

## Customer Consultative Committee

### Terms of Reference

Friday, 29 November 2024



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# 1. About the Customer Consultative Committee

The purpose of AusNet's Customer Consultative Committee (the Committee) is to be a forum for open dialogue and constructive challenge, supporting AusNet to make informed business decisions that enhance outcomes for customers.

This document outlines the Terms of Reference (terms) for the AusNet Customer Consultative Committee (the Committee), setting out its purpose, membership and operation. These terms are to be reviewed annually, with any revisions to be mutually agreed by the Committee and AusNet.

Understanding customers' needs has always been an important factor in the development of AusNet's plans. Putting customers at the centre of our business requires us to continuously reflect on the evolving needs and expectations of those we serve. In "bringing the energy", we understand that our customers expect us to deliver energy reliably and safely, but to also do so in ways that supports their individual needs, aspirations and future plans.

AusNet has maintained the Committee for eight years, continuously adapting to meet the changing needs of our customers and the evolving energy landscape. As part of this ongoing commitment to improvement, we are refreshing the group and updating the Committee's terms. This refresh aims to better reflect the dynamic challenges and opportunities facing both AusNet and our customers, ensuring that the Committee remains relevant, impactful, and able to provide meaningful input into our strategic decisions. While some experienced members will carry over, bringing valuable continuity and insight, the refresh has also created opportunities to welcome new members who can contribute fresh perspectives and ideas, ensuring the Committee remains vibrant and effective, complements AusNet's various other engagement forums, and is well-placed to achieve the objectives contained within these terms.

The Committee plays an important role as a "sounding-board" and collaborative challenger to AusNet, including on progress against its plans. The Committee's responsibilities are diverse, but all are related to working constructively with AusNet to help AusNet improve outcomes for its customers. The Committee's members include customer representatives and AusNet senior leaders. While working alongside relevant AusNet staff, the Committee will remain independent of AusNet's business structure.

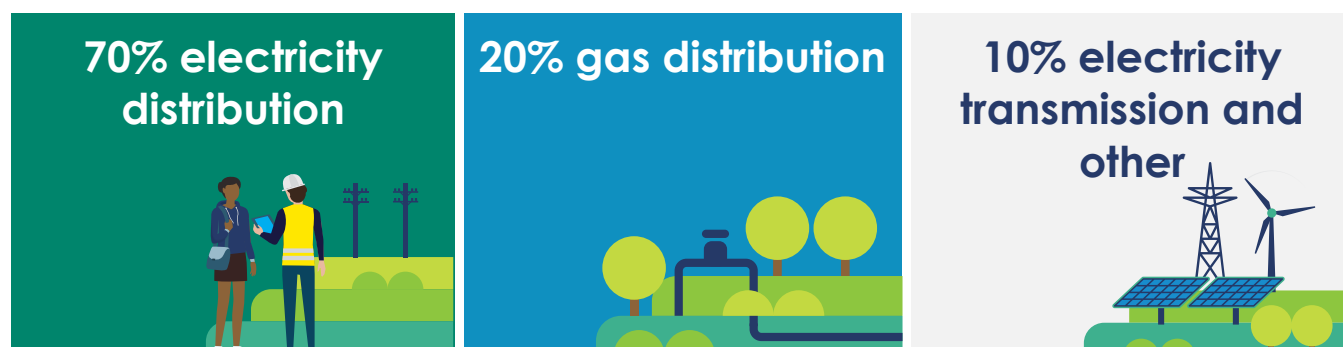
It is essential that the Committee functions as a collaborative and constructive forum without hindering the day-to-day operations of AusNet. While the Committee's input is valuable, it should not impede AusNet's ability to fulfill its ongoing responsibilities or make timely decisions. The Committee's work will be structured to complement and support AusNet's priorities, ensuring that both strategic initiatives and day-to-day activities are effectively managed.

The Committee has no fixed end date. It will continue to operate as long as it remains relevant to the objectives of AusNet and provides value to both the AusNet and its customers.



## 1.1. The Committee’s remit

The scope of the Committee extends across AusNet, but with a heavy focus on AusNet’s regulated electricity and gas distribution networks. We expect the Committee’s time to be split approximately:



Topic's in the Committee's remit may include but not be limited to:

- Engaging on AusNet's performance and progress against commitments made via Electricity Distribution Price Reviews, Gas Access Arrangement Reviews and Transmission Revenue Resets
- Supporting AusNet's annual [The Energy Charter Accountability](#) review, which informs the development of our annual Disclosure and Feedback Summary
- Being a formal escalation point if/as needed for various other AusNet forums
- Engaging in conversations on customer experience improvements, the design of new services and/or approaches and/or prioritisation of activities
- Engaging in conversations on AusNet customer and community engagement and communications activities
- Engaging with customer feedback and challenging AusNet to “do more” to put customers and communities at the centre of its business
- Engaging with feedback provided by customers and stakeholders for the Committee's consideration
- Occasionally reviewing documents and providing written feedback between regular Committee meetings
- *[Optional]* Participating in occasional community events to hear customers' feedback first-hand
- Engaging on other topics of importance to customers and/or AusNet if/as required or desirable, including:
  - Topics raised by Committee members
  - Reviewing grant applications
  - Engaging on various policy positions.

## 1.2. Relationship to other engagement forums

The Committee acts as the overarching customer engagement forum for AusNet. The Committee will act as an escalation point and sounding board if needed. Additional forums may be established and report into the Committee, to enable oversight and allow for input from the Committee. At present, other forums may report into the Committee if/as needed:

- (1) The Transmission Stakeholder Advisory Panel (TSAP), established to participate in select broader engagement activities to support the Transmission Revenue Reset (TRR) 2027-32
- (2) The Coordination Group, established to support the Electricity Distribution Price Review (EDPR) 2026-31
- (3) The Innovation Advisory Committee (IAC), established to ensure customer perspectives help shape the design and prioritisation of electricity distribution innovation projects
- (4) The Developer Consultative Committee (DCC), established to be a forum for greenfield property developers, their contractors and industry group members to raise and discuss matters relating to AusNet that will ultimately improve the experience of negotiated electricity distribution connections.
- (5) The Gas Stakeholder Roundtable, established to support the Gas Access Arrangement Review (GAAR) 2023-28 and our Variation Proposal.

## 1.3. Meeting schedule

The Committee will meet approximately six times per year, with each meeting either a half or full day. Committee meetings will be a combination of in-person and online meetings on weekdays.

Every third meeting will serve as a half-yearly review, which may include additional customer and stakeholder representatives and agenda items at the discretion of the AusNet.

From time to time, Committee members may be asked to attend additional meetings on urgent priorities or provide feedback on specific items outside of the regular meeting schedule.

	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Regular Committee Meetings	Half day	As-needed	Half day	As-needed	As-needed	Half day	As-needed	Half day	As-needed	As-needed
Half-yearly Check-Ins*					Annual review Full day					Half-yearly review Half day

\* May include a broader stakeholder group

## 2. Membership

This section outlines the composition, desired qualities, and ongoing evaluation of the Committee. This section also details the attributes that are sought in Committee members and describes the process for reviewing membership annually to ensure it remains aligned with the evolving needs of both AusNet and its customer base.

### 2.1. Committee composition

Membership of the Committee comprises up to six AusNet representatives per meeting and up to 10 external representatives, from a range of communities and customer interest groups.

The Committee includes both AusNet staff and external members to encourage collaboration and accountability.

AusNet representatives may vary between meetings depending on the focus of each session's agenda items.

External membership of the Committee should collectively represent a cross-section of AusNet's key customers. Committee members are expected to be well-placed to represent AusNet customers' interests broadly, or those of a particular cohort, in discussions. The Committee should have an appropriate mix of skills and collectively be sufficiently informed to participate in discussion on and hold AusNet to account on things that matter to customers. Committee members may be individuals, or representatives of an organisation working to further customers' interests (e.g. customer advocacy or social service organisations).

AusNet retains ultimate responsibility for the selection of members for the Committee. While we value input from stakeholders and committee members in this process, the final decision regarding membership is made by AusNet to ensure the Committee aligns with our strategic goals and operational needs.

### 2.2. Membership review

Membership of the Committee is reviewed annually to ensure alignment with the Committee's evolving goals and priorities, with opportunities for renewal or refresh as needed. Committee members are actively engaged in these reviews, which may include member self-assessments, peer feedback, and a strategic evaluation of skills and representation to inform potential updates.

The intent of these annual reviews is to maintain alignment with AusNet, the Committee and customers' evolving strategic objectives, manage overall composition of the Committee and to maintain a high-performance culture within the Committee.

## 2.3. Attributes of Committee members

The key qualities and skills required for individuals to be effective members of the Committee are as follows:

### Essential

- Committee members should be able and willing to represent customer views, or a cohort of customers such as metropolitan, regional or remote communities, businesses, people experiencing vulnerability, First Nations communities and/or others.
- Ability and willingness engage with AusNet and other Committee members constructively, openly and honestly
- Ability and willingness to engage on complex topics, including where trade-offs are to be made
- Ability and willingness to share insights and perspectives, even when not all details are available, contributing to informed and collaborative decision-making
- Ability and willingness to uphold and respect the confidentiality of all sensitive information discussed
- Stay informed about energy issues that impact the customers or specific cohorts they represent, drawing on insights from their day-to-day professional or community interactions rather than relying solely on AusNet for information. By proactively gathering knowledge from various sources, members can contribute to more informed and dynamic discussions, helping to enrich the Committee's work
- An interest in energy and improving energy outcomes for AusNet customers
- Capacity to attend meetings within standard office hours, and variously online and face-to-face. Face-to-face meetings will typically take place at AusNet's Melbourne CBD office but may be held in other locations in Victoria on occasion.

### Desirable

- Being Victorian-based and a customer of AusNet's electricity or gas distribution business is highly desirable
- Experience participating in similar committees advocating for customers' interests is advantageous
- Experience in various areas useful to the panel, including customer advocacy, community engagement, communications, service design, energy planning and others is advantageous
- Existing knowledge of and experience engaging with AusNet is desirable to help contribute to more informed discussions and challenge.

## 3. Committee governance

This section outlines the key structures and processes that support the effective operation of the Committee. This includes the roles of the Committee Chair and Secretariat, the process for setting and managing agenda items, expectations for active participation, and the approach to member remuneration. These elements ensure that the Committee functions efficiently, remains focused on its objectives, and upholds transparency and accountability in its operations.

### 3.1. Chairing and Secretariat support

AusNet's Public Affairs Team will serve as the Committee Secretariat, responsible for coordinating meetings, managing agenda items, and ensuring that actions arising from each meeting are appropriately followed up. The Secretariat will also act as the primary point of contact for any requests or queries from external committee members and will facilitate the timely follow-up of outstanding actions.

A senior AusNet representative will Chair all Committee meetings, with an independent Chair and/or Secretariat engaged when required, such as when a particularly contentious issue is being discussed.

AusNet will prepare a summary of each meeting, including attendance and apologies. Depending on the sensitivity of topics discussed, two versions of the summary may be prepared to ensure one is available for public release. Meeting summaries will be published to the Customer Consultative Committee webpage (on AusNet's Community Hub online engagement portal) within 2 weeks of each meeting.

### 3.2. Agenda Items

Committee members will be actively engaged in setting agendas where practical, and encouraged to suggest topics that can constructively contribute to the Committee's mission and objectives. The Secretariat will review all proposed agenda items and determine their inclusion based on factors such as:

- alignment to the role of the Committee
- opportunities for the Committee to meaningfully contribute
- items being of broad interest to Committee members, and
- the Committee being the most appropriate forum for the discussion.

On an as-needed basis, the Committee may establish sub-committees to focus on specific areas of interest or may schedule ad hoc meetings, inviting members to participate as appropriate.

### 3.3. Participation & remuneration

Committee members are expected to take an active role in the Committee by attending and meaningfully contributing to meetings. This requires being informed on all pre-reading material and meeting minutes, prior to attendance at each meeting.

Committee members are expected to voice the needs and objectives of the customer segments they represent.

Members who are unable to attend a scheduled committee meeting are to contact the Committee Secretariat by telephone or email and advise of their absence. Members are encouraged to provide input out-of-session if they cannot attend a meeting.

AusNet will offer an annual rate of remuneration to external committee representatives for their participation in meetings, with payments issued on a half-yearly basis. Acceptance of remuneration is at the discretion of each committee member, and payments will be processed upon receipt of a valid invoice from each member at the end of each billing period.



## 4. Code of Conduct

The Committee is designed to enable customer input, expertise and advice to AusNet's planning and decision-making processes. All members of the Committee are expected to adhere to the following Code of Conduct.

- (1) Purpose and Scope

The Customer Consultative Committee (the "Committee") provides a forum for collaboration between AusNet and its customers, fostering open and constructive engagement. This Code of Conduct outlines expectations for behavior to promote effective and respectful engagement.
- (2) Respect and Professionalism
  - (a) Members are expected to engage respectfully, courteously, and professionally at all times.
  - (b) Discriminatory or offensive behavior, including harassment, bullying, or intolerance, is not acceptable.
  - (c) Members should promote an environment where diverse viewpoints are valued and considered thoughtfully.
- (3) Confidentiality
  - (a) Members must respect that material will often be shared confidentially with and within the Committee.
  - (b) Information shared with the Committee by AusNet or other Committee members must remain confidential and should not be disclosed to any external party without proper authorisation. A cautious and prudent approach should be adopted in handling such information.
  - (c) Prior to releasing information to the public, other organisations (including government) or media, including via the media or on social media, members are required to contact the Committee Secretariat to ensure they are fully aware of any possible issues that may be raised.
  - (d) Members are required to refer, as soon as possible, any media enquiries about the Committee or a matter it has discussed to the AusNet media line on +61 (0)3 9483 0989.
- (4) Conflict of Interest
  - (a) Members must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest to the Secretariat.
  - (b) Members should avoid using their position for personal benefit.
  - (c) Members must promptly inform AusNet if they have or intend to refer any matters, personal or otherwise, to the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria. This notification will allow AusNet to ensure its compliance with relevant regulations and obligations regarding engagement with the Ombudsman and its customers, and any restrictions on interactions during such processes.
- (5) Contribution to Discussions
  - (a) Members are encouraged to actively participate, share ideas, and contribute constructively to the Committee's work.
  - (b) Discussions should stay relevant and focused on the Committee's objectives.
  - (c) Members should listen attentively and give due consideration to diverse perspectives when forming their own positions.
- (6) Accountability and Integrity
  - (a) Members should act with integrity and in good faith, contributing to discussions and decisions that reflect the best interests of the broader customer base.
  - (b) Contributions should be based on facts and objective analysis, where possible.
- (7) Collaboration and Teamwork
  - (a) The Committee's work is informed through collaboration and shared understanding. Members should foster a cooperative spirit, work to build trust, and aim for solutions that benefit all.
  - (b) Disagreements should be handled constructively, with members striving to understand and reconcile different perspectives.

## (8) Meetings and Attendance

- (a) AusNet will provide a Chair and Secretariat for the meetings, with an independent Chair and/or Secretariat engaged as-needed for specific discussions.
- (b) Committee members are expected to attend all scheduled meetings to ensure active and meaningful participation. Participation includes preparation for meetings, engagement in discussions, and follow-up on relevant actions.
- (c) Should a member's attendance fall below 75% attendance, their sitting fees may be subject to proportional adjustment to reflect their level of involvement.
- (d) Members who are unable to meet participation expectations on an ongoing basis may be asked to reconsider their membership in the Committee.
- (e) If a member cannot attend a meeting, they should give prior warning, and share any relevant contributions with the Secretariat ahead of the meeting when possible.

## (9) Meeting Preparation and Out-of-Session Contributions

- (a) Members are expected to prepare appropriately for meetings, including reading all provided meeting materials in advance to engage meaningfully in discussions.
- (b) From time to time, members may be asked to review information or provide feedback outside of scheduled meetings. Members are encouraged to participate in these out-of-session activities to support the Committee's ongoing work and ensure timely progress of AusNet's operations. Additional ad hoc duties outside the scope of regular Committee activities or beyond what AusNet judges to be reasonable may be subject to separate remuneration arrangements.

## (10) Decision-Making and Consensus

- (a) The Committee is not expected to achieve consensus on all or any issue. If full consensus cannot be achieved, decisions made or directions taken by AusNet will reflect a balanced approach, with efforts made to account for diverse views.
- (b) For a meeting to proceed, a quorum of at least four external Committee members must be present. This does not apply for optional meetings of the Committee or any meetings of Sub-committees.
- (c) Members are encouraged to respect and support the Committee's collective outcomes, even if they do not align perfectly with their individual views or interests.

## (11) Remuneration and Fees

- (a) Committee members will receive an annual sitting fee as remuneration for their participation in regular meetings and associated activities. This fee compensates members for their time, contributions, and preparation throughout the year.
- (b) The annual sitting fee will be divided into two equal payments.
- (c) The fee covers attendance at all scheduled meetings, preparation time, and reasonable out-of-session contributions as requested by AusNet. AusNet reserves the right to adjust the sitting fee for the affected period.
- (d) Payments will be issued biannually, in December and June, based on the financial year.
- (e) Members must issue an invoice to receive each payment, following confirmation of their participation and contributions during the preceding period.
- (f) The sitting fee does not include travel time or costs associated with meeting attendance. Committee members will be reimbursed for vehicle expenses at Australian Taxation Office (ATO) rates, as well as reasonable accommodation and meal expenses incurred while attending Committee-related activities. Travel time is not eligible for additional remuneration.
- (g) The applicable sitting fees and reimbursement arrangements will be communicated to shortlisted candidates prior to their formal acceptance of a position on the Committee. Rates will be determined in alignment with the responsibilities of the role and industry benchmarks, ensuring transparency and mutual agreement before the commencement of duties.

- (h) AusNet reserves the right to review and amend the sitting fees and reimbursement arrangements periodically to ensure they remain appropriate and aligned with organisational priorities, industry standards, and budgetary considerations. Any changes to the fee structure will be communicated to Committee members with reasonable notice, allowing for feedback or discussion as needed.

## (12) Review and Amendments

- (a) This Code of Conduct may be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains effective and relevant.
- (b) Members are invited to provide feedback to improve the Committee's processes and the overall effectiveness of collaboration.




## (13) Acknowledgement

By participating in the Customer Consultative Committee, members commit to upholding the principles in this Code of Conduct, contributing to the Committee's collaborative efforts in a respectful and constructive manner.

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