

Addressing CAP Feedback Customer Strategy

October 2020



Feedback on the 2020-2026 Customer Strategy

We have taken on your feedback and addressed it in a range of ways, as outlined below

Your Feedback	Our Response
<p>How do our initiatives to assist and work with vulnerable customer overlap with the work retailers do with customers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are all responsible for vulnerable customers. Whilst retailers are the primary point for the management of financial vulnerability with regard to paying electricity bills, there are a range of services we provide directly to customers (e.g. connections, and compliance related services) that we maintain a keen focus on vulnerable customers for. We also take the opportunity to work with culturally and linguistically diverse customers and those experiencing other types of vulnerability very seriously and will be further strengthening our processes to specifically address the needs of these customers through the strategy
<p>The term customer may be considered transactional – should a different word be used to reflect community involvement and our responsibilities to all members of the public?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We feel that the Customer Strategy is a key vehicle to drive the interactions and customer centric culture we are seeking to deliver. To us, the word ‘customer’ is a relationship based term, rather than a transaction, and we will seek to reinforce this message. Community and societal responsibilities are taken very seriously, and we have a broad stakeholder ‘wheel’ that we engage with in our role as an electricity distributor and community partner. Whilst not specifically targeted in this customer strategy, we work closely across our business units to align our strategies and ensure we take a long term, relationship based approach
<p>With the move to more digital communication, there is significant opportunity for improvement of customer experience; e.g. including reminders in text messages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We agree, digital customer experiences are a key focus of the strategy and we have been faster than many other networks on responding to customer needs in this area Our text message capabilities with regard to outages are maturing rapidly and we already send notifications of planned outages via text, including reminders 1 days out We will investigate capabilities for customers to easily add outages to personal calendars
<p>Can the area of land use be elevated? With increased usage of DERs on poles and environmental considerations such as cultural heritage and the reconciliation action plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have cultural heritage checks embedded into our processes for all augmentation works processes and strict compliance with these processes is monitored and managed (and reported on) We also have responsibilities under the Environmental Protection Act responsibilities which we take seriously We will add these elements into our Customer Strategy to better demonstrate how they link with customer service
<p>The wording in the strategy should be broad enough to capture all possible technological futures, and demonstrate a link between our DER strategy and the customer strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will update references to ‘solar enablement’ and replace with DER and embedded generation enablement to more broadly reflect the technologies that customers may wish to connect to our network – this is in line with how we are reshaping our Future Network program, to be broader and have regard to all new technologies

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<p>It would be helpful to represent network specifics using load by customers, to show the differences in residential and commercial customer base</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We understand stakeholders are looking to see how we are addressing the specific concerns of our different customer types and we will outline how our Customer Strategy addresses each group with regard to their share of energy usage
<p>The networks are different, and there is need to address the different customer need of each – there should be different goals for each network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are some initiatives that are fit for purpose across all networks, but we also acknowledge that special consideration needs to be given to the nuances of each network so that we may meet the specific needs of unique customer groups• We have access to mosaic data down to NMI level and our customer testing and feedback mechanisms are personalised by network to help us specifically target customer outcomes and make the most of our customer focused initiatives.• This has led to, for example, different targets for each network in our proposed Customer Service Incentive Scheme (CSIS)• We already have different methodologies for the different networks in addition to the CSIS. Some examples are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• United Energy– much stronger on demand management reflective of more environmentally conscious communities and commitments to net zero emissions.• CitiPower– much greater reliance on digital communication supported by more advanced online service delivery tools eg. eConnect.• Powercor– higher penetration of solar PV directing our approach and planning to solar enablement and improved communication with customers across the whole experience.
<p>There may be cohorts of unhappy customers that are not visible to us. We should make sure we gain visibility across customer groups and address the needs of unhappy customers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are very interested in identifying any cohorts of unhappy customers and would be excited to explore any further opportunities• We have a recently refreshed customer experience survey approach targeting 9 of our most important customer focused services.• Through this program, we capture metrics of customer effort, experience and expectations, and these surveys complement our suite of brand and trust insights. Insights are used to turn feedback into actions that enhance the experience of customers• We are also planning to implement speech analytics in our contact centre enabling us to track customer sentiment in (near) real time• Some of the other things we do:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Track our Trust Index by Local Government Area so we can identify communities with negative perceptions and help inform stakeholder engagement activities within those areas.• Social sentiment reporting – we receive a lot of feedback through social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn) and track the sentiment of comments received and the key words influencing sentiment.• We have undertaken to provide better synthesis of all sources of customer feedback/data into insights that can be used throughout the business.



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<p>Empower the first receiver of the customer issue to resolve it – this is a strong and meaningful value to both the staff and customer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We agree, and customer culture programs, backed with appropriate delegation and process changes we see as key to addressing this empowerment• Whilst we do not currently have a CRM system to store customer engagement history and make this visible to each agent, we will include initiatives to further streamline customer problem solving and will consider metrics to track first call resolution for customers
<p>We need to better understand how customers see value of affordable price – do they value this because they have it, or because they seek it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is not currently determinable with existing customer insights, however, we see it being important to answer as well, and will include questions to answer this in future research• We ask customers directly if they trust us to charge a fair price for network services.• Perceptions of value will be different for every customer depending on their own circumstances and needs. It is also affected by their retail plan. The best way we believe we can measure this is by assessing whether they trust us to provide it, however they define it.• The most recent trust metrics (September) show improvements over the past year:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 45% of Powercor respondents trust us to charge a fair price for network services, up from 36% in September 2019• 52% of CitiPower respondents trust us to charge a fair price for network services, up from 41% in September 2019• 42% of UE respondents trust us to charge a fair price for network services, up from 36% in September 2019.
<p>25% of customers highlighting low willingness to pay more for faster upgrades represents a large minority. A more detailed willingness to pay study may shed more light on this group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will consider the benefits of conducting a willingness to pay study in the future, to better understand how customers value affordability and services we can offer

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<p>It would be helpful to have a vision statement to permeate the entire structure, up to CEO and Board level (customer culture and centricity)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the work with the CAP, we are seeking to develop of a suite of customer commitments, that will developed in consultation with the CAP and then be ratified by our executive team and CEO • A commitment to put customers at the centre of what we do was made around 5 years ago as part of our World Class planning initiative. • As a company, we developed a vision statement to provide safe, reliable and affordable electricity for our customers. • This is supported by our values which include a commitment to be customer and community minded and strategic pillars including delivering customer outcomes. • This commenced our journey towards customer centricity which is continuing.
<p>Do customers see the cost of electricity as a whole, or do they see potential for further value to be delivered by distributors?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indications from customers tell us that costs are typically viewed as a whole, and also in the context of their broader cost of living • However, we note that customer’s engagement with energy and their energy ‘literacy’ is increasing. Many customers are seeking more access to data and insights to manage their energy costs • We see a key role here for us in customer education regarding network costs and an opportunity for us to work with customers to assist them in optimising their energy future for value
<p>How have we differentiated CALD and vulnerable groups within our strategy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have specific initiatives focused on delivering outcomes for vulnerable customers, whilst we also focus on those items most important to vulnerable customers – affordability, reliability and flexibility • In addition to this, as we develop more digital tools, we will ensure we plan and test solutions for vulnerable customers, and maintain our commitment to meeting customer needs by retaining channels and services preferred by vulnerable customers (e.g. regionally based Australian 24/7 contact centre with interpreter services available)
<p>How might the strategy be updated based on a post COVID world? The basis of the strategy may not be the prevailing perceptions moving forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will ensure reflection of prevailing customer views in our strategy through our ongoing customer insights and survey programs. • We will make sure the initiatives proposed in the strategy are flexible to changing customer needs and preferences – for example, since the commencement of the pandemic, we have completed two survey rounds of our customer experience surveys and will track and monitor changing trends from customer feedback

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<p>Demand response is highlighted as an area where customer and network benefits are closely entwined – there is room for more of these type of discussions (e.g. DER)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have been receiving consistent feedback regarding demand response and management – that we don't do enough of it.• We have taken this feedback on board and have refocused our Future Network proposal, recently approved by the AER, to enable more dynamic demand response/management, which is expected to increase customer and third party participation in managing demand at all levels of the network (not just at zone substation level)
<p>There are increasingly more channels for identifying customer sentiment, including call centres, social media and the media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are open to any and all suggestions from the CAP on capture of customer sentiment additional to our current program (see below).• Currently, we collect insights from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• experience, brand and trust surveys,• speech analytics which measures customer sentiment on calls to our contact centre in (near) real time• daily media clippings (analysed in our corporate affairs team and distributed to our entire executive and senior management group)• 24/7 monitoring of our social channels• regular analysis and assessment of our social media mentions• continual monitoring of social media sentiment• quarterly analysis of the impact of media publicity relative to industry benchmarks• project based feedback from customers used as an opportunity to test project performance and customer perceptions and trust• tracking of our own digital channels (website, Facebook, LinkedIn) in terms of reach, impressions and completed actions arising, as well as assess visitor interests in content, information required and improvement opportunities• We'd be happy to share this kind of consolidated reporting on feedback with the CAP.• Further, we have close links with councils and MPs in our service areas and work closely with the Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria to resolve escalated customer issues. Our engagement with the Ombudsman includes regular complaint trend analysis and identification of themes to address through improvement initiatives.