

AUSNET EDPR 2026-2031 COORDINATION GROUP MEETING #5 MINUTES

Location: Microsoft Teams

Date: January 24, 2024

Time: 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Coordination Group (CG):

- Peter Eben (Chair of CG, meeting Chair)
- Helen Bartley (Research and Engagement Panel Lead)
- Kieran Donoghue (Availability Panel Lead) (meeting Secretary)
- Gavin Duffy (Tariffs and Pricing Panel Lead)
- Mark Grenning (Benchmarking and Opex Lead)
- Dean Lombard (Future Networks Panel Lead)

Attendees: Emily Peel (Customer Experience Panel Lead)

AusNet:

- Rob Ball
- Charlotte Eddy
- Lucy Holder
- Sonja Lekovic

CCP:

- David Prins
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Apologies: None

I. WELCOME AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Minutes from the last meeting were accepted, including the edits proposed by Helen.

No conflicts of interest declared.

All action items from the December 2024 meeting were completed.

II. PANEL LEAD UPDATE

- Availability (Kieran)
 - Met 12/12 to discuss power quality issues (e.g. voltage fluctuations)
 - Extent of problem is unclear as customers often don't notice (but could be experiencing impacts, such as slightly higher bills, tripped inverters)
 - A few areas on network where there are a cluster of complaints. There is a claims process but not applicable to large customers, and some small customers may just claim on insurance instead.
 - AusNet can monitor through smart meter data and also have voltage compliance requirements (95% of customers within range 99% of time) that they are currently meeting. Voltage mgt also improving due to programs implemented (and funded) in current period.
 - 100% within range would be prohibitively expensive, but AusNet consider a proactive program costing ~ \$40m in next EDPR will improve performance to be in line with other Vic DNSPs.
 - Next steps: AusNet to revert March 2024 with a revised proposition on investment and comms options.
- R&E (Helen)
 1. **QCV** – AusNet advised the R&E panel before Xmas that the consultant fully launched the survey on 7 December with an initial response rate of 1%, after reviewing the sampling this increased to 3% as at 22 December with >3000 residential responses and 255 from business customers. The sample size for residential exceeds the target while the business sample is short of the target. AusNet expects to have results to share at the March F2F meetings We have noted to AusNet that
 - a. What matters is having confidence the sample is representative and any analysis of business subgroups should be treated with caution
 2. **Customer Workshop Reflections** – I have been having discussions with Lucy and Michaela around the role of panel members as observers to the Customer Workshops and a desire from all parties that our presence there is outcome focused rather than pulling apart the process and losing sight of any learnings. Consequently we have trialed a collaboratively designed feedback/knowledge sharing session with members who observed the Round 2 workshops both in terms of people's insights into customer preferences and issues as observers and also how what they learned would contribute to the EDPR and to also consider how to more widely share members' knowledge to complement the consultant's report. The session was co-facilitated between AusNet and Helen.
 3. **Customer Workshops Round 3** – over the break and early we have been working with AusNet to develop the discussion guide for the round 3 workshops; importantly we have been working collaboratively to develop an interview guide that aims to ensure the workshop purpose is clear for all parties and discussions in a more focused direction to address the key questions. Following the last

coordination meeting in December, the two key topics for Round 3 will be focused on:

- a. Incentive schemes to understand the diversity of views and trends in:
 - i. What aspects of customer service customers value most
 - ii. What level of customer service customers think AusNet should be achieving
 - iii. Who customers think should pay for customer service – should the costs be included in AusNet's standard service offering or should certain things be fee-for-service? Does this view extend to funding an incentive scheme?
- b. Network control and flexibility of customers' energy options to understand the diversity of views and trends in:
 - i. The extent customers value the ability to flexibly use the network, and how this differs across appliances and other loads
 - ii. The diversity of views and trends in willingness to accept a level of control for lower prices across different loads and appliances
 - iii. [If support for shifting / control of load] Understand the likelihood of behaviour change occurring and what AusNet (or others) could do to increase behaviour change, e.g. pricing signals and communications

Importantly for panel members a clear statement of purpose will be included in the discussion guide, so when people observe future sessions they can be focused on the intent of the discussion and what they might learn about customers, rather than being caught up in evaluating the process!

4. **Other for information from AusNet –**

a. In mid December AusNet ran a survey with people who experienced outages > 12hrs (~13,000 customers affected mid Nov-Dec 2023) – 10% completed the survey in 48 hours; while we were not involved in the survey design from our questionnaire review and AusNet's initial feedback we anticipate to be presented with some really useful insights that could feed into both Cx and reliability discussions

5. **Customer interview proposal** – we have been working on this as an action item from earlier meetings and a (hopefully self-explanatory) draft was discussed at the meeting. Comments were noted by Helen and an updated proposal will be circulated for approval by the CG at the subsequent meeting.

- Benchmarking and opex (Mark) – Nothing to report
- Future Networks (Dean) – Nothing to report
- Tariffs & Pricing (Gavin) – Nothing to report
- Customer experience (Emily) – no meeting, but note that has been getting lots of feedback from locals re recent power outages.
- Large customer forum (Mark)

- Some brief comments on the large customer forum on 11th December:
- Around 20 attendees from a wide range of industries
- Topics covered – the EPDR process; reliability and resilience; connections process and EV charging; tariffs
- Reliability and resilience – data previously presented to Availability Panel; unplanned outages are costly with range of view on how disruptive long vs frequent short outages were; again importance of quality communication from AusNet; support for expenditure to reduce outages from those who responded to Menti
- Connection and EV charging – process explained along with recent changes; general feeling that AusNet understood customers' needs; discussion of role of case managers where multiple connections
- Tariffs – lots of interest and keen to discuss further; can be very complex
- Menti tool did not elicit much engagement – C&I customers typically more forthcoming in one-on-one interviews.
- Appreciated the opportunity to provide extensive comments on the draft slide pack
- Investment planning (various)
 - This was a well presented and interesting session
 - Some key drivers of capex decisions identified, e.g. Value of customer reliability (VCR), demand growth, cost inflation. Note AER is currently working on VCR and there are opportunities to engage with them.
 - One of the case studies illustrated a decision to choose lowest cost option rather than highest NPV. There was discussion around the implications of departing from the “optimal” solution and whether affordability should have significant weight for long-lived assets where costs recovered over several decades.
 - The issue of diverging concepts of long term interest amongst different types of customers was raised and it was noted that any new approach to reflect this would need early consideration.

III. AUSNET ITEMS (SLIDES PROVIDED FOR A, B,D)

A. Forward engagement plan recap / update

- i. Rob presented the latest version of the plan – moving toward more engagement with CG, less with panels.
- ii. Potential impacts of federal/state budgets.

B. Draft proposal preparation timeline

- i. Drafting presented as taking place up to April, but Rob confirmed there would be updated drafting to reflect latest info, such as customer engagement sessions scheduled in April/May.

- ii. Board papers need to be finalized 2-3 weeks out, hence the gap from exec signoff to board signoff. Scope for engagement and refinement up to that point but AusNet note they wouldn't want to be updating proposal at very last minute.
- iii. AER considering a revised early signal process – likely to be put to AER Board in February. AusNet still interested in some form of early signal pathway.

C. Panel pre-briefing sessions update

- i. Doodle polls out to canvass dates for each panel to meet before the offsite. Recap on focus questions noting it's been sometime since some of them were discussed. Identify items that have been closed out (as far as possible).
- ii. Need to get clarity with the panels as to what further input is sought from them.
- iii. When drafting process has been scoped out, there is likely to be a need for another round of panel meetings to give panel members chance to feedback on key points going into the report.
- iv. Important to avoid silo effect from working solely with panels individually.
- v. Offboarding - how to feedback to panel members as a whole toward end of process – so they can see how their input has been taken into account. Ref Essential process as exemplar. Could be worked into third in-person meeting earmarked for later in year.

D. March 2024 offsite update

- i. Agenda as per previous CG meeting
- ii. Panel only sessions day 2 – first one to focus on process, second to focus on outcomes. Panel leads to provide panel summary feedback, noting some leads are on multiple panels so may need to “float” in these sessions.
- iii. CG session at end to focus on proposal and panel feedback

E. NSW / ACT revised proposals open discussion

- i. Deferred to a future session. Mark and Gavin happy to provide feedback to those interested.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. CG report timeframes

- i. Timing – contemporaneous with Draft proposal v short lag ~ 2 weeks? May depend on when AusNet can provide locked down proposal to CG. AusNet comfortable with ~ 6 weeks consultation. CG agreed short lag of approximately 2 weeks would be appropriate.
- ii. Peter proposed an in camera session shortly for CG to work through “look and feel” of report by end February. May mimic structure of proposal document for ease of cross reference.

- iii. Peter to develop a draft timeline for the CG report preparation to be circulated and discussed with the group for next meeting.
- iv. Note that at least one AER board member prefers to read everything themselves, which puts a premium on shorter, clearer report.

B. Consumer engagement proposal discussion (proposal circulated in advance)

- i. Supported by CG
- ii. Feedback included: emphasize timing of proposal, importance of capturing feedback from Hume area given their recent outages experience, panel leads to get opportunity to propose specific questions. Orient questions/script to customer type, AusNet interested in canvassing issues not covered in their BAU engagement, and drilling down beyond "top of mind" issues.
- iii. Query if ECA funding might be available

C. CCP representative update

- i. David noted his plans to attend ~ every other CG meeting, his unavailability for the in-person meeting, and that he had no further info on whether the AER would appoint an additional member to the Vic reset CCP.

D. Open discussion

- i. Sonja presented on Vic Emergency Backstop Mechanism and that AusNet would be seeking a passthrough for costs resulting from this new obligation
- ii. CG queried allocation of costs. Should non-solar customers have to pay for this? Charlotte noted that TSS could not be altered in current period, but open to discussions for next period (noting limitations on what can be allocated to solar export tariffs).

V. ACTIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Action items

- i. AusNet to add dates to proposal timeline indicating when co-ordination group influence stops and when board paper must be finalized.
- ii. Mark to circulate invitation from AER to engage on VCR
- iii. AusNet to circulate draft table of contents for proposal to CG
- iv. Peter to draft timeline for CG report preparation for discussion at next meeting
- v. Peter to canvass dates for in camera CG session
- vi. Helen to update engagement proposal for feedback.

Next meeting – 13 February 9am eastern time