



AUSGRID VOICE OF COMMUNITY PANEL 2023

DAY 3 WORKSHOP

'What Was Said' Report

October 2023



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VOICE OF COMMUNITY 2023 - DAY 3 WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTION

In October 2023, Ausgrid held the final Voice of Community Panel 2023 workshop (Day 3), jointly facilitated by Nicole Hunter from MosaicLab and Scott Lappan-Newton from Gauge Consulting.

The primary aim of the workshop was to gather the panel's feedback on the AER's response to Ausgrid's draft proposal for their Regulatory Proposal plan for 2024-2029. In addition, the participants gave feedback on Ausgrid's strategies for heat resilience, affordability and advocacy for regulatory reform.

The workshop was held online, and this report captures the responses and insights provided by participants.

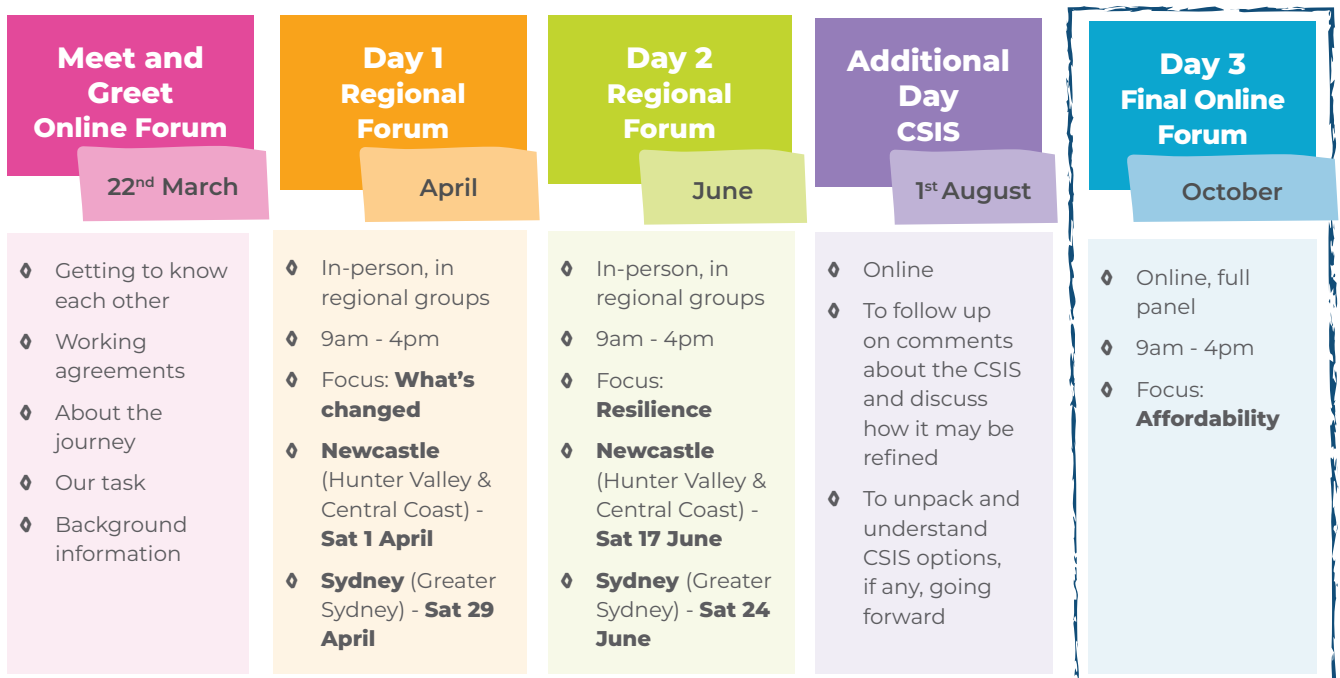
BACKGROUND

In 2022, Ausgrid undertook a wide community engagement process and held a Voice of Community Panel (VoCP) with 45 participants randomly selected from across the Ausgrid electricity network.

The Voice of Community Panel 2023 (VoC), comprising 101 randomly selected participants, built upon the work of the previous panel. The panel's task was to respond to the specific question:

How should Ausgrid finalise its plans for 2024-2029 and look to the future while being fair to today's customers?

The following diagram outlines the Voice of Community Panel 2023 journey and the process of engagement leading up to Day 3.




WORKSHOP PURPOSE

The specific aims of the workshop were:

- ◆ Provide feedback on the AER's response and further insights to support Ausgrid's continued advocacy for customers
- ◆ Hear about Ausgrid's plans to play a greater role in electrification
- ◆ Consider and provide feedback for the final proposal (heat resilience and two-way tariff communication)
- ◆ Discuss the overall proposal and bill impact (affordability)
- ◆ Reflect on the journey of the Voice of Community panel

AGENDA

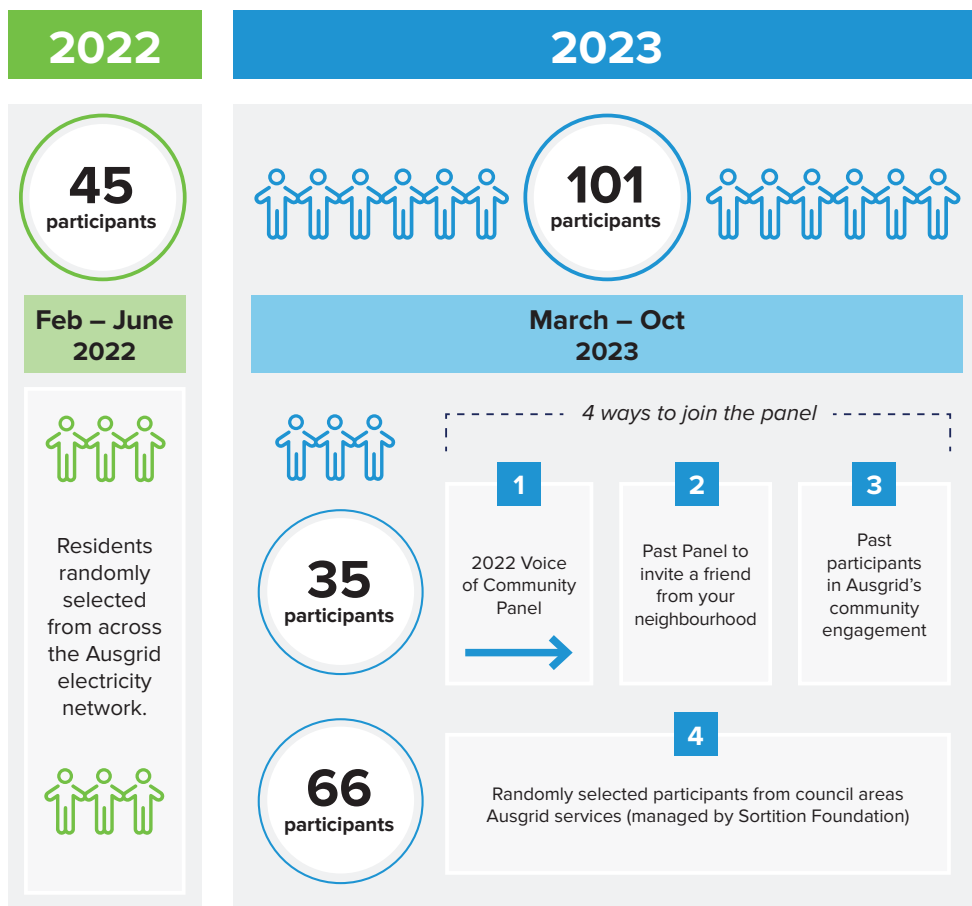
Day 3 - 21 October 2023



TIME	AGENDA
9:00AM	WELCOME & ENTRY
9:20AM	Introduction
9:40AM	What the AER has approved and not approved
10:40AM	BREAK
11:00AM	Heat Resilience and Two-way Tariff Fact Sheet
12:10PM	LUNCH
1:10PM	Affordability
2:40PM	BREAK
3:00PM	Advocating for Regulatory Reform
3:30PM	Reflection
4:00PM	FINISH

ABOUT THE PANEL

Ausgrid's Voice of Community Panel 2023 (VoC) consists of 101 randomly selected participants from across the Ausgrid network areas in the Hunter Valley, Newcastle, Central Coast and Greater Sydney. The VoC represents a diverse mix of new and previous Voice of Community Panel participants as shown in the diagram below:



In total, 70 participants from the Newcastle and Sydney areas attended the Day 3 workshop.



VOICE OF COMMUNITY PANEL 2023 – DEMOGRAPHICS



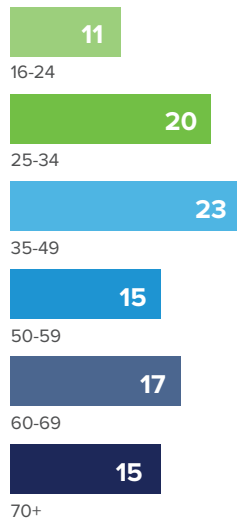
Ausgrid

About our
Voice of
Community
Panel 2023
participants

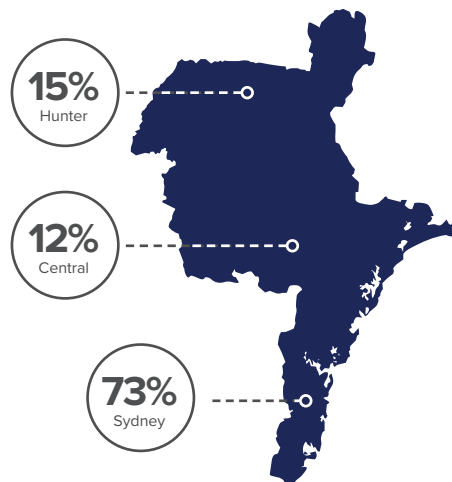
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

101

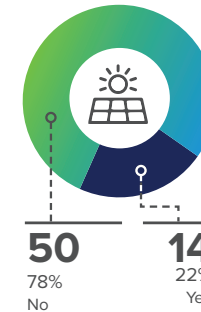
AGE



LOCATION



SOLAR POWER



37 Unspecified

ENGAGEMENT

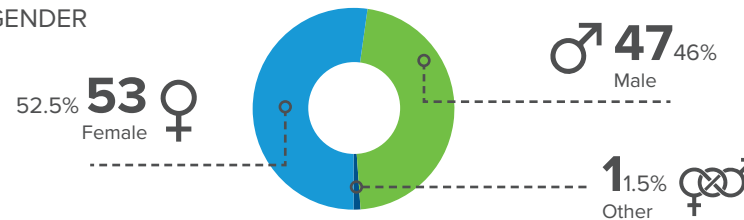


SESSIONS

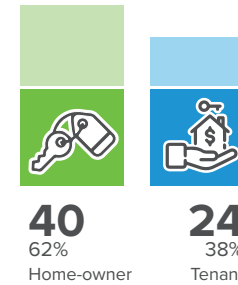


Between March and October 2023

GENDER



OWN/RENT



37 Unspecified



3
Online forums



4
Regional face-to-face forums

WORKSHOP OUTPUTS



OVERVIEW OF OUTPUTS

The overall purpose of the workshop was to close the loop on key aspects of the draft proposal and to test additional items that Ausgrid has developed since the initial submission. Participant responses were captured throughout the workshop, as follows:

- ◆ Feedback on the AER's draft decision
- ◆ Questions and level of comfort for heat resilience research
- ◆ Feedback on the draft tariff fact sheet
- ◆ Level of comfort and reasoning for affordability benefits
- ◆ Feedback on advocacy for regulatory reform
- ◆ Reflections on the VoC journey

FEEDBACK ON THE AER'S DRAFT DECISION

Alex McPherson, Acting Group Executive - Market Development & Strategy, began by sharing an overview of the regulatory reset process, including how the panel's valuable insights and recommendations have informed Ausgrid's draft submission.

Junayd Hollis, Ausgrid's Group Executive - Customer, Assets and Digital, then outlined the AER's response to Ausgrid's draft submission and explained the reasoning behind what the AER had approved and what required further justification or consideration.

Following the presentation, participants worked in small groups to reflect on the AER's draft response and consider any questions for clarification or thoughts about the draft decision. Their responses are captured in the tables below.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE AER'S DRAFT RESPONSE

THEME	QUESTION
About the process, including AER's role and priorities	What is the highest priority of the AER? Is it the final consumer (us), generation, distribution?
	Does AER have coordination role about the national energy needs into the future? Because this decision will affect all other organisations too?
	Does/can the AER give a counterproposal or similar?
	What metrics does the AER need to see in order to approve innovation in the grid?

THEME	QUESTION
About the process, including AER's role and priorities ...continued	Does AER accept feedback from wider community?
	How much of our contribution added to your final decision as percentage?
	Does the AER have any data of the impact of increased renewables (wind/solar) to energy prices? World data clearly indicates the more renewables come into the generation of power the more the cost to consumers increase.
	Are there other proposals? Does Ausgrid get the opportunity to see those results?
	Does AER also review other utilities? Did they also put the restriction on the innovation as well?
	Have other energy providers had similar or better innovations to what Ausgrid proposes? And have these been looked at?
Ausgrid's response to the draft decision	How much scope is there in Business As Usual to allow for some of the things to be done?
	For the rejected sections, how will Ausgrid spend the money so it's not "wasted" in sections they know won't be achieved as originally planned?
	What else does Ausgrid propose to do to increase customer services?
	If Ausgrid accepts AER's decision, which initiatives/directions will be prioritised and which will be dropped?
Collaborating with other organisations	Can Ausgrid collaborate with other providers to ensure better outcomes?
	Does AER use various energy providers e.g. Ausgrid and others, to collaborate on ideas for better community outcomes?
	When the AER asks Ausgrid to see what other networks are doing, is that a request to follow rather than lead (delaying innovations for Ausgrid customers), or just do a better job of showing that you are aware of what is currently happening so you don't duplicate efforts?
Community batteries	How can we present community batteries as a way to alleviate excessive voltage from solar export customers?
	Is Ausgrid going to pursue funding for community batteries or abandon it?

THEME	QUESTION
Cyber security risks	What are the cyber security risks that will arise due to providing mid-tier rather than high-tier security?
Delivering net zero	Why has AER's response to delivering Net Zero been to reduce the expenditure, when Net Zero targets are at the forefront of organisations and governments to achieve? This seems like this expenditure on this, especially in terms of energy should be well spent to ensure better outcomes.
	Would increased clarity around 'delivering net zero' (e.g. community batteries to reduce overvoltage impacts) change the AER's decision to reject this part of the proposal?
Funding - budgets for innovation and resilience, and alternate sources of income	When AER raised the possibility of other types of funding, would this money be additional to the budget and who would provide the funding?
	When AER says Ausgrid should use "alternate" sources of funding for items that were rejected, what exactly are these sources AER expects Ausgrid to use?
	Given that there is a lot less funding in the categories delivering net zero and building resilience, which objectives will be met? And how can we be sure that they can be fulfilled with the budget constraint.
	Where will the innovation budget come from? Without budget in innovation, Ausgrid will be left behind.
	How does Ausgrid fund innovation at present? Do you have some allocation for innovation projects in the current pricing schedule?
	Where's the line between what government funds and what is recovered through customer bills?
Impact on innovation and/or resilience initiatives	Innovation is important element for next 5 years, why there has been cut in innovation?
	So there's a chance that Ausgrid's entire innovation program could stop completely?
	What has innovation previously cost? And what differs from this proposed Innovation to previous ones?
	What community resilience initiatives won't be delivered if \$6M not approved by AER?
	Does Ausgrid feel that better explanation of climate change impacts would influence AER to accept the resilience proposal?

THEME	QUESTION
Impacts and outcomes for customers	<p>By the innovation proposal being rejected, does this mean the impact on our bills will not be a significant?</p>
	<p>How to encourage individual end user to install solar batteries given each house invested in solar but the energy bill is giving less and less incentive in return for the investment?</p>
	<p>What is incentive for tenants or landlord to install solar panels on houses (understand apartment is difficult)?</p>
	<p>Did the AER reject the proposal re innovation due to the cost of living and the impact it would have on consumer bills?</p>
	<p>Does the money they said no to mean it will be cheaper now for households so Ausgrid budget is now less over 5 years?</p>
	<p>Is there opportunity to bring other parties to the table? i.e. Retailers? If the AER says that certain solutions are not within Ausgrid's remit etc, and won't approve funding however customers are adamant that this is a want/need and Ausgrid have indicated that certain options will improve the outcome for customers i.e. use of community batteries and investment in new technologies/innovation, how do you move forward with these solutions that benefit everybody? What is the AER doing to ensure the best outcome for customers?</p>
Reasons for AER's response	<p>Any specifics why AER might have a different view on the proposal?</p>
	<p>Can we have more detail on the reasons for rejections and then we can collaboratively work on solutions?</p>
	<p>Can you give us more information about why non-traditional interventions like community batteries were rejected? What was AER's thinking? This contradicts Attachment A somewhat with the community battery installation waivers being granted.</p>
	<p>Did the AER have a fixed budget and so dollars we asked for were doomed from the get go?</p>
	<p>Did the AER misunderstand the proposal? I'm flabbergasted!</p>
	<p>The pre-reading pack has summaries of AER's Draft Decisions. In the deck these are blunt. I assume AER have provided detailed responses and options for ways forward. e.g.: VoC #1 Advocacy.</p>
	<p>Was the reason for rejecting \$ for more customers to solar around issues of overvoltage or something else?</p>
	<p>What specific areas of the Ausgrid proposal did the AER not understand & therefore did not fund?</p>

THEME	QUESTION
Resubmission process	How long does Ausgrid have to redo the proposals?
	If Ausgrid strong and better proposal (research, more details and reword), will AER change their decisions?
	So if Ausgrid is going back to AER, does that mean that AER could then completely approve the two points that are currently questions marks?
	What does Ausgrid propose to do to get a green tick to AER's responses? Is there a plan B?
	Where AER have "rejected" is that final or can Ausgrid respond?
	Will there be any reconsideration taken about the AER's response.
	As part of Ausgrid feedback to AER can you include feedback provided by VoC panel this morning, their surprise on rejection of innovation funding - considering the amount of time spent by VoC reviewing & agreeing to the spending.
	Can we resubmit those ideas with more information?
	VoC recommendations 6 and 7 rejected. Will Ausgrid be able to "clearly quantify" the benefits for AER's reconsideration, as this was a strongly supported topic from everyone?
VoC's role in the future	Does this mean a few more sessions are required from the panel volunteers to discuss some alternative options or alternative directions/solutions?
	Will there be more opportunities for us to participate in the next process?
Other	What proportion of the overall bill could we influence and how much of that was approved. E.g. there was xx% of overall bill impact on the table and the AER approved xx% of that.
	What is the improved equity for non-CER customers from the surcharge coming up in 2024 & 2025?
	What does Ausgrid mean by "a minimum reliability of supply will not be available for localised areas, such as suburbs or local government areas" in no. 10 of the pre reading document?



THOUGHTS ABOUT THE AER'S RESPONSE

THEME	COMMENT
AER's priorities and decision-making process	<p>I'm not sure on what basis AER makes its decisions (i.e. what their guidelines are) so can't really comment on the decisions they've made. It might be within their limits and remits.</p>
	<p>Maybe AER is aware that other points (like the environmental factors) are and will be addressed by other organisations, so I don't feel like it's appropriate to comment on their decision without knowing what their guidelines are.</p>
	<p>We thought we were being conservative and prudent in reducing the amount Ausgrid spends on various programs, but it seems that the regulator would like to reduce the percentage of innovation and investment to a greater extent than we do. Without AER's actual presence and participation in these discussions, it's hard for us to understand what evidences or perspectives the AER is coming from to reach such conclusions. The feeling is that while the government talks about the importance of net-zero and dealing with climate risks, it doesn't want to allow too much expenditure on actual investment in these areas.</p>
Ausgrid's engagement with customers	<p>A positive: The AER's comments recognising that Ausgrid paid a lot of attention to customer opinions. So at least the AER seems to understand that the community really cares about net zero/ sustainability/innovation/etc.</p>
Disappointment about the response	<p>Annoyed that Ausgrid was so open to us and then AER has shut down.</p>
	<p>Can understand not wanting to double up on innovation and share the cost and responsibility of innovation but feels like a letdown.</p>
	<p>Concerned we are so far apart at this stage.</p>
	<p>Disappointed and confused. AER has responsibility from government to focus on climate emergency yet responding to Ausgrid by reducing the budget.</p>
	<p>Disappointed that Ausgrid is not being given funding to provide infrastructure needed for people who have surplus solar energy back to the grid does not stop the reality that this source of sustainable energy is going to increase in the near future. Ausgrid needs to continue to build this infrastructure.</p>
	<p>Disappointed that innovation budget has been rejected completely.</p>

THEME	COMMENT
Disappointment about the response ...continued	<p>Disappointed that resilience building will not be keeping up with climate extremes. But, Ausgrid needs to continue to push for resilience building.</p>
	<p>Disappointed that the AER did not approve the proposal for solutions to overcome the issue of overvoltage.</p>
	<p>Disappointed that the investments that are required to mitigate obvious climate impacts have not been approved</p>
	<p>Disappointing that the network resilience will not be able to keep responses</p>
	<p>Disappointing to see the AER reject the need to be climate resilient- natural disasters are inevitable</p>
	<p>Disappointing to see the Incentive Scheme approved</p>
	<p>Disappointment- how do we improve and progress without investment?</p>
	<p>Feeling a bit disappointed about the AER's draft decisions. It feels like Ausgrid has really listened to the community, but the AER hasn't :(</p>
	<p>Feels like almost none of the decisions have taken into account Sydney apartment living.</p>
	<p>I'm disappointed.</p>
	<p>My first reaction was some disappointment. If the grid doesn't make some of these investments, who is going to?</p>
	<p>Re technology, resilience and community batteries disappointed AER not listening to us the customer.</p>
	<p>This is very disappointing. I thought we put a lot of effort and careful consideration into the innovation proposal.</p>
	<p>This was such a conservative proposal compared to what it could have been. What needs to change?</p>
Expectation that Ausgrid learns from or collaborates with other organisations	<p>AER expects Ausgrid to learn from innovation from their peers but the peers are not likely to share when Ausgrid is not doing their bit.</p>
	<p>AER noted that some projects may have already been undertaken by other networks. While this is correct, but following other organisation's progress is not enough. Without actually doing it and with no budget to do it, Ausgrid will be left behind.</p>

THEME	COMMENT
Expectation that Ausgrid learns from or collaborates with other organisations <i>...continued</i>	The proposals from other distributors are mostly accepted in full, does that have something to do with them being less "bold" and/or require less spending? Just curious why you believe they are accepted to a greater extent than Ausgrid's proposal?
	Our group is in agreeance that Ausgrid should push strongly for collaboration with Universities and peer companies/organisations that would share best practices towards innovation & technology.
	Could take some pointers from SA I think.
Impact on services relying of the grid	Worried about the impact of not aiming to stabilise the grid especially for life support, medical services, hospitals.
	If something does go wrong, it's going to be a big issue now.
Investment in infrastructure	I think should be spending on infrastructure resilient to impacts of climate. Might cost more in the end to not invest and who pays for that.
	We believe that the grid is getting small damage every day, and so when it breaks, it's going to be larger and more detrimental.
Questioning the reasons for AER's response	How much more does AER want from us?
	If engagement says customers willing to pay for these things who are AER to say no.
	It feels like AER have pushed back on more than half of what Ausgrid put forward based on our input. From the deck, 4 rejected, 3 approved at around 30% of total, and 4 approved.
	It seems like the AER is actively discouraging the use of solar/EV.
	It's disappointing that they don't seem to be allowing you to look towards the future.
	Reducing funding for climate resilience seems somewhat strange given AER commitment to this remit.
	Rejection of innovation is shortsighted.
	Short sighted by AER not allowing us to look at future technology.
	The AER seems to be advocating for throwing away green power (excess solar) when we're still reliant on fossil fuels, rather than finding ways to store the excess for use at other times.

THEME	COMMENT
Questioning the reasons for AER's response ...continued	<p>There's disconnect in the world climate change and fast growing technology, but AER decisions doesn't reflect at all.</p>
	<p>Was the way Ausgrid addressed the climate change problem the reason for such a big reduction in funding?</p>
	<p>Acknowledge that AER could be more across modelling but we don't know what we don't know.</p>
	<p>Feels like they approved the BAU and not much above that. Tricky with a changing environment and prices set for 5 years.</p>
	<p>"The AER had concerns that our forecast would improve, rather than maintain, existing service levels." ... and this is bad, because...?</p>
	<p>Was shocked to see that people are being penalised for feeding IN to the grid!!!????</p>
Questioning the VoC panel process	<p>I feel like the VoC panel did not take on what Ausgrid said to us enough. It looks like Ausgrid told us what to say rather than us taking it on board & delivering it for the AER.</p>
	<p>Querying how much input we really had.</p>
	<p>We feel that in the response to Ausgrid, the AER should inform the VoC panel on the process and parties that would need to be consulted to continue with advocacy on our proposal and its importance to the VoC panel.</p>
	<p>What was the point of this experience if AER doesn't hear what we are saying.</p>
	<p>Will there be a VoC for the re-proposal?</p>
Resubmission process	<p>Ausgrid only has 1 month to modify the proposal - which is very short time to address all AER responses.</p>
	<p>Good to know that other distributors' proposals on climate resilience and innovation were largely approved. I am hopeful if Ausgrid modifies/works/put more details (e.g. put more on benefits, etc), AER might approve a bit more.</p>
	<p>The AER did not approve the proposed expenditure citing that Ausgrid had not clearly quantified the benefits. I am sure Ausgrid can put some details/update at least some part of the innovation projects with clear benefit for the customers. So, some projects can be accepted by AER.</p>

THEME	COMMENT
Spending on climate change and investment in renewable technologies	Ideally we should be spending as much as possible to combat climate change across the board, the question is who pays for it.
	More affordable solutions to HOME batteries.
Support for the draft decision	As long as I have reliable electricity I'm happy. Customers can have a say but they are the experts.
	Good draft decision by AER to unquantified actions of Ausgrid.

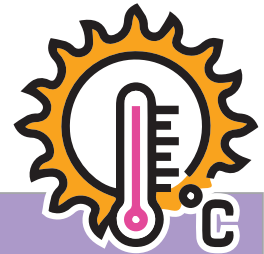


HEAT RESILIENCE

Head of Climate Resilience, Penny Joseph, provided more information about the AER’s feedback to Ausgrid’s proposed heat resilience spend and how Ausgrid intended to address this in their revised submission.

Associate Professor Sebastian Pfautsch, multidisciplinary researcher on Urban Heat, University of Sydney, presented a research perspective on extreme heat and urban cooling.

Participants captured questions during these presentations, as follows:



QUESTIONS

THEME	HEAT RESILIENCE QUESTIONS
ABC cabling	Has Ausgrid considered the location of where the proposed 24km of ABC cabling will be introduced? Do we have an idea yet? Is it spread out?
	Good idea to implement more ABC than current rate.
	ABC's could be mandatory in urban areas
	Apart from ambient cooling, is this the same effect on the drain on the grid and cooling of cables?
Business case for decision making	Is it possible to lobby to change what can be considered as relevant to business cases? This seems ridiculous that you know there are benefits but you can't consider them in your decision making!!
Collaboration with other organisations	Collaboration is certainly needed to support all assets.
	Given that councils have a huge remit and many responsibilities and competing priorities how able are they to take a lead on working with Ausgrid? What's the sentiment from councils?
	This is super interesting to visualise. It appears the sad reality is without developers and governments collaborating to achieve better outcomes we will consistently lose mature trees which people don't realise the benefits of. And whilst I appreciate the many legislations and policies to offset these, we lose crucial years of shade and cool.
	Suggest Ausgrid partner with council to manage the increase in heat
	You mentioned Resilience Sydney - will this project be implemented in other LGAs (Port Stephens, Newcastle etc?)
	Love the proposal. Massive coordination will be needed.
	Love the proposal. But this will take massive coordination roles in this space.

THEME	HEAT RESILIENCE QUESTIONS
Collaboration with other organisations ...continued	Can councils be provided some return on their investments to incentivise them?
	Our group feels that the onus should lie with the councils/ government bodies however Ausgrid should be communicating with councils/government bodies/developers re better solutions in relation to tree types and maintenance plans etc.
Concerns about viability and/or safety	Concerns around the viability
	Are planting trees the only viable option to manage heat?
	Have you considered the damage tree roots will do to underground power lines?
	We support the proposal but pose the question about fire management control, tree revegetation.
	I wonder if anyone has taken into consideration the heat load that solar farms generate ???
	How can Ausgrid/Local Council ensure running cables through the trees is safe from causing and starting fires?
	What is the plan of protecting from falling during storm
	Also to consider for storms and large canopies, do the pros for cooling outweigh pulling down the whole span in a storm? I believe large trees have a big impact on infrastructure during storms.
Cooling is not considered Ausgrid's responsibility	Ausgrid should stick to business as usual. Ausgrid should play no role in cooling. It is not their responsibility neither should it be part of their remit.
	Ausgrid should keep business as usual. No, Ausgrid should not play a role in cooling because it's not part of their remit. There are other organisations set up for that.
	It is not Ausgrid's responsibility to do this. So strongly believe that Ausgrid should stick to what it's responsible for and leave the rest for other organisations.
Impact of heat reduction on expenditure	Can the potential reduction of pressure on the grid due to less consumer use of air conditioning be considered as a factor towards Ausgrid expenditure on reducing city heat?
Practicality of trees in urban areas	What is the practicality of trees in urban areas?
	How practical is it to plant extra trees in heavily built up inner city areas?

THEME	HEAT RESILIENCE QUESTIONS
Questions about modelling	Which public health agencies would you be taking your models from?
	Possible heat effects has been a result of modelling. The latest IPCC Report has indicated that there has not been actual evidence of aggregate change in global warming. These heating outcomes are only still models based on assumptions.
Questions about the approach or need for more information	Main agenda - fix urban heat as quickly as possible, which strategy allows for this to occur?
	Does the ambient cooling affect from allowing canopies?
	Can Ausgrid release a list of "preferred trees to by planted under/ around power lines?
	It's unclear what the proposal of the \$1.05m investment includes. The proposal is vague. More information please.
	We need more information regarding the investment of the 1.05 million capex.
Substation infrastructure	Ausgrid was previously talking about cutting down mature trees around substations.
	How does Ausgrid plan to protect substation infrastructure from the effects of urban heat?
Support for Ausgrid's approach	Why is this not part of BAU? We feel it should be.
	Absolutely.
	It has benefits of surface and air cooling, but also benefits on aesthetics of city areas
	Surely planting trees and protecting mature trees has SO MANY overlapping benefits for council and Ausgrid objectives!
50/50 option	We all agree - option 3 - 50/50 with councils. Just get it done!
	I think 50/50 as it will make it a little easier on everyone.
	With the 50/50 option, would you look at the heavily tree lined areas and deal with those sections in a variety of LGA initially? Not a whole section where there are only say 500m of trees but you replace kms of line?

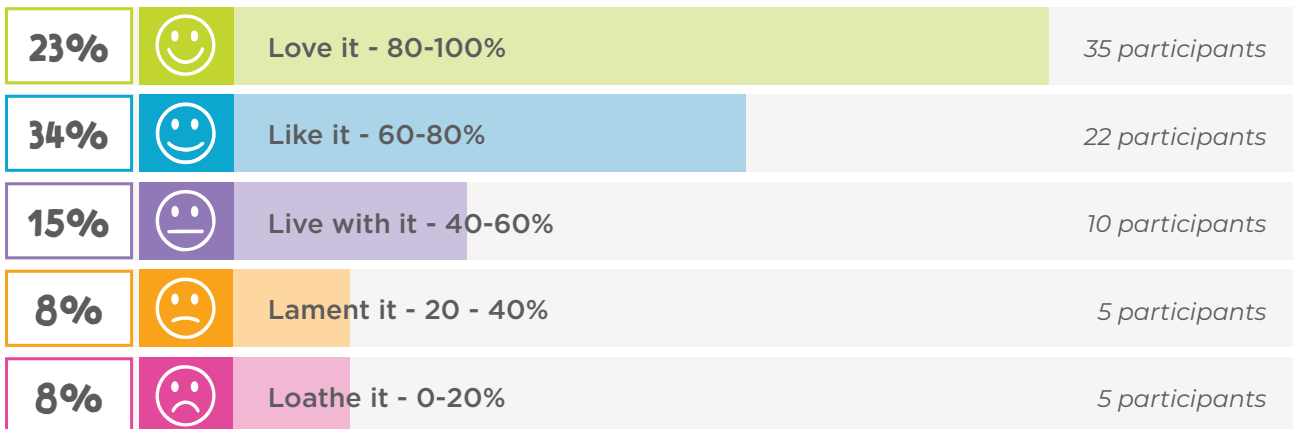


LEVEL OF COMFORT - HEAT RESILIENCE RESEARCH FUNDING


Participants were asked to indicate their level of comfort with the proposed approach to heat resilience and to provide their reasoning in response to the following question:

How comfortable are you with Ausgrid funding research to better understand heat impacts and the changing risk to vulnerable customers?

Overall level of comfort:



Feedback - what, if anything, would make you more comfortable?

<p>Love it 80-100%</p> 	Will Ausgrid partner with other suppliers who may be doing the same thing to ensure the most efficient and impactful use of funds?
	Comfortable with proposal.
	It would be great if Ausgrid would be able to share their learnings from their activities on Urban Heat so that there is less reinventing of the wheel.
	I am quite comfortable with these issues.
	Reassurance that this feedback will be taken seriously!
	Communication regarding what is being done.
	Given what we know lies ahead all over Australia, to do nothing seems unbelievable.
	I never thought about this before and this is helping me understand the ABC need. It is very important for the environment. Happy Ausgrid are thinking about this.

**Love it
80-100%**

...continued



More specific details on what the funding would go towards.
The collaboration between Ausgrid and councils throughout their networks to both better understand heat impacts.
Very comfortable with actioning urban heat.
The needed funding is approved.
Nothing.
Broaden the vulnerable criteria to include Sydney Western urban areas such as Penrith as vulnerable.
I believe the risk is self-evident and honestly there is not much need to qualify the benefits beforehand except to prove it to the regulators. We should invest and perhaps qualify the benefits after the fact.
Going even further.
Without investment in research in the impacts of extreme heat, how are you supposed to make the best informed decision? Short term investment in research will likely results in better outcomes and long term savings.
Seeing this program delivered across all LGAs, not just Sydney!
More info on ABC lifetimes and replacement schedules.
I feel completely comfortable with the funding, as a customer I feel that my comfort is being acknowledged.
The more that's spent on addressing heat (especially in collaboration with Council) is a fair outcome.

**Like it
60-80%**



Safety and type of trees for area.
N/A
Nothing.
Collaboration between Council and Ausgrid.
More time to understand.
Necessary if we need the research to justify expenditure, but if it's clear that action will help (even a bit) then put the money toward just doing it.
Happy with it.

**Like it
60-80%**

...continued



More research on how the negative impacts of planting more trees (bushfires, electrical conductivity etc) can be fully mitigated in the implementation of this.

I would like to ensure that within the research they will be taking into account benefits / risks / costs 10, 20, 50, 100 years based on the decisions that are made.

I'm comfortable and frankly surprised that understanding impacts to the grid are not already part of its processes.

Consider UV effective lighter colour colours on covers.

More research on fire-prevention.

Nothing I can think of.

Needs to be research directed to areas that are more likely to be affected by extreme heat.

More info that by growing bigger canopies around cables we are not creating potential issues for bringing down wires during storms or even bush fires.

One time cost on a project basis to raise fast money is okay.

That Ausgrid only sticks to its main functions and doesn't cross over into council responsibilities.

Certainty of Ausgrid's investment in researched strategies for addressing climate change that offer real-time and long-term benefits for customers.

Exploring other options that may make a difference.

Minimising funding as much as possible.

Certainty that the research will be taken up.

**Live with it
40-60%**



Clarity on the limitation of heat of their assets. Ausgrid should already be aware of the impact of heat on their own equipment.

Need more clarity about government funding in this kind of research.

Should be more celebrative work with the governing body, regarding the environmental impact.

AER really would like to look after the end-user but I feel I would like to see more done for heat impacts by bush fire damage, and urban planning for sensible trees.

Live with it - 40-60% <i>...continued</i> 	Assurance around the availability of funding for this project, considering the conservative outcome of AER's review. Otherwise I support it.
	To see Ausgrid and the Council to work together.
	Why is Ausgrid not combining their investment with those from other distributors for this research? The result will surely be something they need as well. Then overall investment will be reduced for each.
Lament it 20 - 40% 	Better plan.
	Having multiple data researches compiled to ascertain the certainty of climate change.
	If they stick to BAU and allow for councils/government bodies to action this with Ausgrid's input and specialised advice only.
Loathe it 0-20% 	Generally, most of those researches are unreliable due to unreliable data. Invest the money in more concrete actions.
	A lot of people are already doing work to combat heat, better to just rely on others' findings.
	Government departments should take care of climate / urban cooling.
	It is not Ausgrid's responsibility.
	A more universal co-operative agenda.
Other comments	Ausgrid needs to understand how heat might affect its assets as part of its core responsibilities. Ausgrid needs to understand its customers, but surely the risk to vulnerable customer is the retailer's remit.
	Proposal is based on very uncertain modelling. Any evidence of heat warming is required.
	It is a necessity and a cost that we all must contribute to.
	State and Federal funding initiatives supporting these projects.



LEVEL OF COMFORT - CO-FUNDED AERIAL BUNDLED CABLING

Following the heat resilience vote, participants were asked to consider three scenarios for co-funded Aerial Bundled Cabling (ABC) and indicate their preferred approach to the following options:

- ♦ **Option 1** - Ausgrid does NO MORE on ABC than it is already planning to do as part of 'business-as-usual'
- ♦ **Option 2** - Ausgrid invests in research to quantify benefits on how it might support co-funded ABC in this proposal (\$250K)
- ♦ **Option 3.** Ausgrid contributes 50:50 in ABC with Councils NOW up to \$6M (i.e. over the next 5 years)

Participant votes:

The majority of participants (62%) indicated a preference for Ausgrid and Councils to co-fund the proposal in the upcoming regulatory period, as follows:

62%	Ausgrid contributes 50:50 in ABC with Councils NOW up to \$6M (i.e. over the next 5 years)	<i>41 participants</i>
20%	Ausgrid invests in research to quantify benefits on how it might support co-funded ABC in this proposal (\$250K)	<i>13 participants</i>
18%	Ausgrid does NO MORE on ABC than it is already planning to do as part of 'business-as-usual'	<i>12 participants</i>

Reasons for the response:

Participants were invited to give a reason for their preference, as indicated in the table below:

OPTION	REASONS FOR THE RESPONSE
Ausgrid contributes 50:50 in ABC with Councils NOW up to \$6M (i.e. over the next 5yrs)	This is long term solution.
	I think it's a shared responsibility.
	This seems like a no brainer to me.
	I see that way.
	Low-cost high benefit.
	I don't think there is much being done up to date. Given the pressure we read about every day and the volume of housing being build we need to work together to tackle this.
	We need to deal with this issue now and cooperate with the Councils to achieve this.

OPTION	REASONS FOR THE RESPONSE
<p>Ausgrid contributes 50:50 in ABC with Councils NOW up to \$6M (i.e. over the next 5yrs) ...continued</p>	<p>Heat issues are only going to get worse, we need to future proof and start now. Funding with councils means that both contribute to improving not only the reduction of heat, but the aesthetic (because trees chopped around wires is awful) and allows for more trees to stay and survive. Especially good if only doing areas in a LGA where there are heavy tree populations. Besides costs will only go up. It will also save all those 'teams' constantly monitoring and 'pruning' trees, which is money that could possibly then be spent on more ABC.</p>
	<p>I think this has the potential to have a real beneficial impact on the quality of life of residents in some areas. I'd like to see it widely rolled out as an initiative.</p>
	<p>After seeing the evidence of urban cooling with trees and the research just presented to us - this is a no brainer! There are multiple overlapping benefits for all parties. Get planting!</p>
	<p>Warming is inevitable.</p>
	<p>Please help councils plant more trees.</p>
	<p>This is an issue that affects all sections of society, not just Ausgrid, therefore the costs should be shared between all stakeholders.</p>
	<p>Given that heat impacts are likely to increase in the coming years, it is wise to do what we can now to mitigate this. Also, the information presented by the University showed the significant impact of increased tree canopy and deployment of ABC would allow the realisation of optimal benefits from increased tree planting.</p>
	<p>Slow money is great option, we shouldn't be the ones doing everything, councils definitely need to get involved in this matter. The benefits clearly outweigh the cost here, not much more research needs to be done - as the negative impacts of planting more trees (bushfires, electrical conductivity etc) is already lowered.</p>
	<p>The third option is likely to prove worthy in the long run.</p>
	<p>If the system works and there are more of those trees in urban areas, you'll increase cooling.</p>
	<p>I wonder if there are any other options rather than 50:50 contribution.</p>
	<p>Benefits are clear. They are Ausgrid's infrastructure, it makes sense that Ausgrid contribute to this.</p>
	<p>Something needs to be done and anything is better than nothing. My concern would be that this amount of money will be soaked up by bureaucracy and not used to put cables in the air.</p>

OPTION	REASONS FOR THE RESPONSE
<p>Ausgrid contributes 50:50 in ABC with Councils NOW up to \$6M (i.e. over the next 5yrs) ...continued</p>	<p>I believe there are too many organisations involved to make this 50:50 option efficient - I personally work with councils on mass planting projects and the cost blowouts from sub-contractors and poor financial management are very common. Many council don't quite have the money in the budget.</p>
	<p>The time for action is now! Research is valuable, but I'm concerned it would mostly mean unnecessary delays.</p>
	<p>I think that the implementation of the ABC program is vital for the long-term resilience of our country. Statistics are clearly showing that our country is heating up, and I think that by co-funding with Councils, it will ensure that Councils are proactive and actually implement something, rather than putting all the burden onto Ausgrid. Research is wonderful, but it can't be a negative to actually get out there doing something. I really like that Ausgrid is tackling this issue too.</p>
	<p>This is a shared advocacy/action project benefiting all persons and flora/fauna.</p>
	<p>Halve the cost with councils, could lower end-user's bill cost?</p>
	<p>I'd thought that the Ausgrid already has some idea of the benefit seeing the BAU activities already include rolling out ABC. If Ausgrid can get similar data from other distributor to better quantify the benefit, then it will make this a more viable option, especially when council is footing 50% of the bill.</p>
	<p>Councils and Ausgrid working together would be a beneficial outcome for communities. Both funding bodies essentially have a role to play in protecting and advocating for their networks and by both contributing 50:50, it will eliminate a lack of accountability e.g. "it's not our responsibility to maintain". And will also support a better relationship between Ausgrid and Councils.</p>
	<p>Heat resilience is very important. BAU not an option. Also as this is for next 5yrs, just research is insufficient. Should actually action it. So, contribute 50:50</p>
	<p>This is a worrying problem that requires significant investment. It requires Ausgrid to work with councils to have an impact.</p>
	<p>Inner city areas where use is highest have fewer trees</p>
<p>Unfortunately as with the cost of living generally one has to expect that there are always going to be increase in costs associated with day to day living.</p>	
<p>It might make it easier on everyone in Ausgrid and the Council</p>	

OPTION	REASONS FOR THE RESPONSE
<p>Ausgrid contributes 50:50 in ABC with Councils NOW up to \$6M (i.e. over the next 5yrs) ...continued</p>	<p>This funding is essential for building of resilience. So, we can't go as Business as Usual.</p>
	<p>It should be a collaborative effort, and both stakeholders should be invested in resolving this issue.</p>
	<p>Because it makes sense. Because it's cheap..and I'm sick of people choosing to do nothing and stand still vs making the least little effort to improve the problems we face if it's going to cost THEM a dollar.</p>
	<p>Best solutions are collaborative. Ensure other risks are managed/ balanced. Need to be proactive. Potential influence on councils for other actions for Ausgrid out of scope areas e.g. more trees in parklands away from wires and poles.</p>
	<p>Ausgrid and Councils contribute 50:50 each, Ausgrid provides Aerial Bundled Cabling and Council helps cutting trees.</p>
	<p>Unless there is enough money to implement any decision, the research and analysis is waste of money. On a project basis raise the money plant more trees and give the responsibility to council to maintain. The cost cannot be carried for more than 5 years. We can manage the increase in cost for short period not forever.</p>
	<p>It's important.</p>
	<p>I think the ABC investment proposed by Ausgrid is entirely reasonable and they have offered the proper basis for the proposal, including the research which supports the solution. I am content that the proposal, particularly the utilisation of particular types of vegetation coupled with the use of ABC is entirely practical and offers multi-level benefits and long-term solutions to customers. It offers safety, certainty of electricity, climate benefits, resilience to the network and is long-term.</p>
	<p>This is a very important task and needs whole of community by-in.</p>
<p>I just believe this is the sensible approach.</p>	
<p>Ausgrid invest in research to quantify benefits on how it might support co-funded ABC in this proposal (\$250K)</p>	<p>I think the only reason Ausgrid should contribute more with councils if there is a very clear cost benefit for Ausgrid to do so, otherwise leave it to the councils.</p>
	<p>I think a lot of collaboration between Councils and Ausgrid to work out what is the best planting would be best for the areas looked into.</p>
	<p>I was on the fence about this & 50:50 with councils.</p>
	<p>More research can't hurt but is it a waste of funds!?!?</p>

OPTION	REASONS FOR THE RESPONSE
<p>Ausgrid invest in research to quantify benefits on how it might support co-funded ABC in this proposal (\$250K) <i>...continued</i></p>	<p>I feel I don't know enough, cost of living and start with research is best.</p> <p>It would be great if Ausgrid would be able to share their learnings from their activities on Urban Heat so that there is less reinventing of the wheel. Research seems to be a good middle ground. As urban heat is an issue that differs between different regions of the service area, I think councils are best placed to lead urban heat reduction efforts. Really appreciate Ausgrid's engagement and initiative in this process, good stuff.</p> <p>To make sure ABC actually works as expected.</p> <p>Not residents' responsibility.</p> <p>Happy with the info being mentioned to everyone today.</p> <p>Collaborative work would bring the best outcome.</p> <p>Ausgrid needs to ensure that they are keeping costs down as all these extras add up for the customer. This seems like more of a council function.</p> <p>Again striking the balance between innovation and economic viability, particularly as this also falls within the responsibility of local councils.</p> <p>I think the second option is more justifiable. It doesn't cost customers a large amount and it's proceeding cautiously with collating research, until the justifications for spending a lot of cash on the installation of ABC are met. The AER is much more likely to approve of this approach too, because it minimises spending and also displays an effort to research the area thoroughly before proceeding. Thus, it seems the safest option, which also offers some progress.</p>
<p>Ausgrid does NO MORE on ABC than it is already planning to do as part of 'business-as-usual'</p>	<p>Again, because Ausgrid is not responsible for the greenery of the streets. By having more trees in the streets Ausgrid would have to manage their lines better. So it feels like Ausgrid is again asking for more funding for that i.e. for doing their jobs.</p> <p>I see no reason to invest in research to quantify benefits as co-funding is not a priority.</p> <p>Stick to core tasks. Governments won't stop urban development which is counterproductive to this proposal.</p> <p>Councils and government need to invest in research and councils need to invest in tree planting.</p> <p>I think that it is not the responsibility of the entire customer base to pay for inner city problems.</p>

OPTION	REASONS FOR THE RESPONSE
<p>Ausgrid does NO MORE on ABC than it is already planning to do as part of 'business-as-usual'</p> <p><i>...continued</i></p>	<p>Councils and government bodies should take the lead in collaboration with Ausgrid and their specialised advised around planning etc.</p>
	<p>Tree planting will be limited due to other factors anyway. Better to underground cabling wherever possible.</p>
	<p>AER have already reduced the budget in the proposal.</p>
	<p>Ausgrid has already projects to convert conductors to ABC to provide for safety around shops and buildings and for impacts from trees. Stick to BAU.</p>
	<p>Ausgrid needs to focus on its core priorities, not expand into other areas of responsibility.</p>
	<p>Generally, most of those researches are unreliable due to unreliable data.</p>
	<p>Government should take care of urban cooling and climate change research and development. I think Ausgrid should focus on their service delivery.</p>



DRAFT TARIFF FACT SHEET

Bill Nixey, Ausgrid's Manager of Network Pricing, introduced a draft tariff fact sheet on two-way pricing, recommended by the AER to provide further information to customers.

Participants were asked to review the fact sheet and provide feedback to Ausgrid about its effectiveness and offer suggestions about ways to make the information clearer. They were also asked if they had any questions after reading the fact sheet.

The participant's responses to the question about effectiveness are included in the following table and their questions are outlined on pages 32-33.



What do you think would make the fact sheet more effective?

THEMES	COMMENTS
Accessibility	Can be difficult for ESL people or low levels of literacy to understand.
	Has any research been done on translating the fact sheet to other languages? Will it get the message across?
Edit the fact sheet for clarity	The fact sheet should be designed in a way that it could be understood more easily.
	The free threshold breakdown into four.
	The two-way tariff boils down to: encourage people to use solar during the day and export it in the evening, either by changing usage or investing in storage. This message is getting lost in the complexity of the fact sheet.
	There could be more emphasis, maybe a sentence on each page instead of just the first page reiterating that there are costs for Ausgrid on being able to take in energy and this is why the tariff is needed. This might make this tariff more palatable.
	Too long, language a bit too technical. Simplify language.
	Understanding that it's counter-intuitive for customers to pay to contribute to the network and explaining very clearly to new customers why they are doing this. This could help to mitigate confusion for these customers.
	Clear information as to WHY this is fair.
	Consider adding a statement that excess solar exports during the day destabilises the grid. It gives a little more explanation why you have to drop excess at all.
It's too long, too verbose, and the message gets lost.	

THEMES	COMMENTS
<p>Edit the fact sheet for clarity ...continued</p>	<p>Instead of giving different free limits for different months, it would be much simpler/easier to understand if you say 6.8kWh (or whatever number it is) per day. Put the consequence for different months in a footnote if it's necessary.</p>
	<p>It's too long. Needs to be clear and concise. Ausgrid appears to be trying too hard to sell the idea to its customers. Fix the typos and cut it back.</p>
	<p>Lot of info to digest - I needed more time to read. Can we have a graphic on p1 to help? P3 helped me most.</p>
	<p>Needs a clearer explanation of the different structures e.g. a sentence saying there's three different approaches to this.</p>
	<p>Needs to be clearer.</p>
	<p>Needs to be more concise, diagrams rather than words are easier to follow.</p>
	<p>Needs to be more succinct overall, more like the first page.</p>
	<p>Needs to be simpler overall.</p>
	<p>Needs to get the message across right away, not through 4 pages.</p>
	<p>Put the infographics higher in the sheet to provide clearer understanding to consumer of what is still free.</p>
<p>Education about sustainable ways to use energy</p>	<p>More education is definitely needed. We need to show customers the most effective way of using energy if we want it to be sustainable.</p>
	<p>Why not invest in community batteries to absorb the "excess voltage" rather than getting people to moderate their use during the day.</p>
<p>Explain the purpose of the fact sheet</p>	<p>This fact sheet appears to be aimed at trying to convince customers not to feed into the grid because there is so little benefit. Why not just be upfront and say that the grid is not up to receiving inputs from residential solar and for this reason we are discouraging it.</p>
	<p>Ultimately retailers will (most likely) reward less/reward more at different times of day, but this doesn't come through until page 3. Before that point the sheet talks about charge and reward, which is unnecessarily alarming.</p>
	<p>Why not just say what Bill Nixey said in there at the top 'We want to encourage people to export later the day'.</p>

THEMES	COMMENTS
How will customers be billed?	Certainty regarding billing. It is unclear on the fact sheet how customers are going to be billed. Ausgrid uses terms such as "likely" and "typically". Using terms like this suggests there is discretion to the retailer in passing on the benefits of the 2-way tariff system to the customer.
More information or clarification needed	<p>Information to lessen the impact on your bill.</p> <p>Lack of reasoning for the tariff charges - why is this the case?</p> <p>Price.</p> <p>Right after the opening explanation, add a separate line "This is separate to the Retailers Feed-in Tariff (FIT)".</p> <p>It's a fact four-sheet, not a fact sheet.</p>
Positive feedback	<p>I like the breakdown on the different customer types, that is very helpful to see what the bottom line is.</p> <p>Like the graphics.</p>
Retailers	<p>Encourage the retailers to also have a similar fact sheet.</p> <p>It doesn't mention about the retailer might charge differently.</p> <p>The fact sheet needs to make clear that this is how Ausgrid charges the retailer, and the retailer might not follow the same model. This would be very confusing for the customer to understand.</p> <p>Actual cost including the retailer's price.</p>
Suggestions for changes to wording or graphics	<p>Break out the on average daily limits.</p> <p>Change heading to 'Two-way pricing for solar export to the grid'.</p> <p>I feel like it needs a TLTR like the key points and a summary.</p> <p>Clearly say how much can be exported in a day for how much when without all the graphs. Graph actually makes it more confusing. Remember 'KISS' principle.</p> <p>Graph on the bottom on page 2 the light blue legend says "No change or reward". I'm pretty sure that is supposed to be "No CHARGE or reward".</p> <p>I need clarification of graph on page 3.</p>

THEMES	COMMENTS
Suggestions for changes to wording or graphics <i>...continued</i>	Page three where the months are divided into four different categories for the free threshold seems too detailed. An average should suffice for an information sheet.
Suggestions to include references to solar	I have solar - if read this fact sheet, the title and summary paragraph does not mention about solar. Reading the title, I would probably ditch it before reading it. Maybe adding a line - saying "Solar" in either title or summary be useful.
	I'm not sure it clearly explains why the solar customer should be charged when they feed in at certain times of the day. I only understand that after attending these Ausgrid sessions. I think this is key context that is needed to be understood upfront or it won't be understood why the other information is what it is.
	Will I as a customer know how to export my power at different times? Is it in the control of all solar customers or just some?
	Informing solar customers how they can optimise feeding into the grid at the peak demand periods e.g. is it to invest in a battery?
Tools for customers to compare costs and benefits	A concern is that this tariff or misunderstandings about the impact of this tariff could dissuade people from investing in solar. This is more work but perhaps there could be a calculator or some such to help people see what the bottom line of the numbers is. Perhaps this is not Ausgrid's job but Ausgrid could partner with NSW government etc?
	An explanation of what solutions (i.e. battery) could be installed to allow customers to take advantage of the extra tariff and what the cost benefit of that is (I suspect the tariffs wouldn't pay off the installation cost of the battery).
Using video and/or adding links to website	Create video too and add video link on the fact sheet.
	Explaining how to monitor your electricity use and solar export (web portal link to access it).
	Limit to two pages, people won't read more than that. With a link to website if you want more info.
	Maybe creating a video explaining instead of having to read a info sheet.



What questions do you still have after reading the fact sheet?

THEMES	COMMENTS
Agreements between Ausgrid and retailers	Can Ausgrid ensure these benefits to the customer? It appears from the language used on the fact sheet that this agreement is between Ausgrid and the retailer and Ausgrid relies on the retailer in good faith to adopt the same practice to the customer. It sounds reasonable in theory but how can customers be certain that they will receive the benefits of the two-way system when Ausgrid is transacting with the retailer and not the customer?
Alternative approaches	It seems counter-productive that customers will be charged to manage the overwhelming exportation of energy back to the grid, when theoretically we have technologies that are way more efficient e.g. community batteries, that we could potentially be exporting back to, not be charged for and get positive input into the community. Is this not an option?
	More can be done to absorb this excessive solar resulting from excessive export during the day - implementing solar batteries as either community-funded or retailer incentivised community investments.
	What can customers do to export during peak electricity demand period - is this through battery storage?
Calculating exports	I was wondering how they calculated electricity export between 10am to 3pm and 4pm to 9pm.
CER solar	At \$3/year this seems so trivial at the individual level...how much does this raise for Ausgrid to put towards upgrading the grid to handle more CER solar?
Cost of batteries	How much does a solar power battery cost?
Costs of running the network	Does free export of energy back into the network reduce cost or increase cost of running the network?
Costs and incentives	What is the incentive for people to opt-in in 2024 when it is going to cost them more?
	What is the relevance of the chart in page 3 to the cost to consumer?
Default tariff	"Default tariff" (from the second year) to me implies you can opt out. Is this true?
Fairness	As a retailer end-user, I was encountered a "unfair" situation: that in my bill, the charge part has GST, the feed-in-tariff has no GST, therefore, initially from my solar, I generated something, after then stripped off layer by layer, I got tiny little left, I felt the policy so unfair.
	Why does Ausgrid think this is fair?

THEMES	COMMENTS
Free thresholds	What is the basis for the free thresholds?
Impacts	What is the impact per day?
Implementation benefits	Has the benefits of implementation of this tariff been quantified?
Information about how tariffs work	Could you include a clearer blurb of information in the fact sheet for those who are new to two-way tariffs and who don't understand how they work?
	What's the reasoning and justification for different amount of free export on 30 day vs 31 day months etc instead of winter summer autumn & spring?
Managing household solar systems	How can I program my system to not export during the day and only export between 4pm and 9pm.
	The fact sheet doesn't tell people how they can use this information to their advantage e.g. by running machines during the day using delayed start programmes.
	What do I need to do to export and set the times to export?
	What happens if you have a battery?
	The fact sheet gives the impression that the feeding to grid is not welcomed. Should we stop installing the solar panels on our roofs?
More information about opting-in	It seems like it doesn't have any information regarding why customers should opt-in in 2024 before it's the default. Why should customers opt-in?
Pricing over 5-year plan	Is the tariff structure locked in at those prices and thresholds for the 5 year period of the plan?
Retailers	Seems to double up on retailer's obligations.
	Shouldn't the retailer be the one communicating these tariffs to the customer since they are the ones who ultimately determine the fees/rewards for the individual?
	Currently, does Ausgrid provide 100% export tariffs or are there other contributors e.g. retailers?
Revenue	Where does the money from the tariff go? Directly to counterbalance the cost that Ausgrid incurs because of more load to the grid? Or could it go toward community projects like batteries?
Technical questions	Where is the excess power going (from the solar panels) if I don't use it (if I don't have a battery) and Ausgrid isn't using it?



AFFORDABILITY OF THE OVERALL PLAN



Fiona McAnally, Regulatory Analytics Manager, outlined a summary of Ausgrid's proposed response to affordability with the aim to:

- ◆ test the affordability of the overall plan Ausgrid is advocating for with the panel
- ◆ understand if customers would be comfortable with the overall package and its bill impacts given increased inflation and other cost of living pressures

Participants gathered in small groups to consider the following priorities as well as the overall benefits of the proposal, as captured in the table below:

Increasing priorities

- ◆ Improving customer experience
- ◆ Transforming the grid
- ◆ Delivering net zero
- ◆ Building resilience

Continuing priorities

- ◆ Safety and reliability
- ◆ Connecting customers
- ◆ Diversity and inclusion

What questions do you have about the overall benefits of the proposal?

THEMES	COMMENTS
AER considerations	I would like to know how far the AER will go to consider and meet more than 50% of what customers are asking for. How far is AER willing to go to meet customers ideas/plans?
Collaboration with other organisations	Will Ausgrid be collaborating with other distributors and players on research and innovation etc to get bigger bang for buck?
	We assume there is considerable sharing of info amongst all energy distributors to avoid duplication of effort?
	Who, other than AUSGRID is investing in this type of innovation that AUSGRID will be learning from?
	Innovation - as mentioned before, important to ensure Ausgrid collaborates with other areas doing similar research and not duplicate effort
	Is it possible for multiple distributors to combine their investments to fund research projects to support some of these benefits?

THEMES	COMMENTS
Collaboration with other organisations ...continued	Does AUSGRID plan to work collaboratively with these players to get a bigger bang for the buck?
	Does Ausgrid have influence on the priorities for R & D conducted by universities for example.
Comments on the proposed expenditure	And your proposed expenditure (+\$33) is less than what you save from the proposed affordability measures (-\$36)!
	<i>Comment - This is a good thing.</i>
	Good to see that the proposed expenditure that we are discussing is more than offset by the affordability measures.
Contingency planning	Important to be able to manage the extra load 110K new PV customers etc. What will Ausgrid do if they don't get approval for sufficient funds?
Feedback from AER	How much feedback or constructive criticism does the AER give back to Ausgrid?
Impact on bills	Will our overall billing increase or anything?
	It seems with all cuts done by AER, the bill impacts was 1%? Is it correct?
Impacts for solar customers	How are we moving towards net zero when we penalise customers with solar roof tops? This discourages people to get solar systems.
Impacts of economic fluctuations on electricity prices	How does the recent decrease in electricity usage affect these numbers?
	The increase in 2029 will keep going from 2029 onwards + any other increase?
	Does the cost come down if interest rate drop?
Innovation	It's good to hear that Ausgrid is re-proposing similar amount for Innovation.
	Innovation is just not about research - implementation and pilot on various new technology in Ausgrid Network is equally important.
	It would be good to list some examples such as "new innovative technologies that better integrate customer solar & EVs".
Integrity of the process	I'm certain the AER is acting for the benefit of the consumer, so if they are questioning points, then they should be addressed adequately by Ausgrid i.e. we can't just say it was proposed by us and therefore it should be accepted.

THEMES	COMMENTS
Questions for clarification	Are all the benefits that AER didn't approve cost only an extra 1% as per attachment B of pre reading document?
	Are the benefits able to be justified with remodelling the data inputs. I.e. is it that the benefits have changed, or is it the math?
	The additional increase in innovation will impact the consumer bills? What's the delta or this has been compensated from other initiatives?
Reasons for the AER decision	I want to know what Ausgrid needs from us to support their proposal. We have put so much time into what has been completely rejected and I think it would have helped us to know the reasons why it was rejected as then it would be clearer.
	Is the regulator here to speak to us to explain from their perspective why they have made this draft decision?
	AER September draft decision amounts for all areas are much lower than requested - is there any feedback from the AER that we leverage?
Renewable energy usage	Solar usage up by a third!
Reporting back	How does Ausgrid report back on the benefits over course of the 5 years if the regulator does approve the additional expenditure?
More information or detail needed	More information of what the bill impact will mean and how it will be communicated?
	Can we get more numbers in terms of bill impacts i.e. the cents/dollars increase of these proposals, that is easier to understand than million dollar figures.
	Can we have Fiona's Bill Impact slides?
Resubmission process	I think it's beneficial, but what steps do Ausgrid intend to take next to convince the AER that there are enough benefits of the new proposal? Extra data?
	Support requesting the original amounts for innovation & CER.
	How much detail will Ausgrid include to make the case for delivery to net zero and not pass on all the fiscal responsibility to the consumer?
	Why does Ausgrid consider the reformed proposal will now be accepted if the proposed cost is the same?
	How are Ausgrid going to quantify the benefits of the programs to the AER on re-proposing our original plans and spending?

THEMES	COMMENTS
Revised spend	With the reduced monies that the AER is supplying, how are those monies going to be proportioned across?
Risks of extreme heat to areas within the network	The whole of network funding under jeopardy of not being funded includes the whole of Sydney. Considering that the Western Suburbs are highly at risk of extreme heat, this may well be the area that will lose out significantly on funding, if AER does not approve the original submission.
Role of the VoC	What does Ausgrid need from us? What do we need to be considering about the benefits that we have not previously considered to assist Ausgrid to convince the regulator?
	Will there be space for a VoC to have involvement in this process?
Support for Ausgrid's approach	Overall Ausgrid seems to be doing a good job of reflecting the community's views (thumbs up emoji goes here).
	We're really happy that Ausgrid isn't abandoning the important issues that the VoC have proposed!!
Support for the original proposal	We feel that we are still happy with everything that was proposed originally even though some cost of living issues have increased.
	We've talked about this a lot over the months, we are generally in favour of the expenditure - the average bill impact seems low compared to the potential benefits, can we just go for it?
What reductions are proposed in the revised submission	That overview was very high level. Can we have some more detail regarding the proposed reductions and changes that Ausgrid expect to implement to the proposal that will yield a different result from the AER?
	Are there any options under building resilience that have been omitted from the reduced amount?
Other	More needs to be done by Ausgrid to quantify and assess the very uncertain benefits of these additional costs.
	What if any room is there for compromise?
	Overall benefits seem reasonable to expenditure, just not sure if those are still the same quantum when response to decision is done.



LEVEL OF COMFORT - AFFORDABILITY

Following a short whole group discussion, participants were asked to rate their level of comfort on the affordability proposal, responding to the question:

How comfortable are you with the overall proposal and the associated bill impact?

The participant's responses are included below, followed by the reasons for choosing their level from very comfortable to very uncomfortable:

4%	Very comfortable - I would be willing to have us spend a whole lot more	<i>3 participants</i>
13%	Comfortable - more than ok I would have been happy for us to spend a bit more	<i>9 participants</i>
41%	OK - this spend for us all is spot on!	<i>29 participants</i>
26%	Uncomfortable - I think this is a little too much for us all to spend	<i>18 participants</i>
16%	Very uncomfortable - this overall spend is a real stretch for us all	<i>11 participants</i>

LEVEL OF COMFORT	REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS COMFORT LEVEL
Very comfortable - I would be willing to have us spend a whole lot more	Happy with that.
	The issues we have discussed in this and the past sessions we were together were all essential issues to build resilience in Ausgrid and provide reliable service to customers. So, I think it's reasonable to spend this amount, or more, as we have discussed.
	At this point, I just think that we need to be more ambitious and proactive.
Comfortable - more than ok I would have been happy for us to spend a bit more	So long as spend isn't going to be a reason for AER to reject again.
	On Ausgrid's part there is a net -\$3, that seems very fair for investment into the future. Costs are not going to come down in the future if we don't weather the near-term pain of investment. You can't save your way out of climate change.
	I am comfortable with the overall proposal as I feel that the aspects that were rejected by the AER (innovation, movement to net zero) need to be implemented to future-proof the network. Also, the additional spend is offset by the savings found.

LEVEL OF COMFORT	REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS COMFORT LEVEL
<p>Comfortable - more than ok I would have been happy for us to spend a bit more ...continued</p>	Critical spending for future security.
	Because the plan still delivers what we as a group asked for over the last 2 years.
	It's reasonable increase as the innovations are long term investments.
	Better to stay ahead of the game, rather than catchup.
	The impact on overall increase is rather small. So it's OK to spend a bit more.
	-\$36 through affordability measures and +\$33 investment in your control: You've responsibly saved in order to afford these investments. The increase is tough on the most vulnerable but the investment paves the way for cheaper energy (renewables) overall.
<p>OK - this spend for us all is spot on!</p>	Based on all the discussion we need to spend on some key priorities to balance cost cut and opportunities. As this is assessed impact, agree with this spend. Too much will hurt everyone's budget.
	The factors out of Ausgrid's control contribute a lot. I'm comfortable with the spend + think it's right (the \$33 in Ausgrid's control) because I think the projects discussed are necessary + need to be done - but I wouldn't want to see any more than that spent.
	The proposed use of the \$28.00 in areas of innovation, net zero and resilience is important. The overall increases will be difficult for people to pay.
	We can't know the future. In the initial discussions at the beginning of this process this was a no brainer...discussions have changed after all of a sudden interest rates rose. The benefits are needed moving forward. Perhaps the recoup time could be longer.
	I think the benefits are worth it for investing in an enhanced system and mitigating the effects of climate change. I wouldn't be comfortable with any more than that though. A lot of people will struggle with the increased costs at the end of the period.
	Hope Ausgrid can adjust the increase quickly when the situation changes.
	Ausgrid has made savings elsewhere it's an acceptable increase, I believe investing in things like cybersecurity is existentially important and needs to be done.
	What we can control costs 33 compared to 225 for things we can't control. So, ok with funding for what we can control.

LEVEL OF COMFORT	REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS COMFORT LEVEL
<p>OK - this spend for us all is spot on! ...continued</p>	<p>All areas seem to have been considered.</p>
	<p>Can live with it but cost of living is impacting so many families and people already. Needs to be more education around how to reduce bill costs.</p>
	<p>There are many things outside Ausgrid's control. Although uncomfortable about any additional costs for our bills, the additional spend for agreed priorities, is absolutely needed. We have been fortunate in past years that we have become comfortable with.</p>
	<p>Still unsure.</p>
	<p>A very minor change given these are controllable costs. The extra 225 will happen anyway.</p>
	<p>If the cost of living crisis is not addressed within this period and interest rates continue to rise, I am concerned about this cost would be too high. Safety nets for vulnerable people are very important in this circumstance.</p>
	<p>Provided the change in interest rate will readjust this change.</p>
	<p>I think the bill impact is pretty minimal, especially in comparison to those of energy providers.</p>
	<p>The spend is reasonable and justified. We need to invest for the future.</p>
	<p>As much as I like if any bills do not increase, there's some inevitable factors outside Ausgrid control. I am very comfortable with Ausgrid proposed investment.</p>
	<p>A lot of time and effort has clearly gone into the numbers and I feel that the VOC has been listened to. Taking inflation into account, this proposal is modest.</p>
	<p>Whilst the cost of living pressures are wide spread. If we don't invest soon the cost blow out for customers may be far more significant in 5 - 10 years' time. However, I cannot justify spending more at this time.</p>
	<p>Although the increase is harsh, Ausgrid are at least listening to us and trying to implement things at a fair cost to the consumer. I think the big problem is the external factors - they should be putting price caps into place etc to help.</p>
<p>When isolating the bill increase to what we're actually voting on today (Ausgrid's cost etc), I think that the cost is okay. For what it's implementing, including Net Zero, Climate Resilience, Cyber safety etc. I think the cost is reasonable.</p>	

LEVEL OF COMFORT	REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS COMFORT LEVEL
<p>OK - this spend for us all is spot on! ...continued</p>	<p>Inability to access remedial measures such as solar</p>
	<p>I put in neutral position, not for the answer, what I am trying to point out, this chart I have seen it since mid of 2022. These figures have not changed at all, but since mid-2022, did Ausgrid know in June 2022 that up until now, we have had 12 interest rate rises.</p>
	<p>No-one likes to pay more if it's unnecessary but the improvements this brings to supply and the functioning of Ausgrid's system are worth the cost</p>
	<p>I know things are going up but I don't have the control over them that I like. I'll bear with it and try to adjust my living, this is for me and anyone in my position.</p>
	<p>I want to be able to look forward and not backwards.</p>
	<p>I would prefer a little less but ok as is.</p>
<p>Uncomfortable - I think this is a little too much for us all to spend</p>	<p>I feel that the amount of increases we have had over the last year alone has giving me pause for more increases.</p>
	<p>I speak for all those who may be in my position when I say we are just in some cases coping and we would hope that Ausgrid realises this from this vote and would where possible reduce some of our expectations in putting their next submission to the AER.</p>
	<p>I think for a lot of households right now with cost of living. The Government is trying to tackle this crisis.</p>
	<p>I understand that the reasons for the price increase are mostly out of anyone's control, but it seems like customer bills are going up and up and up. There's only so much we can cope with.</p>
	<p>It seems too much of a burden.</p>
	<p>Any further increase to everyone's bill with the rise of cost of living is uncomfortable, not a stretch for ALL of us but possibly to the majority of us.</p>
	<p>Not good.</p>
	<p>No increase is a good increase in bills, but we know where our money is going to and there are more 'fors' than against and therefore I am ok to spend this amount.</p>

LEVEL OF COMFORT	REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS COMFORT LEVEL
<p>Uncomfortable - I think this is a little too much for us all to spend ...continued</p>	<p>The controllable increase is marginal compared to the uncontrollable increase so in the context of that, it's not that much. However, Ausgrid should do what they can to reduce the cost to the consumer as much as possible.</p>
	<p>I think you need to think about people on government benefits.</p>
	<p>I think most consumers are already at the limit of their budgets. So a further increase will more than likely push these consumers over the edge into deficit, to the point where they will not be able to afford their bills.</p>
	<p>I appreciate what the amount represents, however if it comes down to the basic question of "Do I think this is affordable for everyone?", then no, I don't agree. This increase is bare minimum for the average customer and is already borderline unaffordable.</p>
	<p>We are having too many price increases.</p>
	<p>I don't entirely believe that the increase is justified for the factors within Ausgrid's control such as prioritisation of innovation.</p>
	<p>\$28 may not sound a lot but there will be many, many families who will still struggle to pay the additional cost, especially when the current cost of living crisis is likely to continue for the next 5 years.</p>
	<p>Given rent increases, interest rises, world unrest effect on fuel the cost of living will increase further dramatically. Just at this time collaboration with all vested parties would assist.</p>
<p>Very uncomfortable - this overall spend is a real stretch for us all</p>	<p>There should be ways to lower the bill impact with smart meters and such sort of considerations.</p>
	<p>Outside control part costs are too much.</p>
	<p>With the rise in cost of living and inflation, we need to draw the line at some point and there is already too much happening too quickly, it seems as though people don't have enough say and we need to factor in how hard it is actually getting.</p>
	<p>Actually, I accept the benefits are worthwhile, but overall inflation is killing most people's budgets. This is especially true for those on fixed incomes (elderly, etc.). It is time to call a time out and let the federal and state governments to realise.</p>

LEVEL OF COMFORT	REASONS FOR CHOOSING THIS COMFORT LEVEL
<p>Very uncomfortable - this overall spend is a real stretch for us all <i>...continued</i></p>	<p>From where the money is coming to pay this increase? Seniors income is not increasing at all.</p>
	<p>Even with the inflation and the cost of living going up, the small amount you mentioned is affordable on that amount. But by the time bill arrive with the additional cost from the other downstream companies prices in the actual bill would be very high.</p>
	<p>The never ending increases will break the average customer. There is no case to show the cost verses the outcome.</p>
	<p>The prices have gone up more than enough. Asking the public to pay even more is pushing the already strained friendship.</p>
	<p>As costs increase that are out of Ausgrid's control Ausgrid needs to focus on what they can control to bring their part of the overall energy bill down. Ausgrid needs to look for ways to improve their performance and reduce cost as BAU.</p>
	<p>Always easy to spend other people's money. Ausgrid's proposed benefits are uncertain, variable and risky and as such do not balance the costs. The very quantum of the extra costs are too great given the high cost of living expenses being born by the public.</p>



PLENARY COMMENTS

A brief whole group discussion followed the vote. Further comments were captured and included below:

Costs are rising, many things are out of customer's control.

We were prepared to spend more on what was rejected.

I think that is the hard thing Jim, we don't have the magic ball to see if interest rates etc will change.

For people who are still in the earning phase of their lives: join your union, fight for increased wages ;)

We're focused a bit too much on things outside Ausgrid's control. It is a push for a lot of people, but it is reasonable over a 5yr period.

We talk a lot about vulnerable people. Then why are we going to charge both vulnerable people and rich people the same. Ausgrid should ask money from the government so that it can come out of the Income tax.

They have also removed the middle-income tax offset - things are getting harder.

It's not like a luxury, it's an investment. An increase now but will come back to serve myself and community in the future.

Good point (re investment) Good way to look at it...as hard as it may be for some.

Yes, consumers are getting punches from all sides.

Intergenerational equity - we need to think about impacts on future generations, not just ourselves at this point in time.

Ausgrid are going back in with the exact same numbers. Will

Ausgrid take the feedback on board and perhaps come back with a revised figure? Impact will be greater for some customers - we're asked to vote on average, but it will be much harder for some.

Absolutely! Five years is a super long time if we vote against implementing any of these things.

Fixed income (pension) - can't afford to be paying out too much on extras like this but I can understand why we need to put in more for later on.

I totally agree with that comment and slightly wish I went for the uncomfortable mark now (instead of OK) because whilst I understand Ausgrid's part in this increase in role, I guess it's a tough one to accommodate everyone's needs.

Ausgrid aren't increasing it \$200, only \$30.

We need to learn how to best use energy/electricity so that the network is sustainable for the future. We need to educate ourselves and educate our youth on responsible use of electricity as a resource and utility & how not to abuse our privilege.

Although the increase is harsh, Ausgrid are at least listening to us and trying to implement things at a fair cost to the consumer. I think the big problem is the external factors - they should be putting price caps into place etc. to help the most vulnerable, rather than us being uncomfortable over the \$3. I'd prefer to see \$3 taken from all the other factors that aren't in

Ausgrid's control.

Today or 5 years from now, a \$1 means differently to different people. I would like to see this from the vulnerable people on minimum wage. I don't think this is nowhere near fairness to increase the energy price for all people.

I think the fact that the estimates went up even since we met in June could be a concern as well.

Really good discussion! Love that everyone is so respectful and listens to each point of view.

Very true. Life's not fair! As someone from a lower income household this stuff is so important.

Wouldn't it be nice if the govt increased pensions and raised taxes on the super-rich to help balance these things out :-/

I've got to say it was interesting to see the change in viewpoint. Last time we discussed this I was the cheese standing alone below the line.

My electricity bill is over \$1000 per qtr. We are not on a huge income. I've spoken in the past with the energy provider and get a discount for paying on time and another for a long-time customer...I think it is one way that maybe a customer can keep the costs down. With the discount it comes down to between \$750-\$900.

ADVOCATING FOR REGULATORY REFORM



Naomi Wynn, Manager Regulatory Policy, provided an update to the panel on Ausgrid's advocacy work in 2023, which included:

- ◆ Network businesses participation in the Federal Government's Community Battery Program
- ◆ AEMC's CER Technical Standards Review
- ◆ AEMC Review into the Regulatory Framework for Metering Services
- ◆ National legislation updated to mandate emissions to be considered in energy decision making
- ◆ Check Up of Electricity Reliability and Security in NSW
- ◆ NSW State Inquiry into Embedded Networks
- ◆ Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Residential Electrification

The participants then considered any questions or comments they had in response to hearing about Ausgrid's advocacy for regulatory reform. Their ideas were captured and presented in the tables that follow, under the questions asked of the participants.

What do you need Ausgrid to keep in mind as they continue to advocate?

THEMES	PARTICIPANT RESPONSES
Advocate for customers experiencing disadvantage	Advocate in programs which impact the disadvantaged.
	To keep in mind the most vulnerable individuals and communities when advocating to ensure everyone is equitably represented when it comes to regulatory reform regarding energy.
Appreciation for the Voice of Community process	Really appreciate this feedback from Ausgrid. Having been involved in this process for over 2 and a half years, it is incredibly rewarding to hear that Ausgrid has been able to utilise our feedback to lobby for change in areas such as community batteries!
	Super cool outcome!
	Thank you for listening to our views!!!
Change and innovation	Things change so quickly, need to be nimble and adaptive as things change.
	Innovation is very important.
Collaborate to achieve best outcomes	Collaborate with other organisations and universities as much possible to save cost and get best outcome.
	Discussion with small and large business about policy changes.
Community batteries	Yeah for community batteries and similar community sustainable energy solutions.
Consider the life cycle of technology	I really like the concept of community batteries, but am afraid of the unseen costs to the environment as they are built and when they need to be disposed of at their end of life.

THEMES	PARTICIPANT RESPONSES
Consider the VoC process and agreements	<p>We have spent lot of time in past sessions and last year to come to agreement, so please consider those when changing any decisions.</p> <p>Keep in mind previous sessions not just on today.</p>
Continue engaging with community	<p>Keep gathering community input.</p> <p>Keep getting feedback from the community.</p> <p>Keep listening to the community!!</p> <p>Maintaining the conversation with its customers directly. Keeping the lines of communication open.</p>
Continue to advocate	<p>Keep advocating for better and contributing to the dialogue.</p> <p>Whatever we do now to achieve sustainability and net zero emissions will be so much more cost effective and would be of benefit to Ausgrid to be able to articulate the benefits of successful advocacy, things that make a difference.</p>
Continue to engage with First Nations people	<p>Continue to engage with First Nations communities and Elders to gather knowledge and advice.</p> <p>Keep continuing to elevate Indigenous Voices, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People and Disabled People!</p>
Cost of living	<p>Cost of living is making bills unaffordable. It is a presumption to propose increase costs to the consumer when families and businesses cannot afford continued increases in their expenses.</p> <p>Inflation and cost of living and that things are not easy for the average household at the moment. Middle income tax offsets have been removed, so middle income and low income households need to be considered fairly.</p> <p>Although there are large costs involved in meeting net zero, Ausgrid must keep in mind the continuous rise of cost of living and how it affects people with low income.</p> <p>Be careful to realise outside inflation is pushing consumers to a wall.</p>
Drive to net zero	<p>Whatever we do now to achieve sustainability and net zero emissions will be so much more cost effective and benefit ours and future generations down the line. It's great to see Ausgrid is on the track towards Net Zero, but we need to go much faster and further than we are going.</p> <p>Continue to drive to net zero</p>

THEMES	PARTICIPANT RESPONSES
Drive to net zero <i>...continued</i>	To have climate action, the drive to net zero and environmental impacts at the forefront always.
Economic drivers and impacts	Financial landscape for customers and technology.
	Climate change is not the only driver for reform. Economic strength as a nation is a far more important.
Education about energy usage and sustainable living	Through this whole process it's clear that energy bill breakdowns are just quite opaque. Perhaps advocacy for education on how to efficiently use electricity or minimise energy usage or understand their energy usage might be important especially with smart meters creating that data. Can retailers give us that information?
	It's been an awesome experience to be a part of VOC & I believe it doesn't stop here. It's really food for thought to think what can I, myself, do to contribute to community knowledge/education about electricity/energy and its usage for sustainability.
Measure results and return on investment	Everything Ausgrid advocates needs to be backed by clear KPI's that provide at worst neutral or preferably positive rate of return on the investments they are advocating for.
Planning for future generations	To keep in mind the impact on future generations and planning intergenerationally to ensure our future communities are able to continue to grow and thrive.
Reducing consumption	That we need to 'live within our means' so to keep all unnecessary expenses to an absolute minimum.
	To advocate for energy-saving on a consumer level.
Renewable technologies and infrastructure	It would be great if instead of people paying extra for green power, it is switched around to people paying extra for non-renewables. I think green should be the default!
	Solar uptake is only going to increase, need to adapt so system can cope with surges.
	Focus on renewable energy sources.
	To keep Ausgrid informed and involved in the infrastructure road map for NSW e.g., the wind farms, solar with reference to connecting the poles and the wires for connection back to the grid.
Retail customers	To direct deal with retailer customers in an automated system.



What questions do you have about advocating for regulatory reform?

THEMES	PARTICIPANT RESPONSES
Advocating for renewables	Is most of your advocacy directed at change? (More specifically, a greener future)
	Is Ausgrid able to advocate for generators to go for renewable energy sources?
Appreciation for the VoC process and continued advocacy	It's great to hear that Ausgrid has been able to use one of our recommendations to lobby the regulators.
	Thank you for listening and advocating for the community.
Collaboration with other utilities	Does Ausgrid advocate together with the other players in the field?
	Does Ausgrid advocate with support from other providers? Has VoC given meaning to advocating?
	Is there a collaborative approach with other network providers to advocate for reform?
Community batteries	Can you explain what you mean by getting a waiver for installing community batteries?
	How is success measured for the batteries that have been installed?
	What is the chance of the AER waiver on community battery can be made permanent? Not just for trial but beyond that.
	Where are these batteries being placed? How is that decided?
Continued engagement	Will Ausgrid continue these VoC panels and are your counterparts around Australia also doing VoC consultations?
	Will Ausgrid continue to ask the community what they would like Ausgrid to advocate for? If so, how will they do this?
	After the VoC finishes today, how will Ausgrid gather customer opinion to then advocate for change?
Cost of transmission	Who is responsible for cost of transmission from offshore windfarms?
Costs to customers	Daily charge is out of consumer's control, usage charge is what they can affect. Do you have much scope to change the balance so consumers have more control?
Economic considerations	Can 5-year plans be enhanced by annual delta updates, e.g. with current high interest rates & inflation, people are not happy about spending too much on innovation etc, but attitudes could change within the 5-year term if the economy changes.

THEMES	PARTICIPANT RESPONSES
Influence and effectiveness of Ausgrid's efforts	Does Ausgrid believe the existing channels for advocacy are sufficient (and effective) for them to get across the wishes of the VoC and their customers?
	Good move, how effective do they think they will be long term?
	How much influence does Ausgrid actually have in its advocacy?
Limits of Ausgrid's role	Ausgrid's role is to provide the lowest cost, efficient and timely distribution of electricity in accordance with the NSW Distribution Licence. It is not its role to provide advocacy to social causes and pick technology innovations.
Measuring results / return on investment	Way to measure what happens in next 5 years so can learn for next price path. <i>Comment: Ausgrid could push more for a whole of society push for example the building regulations for homes which still install gas in new builds. For easing the council and strata laws to allow for easier solar installation.</i>
More information needed	I just heard that NSW government last month had released something to do with AER or Ausgrid, would like more details?
Policy and regulatory reform	Ausgrid and other networks to push for better building laws to hasten electrification.
	Can Ausgrid speak to the government?
	Is regulation in NSW & perhaps Australia standardised and the same for Ausgrid and other suppliers?
	Can regulatory reform reduce costs?
	Unsure what the regulations are that we are looking at reforming.
	When advocating for regulatory reform, does Ausgrid compare/ use other countries and states results on their energy results when advocating for reforms?
Reporting back	Reporting back, it would be good to be able to track how things progress.
Sharing advocacy with whole customer base	How will/does Ausgrid share its advocacy with its customers? How does Ausgrid facilitate advocacy for customers outside of the VoC?
VoC process	Question not for Ausgrid, but Nicole and Scott... I'm not emotionally ready for this to end, so which of you will be volunteering their house for a BBQ meet up? ;)



REFLECTIONS

HEAD, HEART, HANDS

At the end of the workshop, the participants were invited to share their reflections on the journey of the Voice of Community panel and provide feedback in the form of one thing they learned, one thing they were inspired by and one action they will take as a result of their participation. Their reflections are captured below:



ONE THING I LEARNT FROM OUR TIME TOGETHER IS...

A bit about Ausgrid and how the electricity system works in Australia.

A lot of knowledge and inside about Ausgrid.

An appreciation of the diversity of view.

At the start of this last year most people in the room thought it was just a checkbox process. By the end of last year we all were amazed at how much Ausgrid wanted our input and faithfully represented it in their submission. At the end of today I'm really impressed at how hard Ausgrid are fighting to get our input accepted by AER! THANK YOU!

Diverse thoughts.

Gratitude to Ausgrid for inviting us on this journey.

Great community can jointly shape our future.

Great learning.

Great to be involved in a robust session considering engineering, costs and community of electricity distribution.

Heaps about the electricity network that I was completely unaware of.

How Ausgrid operates.

How Ausgrid works with government departments

How complex the process of powering our homes is. There is so much work being done with so many different actors.

How energy providers work, how others needs are considered and how Ausgrid takes on their customers feedback so well.

How not to behave on Zoom hehehe

How to run a meeting.

HUGE understanding of the work done by Distributors and the technology used.

I gained a more in-depth insight into how an energy distributor interacts with other government bodies and entities.

I've learnt a lot about the different parties across the whole electricity network.

It changed my perspective on the whole energy business. I am no longer just whinging - but understand reasoning behind many decisions.

It is possible to develop a plan/proposal from the opinions of a diverse community.

Just how constrained Ausgrid is in its actions.

Learning.

Learnt how it feels like to be part of an influential process.

Listening to each other allows us to make good progress together.

Lots about new energy technologies.

More confidence in technology.

More insight into what's involved - loved the professionalism of all staff/facilitators involved.

Never thought I would know so much about energy!

Never underestimate the way someone feels about something.

Role of Ausgrid in providing electricity.

So much about Ausgrid and planning.

Stay focused with the main goal: lower the cost and reliable network

That many people from different backgrounds could actual come together and agree on a final submission.

The different players in the electricity market.

What Ausgrid actually has responsibility for in terms of electricity!



ONE THING THAT HAS INSPIRED ME IS....

All the open conversation.

All the organizers are so professional and skilled at engaging and facilitating a large group.

Ausgrid really listens to their customer voice well. Not just ticking the box.

Ausgrid's commitment to this panel and delivering a proposal that meets customers' expectations.

Consider hardships of others when requesting what we would like to have.

Different viewpoints.

Diverse perspectives on initiatives.

Enjoys.

Everyone's different perspectives.

Friendship and fellowship.

Fun experience.

Good to know everyone is so forward looking into future innovation.

Hearing other people's opinion.

Heartened that Ausgrid and so many attendees have the net zero goal front and centre.

How brilliant MosaicLab are as facilitators.

How many people of all different backgrounds, ages and life experiences were advocating for climate resilience and net zero!

How seriously everyone took the process.

How you run your meetings.

Inspired me to get smart about my own use of electricity and how I might educate the community.

Just how passionate and informed many people have been during the process.

Loved socialising, collaborating and talking with others on such engaging topics.

Meeting and collaborating with people from all walks of life, different communities and more.

MosaicLab has been fantastic, you've had such a hard job.

MosaicLab - ability to shift thinking and keep us on track, draw opinions - know what we wanted even if we didn't know how to say it.

MosaicLab was excellent coordinator.

Nicole & Scott!!!

Passion of all of them.

People thinking about impacts on others not just themselves.

People's intelligence.

Scott's ability to google translate our opinions!

Strongest experience of democracy I've had. A truly good cross section of NSW. Really heartwarming even with all our differences.

Teamwork, fun together.

That Ausgrid really seemed to take on board what we said.

The change we can make when we push for what we believe in.

The community's passion to be heard.

The contributions that everyone was able to make to various topics. Diversity is king!!

The different views of the members of the VOC can actually bring some positive results.

The forming of a family type network.

The need to educate the community & consumers.

The overwhelming drive from participants for green/net zero improvements.

To appreciate the situations of other persons. Especially how many people are suffering today.

To be a part of more community sessions similar to this.

Unity.



ONE THING I MIGHT DO AS A RESULT OF MY EXPERIENCE HERE IS.....

Advocate for renewable energy sources.

Be more conscious of electricity usage.

Be open to participating in similar engagement sessions.

Consider my privilege.

Continue to advocate for community solar for apartment dwellers.

Continue to advocate for my community on behalf of the Greater Cities Commission Youth Advisory Panel. Loved this experience!

Do it again!! Employ MosaicLab.

Explain to people who want to listen what Ausgrid is going to do.

Get more involved in my electricity usage.

Get more involved in broader community panel.

I will continue to advocate for more savvy usage of energy resources.

I'd work for Ausgrid. I am beyond impressed with its commitment to the delivery of this program and the passion of its staff to delivering results.

I'll never look at power lines the same way again!

Implement the problem-solving skills that I've learnt from this experience.

Join more community advocacy groups.

Keep abreast of changes in the electricity market and systems. Very interesting and dynamic.

Keeping workshops engaging.

Knowledge of what we might do to improve your energy usage.

Look out for more community voice panels because this was such a lovely experience.

Love to involved again in this discussion with Ausgrid. Thanks.

Pay more attention to emerging energy technologies.

Personal study on some the tech.

Probe.

Research the practicability of installing solar.

Research research research!!! Would love to see what I can't contribute on grass roots level.

Run better meetings.

Run group conversations.

Some creative engagement.

Take different perspectives on subject matters and debate.

Talk to friends and acquaintances about what I learned.

Talk to friends and family about the issues here.

Tell more people about Ausgrid's role.

Thoroughly research solar and batteries to maximise benefits to me.

Whole experience was amazing! I want to do it again.

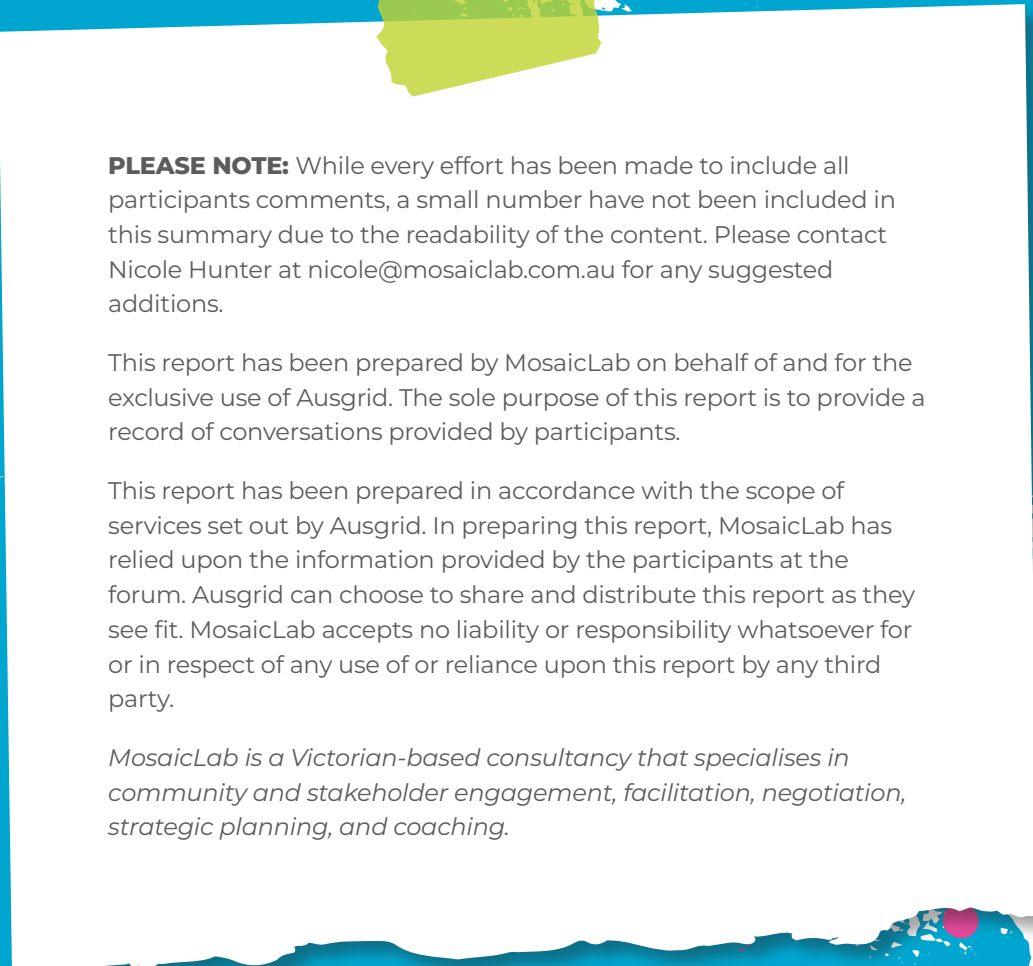
Will encourage family and friends to be part of these VoC - it was a great experience. Looking forward to attend more.

Working together achieves more.

NEXT STEPS

Ausgrid will use the responses from the final Voice of Community workshop to prepare the final Regulatory Proposal plan for 2024-2029 to be submitted to the AER in December 2023.





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

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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