

Meeting Snapshot

Council Engagement on Smart Lightening | EDPR 2026-31

Thursday 17 October 2024

Participants

Council Representatives	AusNet staff
Abdul Ahad, Banyule City Council	Justin Bethlehem, Senior Regulatory Advisor
Brad Kijlstra-shone, South Gippsland Shire Council	Brett Millsom, Stakeholder and Communications Lead
Elyse Kelly, Mitchell Shire	Eliza Cochrane, Regulatory Economist
Faye Adams, Manningham Shire	Lia Mavrias, Business Graduate
Greg Karlson, Towong Shire	ltron staff
Jack Donkers, Bawbaw Shire	Adam Weston, Client Executive
Justin Schreuder, Knox Council	Sagar Shevade, Lead Technical Sales
Mark Arkester, Casey Shire	Lawrence Gatica, Product marketing and development
Matthew Duguay, La Trobe Council	
Sam Sampanthar, Knox Council	
Samantha Nock, Wellington Shire	
Wilson Ma, Manningham Council	

Apologies

Brett Munckton, Cardinia Shire

Key discussion points

Agenda item	Key discussion points
Welcome	AusNet’s Brett Millsom welcomed participants and provided an Acknowledgement of Country. He outlined the agenda for the session and highlighted the importance of feedback from council representatives.
1. Background to our public lighting	AusNet’s Justin Bethlehem highlighted the proposed smart lighting approach, which is to fully manage smart lighting services through a Central Management System (CMS) and the costs associated that Local Government Organisations will bear.

2. Itron presentation

Adam Weston introduced Itron and provided background on the company's expertise in smart streetlight control. He emphasized that Itron is the only global player with a significant market leadership position in both electricity metering and smart streetlights. This sets them apart from other vendors in the electricity sector. He then presented the rule change by the AEMC that has prompted the session and detailed the benefits in unlocking smart streetlighting, which are:

- Cost Savings in the wholesale energy costs for councils
- Operational and Maintenance costs being reduced by 6-8% for new and existing LED deployments
- Environmental impact on reportable lower carbon footprint due to reduced energy consumption.

Councils were engaged in the following discussion:

- There was clarification regarding the 6-8% operation and maintenance savings, which depends on the level of smart electronics used. This percentage is related to the truck rolls that AusNet would need to perform.
- Itron will share a white paper on the impact of LED lighting and brighter whites on biodiversity, highlighting benefits for both humans and wildlife. The Central Management System (CMS) offers the flexibility to adjust light colours based on specific conditions.
- Discussions with the Department of Transport are ongoing, as they typically engage when lighting standards are clearly met to avoid any compliance issues.
- Itron has reviewed the relevant infrastructure design manuals and currently has no concerns. They emphasize the need for continuous monitoring of changes to standards, especially as their products are deployed throughout Canberra.
- Itron will provide examples of cost savings that previous customers have achieved with their solutions.
- Adaptive lighting solutions implemented in remote areas have demonstrated significant improvements in safety by activating lights only when necessary.
- A critical mass of smart cells is needed to connect back to a meter for effective data collection. Itron has developed a street light micro access point designed to accommodate 10 to 15 lights, functioning as both a photocell and data retrieval point.
- Each distributor will utilize their own Central Management System. In cases with dual energy distributions, solutions will need to be developed for effective integration.
- It is important to clarify that street light monitoring does not involve the use of cameras, thereby maintaining privacy on the streets.
- Over the past 4-5 years, Itron has engaged with federal and state governments to explore financial support for councils in funding smart city initiatives.

3. AusNet's proposal including discussion on \$s and conditions

AusNet's Justin Betlehem detailed the proposed smart lighting approach, emphasizing the need for councils to commit now to achieve the scale necessary for investment. Additionally, AusNet is suggesting a shared cost model for implementing and managing the Central Management System (CMS), which would be reflected in the LED light prices within public lighting fees. It was noted that relaxing requirements could result in reduced operational savings.

A discussion followed on these points:

- Clarification was provided regarding the upfront costs for councils, with AusNet handling installation and procurement as it is responsible for the network equipment.
- If Itron serves as the main supplier for the network, risks could arise if AusNet needs to seek alternative suppliers. However, AusNet maintains a strong relationship with Itron, noting that they are more cost-effective than other options.
- Each council area will have separate National Metering Identifiers (NMI) for street lights, with approximately two NMIs assigned for each postcode.
- Light dimming regulations will be guided by specific requirements and recommendations set by Itron, with AusNet's approval. Councils will also have the option to propose their own experts to ensure compliance with relevant standards.
- It was noted that dimming can lead to significant energy savings, estimated at around 30%.
- Tree shading may cause lights to turn on earlier, but this is considered a minor factor.
- A question was raised about whether this initiative would meet any new Australian Energy Regulator (AER) obligations in terms of asset management. AusNet responded that the AER has not mandated this, and the initiative is not a response to regulatory calls; rather, it is an opportunity being explored to gauge council interest.

4. Close, actions and next steps

AusNet's Justin Betlehem thanked the group for their contributions and feedback.
