to have effective input into and examination of Ausgrid's planning, performance and decision-making processes
- provide a forum for facilitating two-way communication around Ausgrid's service development initiatives and responses to customer concerns
- assist in understanding the environment and market in which Ausgrid operates, including trends and technological developments which impact on future plans and strategies
- provide a forum for oversight of Ausgrid's customer research, consultation, and engagement plans and activities
- represent the needs, experiences and views of customers and the community Ausgrid serves
- represent the needs, experiences and views of vulnerable, disadvantaged, low-income and minority sectors of the community
- promote a just, equitable, effective and sustainable delivery of Ausgrid's services.

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Committee Members will:

- have an interest in electricity distribution related issues and customer service.
- regularly attend meetings and actively participate in discussions. If a member is unable to attend a meeting they should arrange for alternative representation from their organisation.
- read and review papers provided in advance of Committee meetings to inform discussions.
- suggest agenda items in advance of meetings.
- report the views of their organisation and those they represent to Ausgrid.
- give feedback from the Committee meetings to their organisation and the wider community when appropriate.
- respect the views of other Committee Members.
- respect any information or material that may be confidential.
- abide by the Committee Charter.
- respect the position they hold with regard to access to information from Ausgrid, and not use this position in any way for personal gain.
- participate in issue-specific, time-limited working groups that can explore issues in more depth with other relevant stakeholders and feed into Committee meetings
- on occasion be invited to attend forums or other events organised by Ausgrid, as representatives of their organisation, outside of the Committee.

Ausgrid acknowledges Committee Members' right to make public comment (other than on confidential material or matters). Where possible, Ausgrid requests members advise the Executive Secretariat of any impending media items relating to the Committee or Ausgrid.

From time to time, Committee Members may be given confidential material, not to be shared outside the Committee. Documents that are confidential will be marked accordingly.

AUSGRID'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Ausgrid agrees to:

- work within the framework of the Committee Charter.
- provide a Chairperson, Executive Secretariat and other resources as required.
- provide appropriate induction and briefing for new members.
- seek feedback from the Committee on projects and proposals at an early stage.
- provide relevant information for the Committee to become familiar with issues affecting the electricity industry.
- provide the required agenda, papers and other documentation in advance of each Committee Meeting.
- publish the agenda for each upcoming meeting, and the ratified meeting minutes along with any non-confidential papers from each previous Committee meeting on Ausgrid's website.
- provide information, in a timely way, sought by the Committee under this Charter, or give specific reasons for confidentiality.
- encourage all Committee members to present their views.
- respect the input and advice from all Committee Members as given in good faith
- pass on the Committee's advice and recommendations to relevant Ausgrid managers and staff.
- give written feedback on all suggestions and ideas made by the Committee, explaining how each contributed to the decision making process or reasons they did not.
- help promote the Committee's role and objectives to Ausgrid staff and the community.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA, SELECTION OF MEMBERS, TERM OF OFFICE

The Committee needs to strike a balance between having representation of diverse perspectives whilst also remaining a manageable size. There are opportunities to involve some customer or stakeholder groups or organisations via issue-specific working groups or focused consultation. Committee Members should be able to provide valuable input across a range of issues as well as advocating for their members or organisation's core purpose. Committee Members will also advise on Ausgrid's broader engagement approach.

Representation

It is desirable to have a Committee membership that represents or can provide informed input on the following perspectives:

- the community Ausgrid serves and community groups
- vulnerable and disadvantaged customers
- customers in low-income households
- older customers
- customers with disabilities
- ethnic minority communities
- Aboriginal communities
- customers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- customers living in rural and urban fringe areas
- business customers and business groups
- environmental groups
- local government.

Any member of the Committee may represent more than one section of the community, or multiple perspectives. Each Committee Member represents the organisation which nominated them, but also brings a wealth of knowledge and experience as an individual. Membership of the Committee will be limited to ensure the group is able to function effectively.

Selection Criteria

Ausgrid will appoint organisations to the Committee to represent one or more sections of the community or consumer perspectives. Committee membership is made up of representatives from those organisations. The organisations must satisfy the following criteria:

- be a formally constituted entity.
- have direct links and interest in promoting the interest of one or more section of the community.
- be non-party political in nature.

Appointment of members to the Customer Committee is at the discretion of Ausgrid's Chief Executive Officer or their nominee. Ausgrid will confirm the appointment of new members in writing to the member organisation.

New members can be invited to join the Committee at any time.

Term

Members of the Committee serve for an initial three year term. At the end of each three year term, each representative's membership will be considered by the member body and by Ausgrid in terms of continuing value. Reappointment is at the discretion of the Ausgrid CEO. A representative may serve up to three terms in total (either consecutive or non-consecutive). While the objective of limiting the term for membership is to introduce new members to the Committee, the knowledge, experience and level of participation of members should be considered before they are replaced.

If a member's position on the Committee becomes vacant, Ausgrid may request a replacement from the member organisation, or select a new member organisation.

Ausgrid reserves the right to alter representation on the Committee at any time, and will notify member bodies in writing, should this occur.

Termination

Either Ausgrid or the member organisation may terminate a member's tenure on the Committee at any time. Termination could result from:

- missing three or more consecutive meetings without an apology.
- misconduct (such as inappropriate behaviour in meetings, or abuse of their position on the Committee for personal gain).
- acting in a way that is contrary to the values of the Committee or Ausgrid.
- a Committee Member becoming an employee of Ausgrid or a direct provider of goods or services to Ausgrid in a relationship which would be an untenable conflict of interest.

Membership of the Committee may be terminated at the discretion of Ausgrid's Acting Chief Executive Officer.

Notification of the termination of a member will be made in writing to the member organisation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

As the aim of the Committee is to represent a diversity of viewpoints and consumer perspectives, it is not a requirement that consensus be reached among Committee members on issues of discussion. Convergence is helpful but there is much to be gained from hearing conflicting positions.

Conflicts of interest can involve financial or non-financial interests of the Committee Member and the interests of a business partner or associate, family member, friend or person in a close personal relationship with the Committee Member. If a Member of the Committee has a conflict of interest in relation to a particular issue or item of discussion, the Committee Member should make this position clear to the Chairperson and the other Committee Members. This Committee Member will not be excluded from discussion on this issue.

MEETINGS

Dates and times for Committee Meetings will be agreed for each financial year.

Frequency

The Committee will meet for a minimum of four meetings annually at a venue to be determined in advance of each meeting. Where there are specific issues which need more in depth consideration, there is the option to establish issue-specific, time-limited working groups. These will have agreed terms of reference, including input required and reporting deadline.

Chairperson

Ausgrid's Chief Executive Officer will chair each Committee Meeting. In their absence, another member of Ausgrid's Executive Leadership Team will be invited to chair the meeting.

PAYMENT

Sitting Fees

Member organisations can be paid a sitting fee and reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses (eg travel, parking and accommodation) agreed to by Ausgrid. The standard sitting fee for the Ausgrid Committee has been set at \$320 per meeting. Members of any issue-specific working groups established by the Committee will be eligible for sitting fees at the same rate as for the main Committee.

Other Funding

Ausgrid's Chief Executive Officer can apply for additional funding, when requested or recommended by the Committee, for members to undertake activities, outside of the scheduled meetings, on behalf of the Committee or Ausgrid.

DECISION MAKING

The Committee acts primarily as a strategic discussion forum and advisory body. Also, as it represents a diverse range of organisations and consumer perspectives, it is not expected to reach consensus or take decisions on every issue covered.

Where decisions are required, eg on Committee Governance, consensus will be sought. In the absence of a consensus, majority voting shall apply. If agreement on an issue cannot be met then a record of the nature of the disagreement shall be made.

The Minutes, and any reference to Committee discussions in external communications, will make it clear where decisions were unanimous or by majority, with dissenting or qualifying views recorded.

Quorum

The Chairperson and more than fifty percent of Committee Members in person or by proxy are a quorum for Committee meetings to be held.

PLANNING AND REPORTING

Agenda framework

The Committee will have an agenda framework, agreed at its first meeting, with the opportunity for Committee Members to add items within the agreed framework. The framework will be reviewed periodically to facilitate effective meetings around appropriate agenda items.

Reporting and reviewing

At the last meeting of each financial year, Ausgrid will present to the Committee a list of the achievements for that year with input from the Committee; along with patterns in insights and advice provided. This report will also be presented to the Ausgrid Executive Leadership Team.

For the first meeting of each financial year, the Committee will prepare a report on their achievements, observations and recommendations. This report will be presented to the Ausgrid Executive Leadership Team and the Ausgrid Board.