

Business and Residential Customer Workshops

Round three report

AusNet

May 2024

senate **shj** grounded in
smart thinking

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01

Executive summary



Workshop topics to date

In August 2023, AusNet engaged SenateSHJ to lead a public consultation process to help inform its submission to the Electricity Distribution Price Review 2026 – 31.

The consultation involved residential customers from three regions (Morwell, Epping and Wangaratta) and residential and business customers online from across AusNet's network.

The **first round** of five three-hour workshops, conducted between Tuesday 29 August and Wednesday 6 September 2023, facilitated a high-level conversation about customers' use of electricity and their plans for the future.

The **second round** of five three-hour workshops took place between Tuesday 10 October and Wednesday 18 October and sought to determine:

- customers' views on what AusNet's priorities should be between 2026 and 2031
- what balance of cost and service level AusNet should deliver
- where customers stand on sharing the costs of improvements to service levels.

Workshops in **round three** took place between Monday 12 February and Wednesday 20 March 2024. Five two-hour workshops sought to determine:

- opinions and ideas about customer services provided by AusNet including expectations of customer service in 2031
- customers' propensity to change the way they use electricity and the information and/or incentives customers may need to change.

Workshop structure (Round three)

Round three workshops were divided into two sections, customer service and flexibility. We used a mix of presentations, surveys (online and in print) and facilitated group conversations and 'play backs' to generate opinions and ideas.

Topic one: customer service

We ran:

- An exercise requiring participants to nominate customer services that should be provided by AusNet (which currently are not being provided).
- A survey requiring customers to reflect on customer services they have experienced, their levels of satisfaction with these customer services and how important they believe these services are.
- A discussion requiring customers to consider what trends or changes might impact their expectations of customer service in 2031.
- Group discussions requiring customers to think about and decide on customer services they would expect in 2031 (their non-negotiables) and customer services they would like to see in 2031 (their wish lists) for scenarios including during planned and unplanned outages, when having complaints addressed, making a general enquiry, connecting solar and batteries, connecting new properties and/or upgrading supply.

Topic two: flexibility

- A survey and discussion requiring customers to consider how willing and able they are to move usage of their appliances to the middle of the day and what they might need in order to do so i.e. more information and/or incentives

We spoke to 109 customers in 5 workshops in round 3

SenateSHJ worked with a professional research recruitment agency, [Focus People](#), to source participants. Most were recruited from their research panel, but a small selection were sourced through AusNet's Research and Engagement Panel network.

Due to the weather event on 13 February, we had to cancel and reschedule four of the five workshops which may have had an impact on overall attendance.

Residential (89 customers)

Business (20 customers)

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Morwell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday 12 February • 21 customers • Morwell Bowls Club 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Wangaratta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 12 March • 24 customers • Wangaratta Performing Arts and Convention Centre 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 19 March • 24 customers • Hosted on Zoom 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Epping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday 20 March • 20 customers • Epping RSL 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday 18 March • 20 customers • Hosted on Zoom
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Gender	Total sample (n=89)
Male	41%
Female	59%

Age	Total sample (n=89)
Under 30	10%
30 to 39	37%
40 to 49	29%
50 to 59	16%
60+	8%

Location	Total sample (n=89)
Metropolitan	33%
Regional	49%
Rural/remote	18%

- Self-employed – 52%
- 1 to 4 staff – 24%
- 5 to 19 staff – 14%
- 20+ staff – 10%

- Metro – 62%
- Regional – 33%
- Rural/remote – 5%

Round three workshops were impacted by a catastrophic weather event

A catastrophic storm on Tuesday 13 February caused substantial power outages, impacting more than 360,000 AusNet customers. At the peak of the storm, AusNet had 255,000 homes and businesses off at the same time.

About 12,000 kilometres of AusNet's distribution network was surveyed and repaired following the event. The geographic characteristics of AusNet's network make it particularly exposed to storm damage and extreme weather events. The rugged terrain also impacts AusNet's ability to restore the network quickly during, and after, an extreme event.

Workshops scheduled to be conducted in the days following the catastrophic event were cancelled and rescheduled to March. Workshops conducted after the event were restructured to allow customers time to reflect and comment on how outages impacted them; and to ask questions of AusNet team members attending each workshop.

This means that, with the exception of the workshop conducted in Morwell (before the event), customer views and responses were influenced/informed by personal experiences of the event and outages, and media reporting.

Please note that the four workshops modified to allow time for reflection, comment and questions about the event and outages left less time for consideration and discussion of the two main topics considered in this round of workshops: customer service and flexibility. Customers taking part in the online residential workshop did not consider or discuss flexibility because of a lack of time.

News / National

'Days if not weeks' to fix some power outages as almost 300,000 without power in Victoria

By Rhiannon Tuffield, Jorge Branco | 7:34am Feb 14, 2024



Thousands of Victorians remain without electricity as inquiry launched into mass power outages

Independent experts to review energy firms' response to storms that left more than half a million customers without power

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Half a million Victorian customers without power as Loy Yang A shuts down and storms damage infrastructure

ABC Gippsland / By Jarrod Whittaker and Natasha Schapova
Posted Tue 13 Feb 2024 at 4:03pm, updated Tue 13 Feb 2024 at 7:15pm



■ A worker inspects a damaged transmission tower at Anakie, Victoria, after a storm. More than 3,100 customers remain without power a week after the storms.



'Weeks to restore': Half a million homes without power after extreme weather

Key observations from workshops

The summary below is intended as an introduction to the more nuanced observations reported by topic and location later in this report. Please refer to observations recorded in these later sections for details and verbatim quotes expressing customer views and sentiments.

Topic: Customer service

Customers want better access to information

Timely access to accurate information is key for customers. In particular, access to up-to-date information about outages e.g. the cause(s) of an outage and the likely duration, is very important. Customers want AusNet to communicate via numerous channels e.g. social media, SMS, letter drops, push notifications on apps and SMS, to cater for varying levels of familiarity with, and access to, technology.

Continuity is key and personalisation is on customers' wish lists

Customers want continuity in their interactions with AusNet i.e. they don't want to feel like they're starting afresh every time they contact AusNet. Some suggested having access to dedicated case managers as a solution while others suggested putting systems in place to ensure customer records are updated and used by customer service professionals. Some customers suggested personalised customer service would be something to strive for by 2031.

Customers value human interaction

Where some customers are looking forward to the immediacy of customer services provided by sophisticated AI, most want the option of interacting with a human being without having to wait for too long. They want "to have a conversation with a knowledgeable, real person".

Customers expect and want quick responses

Suggested response times for responses to complaints and calls (during outages) varied between groups, ranging from immediate to no more than 48 hours. Some recognised the potential of AI to be part of the solution.

Customers want more support during outages

Customers want access to customer services 24/7 during planned and unplanned outages. They want clear and up-to-date information – some suggested real-time information on progress restoring supply delivered on an app (like Uber). And, they want help planning for outages e.g. information on how to store large amounts of food; and special provisions for customers experiencing vulnerability e.g. information about how to access medical services. Customers suggested working with essential service providers like supermarkets and doctors to ensure these services remain available to customers during outages. Some suggested allowing access to alternative sources of electricity e.g. solar.

Customers are unaware of customer services and communication is key

Customers were not aware of some customer services available to them e.g. Outage Tracker and FAQs on the website; and there is a lack of understanding about important information that might help customers manage their electricity use more efficiently e.g. information about peak and off-peak times.

Key observations from workshops

Topic: Customer service

Customers value transparency and accountability

Customers believe that AusNet should be held to account for delivering on its KPIs. Some referenced the lack of accountability when it came to prolonged outages: "If they had told me straight up that your power is going to be out for 14 hours, I would have done things differently. And then they had no accountability for that."

Communication during outages is the most important customer service

Residential and business customers ranked communication during planned and unplanned outages as the most important customer service provided by AusNet. Most were less satisfied with the level of customer service they received during unplanned outages.

Customers nominated cyber security as one trend that may affect customer service in 2031

In addition to trends presented to customers during workshops (e.g. the use of AI, personalisation, self-service, increasing use of rooftop solar, more frequent extreme weather events), customers suggested that cybersecurity, electrification and a growing population would also impact customer service by 2031.

Customers want better access to compensation

Some customers expressed their frustration about not being able to access compensation following prolonged outages while others said the process was too complicated.

Business customers expect and value honesty, transparency, speed and clarity in communication.

If this is prioritised, it helps ease their concerns and allows them to make fast and effective business decisions to minimise income losses.

Other notable suggestions for improving customer service

During the workshops we heard and recorded many great suggestions for how customer service can be improved, these include: the use of an online poll to determine when planned outages should take place; having AusNet staff stationed visibly at frequented public spaces e.g. shopping centres to take questions during outages; an increased presence on social media so customers receive information on the platforms they frequent.

Key observations from workshops

Topic: Flexibility

Customers are willing to change when they use some appliances but not others

Of the key appliances tested, customers were most willing to change when they used their washing machines, dryers and dishwashers. They were least willing to change when they used cooking appliances: "Cooking or showering within a certain window, probably not going to happen. There are just some things you wouldn't put a price on especially during winter, or when you have kids."

Some customers can't take advantage of off-peak hours

Being at work (away from home) during the day means that some customers are unable to, or won't, change when they use their appliances. Some suggested that off-peak hours should be changed so more people can take advantage of lower prices. Some added that off-peak hours (between 10am and 4pm) unfairly favour those who can work from home: "This is favouring hybrid workers who usually have higher pay. Lower paid people need to physically go to work and don't have the luxury of being home to take advantage of off-peak rates and get all the extra incentive. It is not a fair system."

Customers want clear information about pricing

Customers asked for clear information and/or customer testimonials explaining how pricing works e.g. rate differences between peak and off-peak hours, weekdays and weekends, and seasonal changes.

Customers may change when they use appliances if offered rebates/discounts and/or are given more information

Customers who said they would change their behaviour for a rebate nominated between \$100 and \$300 a month as compensation for the inconvenience they would experience. Some said that having more/better information e.g. on the best times to use appliances, may encourage them to change when they use appliances.

Customers nominated a few reasons why they would not change when they use their appliances

These reasons include not being home during the day; wanting to be at home to monitor appliances when they were in use; wanting the flexibility of using their appliances as and when needed; having access to solar power; and that it would simply be too inconvenient to rearrange routines.

Key observations from workshops

The catastrophic weather event in February was challenging for many. Themes from customer stories and questions, and suggestions for improvement are presented in this report on pages 12 to 16. The following is a summary of these themes.

Topic: Reactions to the weather event in February 2024

Customers were left confused by a lack of/inconsistent communication

Customers reflected on confusion caused by a lack of and/or inconsistent information: "There was lots of confusion, and a lot of issues on the website. There was a portal you can check and it had different information to the website."

Misinformation caused angst

Some customer recollections pointed to the spread of misinformation during the outage e.g. "We were disappointed because we heard they shunted power from my postcode down to Melbourne to keep Melbourne running. And we were left high and dry because it's a regional area."

Customers were frustrated by difficulties accessing compensation

Some expressed their frustration about not being eligible for compensation for reasons including the duration of the outage they experienced e.g. "Someone's losing something, and there are families out here that are below the poverty line that are actually really needing every dollar they've got, and that would really impact them greatly. So to say, oh no sorry, because it hasn't been seven days you're not eligible for any kind of compensation."

Customers want resilience/alternatives during major outages

Some customers suggested the need for access to alternative power sources during major outages. This included being able to access solar power e.g. "That's a huge problem for households that could be self-sufficient with batteries like myself who have solar but can't use it because it's blocked by power companies." Some also expressed frustration at what they believed was a lack of investment in the network e.g. "Most customers are kind of at a breaking point now, where their patience threshold is gone, because they've seen decades of underinvestment in the infrastructure."

Some customers were happy with the speed of restoration and the way the crisis was handled e.g. "For me, it was back in 24 hours. And technically, I'm considered a customer on life support. So this was a strain, but it was far more manageable because I thought they handled it really well. They got it right."

Business customers expressed their frustration with the lack of communication and loss of income as a consequence of the outage e.g. "There was no communication. I was without it for a couple of days. You don't recover that money. You can't invoice for 2 or 3 days you might lose clients."

02

Residential customers



Findings by topic

- Reactions to the weather event in February 2024
- Customer service
- Flexibility

Reactions to the weather event in February 2024

Key themes from customer stories

Key themes from customer stories:

- Medical concerns and concerns for customers experiencing vulnerability
- Communication confusion/lack of communication about the outage (and its emotional impact)
- Lack of compensation and empathy
- Lack of preparation/contingency planning/power reserves
- Partnerships with other organisations who can help i.e. Woolworths and Telstra
- Power companies not enabling use of solar
- Personal costs (residents) and income loss (business)

What customers said

- "She was looking after her mother, who's legally blind and she's got some Alzheimer's, so it's very hard for her to function in the darkness."
- "My wife was in hospital ready for major surgery. They were just about to put the drip in and the power went off so the surgery was delayed. Thank God she wasn't on the table."
- "There was lots of confusion, and a lot of issues on the website. There was a portal you can check and it had different information to the website. The information was not very accurate. But the information we needed to know like how long it's expected to be off, needs to be more accurate, but that was not working well."
- "They have the cheeky nerve to say that four days is not enough time for you to deserve to get some kind of a compensation."
- "They are not telling us of any contingency plans. There's no backup plan."
- "We really need to develop reserve, infrastructure and power sources that we can use in the case of a massive outage and then have that as a reserve."
- "I really think AusNet and places like Woolworths should work together to be able to provide that to people who may have no power..."
- "But these larger companies (i.e. Telstra) also need to take responsibility and have backups. If they're providing an essential service to customers, they need backups."
- "That's a huge problem for households that could be self sufficient with batteries like myself who have solar, but can't use it because it's blocked by power companies."
- "My folks have bought a rechargeable battery that'll get them through most standard outages and one day events, but at a cost of anything from \$300-\$1200 for those that can afford to buy and fuel generators but it's so beyond the reach of so many people."
- "I'm a sole trader I didn't have power for two and a half days. Had no idea when it was going to be restored. So I lost a lot of money."

Key themes from questions asked

Key themes from questions asked:

- What's the wholesale cost of electricity and will customers see a spike in costs/fees due to the outage?
- What impact did the event have on wind turbines and how did that impact our power?
- What happened to the towers? Why did they collapse?
- Why isn't there technology that identifies individual households without power?
- What alternative sources of power can be accessed to help us remain on grid in future?

What customers asked

- *"The wholesale cost of electricity was at a few thousand per time. The cost of the wholesale purchase is going to fall around to everyone, is that the case?"*
- *"Wholesale cost isn't a risk that retailers take. Will residential customers see a big spike as a result of that event?"*
- *"Is it true that the wind turbines at the end closed down after because it was too windy?"*
- *"Wasn't it part of the Royal Commission that those transmission towers was supposed to be relocated on the ground?"*
- *"It wasn't just the weather, but the wind and the temperature drop compromised the integrity of the towers."*
- *"Do we have the technology nowadays to see which properties have actually lost power due to an outage rather than having reported by the media?"*
- *"Can you do apply automatic CSL or Google Gestures to monitor amount of time of outage? Rather than logging in at the retail platform or network platform."*
- *"Something to think about when it comes to the 2040 migration: Aligning ourselves into this one single source of power, having an objective energy source like gas might be of value at certain areas"*

Further discussion on key issues

Some customers felt AusNet handled the crisis well...

- *“For me, it was back on in 24 hours. And technically, I'm considered a customer on life support. So this was a strain, but it was far more manageable because I thought they handled it really well. They got it right.”*

...but they were in the minority.

Most customers were unhappy due to the following...

- Disappointment with communication speed and accuracy
 - *“You guys did quite badly of actually communicating what the problems were and why they were being caused. The loudest voice definitely was the news media who were blaming it on moving to carbon friendly solutions.”*
- Misinformation and disinformation started to spread (the following quote was identified as fake news)
 - *“We were disappointed because we heard they shunted power from my postcode down to Melbourne to keep Melbourne running. And we were left high and dry, because it's a regional area.”*
- Businesses were annoyed with communication and the extended time off grid led to significant income loss
 - *“There wasn't really any confirmation from you guys to say that was or wasn't the case.”*
 - *“There was no communication. I was without it for a couple of days. You don't recover that money. You can't invoice for 2 or 3 days you might lose clients.”*
- Some drove long distances to try and gain access to information and were still left feeling frustrated with the lack of information
 - *“That was the hardest part. Even driving down there. There was no point because I still couldn't find any information.”*
- There was also a lack of empathy and no offer of compensation
 - *“Someone's losing something, and there are families out there that are, below the poverty line that are actually really needing every dollar they've got, and that would really impact them greatly. So to say, Oh, no sorry, because it hasn't been 7 days you're not eligible for any kind of compensation.”*
 - *“Basically, you were just sort of told, Well, go sort that out yourself.”*
- Customers are frustrated with the infrastructure and believe there hasn't been enough investment
 - *“Most customers are kind of at breaking point now, where their patience threshold is gone, because they've seen decades of underinvestment in the infrastructure.”*

Customer suggestions for improving communication during major outages

Ideas for ways to communicate during a major outage:

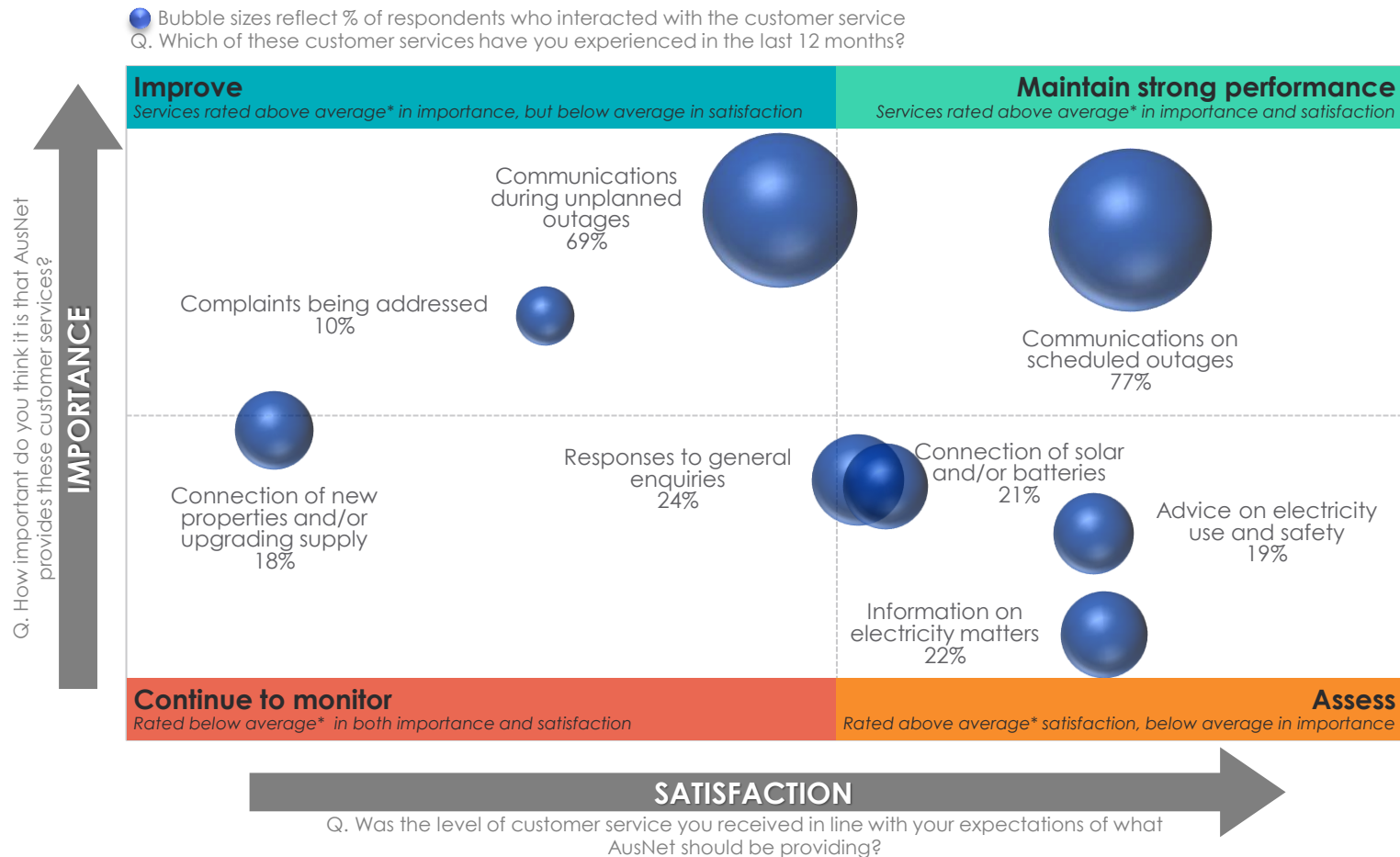
- Radio is an option although it was acknowledged that they are less commonly owned and used in the digital era
- "Community hubs" with representatives (AusNet staff, members of local councils, essential services representatives) in high foot traffic locations. Suggestions include:
 - For larger metropolitan areas – major retail shopping centres like Doncaster, Chadstone etc.
 - Smaller outer suburban areas and regional towns:
 - Local shopping centres, supermarkets, malls
 - Sporting venues – stadiums/ovals
 - Council offices
 - Rural towns
 - Community centres/town hall
 - Sporting venues – stadiums/ovals
- Use of social media – Facebook which can create social echo (people share it but also talk about it).
- Satellite communications strategy

What customers asked

- "The only thing I could think of is to have it known on radio stations that it goes on, you know, now we all know there's a blackout, so at least you can get in your car, turn the car on and tune in on the half hour and the hour and get some updates. I think something like that would have to be advertised as well. So something that can actually tell us what's going on that we can access."
- "What about liaising more with the councils? So if the councils are responsible for the community and setting up, the hubs that people could go to. Having frequent communication with the council and get them to do a bit more legwork for AusNet, for setting up in areas that have blackouts and tell community members it's out for this long."
- Back during Ash Wednesday, they had representatives from the water company, electrical representatives and from the distribution network. People were at the end of the street, at the local supermarket etc." So if you're asking what staff could do, get them out into the area and have a booth set up and just be there to hear people's stories or to direct them to where to go to get help, but make it known that they are at big centres like mid Valley or Traralgon Mall or Eastland. Set them up so they're visible so you're not having to rely on technology to find someone. It's well known in an event they will be at these big centers and pick centers well in advance and communicate that if something happens, we will set them up and they will be at Chadstone, Doncaster shopping centre, Eastland and Southland. When you go regional, put them there to. They'll be at Ballarat (whatever the mall is up there), Bendigo etc. Put them in the big centres where they're needed."
- "Most people have access to community halls. And like during bush fires, we have community meetings on a regular basis."
- "During a disaster, it could be an oval or something that people go to for sporting events where it has the space and capacity for a bunch of people to come down."
- "So going to Facebook and that kind of stuff would be kind of our first port of call. But if you don't have that there's a problem".
- "We have a generator, and we've got Sky muster. So we're not depending on anything other than the satellites. If you've got Starlink, even better."

Customer service

Most residential customers see communication during outages as the most important customer service



- Overall, residential customers placed high importance on communication during outages and complaints being addressed. Areas with relatively low importance are advice on electricity use and safety and receiving information on electricity matters.
- Most residential customers said they had a communication experience with AusNet during planned (77%) and unplanned (69%) outages.
- Overall, residential customers were least satisfied with the experiences they've had when connecting new properties and/or upgrading supply. They were most satisfied with communication during planned outages.
- The impact of the major weather event may have played a part in customer views on communication during unplanned outages. Customers in Epping, Wangaratta, and Online placed greater importance to communication during unplanned outages than residents in Morwell. They were also less satisfied with their experiences of this service.

*Average computed via the answers through the 5-point scale
 Total residential customers (n=89)

Customers believe cybersecurity, AI and population growth are **trends** that will impact customer service

When asked customers to identify trends that may impact customer service in 2031 (in addition to those presented during the workshop), they nominated the following:

- Cybersecurity/cybercrime/hackers/scammers – we need to be wary and prepared/protected
- Electrification/solar/renewable energy, building a more resilient power system
- Artificial intelligence (AI)/chatbots/self-service vs human support
- Options to accommodate a growing population
- Personalised service in the form of an app
- Effective management and monitoring of multiple customer touchpoints

What customers said

- "Hackers /scammers may cause major issues."
- "These trends are all things I highly disapprove of: HACKERS, SCAMS, DATA LEAKS, IDENTITY THEFT, SECURITY ISSUES."
- "I suppose more solar would change how AusNet is able to provide customer service to the same level."
- "Higher demand on service. Not allowing gas is relying on one service that is not storm proof."
- "Building more and better equipment as we learn from the weather etc. that we are going through. This is a positive and a hopefully good step into the future."
- "Need option in chatbot to talk to a person."
- "I thought customer service was a person service not AI."
- "There still needs to be a real human person to communicate with other than chat bots."
- "Call back options if we need any more information on provided medium. It will be more populated around 2031 and we definitely face a lot of problems, we shouldn't end up like Centrelink call centers."
- "Greater dependency on electricity – more houses with electric stoves, electric cars, more variations in weather where its necessary to use air con rather than just a comfort option."
- "AusNet IOS or android app with everything all in one place. It has all your info in it and is interactive. Helps you deal with issues quickly and efficiently."
- "APP interaction like insurance claim apps."
- "TV adds with QR codes prompts."
- "Well informed on various platforms."

Q. Are there any other trends or changes that might impact the customer service you expect from AusNet in 2031?

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during unplanned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Human customer service – efficient and effective
- Community engagement/presentations (especially for regional/rural towns)
- Response times to be kept to no more than an hour
- Timely, accurate, up to date communication – cause, expected outage duration
- Communication options: multiple touchpoints – SMS, email, media, social media
- Most customers experiencing vulnerability to be catered for
- Accountability from AusNet

What customers said

- *“Easy to access without waiting for ages to speak to a real person. Human interaction.”*
- *“Use of the emergency radio network. Liaise with local councils to get more frequent advice to communities.”*
- *“Information to be made available on a regular basis. Keeping everyone up to date and giving advice on what to do next.”*
- *“Indication of how long the outage will last.”*
- *“For the most vulnerable people who don’t have a mobile phone...someone should call them (on landline)...a 30 second phone call...your power is out and should be back by this time.”*
- *“If they had told me straight up that your power is going to be out for 14 hours I would have done different things. And then they had no accountability for that.”*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- AusNet staff available on the ground in the community to answer questions. Staff should be visible – especially in regional/rural towns
- 24/7 human support
- Access to alternate sources of electricity – switch to back up power i.e. solar
- Proactive information – real time, accurate, efficient and effective updates
- An intelligent, sophisticated AI
- Refunds/discounts as compensation for outages

What customers said

- *“Updates as work progresses if estimation time changes.”*
- *“AusNet staff out on-site offering support and direction to communities.”*
- *“Real person answers phone.”*
- *“Dominos tracker.”*
- *“Instant response times.”*
- *“If everything is going to go AI...then you want AI to be on the ball...if you’re speaking another language then it automatically responds in your language.”*
- *“We all have batteries so when this happens we switch it on and we use that.”*
- *“Can they provide refunds?”*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? “It’d be great if...” (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during planned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Human customer service – knowledgeable, informative, outside work hours
- Accurate, transparent information – need for outage and approximate length
- Plenty of notice to allow preparation time and provide reminders
- Communicate through multiple touchpoints – SMS, email, mail, social media
- Communicate outages to essential services e.g. doctors and supermarkets
- Backup network for customers experiencing vulnerability
- Text to speech for landline numbers for those without mobiles
- Mobile app with push notification
- Alternative energy sources

What customers said

- *“A minimum should consist of personalised customer service because no one enjoys talking to a chat bot or being told to go online when you need help.”*
- *“Should be accurate as to date and times, if it's going to be a long one, there should be compensation especially if your work is affected.”*
- *“Real time live power tracker.”*
- *“I expect to have at least 2 weeks notice as well as well as a reminder 48 hours before.”*
- *“A backup mobile network for safety and for vulnerable people.”*
- *“Only had a landline number and didn't know there was going to be outage.”*
- *“Surely there's some sort of alternative energy source like batteries.”*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Human customer service – answer quickly and efficiently
- Option to choose day of planned outage via a customer poll
- Offer customer compensation
- Real-time, accurate updates e.g. AI app or live tracker of your outage
- Backup, more resilient network for everyone – have better infrastructure in place
- Provisions to have security services backed up
- Information to help with planning e.g. storing large quantities of food
- Use video calls so customers can show problems/issues

What customers said

- *“Ability to have a conversation with a knowledgeable real person.”*
- *“Option to choose day for outage and communication to fulfill various needs.”*
- *“Consideration of when the outage will be.”*
- *“Compensation for lost work due to power outage.”*
- *“Plan ahead to have answers to likely questions and problems.”*
- *“Less outages, more sophisticated infrastructure, moving more power underground to mitigate outages.”*
- *“If they say it's going to be off between 9 and 3...is should be off at 9 and not at 8...they do it all the time.”*
- *“By 2031, there will be so many people using cameras and alarm systems at home and without having a power source will jeopardise these systems.”*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? “It'd be great if...” (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: addressing complaints

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Human customer service – acknowledge, empathise, address complaints, be compassionate and transparent with providing a timely response
- Quick turnaround times to resolution
- Continuity – informed customer service team (don't have to repeat yourself)
- Offer multiple touchpoints – phone, direct messaging, email, social media
- Ease of contact – catering to people with different capabilities
- Available at any time
- Recorded calls/email of conversation

What customers said

- *"Complaint being addressed in 24 hours or less with at least feedback."*
- *"Fast, compassionate, flexible communication. No excuses, don't be rude."*
- *"For all customer service reps to have the same knowledge."*
- *"Consistency, same contact person for issues."*
- *"Flexibility on how to contact customer service."*
- *"Open 24/7."*
- *"Recorded logs and a written log emailed to you...because with AI now it's voice to text and they can just email you the conversation."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Human customer service/complaints line – 24/7 support
- Continuity – informed, dedicated customer service manager
- Multiple touchpoints to connect with AusNet
- Regular updates of complaint/issue resolution using technology e.g. an app
- Backup systems for outages
- Messages being sent to smart meters
- Financial aid for customers who can't afford repairs

What customers said

- *"If would be great if complaints could have a complaint line that was 24/7."*
- *"Feedback on how complaint is progressing."*
- *"Different ways of communicating."*
- *"It would be great if they had more sources of communication."*
- *"Those that don't agree with modern trends shouldn't be forced to use them i.e. still appreciated as a customer's needs and not discriminated against because they don't want to use modern customer service solutions."*
- *"It would have an app or website to go to and find out what you need to know and being able to speak to someone if needed."*
- *"It would be good to use communication through smart meters."*
- *"Low interest loans for homeowners who have no capacity to pay for repairs i.e. healthcare card holders because that's going to be a significant issue for them."*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: responses to general enquiries

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Quick responses and answers
- 24/7 service
- Well-trained and qualified customer service professionals
- Logged information, detailed notes, date/time stamps

What customers said

- *"Quick response time and 24/7...so they're always open."*
- *"Well-trained people so you don't get people who don't really know the answer."*
- *"There's nothing worse than having to go over the same old story."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Self-service option for everything
- Fully integrated system
- Always an option to speak to a person

What customers said

- *"I hate talking to people...so enhanced self-serve options."*
- *"Fully integrated system of phone calls, emails and chats that's logged against your profile."*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: connection of solar and/or batteries

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Customers would like advice on technology, needs and benefits
- The use of AI in customer service is contentious – some feel that AI will not provide the information they need while others believe that AI will be sophisticated enough as to be indistinguishable from human customer service in future

What customers said

- “We don’t want AI because how can you talk to them about solar panels?”
- “I don’t think people are aware of how sophisticated AI is getting. It is learning. It remembers everything it’s crazy. It could really help out initially but it would be good to always be able to speak to a human. But at least the AI could get it done like that but there are only so many humans and you’ll have to wait.”
- “We didn’t believe your statement when you said...our surveys are saying that customers want more self service. None of us agreed. We feel like the company is pushing it on everyone. It seems like a cost saving thing and that cost doesn’t come back on to us...we don’t get a staff discount...”

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Personalised email with a plan as a follow up to phone discussions
- Short wait times for connections
- Timely, up-to-date advice
- Cheaper connections/discounts
- Simple, accessible information and processes

What customers said

- “Great customer service would be they send you a personalised email with everything you’ve discussed on a call...with everything and a plan. Rather than just telling you on the phone they actually send you a follow up.”
- “You would regard great customer service as being personalised plan covering economics as well as technology.”
- Re advice: “Up-to-date technology – you don’t want to be given something that’s going to go out of date.”
- “You’ve given me pages and pages to read and all these links that I have to jump into to fill in all these forms...and I went...you know what, I’m juggling too much as it is...no...that’s too hard basket for me.”

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? “It’d be great if...” (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: connecting new properties or upgrading supply

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Easy to follow connection steps – information describing the exact process you have to go through to get a property connected
- Clear and accurate information about costs and timeframes
- Timely responses if we're requesting connections or have questions
- Someone to talk to who is knowledgeable on connections – staff who are specialised in these issues
- Updates on progress of connections
- Options for people who speak English as a second language
- Clear quotes that don't change before the job gets done
- Contact details for someone you can call if something needs to change

What customers said

- *"Clearly outline steps as to how that occurs...why do I do..."*
- *"Someone who is knowledgeable on these sorts of things...I don't want to be on the phone for 20 minutes talking to someone about upgrading to 3 phase only to find out no you can't do that."*
- *"We want options for people who...English might be a second language... translation services so all people can access services."*
- *"I think the connection of a property should be addressed by an actual person."*
- *"If they say it's going to be done on Monday you don't want to be still be waiting on Friday."*
- *"You don't get their quotes to go up after six months after you've already started"*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- AusNet records customer history so when you call they know and you don't have to retell your story
- Options to organise new connections online and options for people who prefer a phone call
- A consultancy service for a new build
- Increased use of AI to get specialised knowledge quickly
- Other means to reach people, and mail outs to supplement email
- Extra quick service
- Human service – want to talk to someone who knows what they're talking about
- Reliability for the times of the service itself
- A progress check-up to see how the works are actually going

What customers said

- *"It doesn't matter who you ring up and speak to they can just get your property number and they know exactly what has been said before and what has been done."*
- *"It'd be great if you could do it online"*
- *Instead of just getting your documentation by email...older people would sometimes prefer a mailout...we're hoping for a free one."*
- *"In starting a new build, a rep from AusNet comes and tells you your options. 10- or 15-minutes face to face and you make sure you have everything ticked off."*
- *"The quicker they can come to my house and fix things the better."*
- *"More human connection...less AI...want to talk to talk to someone that knows what they're talking about."*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Flexibility

Reasons for and against changing when customers use appliances

Key themes

Will not change usage

- Customers want to be able to choose when and which appliances they use throughout the day
- Some appliances are essential, like heating water and the home, cooking, and cooling the home, especially among households with elderly and customers experiencing vulnerability and young children
- Being at work means that some customers can't/won't use their appliances during the day. Some suggested that off-peak hours (10am-4pm) favour those who can work from home.

Can change (some) usage

- Customers are more willing to change when they use appliances like washing machines, dryers and dishwashers
- Some suggested changing off-peak hours to accommodate people who can't work from home
- Customers want clear information and/or customer testimonials explaining how pricing works i.e. rate differences between peak and off-peak hours, weekdays and weekends, seasons
- Identify which types of appliances consume the most electricity
- Some require a financial incentive e.g. between \$100 and \$200 per month or an equivalent bill rebate.

What customers said

"Cooking or showering within a certain window, probably not going to happen. There are just some things you wouldn't put a price on especially during winter, or when you have kids."

"I think essential appliances should be running on an off-peak rate like fridges, cooking appliances, hot water. Everything else is just a want, not a need."

"This is favoring hybrid workers who usually have higher pay. Lower paid people need to physically go to work and don't have the luxury of being home to take advantage of off-peak rates and get all of the extra incentive. Its not a fair system."

"Changing the off-peak time from 10am-4pm to 8:30am-5pm so those who go to work can do something prior to going to work."

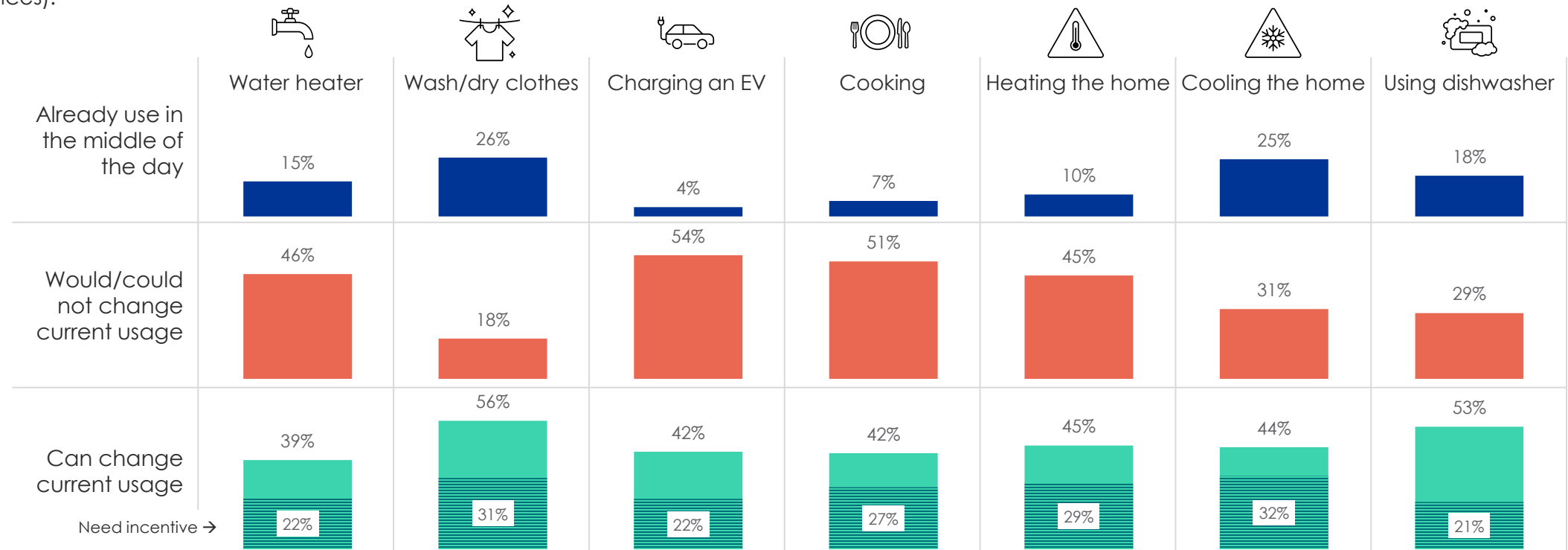
"One of the biggest incentives that is expected is rebates of solar solutions – the panels and battery storage."

"Points system like Flybuys – accumulate a certain amount of points during off-peak times, you get incentives like vouchers going to the bill or refund, that will make you want to use appliances during off-peak."

"Maybe it makes a difference if someone presented to you how much you are actually going to save if you do X, Y, Z."

Residential customers are most likely to change when they use their washing machines/dryers

- Customers use washing machines and air conditioners/fans during the middle of the day more than other appliances.
- Customers are least likely to change when they charge EVs or cook but can be persuaded to use washing machines and dishwashers during the middle of the day.
- A higher proportion of customers require an incentive or information to change when they use air-conditioners and washing machines/dryers, (relative to other appliances).



Total residential customers (n=74)

Q. How willing and able are you to move most of your household usage of appliances to the middle of the day (e.g. 10am to 4pm) to maximise the use of solar energy?

Q. Would you need information/incentives to make this change? (asked among those who can change current usage)

Customers may change when they use appliances if offered rebates, discounts and/or information

Some customers were willing to change when they used their appliances if incentivised to do so and/or given the right information. It is worth noting that most had not thought about changing their behaviour and a significant effort including effective communication will be required to actualise these intentions.

Incentives or information needed
<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better rates Customers who said they'd want a rebate typically specified between \$100 and \$300 a month would be needed to compensate for the inconvenience Customers who said they'd want a discount/bill reduction, suggested a 20% saving (on average) is needed to compensate for the inconvenience Points system adding up to a certain amount to redeem as a bill reduction or other vouchers
<p>Information on best times to use appliances – <i>mentioned more in Morwell</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Times and prices when power is cheap Testimonials from other people who have done it
<p>Advice or general information – <i>mentioned more in Wangaratta</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy meal tips Which appliances use the most electricity How it works
<p>New appliances – <i>mentioned more in Wangaratta</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smart adapter for appliances Smart appliances (turn off/on via phone) and with timers. Some suggested discounts for these as an incentive.

Total residential customers (among those who expressed the need for incentives to change behavior)
 Q. What \$ value of incentive(s) and/or type of information will you need?

Why not change behavior
<p>Not usually home around the time (midday). Some customers also said that they would prefer to be at home to monitor appliances when they are running.</p>
<p>Want to be able to use appliances when needed</p>
<p>Have solar – <i>mentioned more in Wangaratta and Morwell</i></p>
<p>Would have to rearrange life routine</p>

Findings by location

- Morwell
- Epping
- Wangaratta
- Online (residential)

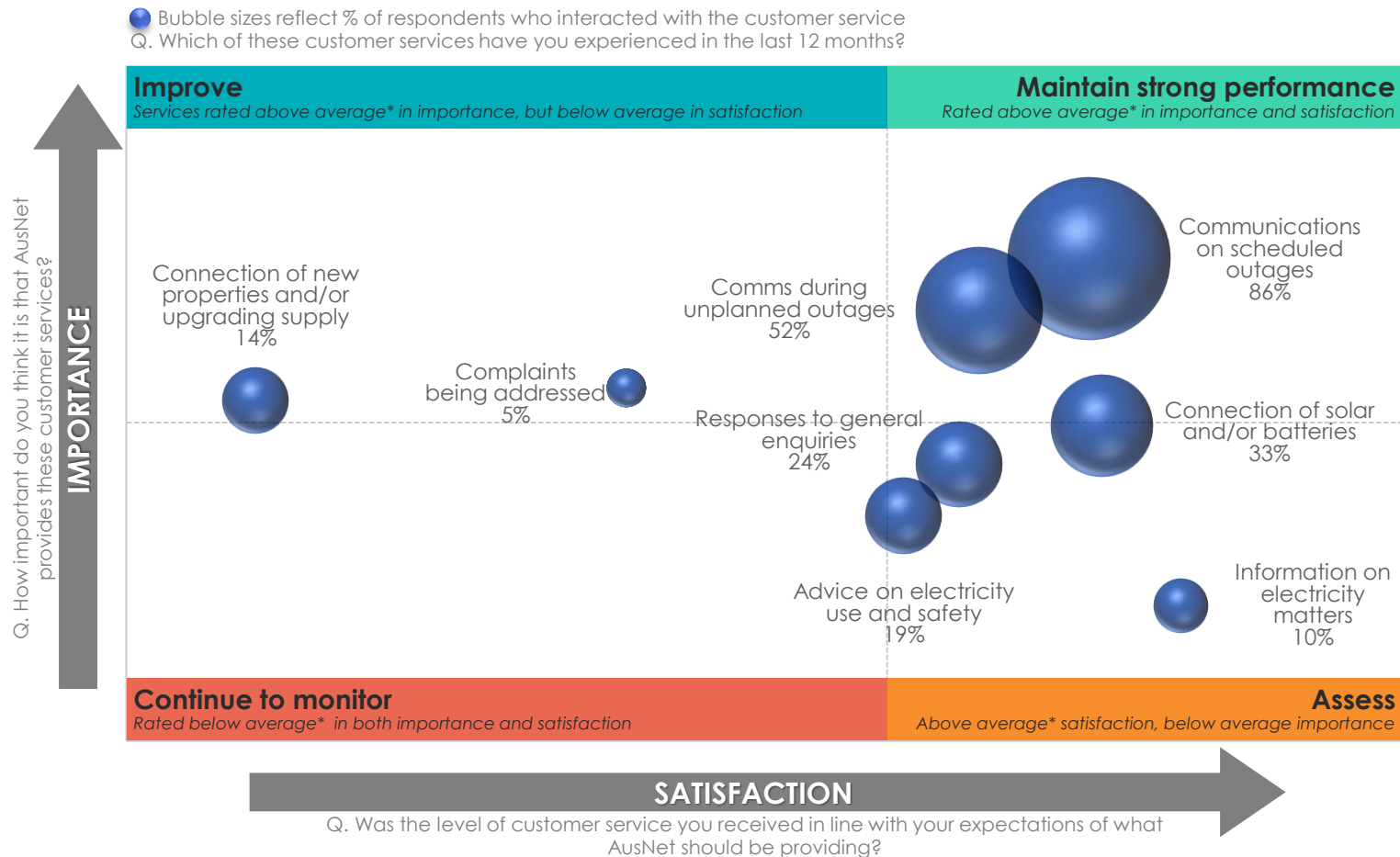
Morwell

Summary of findings from Morwell workshop

The summary below captures key points from the pages that follow. Please refer to pages 34 to 40 for more information and verbatim quotes from the workshop. The group in Morwell discussed four customer service interactions: communication during unplanned outages, communication during planned outages, customer service received when having complaints addressed and customer service received when connecting solar and/or batteries.

- **Morwell customers regarded communication during outages (planned and unplanned) as the most important of AusNet's customer services.** Customers were also satisfied with the level of customer service they received from AusNet with communication during outages.
- When discussing **communication during unplanned outages in 2031...**
 - Morwell customers said they expected (as non-negotiables) to receive responses from AusNet **within 24 hours**; that information should be timely and accurate, that they would have **options for how they could receive information** i.e. not just updates on AusNet's website or text messages; and that they would always have the **option to speak to a human being**.
 - On their wish list for 2031, they nominated: **reliable/resilient supply** i.e. no outages, **immediate responses**, **personalised** customer service, **proactive and accurate** information and **intelligent AI** (more reliable chatbots).
- When discussing **communication during planned outages in 2031...**
 - Morwell customers said they expected (as non-negotiables) **a lot of notice, personalised customer service** and **allowances for people without mobile phones** e.g. text-to-speech for landline numbers.
 - On their wish list for 2031, they nominated: more **accurate information about the duration of outages...**"if they say it's going to be off between 9 and 3...it should be off at 9..."; **compensation** for outages greater than 4 hours; a **callback service** instead of waiting on hold and more **convenient timings** for outages.
- When discussing **having their complaints addressed in 2031...** Morwell customers said they expected (as a non-negotiable) their complaints to be resolved within **five working days**. On their wish list for 2031, customers suggested that AusNet should **pre-empt issues** and that there would be **financial aid for customers** who can't afford repairs.
- When discussing the customer service received when **connecting solar and/or batteries**, Morwell customers said they expected (as a non-negotiable) to receive **informed advice on technology**, their needs and benefits. On their wish list for 2031, customers wanted **personalised advice** and a plan, **short wait times** for connections, **cheaper connections** and **simpler processes**.
- **A little under half of residents are not keen on changing the way they use appliances**, citing **concerns about the limitations of existing infrastructure**. Others felt that asking end customers to change, **financially benefits the retail company and AusNet**, with **no return** to them. A clear explanation is needed to incite change among customers.
- People who are willing to **change behavior said they required financial incentives** to do so. Others felt that they should be provided with **equipment or appliances with timers** to enable them to use appliances during off-peak hours even when away from home.

Morwell residents consider communication during outages the most important customer service interaction



- Most Morwell customers had a communication experience with AusNet during planned (86%) and unplanned (52%) outages. They believe **communication during planned and unplanned outages to be the most important of AusNet's customer services** and are satisfied with the service they receive.
- The customer service least used by Morwell was 'complaints being addressed' and they were **least satisfied with the level of customer service they received when connecting new properties and/or upgrading supply.**
- They were **most satisfied with the customer service they received when seeking/receiving information on electricity matters** – however, they don't regard this as an important customer service.

*Average computed via the answers through the 5-point scale
 Morwell (n=21)

By 2031: non-negotiables and wish list for communication during unplanned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Timely, accurate communication
- Human customer service
- Response times to be kept to no more than an hour
- Options for communication channels

What customers said

- "A text message with a link to a website that will keep you updated on the progress."
- "Don't send me a link I'll think it's a scam."
- "There should always be an option to talk to a human."
- "Transparency...having their information easy to access...they're not just on websites...they're transparent and not trying to hide."
- "Response time within an hour."
- "Who wears the cost if the power goes out and it's a grid issue...some companies will say here's a voucher for food because you've lost your groceries...because you guys are responsible for distribution?"

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Personalised service where customer service responds to unique needs
- The power stays on
- Proactive and accurate information
- Response times should be instant i.e. real-time response
- An intelligent AI

What customers said

- "The power stays on."
- "Proactive communication."
- "Just following through...if they say they're going to do something, they do it."
- "Instant response times."
- "Options for communication" (numerous channels for communication)."
- "If you send letters out...send braille letters out...or pictographs for people who have low level English who focus on pictures...if we're talking about hyper-personalised service." (provide people with options for how they'd like to receive communication)."
- "If everything is going to go AI...then you want AI to be on the ball...if you're speaking another language then it automatically responds in your language."
- "People don't have time to wait."

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

By 2031: non-negotiables and wish list for communication during planned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Text notification for outages
- Lots of notice for when the planned outages are
- Text to speech for landline numbers so that people without mobiles can receive messages

What customers said

- "They only had a landline number and didn't know there was going to be outage."
- "I just don't think anyone is going to have a landline in 2031."
- "I think a minimum should consist of personalised customer service because the reality is that no one enjoys talking to a chat bot."

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Compensation for outages greater than 4 hours
- No self-service or AI
- Better accuracy for when outages will happen
- More consideration to be given to timing of outages
- Callback service instead of waiting on hold

What customers said

- "We don't think that self-service is customer...customer service is always about the interaction between the worker and the person."
- "I'd prefer the outage between 12am and 6am rather than all through the day."
- "If my AI can speak directly to AusNet's AI and sort things out that'd be cool."
- "For people that work from home and you have to take leave because you don't have power...that would definitely be a claim." (for compensation)
- "If they say it's going to be off between 9 and 3...is should be off at 9 and not at 8...they do it all the time."

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

By 2031: non-negotiables and wish list for **addressing complaints**

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Complaints should be resolved within a reasonable amount of time e.g. no more than 5 working days

What customers said

- *"Complaints should be resolved in a reasonable amount of time."*
- *"Stop cutting my power off."*
- *"Complaints should be answered within 5 working days."*
- *"The only complaint I have is during the outage...no one could tell me when my power was coming back on."*
- *"I don't have any complaints but I expect them to be dealt with within a reasonable amount of time."*
- *"Instant response by text."*

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Pre-emptive service
- Financial aid for customers who can't afford repairs

What customers said

- *"If we were to have a meter box that was about to explode, we'd like an instant response via text message because we're aware that you monitor the system and look for spikes in the grid...great customer service for us would be for you to neutralise the threat to that meter box via an error code before it explodes."*
- *"Low interest loans for homeowners who have no capacity to pay for repairs i.e. healthcare card holders because that's going to be a significant issue for them."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

By 2031: non-negotiables and wish list for **connection of solar and/or batteries**

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Customers would like advice on technology, needs and benefits
- The use of AI in customer service is contentious – some feel that AI will not provide the information they need while others believe that AI will be sophisticated enough as to be indistinguishable from human customer service in future

What customers said

- *“We don’t want AI because how can you talk to them about solar panels?”*
- *“I don’t think people are aware of how sophisticated AI is getting. It is learning. It remembers everything it’s crazy. It could really help out initially but it would be good to always be able to speak to a human. But at least the AI could get it done like that but there are only so many humans and you’ll have to wait.”*
- *“We didn’t believe your statement when you said...our surveys are saying that customers want more self service. None of us agreed. We feel like the company is pushing it on everyone. It seems like a cost saving thing and that cost doesn’t come back on to us...we don’t get a staff discount...”*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Personalised email with a plan as a follow up to phone discussions
- Short wait times for connections
- Timely, up-to-date advice
- Cheaper connections/discounts
- Simple, accessible information and processes

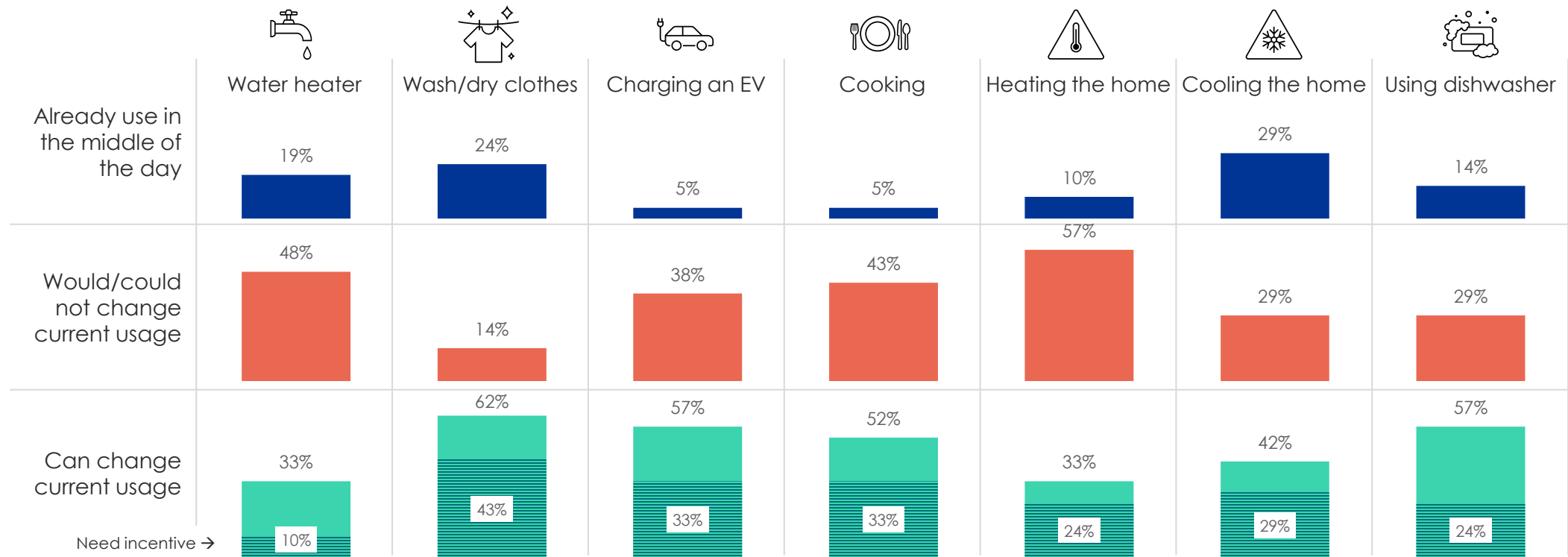
What customers said

- *“Great customer service would be they send you a personalised email with everything you’ve discussed on a call...with everything and a plan. Rather than just telling you on the phone they actually send you a follow up.”*
- *“You would regard great customer service as being personalised plan covering economics as well as technology.”*
- *Re advice: “Up-to-date technology – you don’t want to be given something that’s going to go out of date.”*
- *“You’ve given me pages and pages to read and all these links that I have to jump into to fill in all these forms...and I went...you know what, I’m juggling too much as it is...no...that’s too hard basket for me.”*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? “It’d be great if...” (create your wish list)

Morwell customers are more willing to change when they do their laundry, dishes and charge EVs

- However, a higher proportion require incentives to change when they use the washing machine and dryer vs. other appliances.
- Heating is a necessity, with at least half not keen to move usage of water heater and heaters at home.



Morwell (n=21)

Q. How willing and able are you to move most of your household usage of appliances to the middle of the day (e.g. 10am to 4pm) to maximise the use of solar energy?

Q. Would you need information/incentives to make this change? (asked among those who can change current usage)

How did customers in Morwell respond to questions about flexibility?

Willingness to move usage to the middle of the day

9 out of 21 (43%) are not willing to change when they use appliances. Reasons for this include:

- Being at work and therefore unable to use appliances during the day.
- Wanting to choose when they use their appliances (i.e. not being told)
- Seeing minimal benefit in making the change. Some believe that making the change would only benefit AusNet/retailers.

Some suggested moving off-peak hours, to give people who need to leave their houses for work/school a chance to use their appliances for less.

Information/incentives needed to make this change

In addition to financial incentives, customers suggested a number of factors that might encourage them to change when they use their appliances, including:

- Having access to appliances with timers.
- Have an automated system to use appliances.
- Having access to cheap and local batteries.

What customers said

- "Changing the off-peak time from 10am-4pm to 8:30am-5pm so those who go to work can do something prior to going to work."*
- "But if they are in school or work, they can't use it."*
- "Why isn't there enough systems to take on more power."*
- "Don't you have the infrastructure to send excess solar power to people's houses?"*
- "Why should we do all these changes if you are just going to make more money and we are not getting anything back in return."*
- "I hope that it's clear that lots of us don't want to change but we are participating in discussions."*
- "I do not want to change. We are not living in a third-world country."*

What customers said

- "A very high financial incentive, and it must benefit the customer, not the company's or retailer's pocket. Money should go back to customer not the AusNet's pocket."*
- "Need new equipment that has timers."*
- "Mobile bus and community showers for homeless people."*
- "Community garden."*
- "Localised batteries."*
- "Cheap storage battery for later usage."*
- "Automatic system to use appliances"*
- "Cheap power throughout the day."*

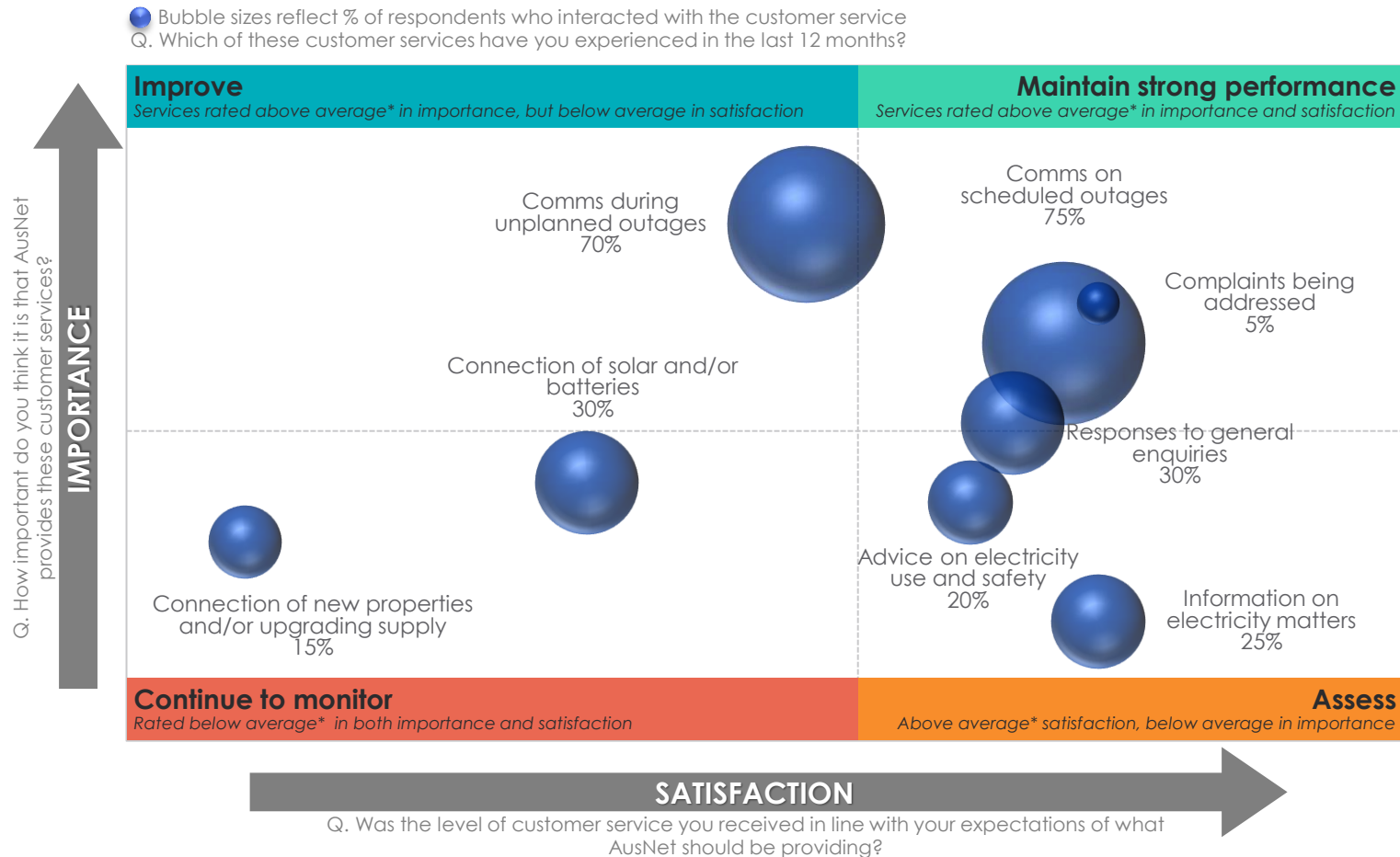
Epping

Summary of findings from Epping workshop

The summary below captures key points from the pages that follow. Please refer to pages 43 to 49 for more information and verbatim quotes from the workshop. The group in Epping discussed four customer service interactions: communication during unplanned outages, communication during planned outages, customer service received when having complaints addressed and customer service received in response to their general enquiries.

- **Epping customers regarded communication during unplanned outages as the most important of AusNet's customer services.** Customers were less satisfied with their experiences during unplanned outages than during planned outages e.g. *"I don't feel like AusNet communicated well enough during the Jan & Feb blackout incidents. I didn't receive any information on warnings about possibilities of blackouts."*
- When discussing **communication during unplanned outages in 2031...**
 - Epping customers said they expected (as non-negotiables) to receive **text messages** letting them know the cause and duration of the outage and **for the most vulnerable to be catered for** e.g. by calls to landline in addition to notifications on mobile phones.
 - On their wish list for 2031, they nominated: **sophisticated AI, access to alternative sources of energy, multilingual customer service** and refunds/discounts as **compensation** for outages.
- When discussing **communication during planned outages in 2031...**
 - Epping customers said they expected (as non-negotiables) the option of **speaking to a human being; quick and precise updates;** an app with **push notifications;** access to **alternative sources of energy;** and providing for **emergency services and customers experiencing vulnerability.**
 - On their wish list for 2031, they nominated: having **options for compensation and making provisions for security systems in homes and businesses.**
- When discussing **having their complaints addressed in 2031...** Epping customers said they expected (as non-negotiable) their complaints to be attended to **within 24 hours;** for there to be **continuity** in the service they receive e.g. they have the **same contact person** and records are kept of phone calls and emails. On their wish list for 2031, Epping customers want to **receive regular and proactive updates** until their complaints are resolved.
- When discussing customer service received when **making general enquiries...**
 - Epping customers said they expected (as non-negotiable) **quick responses** from **well-trained professionals; 24/7 access** to customer service; and **logged information** recording interactions (service continuity).
 - On their wish list for 2031, they nominated: always having an option to **speak to a person;** a **'fully-integrated system'** that includes all channels; and a self-service option for everything.
- **Residents were split** when discussing appliance usage flexibility. Those who **said they couldn't change pointed to the necessity of running essential appliances throughout the day** (like cooking or heating appliances). Others said that **off-peak usage does not benefit those with lower incomes** as their jobs require them to be physically present and therefore cannot enjoy the off-peak rates.
- In terms of financial incentives, customers suggested **rebates valued at \$200 a month** and a **'Flybuys' type of points-earning system** they can use as vouchers. Others said they needed more information on how to use appliances differently.

Customers in Epping consider communication during unplanned outages the most important of AusNet's customer services



- Most Epping customers experienced communication during unplanned (70% of participants) and unplanned (75%) outages.
- Customers were satisfied with the level of customer service they received during planned outages. However, many were less satisfied with their experiences during unplanned outages:
 - "Gave no indication of time frame."
 - "Not enough information or text messages with updates."
 - "Quick SMS is pretty vague and undefined. E.g. scope of work, why, etc."
 - "Didn't get to speak to anyone, no call back."
 - "I don't feel like AusNet communicated well enough during the Jan & Feb blackout incidents. I didn't receive any information on warnings about possibilities of blackouts."
- Similar to customers in Morwell, customers were least satisfied with the level of service they received when connecting a new property or upgrading supply and regarded as least important the customer service they received when getting information on electricity matters.

*Average computed via the answers through the 5-point scale
 Epping (n=20)

By 2031: non-negotiables and wish list for communication during unplanned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Text messages letting customers know cause of outage and time to restoration
- Most customers experiencing vulnerability to be catered for e.g. calls to landlines not just notifications on mobile phones

What customers said

- "You get a text message about what exactly the outage is...and how long it's going to be."
- "You want an indication about how long it's going to be...also potentially what has caused it...tree down or someone has driven into a power pole."
- "For the most vulnerable people who don't have a mobile phone...someone should call them (on landline)...a 30 second phone call...your power is out and should be back by this time..."
- "If the power outage happened to my grandmother in the morning she'd be alright, if it happened in the evening she wouldn't know what to do."
- "Service should be 24/7."

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Sophisticated AI
- Access to alternative sources of energy e.g. solar/batteries
- Multilingual customer service
- Refunds/discounts as compensation for outages

What customers said

- "We already have AI now...in ten years it should be next level."
- "An instant reply your query."
- "In an ideal world you'd say an accurate time...it's going to be 2 hours to get this fixed."
- "If it's a wish list...always be able to contact a human."
- "We all have batteries so when this happens we switch it on and we use that"
- "It'd be good if the notification could come in any language...not just the six most common...translated by native speakers."
- "Can they provide refunds?"

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during planned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Human customer service should remain an option
- Quick and precise updates
- App that has push notifications
- Alternative energy sources e.g. gas
- Provision for emergency services and customers experiencing vulnerability

What customers said

- *"No matter how digital we're going...we'd like to have the human touch...to talk to somebody if needed."*
- *"By 2031 we assume that there would be people who would be connected to digital sensors etc related to medical services and they need to be supported."*
- *"If it is a planned outage they have plenty of time to send it via text message, via an app, or via a letter...they can communicate through different channels."*
- *"Quick, regular, accurate updates."*
- *"It's about clearer communication."*
- *"There should be some sort of compensation."*
- *"There has to be some sort of alternative source of energy...batteries may be part of this."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Options for compensation
- Provisions to have security services backed up

What customers said

- *"By 2031, there will be so many people using cameras and alarm systems at home or even small businesses for that matter and without having a power source might definitely jeopardise their security."*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: addressing complaints

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- 24-hour or less turnaround
- Same contact person or systems in place to ensure continuity
- Recorded calls/email of conversation

What customers said

- *"I know this is difficult but try to have the same contact person unless you're being transferred to a different department. We understand there's shift work or person might not be working...all we're saying is to make sure the notes have been noted...make sure that the calls are recorded."*
- *"Some communication...even if they don't have the answer...to let you know they're working on it."*
- *"It's dealt with by the one person. Even if it's not the same person but it's more personalised so they're following off the same notes."*
- *"What if it's a person of a non-English speaking background?"*
- *"Recorded logs and a written log emailed to you...because with AI now it's voice to text and they can just email you the conversation."*
- *"A lot of them are virtual assistants so good luck getting the same person...you have to think...consistency is the thing."*
- *"You know when you ring up and you get a computer...you got a robot telling you what to do...if you're on a website it says 'please pick out the closest situation and you think...none of them. Would you like to be put through to an operator...yes please!"*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Regular, proactive updates until complaints are resolved

What customers said

- *"To get feedback along the way until a resolution is finalised."*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: responses to general enquiries

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Quick responses and answers
- 24/7 service
- Well-trained and qualified customer service professionals
- Logged information, detailed notes, date/time stamps

What customers said

- *"Quick response time and 24/7...so they're always open."*
- *"Well-trained people so you don't get people who don't really know the answer."*
- *"There's nothing worse than having to go over the same old story."*

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Themes

- Self-service option for everything
- Fully integrated system
- Always an option to speak to a person

What customers said

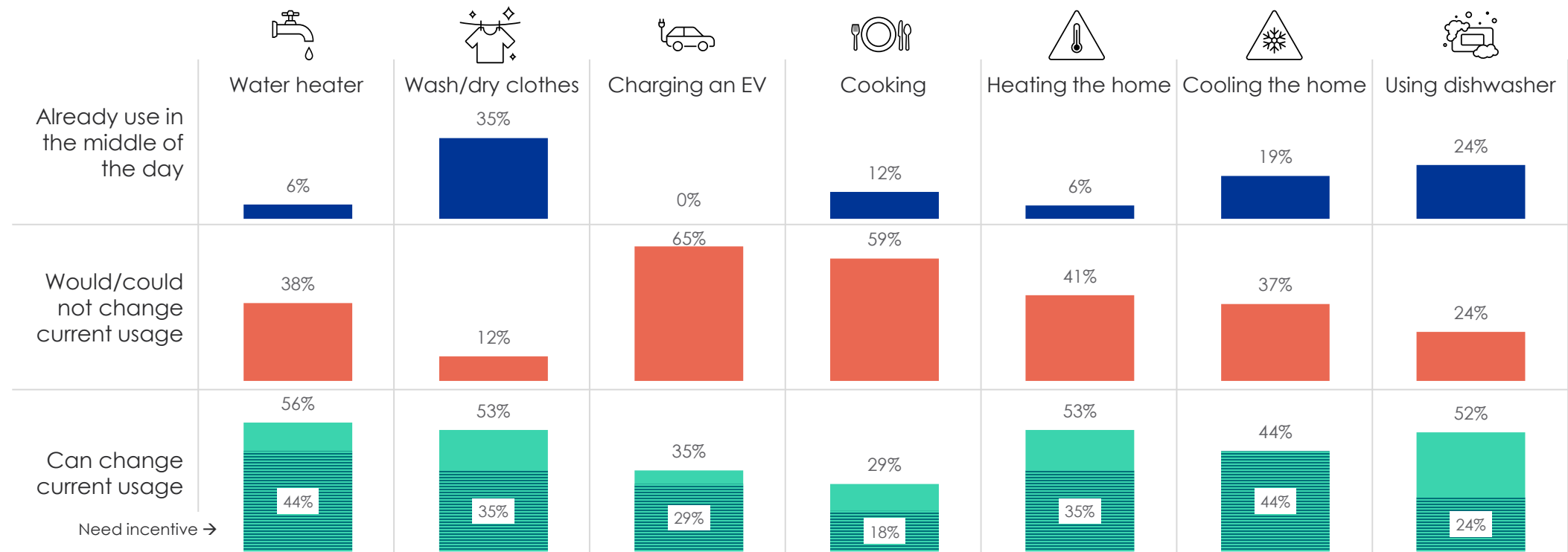
- *"I hate talking to people...so enhanced self-serve options."*
- *"Full integrated system of phone calls, emails and chats that's logged against your profile."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Over half can change when they use water heaters, washing machines, dryers, heaters and dishwashers

- Over one-third of residents are already washing and drying their clothes between 10am and 4pm.
- Some may consider using the air-conditioner during the middle of the day, however they all need incentive/information to make this change.
- Customers are least likely to change when they charge their EVs and/or cook.



Epping (n=17)

Q. How willing and able are you to move most of your household usage of appliances to the middle of the day (e.g. 10am to 4pm) to maximise the use of solar energy?

Q. Would you need information/incentives to make this change? (asked among those who can change current usage)

How did customers in Epping respond to questions about flexibility?

Willingness to move usage to the middle of the day

Some feel strongly about not changing when they use appliances. Reasons for this include:

- They want to have a choice as to what appliance to use and when they use them.
- For some, it's essential to use certain appliances at specific times e.g heaters and cooking appliances. This is especially the case for elderly and customers experiencing vulnerability, and those with young children.

There is also a perception that daytime off peak hours benefit people with higher pay who can work from home. Whereas lower-paid workers who have to physically be at work won't be able to take advantage of off-peak rates. It's worth noting that some Epping customers said they had already changed when they used appliances to take advantage of off-peak rates.

Information/incentives needed to make this change

Some customers expect incentives to change when they use appliances, including:

- Rebates of \$200 per month (on top of other incentives).
- Rebates for solar solutions in the household.
- Points system like Flybuys – where you can get vouchers or a refund.

Information needed to change behaviour include:

- Clear definitions of off-peak hours, including price differences.
- Testimonials from other people as to how much they saved after making these changes.
- Rates and power consumption of different appliances so people are more mindful of usage.

What customers said

"Most of us [at the table] have changed our lifestyle to accommodate most of the appliances to run during daytime."

"Cooking or showering within a certain window, probably not going to happen." There are just some things you wouldn't put a price on especially during winter, or when you have kids."

"We want to be able to use them when we want to."

"I don't want to rely on smart meter. Modern tech makes me feel out of control of my life. Feels like AI knows more about me than I do myself and it causes me frustration."

"I think essential appliances should be running on an off-peak rate like fridges, cooking appliances, hot water. Everything else is just a want, not a need."

"This is favoring hybrid workers who usually have higher pay. Lower paid people need to physically go to work and don't have the luxury of being home and take advantage of off-peak rates and get all of the extra incentive. It's not a fair system."

What customers said

"Rebates of solar solutions, the panels, batteries, and battery storage that the biggest incentive that's expected."

"Assumptions by household: what we consume, what we generate what we store is being consumed by us, and if there is any excess, we feed into the grid."

"200\$ a month rebate on top of incentives."

"Clearly stipulate the exact times of cheap prices – the peak and off-peak rate difference in percentage and if these will change with the seasons."

"Maybe it makes a difference if someone presented to you how much you are actually going to save if you do X, Y, Z."

"Which appliances uses the most electricity, so we can be more mindful."

"Points system like Flybuys – accumulate a certain amount of points during off-peak times, you get incentives like vouchers going to the bill or refund, that will make you want to use appliances during off peak."

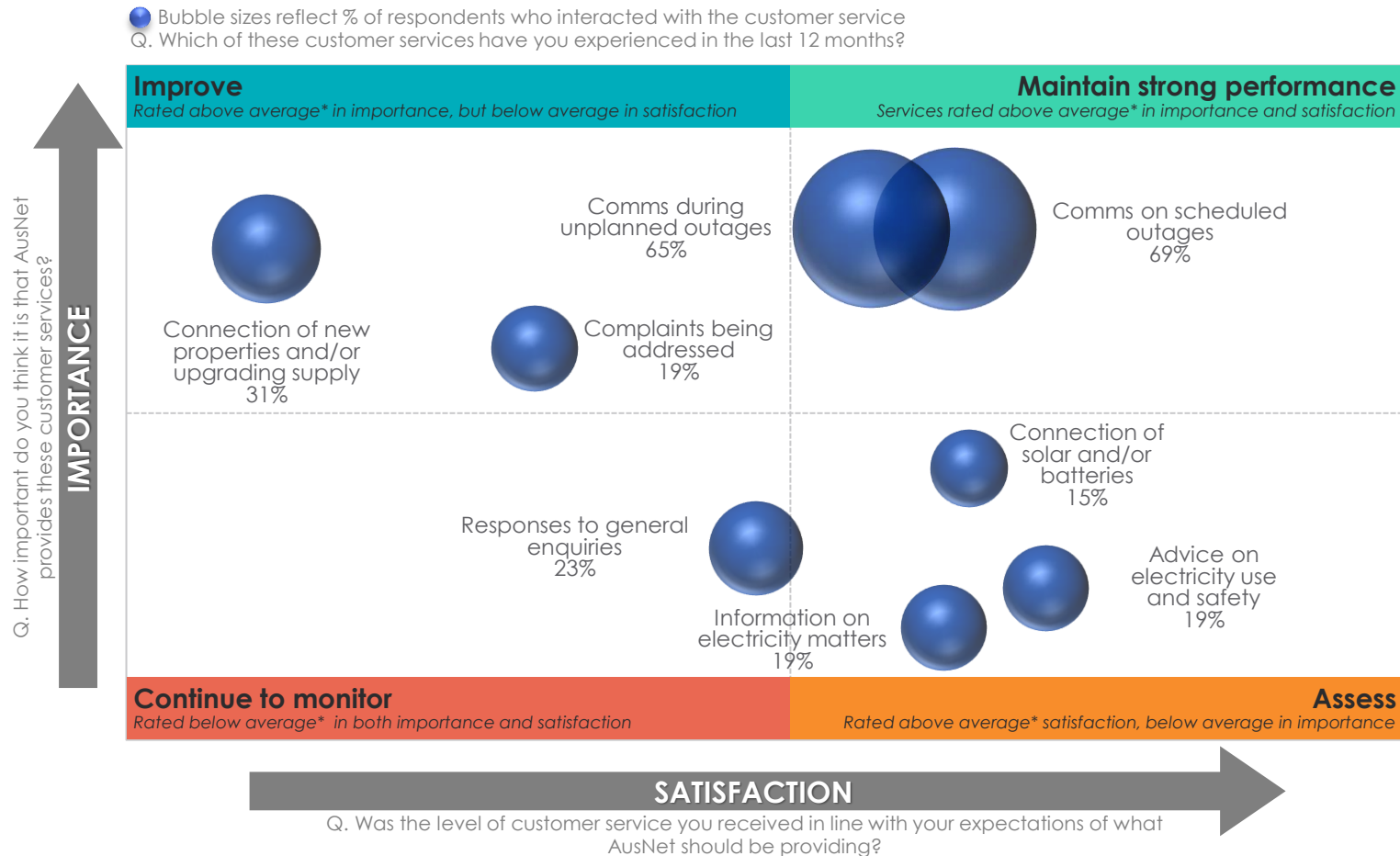
Wangaratta

Summary of findings from Wangaratta workshop

The summary below captures key points from the pages that follow. Please refer to pages 52 to 58 for more information and verbatim quotes from the workshop. The group in Wangaratta discussed three customer service interactions: communication during unplanned outages, communication during planned outages, and customer service received when connecting new properties or upgrading supply.

- Wangaratta customers regarded **communication during unplanned and planned outages as the most important** of AusNet's customer services.
- Customers in Wangaratta connected their properties/upgraded supply more than customers in other locations.
- When discussing **communication during planned outages in 2031...**
 - Wangaratta customers said they expected (as non-negotiables) to receive **as much notification as possible** about the duration, date and time of the outage; for there to be **contact numbers for customers experiencing vulnerability** and for customer service to be **accessible after hours**.
 - On their wish list for 2031, they nominated: **compensation for lost food; information to help with planning** e.g. how to store food; a **certificate** attesting to the duration of the outage (for insurance purposes); **credit** for the duration of the outage; **simple online processes** and **free customer service** i.e. customers should not be charged for phone calls.
- When discussing **communication during unplanned outages in 2031...**
 - Wangaratta customers said they expected (as non-negotiables) to be able **to speak to a real person**; more **accountability from AusNet** (better follow up after an outage); and **continued supply** of power to priority customers.
 - On their wish list for 2031, they nominated: **real-time information** and to **speak to a real person** rather than a chatbot.
- When discussing **connecting new properties/upgrading supply in 2031...**
 - Wangaratta customers said they expected (as non-negotiable) work to **happen when it is supposed to happen**; to be able to **speak to a knowledgeable person**; clear and **fixed quotes**; **contact details** for someone they can speak to if and when needed; **easy to follow connection steps**; **clear and accurate information about costs and timeframes**; **options for people who speak English as a second language** and regular **updates on progress**.
 - On their wish list for 2031, Wangaratta customers **want human service; fewer retailers; continuity of service** (e.g. having a record of interactions); regular progress check ups, **a 'consultancy service' for new builds** where a representative from AusNet visits customers who are building homes and discusses their options for connection; and **increased use of AI**.
- Timing constraints limited discussions on customers' propensity to change when they use appliances. However, we captured some information during the workshop:
 - Some customers would like to change when they use appliances but are **constrained by their working hours**.
 - Customers look to **financial incentives to compensate for the inconvenience** and **investment in purchasing smart appliances**.
 - Others would like information on peak and off-peak times, and appliance electricity consumption, to guide their usage.

Residents in Wangaratta are fairly satisfied with AusNet's communication during outages, even after the extreme weather event



*Average computed via the answers through the 5-point scale Wangaratta (n=24)

- Customers in Wangaratta regarded communication during planned and unplanned outages as the most important customer services delivered by AusNet.
- They were less satisfied with the level of service they received during unplanned outages:
 - "14 hours without power. Communication was not great. Delays kept pushing the connection time. Had no real idea when power was going to come back on."
 - "I was away from my residence during the blackout. I received the text to say my power had been restored but it had not. I arrived home two hours later and it was still off."
- More customers in Wangaratta (31%) connected their new properties to the grid or upgraded their supply, compared to customers in other locations. However, of the customer services they had experienced, they were least satisfied with the customer service they received when connecting/upgrading.

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during unplanned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Be able to talk to a real person
- More accountability from AusNet – follow up procedures after an outage
- Continue keeping power on to priority customers e.g. on life support

What customers said

- *“A non-negotiable is being able to talk to someone...human interaction.”*
- *“They just kept pushing back the time and I had to go and borrow a generator just to keep my food...and there’s was no compensation for that. There’s no accountability.”*
- *“If they had told me straight up that your power is going to be out for 14 hours I would have done different things. And then they had no accountability for that.”*

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Up to date information in real-time e.g. the Domino's pizza tracker
- Speak to a real person rather than a chatbot
- Take customer's information at the beginning of a call so they can call back if the signal drops out

What customers said

- *“Up to date information available online...should be constant...like the pizza tracker...your electricity will be arriving in eight minutes.”*
- *“Ensure it doesn't become like a government agency call centre.”*
- *“Don't want to upgrade to all this automatic shit...you go through all these options and you get two automated options and its not even what you want...or when you're talking to someone and the line cuts out and then you have to ring up all over again.”*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? “It'd be great if...” (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during planned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Provide notification with reasonable time including details e.g. what time, date and for how long
- Contact number for priority/customers experiencing vulnerability
- Customer service available outside work hours

What customers said

- *"I expect to be notified...with plenty of time...as advanced as you can possibly get."*
- *"People who are on life machines...there should be a contact number you can ring if you have any concerns...like an emergency or priority number."*
- *"A lot of people work during the day and don't get home till 6 or 7pm and they don't have a chance to speak to someone to solve an issue...so extended hours."*
- *"Reasonable time...I might say a week, someone might say I need a month, someone might say I need three days, someone might say I need an hour...as early as possible."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Compensation for lost food
- Information to help with planning e.g. storing large quantities of food
- Certificate of outage recognised by the insurance companies
- Credit for the time the power was out
- Simplify online procedures
- Customer service should be a free service
- You should be able to call and speak to a person in AusNet
- Use video calls so customers can show problems/issues

What customers said

- *"I want to know if I've a function...and I don't want to lose all my food...if they can let us know where I can save it...like a cool room."*
- *"Let's put in compensation for lost food...some people said that their insurance covered it but others did not."*
- *"A certificate to prove that it was out for a such and such a time with a section number on it and an invoice number so you can refer it to insurance."*
- *"To get a credit on your daily rate...a lot of people would like discount."*
- *"Make it easy...not like these people at the moment...you get online and you can be there for three hours...like Qantas...all their customer service is overseas...I wish they were all in Australia."*
- *"Free to call customer service...calls shouldn't be at the customer's expense."*
- *"It would be great if you could actually speak to a person. You used to be able to call and speak to someone and have your problem solved in a minute."*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: connecting new properties or upgrading supply

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Time sensitive – work happens when it is supposed to happen
- Talk to a person and get our answers immediately
- Clear quotes that don't change before the job gets done
- Contact details for someone you can call if something needs to change

What customers said

- *"I think the connection of a property should be addressed by an actual person."*
- *"If they say it's going to be done on Monday you don't want to be still be waiting on Friday."*
- *"You're working with other tradies so you don't want to be told it's going to be done Tuesday and it's still not there on Friday afternoon."*
- *"You don't their quotes to go up after six months after you've already started."*

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Extra quick service
- Human service – want to talk to someone who knows what they're talking about
- A mail out not just email
- Reduction in the number of retailers – conducive to more competition
- Reliability for the times of the service itself
- Continuity of service
- A progress check up to see how the works are actually going

What customers said

- *"The quicker they can come to my house and fix things the better."*
- *"More human connection...less AI...want to talk to talk to someone that knows what they're talking about."*
- *"Instead of just getting your documentation by email...older people would sometimes prefer a mailout...we're hoping for a free one."*
- *"It doesn't matter who you ring up and speak to they can just get your property number and they know exactly what has been said before and what has been done."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: connecting new properties or upgrading supply

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Easy to follow connection steps – information describing the exact process you have to go through to get a property connected
- Clear and accurate information about costs and timeframes
- Timely responses if we're requesting connections or have questions
- Someone to talk to who is knowledgeable on connections – staff who are specialised in these issues
- Updates on progress of connections
- Options for people who speak English as a second language

What customers said

- *"Clearly outline steps as to how that occurs...why do I do..."*
- *"Someone who is knowledgeable on these sorts of things...I don't want to be on the phone for 20 minutes talking to someone about upgrading to 3 phase only to find out no you can't do that."*
- *"We want options for people who...English might be a second language...translation services so all people can access services."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- AusNet records customer history so when you call they know and you don't have to retell your story
- Options to organise new connections online and options for people who prefer a phone call
- A consultancy service for a new build
- Increased use of AI to get specialised knowledge quickly
- Increasing use of video calls to be able to reach people

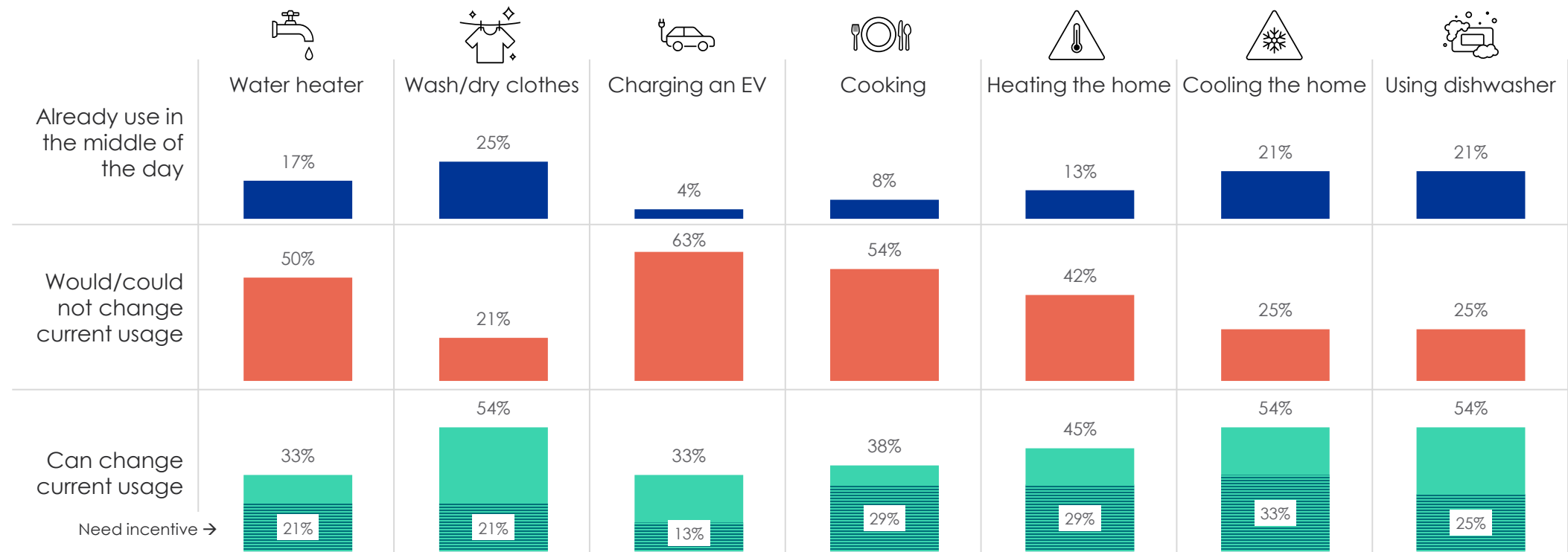
What customers said

- *"If I call six hours later and I said my power is still not on...I'm getting different answers from different people...there should be a record."*
- *"It'd be great if you could do it online" and..."you need to be able to actually talk to someone as well."*
- *"If I moved into a property that has had issues before...can you guys see that beforehand...that this property has had issues before with their power supply you could then judge what I needed for the future to make our lives better...so that they don't have to go through the whole thing again."*
- *"Can you make it a part of a package of starting a new build...a rep from AusNet comes and tells you your options...this is what you're doing...ten or fifteen minutes face to face and you make sure you have everything ticked off."*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Wangaratta customers demonstrate the highest propensity to change usage of laundry appliances, cooling and dishwasher

- Some (a small number) in Wangaratta have already changed when they use their appliances. Among those who haven't, the propensity to change is reasonably high for most appliances. Most are willing to change when they do their laundry, cool their homes and use the dishwasher. Less than half are willing to change when they use other appliances but an incentive is likely to help for some (up to a third).



Wangaratta (n=24)

Q. How willing and able are you to move most of your household usage of appliances to the middle of the day (e.g. 10am to 4pm) to maximise the use of solar energy?

Q. Would you need information/incentives to make this change? (asked among those who can change current usage)

How did customers in Wangaratta respond to questions about flexibility?

Willingness to move usage to the middle of the day

Customers are willing to change when they use appliances but they are constrained by their work schedules. Some feel they cannot change when they use some (essential) appliances.

Information/incentives to make this change

Some customers requested more information about peak and off-peak times (when electricity is cheaper). Others suggested that tips for easy-to-cook meals and/or information about the most power-hungry appliances would help with how and when they used appliances.

Others mentioned a monetary incentive to compensate for any inconvenience caused or investments made purchasing smart appliances.

What customers said

"I'd love to use electricity between 10-4pm, but it's not practical.

"It's fine for those who don't work. But others can't take advantage of it."

"Apparently there are some power companies that have peak and off-peak at different times, so maybe you can find an energy provider that allows you to use more electricity between 8 at night and 8 in the morning, it might be cheaper from that company than others."

"If that were the case I'd do my washing at night, but I work from 6 in the morning until 4.30, so I miss out on any cheap electricity."

"You can't do that for hot water. But maybe we can if we have gas anyway."

"I have solar, so this is not relevant."

What customers said

"I need more info, then incentive."

"I need the information to know that these times are the right/cheaper times to use my appliances."

"Money rebate. Spent a huge amount of money buying efficient appliances. If you want me to do my laundry during the day when nobody is home and have the foresight to set the timers, and get up earlier to organise it. You'd have to pay me to do it."

"An appliance that I can turn on and off from my phone. I would like to cook during the day when I'm at work but not sure how this would work."

"Just some advice or easy tip meals. What uses the most electricity? Am I best to cook everything Sunday in the day and then heat it up at night? Should I put it in the oven? Just more advice!"

"Absolutely need an incentive because it's very inconvenient."

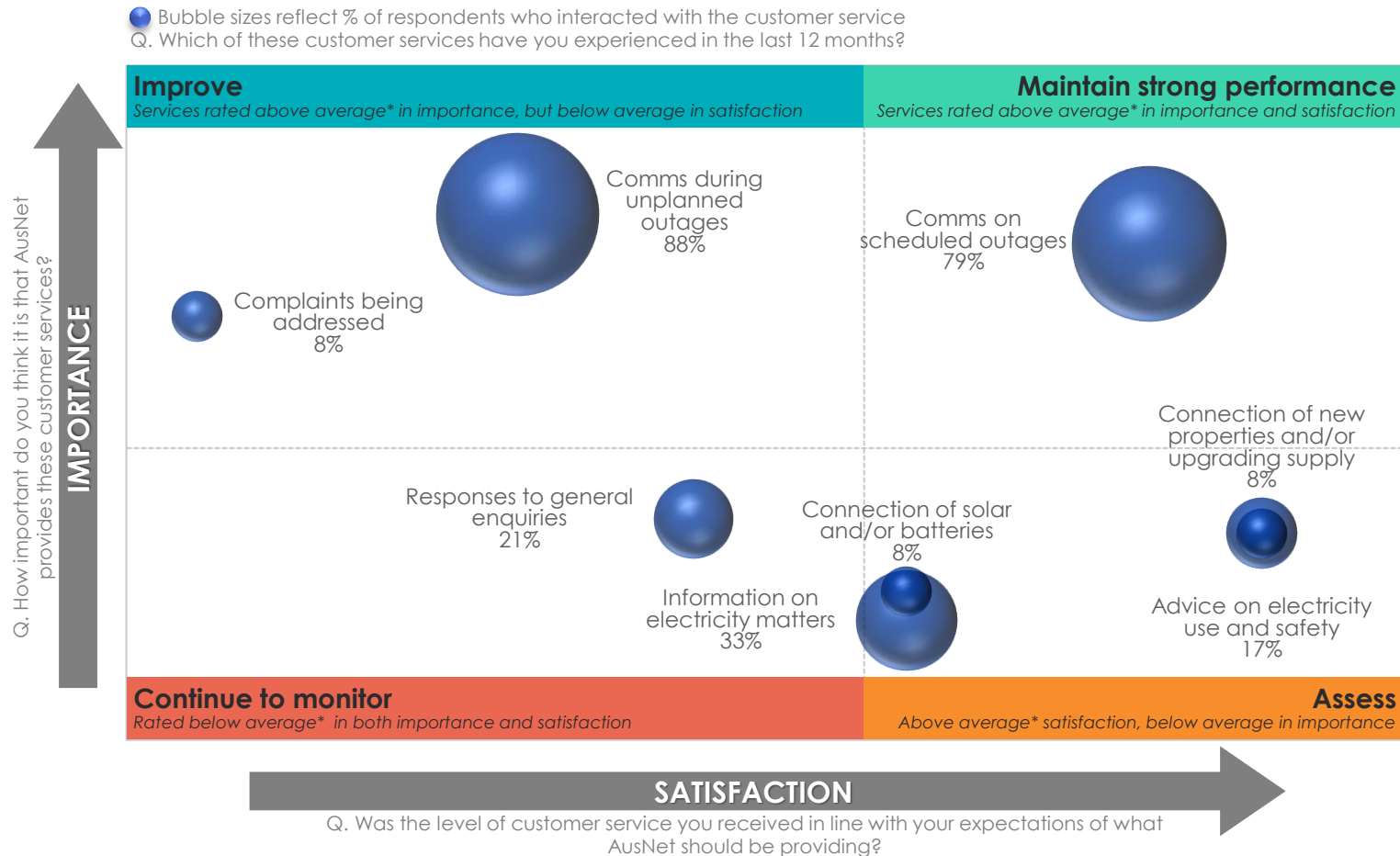
Online (residential customers)

Summary of findings from online residential workshop

The summary below captures key points from the pages that follow. Please refer to pages 61 to 66 for more information and verbatim quotes from the workshop. The online residential group discussed three customer service interactions: communication during a major disaster, communication during planned outages, and customer service received when having complaints addressed.

- Customers were **less satisfied with the communication they received during unplanned outages** than customers in other groups. Another key difference between this group and the others was that they were **satisfied with the level of service they received when connecting a new property/upgrading supply**.
- When asked for suggestions for how best to communicate with customers **during a major disaster** customers suggested:
 - Using **radio** (although customers accepted that not all would be tuning into radio), gatherings in **community halls**, using existing **emergency communication infrastructure** e.g. the Emergency Vic app, communicating through **existing groups** e.g. local council, **making AusNet staff available** and visible in community e.g. in shopping centres, and ensuring that the community can report issues.
- When discussing **communication during planned outages in 2031...**
 - Customers expected (as non-negotiables) to have **multiple points of contact**; regular **reminders** of when outages would take place; that AusNet would **communicate with essential services** e.g. doctors and supermarkets to ensure services were not disrupted; and **emergency communications via SMS**.
 - On their wish list for 2031, customers want **options for when a planned outage should take place** e.g. they want to have a say via a poll; clear **communication about services** e.g. medical services; a **greater social media presence**; **personal service** for the elderly and those who are not tech-savvy; a **live tracker** e.g. like Uber; and **financial penalties** for AusNet if it doesn't meet KPIs.
- When discussing customer service when **addressing complaints in 2031...**
 - Customers said they expected (as non-negotiable) to easily contact AusNet via **different channels** (catering for people with different capabilities; clear **communication about how long it'd take to resolve** the complaint, **compassionate responses** from AusNet customer service professionals; for each complaint to be dealt with **on its own merits**; and for people to be **connected with welfare services** during an emergency.
 - On their wish list for 2031, customers want communication options **i.e. multiple channels through which they can reach AusNet**; for **messages to be sent directly to smart meters**; and **TV takeovers** during an emergency.
- Due to time constraint, appliance **flexibility was not discussed**. However, some participants were able to share their thoughts and sentiments, via their individual surveys. Generally, people find moving their appliance usage to the prescribed time is inconvenient and therefore require an incentive to compensate for this. Financial **compensation range from \$100 to \$300 a month**, or a direct rebate in their bill.

Residential customers in the online session had the highest level of interaction, and lowest satisfaction, with communication during blackouts



- Customers said they weren't satisfied with the level of service received during blackouts because of inaccuracy and lack of clarity:
 - "The only way I could get info was from the Facebook updates because the AusNet sites were down. But it was always the same type of vague post."
 - "Frustrating to get general messages without timeframes. Power came back 26 hours later but it was a surprise. Would have been good to be notified as it was an anxious time."
- Customers were least satisfied with the service they received when having their complaints addressed.
- A clear point of difference between customers in this group and the other workshops is that they were happy with the level of service received when connecting a new property/upgrading supply.

*Average computed via the answers through the 5-point scale
 Online residential (n=24)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during a major disaster

Please note: this session was run differently i.e. not requiring participants to discuss non-negotiables and a wish list. Customers were asked how AusNet can best communicate with customers when traditional digital communications are down?

Key themes

- Radio, community halls, using existing communication channels through things like the Emergency Vic app, make sure AusNet is speaking to other groups who communicate during events e.g. councils, and making sure community can report in issues e.g. trees down, and how we best use AusNet staff e.g. office staff who may not be involved in an outage – AusNet staff should be present in the community

What customers said

- *“AusNet staff should be present in the communities maybe stationed outside key shops ...and other areas that get a lot of foot traffic so that staff can share key messages, direct people to help as they need it and also be there to hear stories and make sure people are able to get help.”*
- *“To have updates on radio stations...so you can get in your car and tune in.”*
- *“You could link into the emergency channels like they do if there is a fire warning...that’s AM/FM emergency broadcast network.”*
- *“We’ve become so reliant on tech that everybody goes to Facebook and then when that goes down nobody knows what to do with themselves.” (so radio should have to be advertised)*
- *“Most people have access to community halls. People want to be reassured about what can they do...”*
- *“I’ve lived in places where it can be hard to reach community centres even...I’m struggling to find a solution in this situation.”*
- *“What about more communication with the council to get the council to do more of the legwork for AusNet? Have people go around and actually see people”*
- *“Even the Emergency Victoria app...you can get information put onto that.”*
- *“There used to be one (app)...where community can report things themselves...I really miss that.”*
- *“You’d exclude a lot of people if you were depending on it (Facebook).”*
- *“I don’t know where to go for any of this information...there needs to be something more proactive...if something happens...go to this resource.”*
- *“I don’t think you should feel like you should be high-tech to be helped.”*
- *“If you’re asking what staff can do... get them out into the area and have a booth set up and just be there to hear people’s stories or to direct them to where to go to get help. You’re not having to rely on technology to find someone. It’s well known...they will be at these big centres.”*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during planned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Having multiple points of contact e.g. email, phone, Facebook
- Reminders for outages – a text message a day before
- Communicate outages to essential services e.g. doctors and supermarkets
- Emergency communication by SMS

What customers said

- *“We just need to improve our communication overall. And keep our human contact especially.”*
- *“An absolute...there needs to be communication across all mediums...via email, text message, via social media to an area...because you can segregate clients via Facebook by postcode.”*
- *“For elderly people who might not be with it...it should be by paper also for some people...but by all means possible.”*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Providing options for timing of the outages e.g. a poll
- Providing communication on services e.g. food services, medical services
- AusNet should have greater social media presence
- Personal service to elderly and non-tech savvy
- A live tracker of your outage e.g. Uber
- Financial penalties to AusNet for not meeting KPIs

What customers said

- *“They should provide options. If you have this medical need then you should go to this place.”*
- *“If the customer could be given an option...like option A your power could be out on this day...option B on this day...if most people have chosen option B then you go with option B...there's just certain days when it's super annoying and the option to choose would be nice.”*
- *“To be well informed on multiple platforms and be able to speak to a real human at AusNet if need be and to have a backup mobile network for safety and for the vulnerable.”*
- *“There should be a significant focus on assisting the vulnerable...so having face to face contact with them...I think that's key especially with our ageing and growing...retain the human contact.”*
- *“A greater social media presence...AusNet doesn't have an Instagram account. And having educational videos so people can watch...so what do I do if there is a planned outage coming, how do I check if the planned outage is still going ahead...”*
- *“Having a three point of contact per person per household to be kept well informed about outages.”*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? “It'd be great if...” (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: addressing complaints

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Ease of contact – catering to people with different capabilities
- Clear communication about how long it will take to resolve a complaint
- Responses should be compassionate
- Each complaint should be dealt with on its own merits i.e. not a cookie cutter approach
- Connect people with welfare services in an emergency

What customers said

- *“You need to know when to expect a response and then you have to expect that response by that period. There should be an automatic reply to acknowledge and then they should come back within 24 to 48 hours.”*
- *“When you're making the complaint there should be a variety of ways for you to submit the complaint...we all have different ages and tech backgrounds. And then I want to see compassion, I don't want to hear excuses and I don't want them to be rude.”*
- *“The complaint is done at an individual level so it needs an individual response. We can't have a cookie cutter response where you go well this falls into this category so you just do this. Humans need to be treated like humans not numbers.”*
- *“You need to have someone there not just a chatbot.”*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- All options to contact AusNet catered for
- Messages being sent to smart meters
- TV takeovers during an emergency

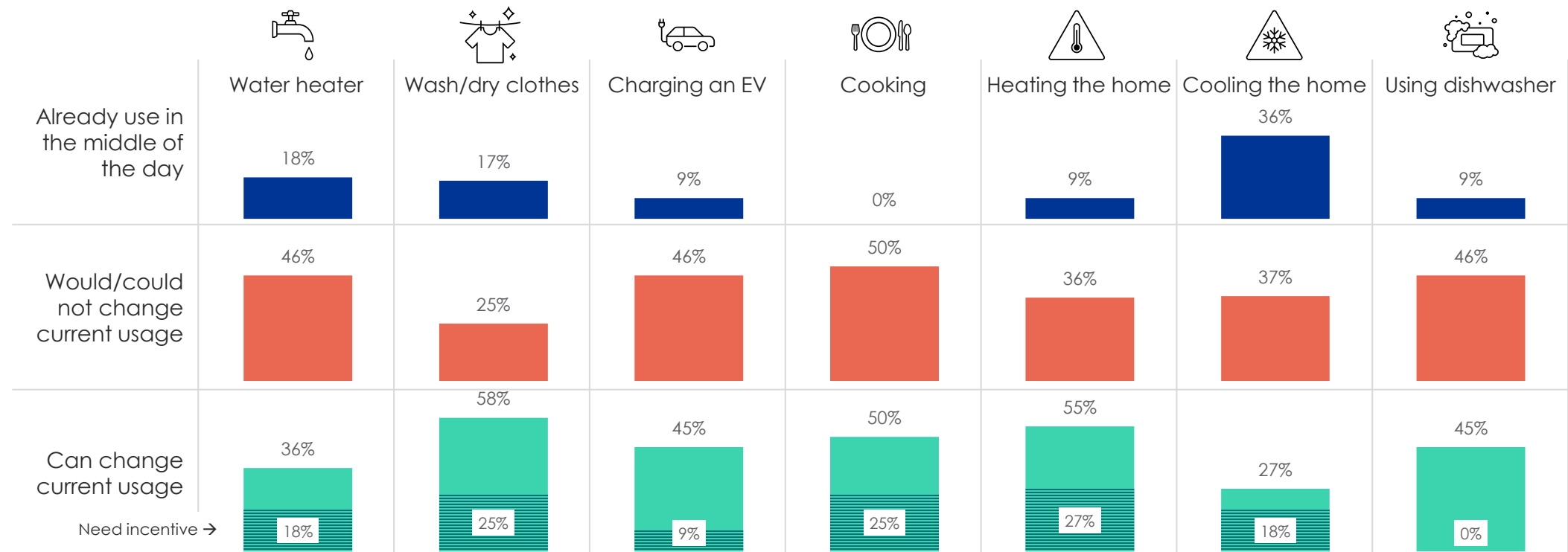
What customers said

- *“Ways of making contact. If you provide me with a choice that would be really helpful particularly if it's 24/7.”*
- *“I expect that by 2031 that they can control of your TV (to deliver a message)”*
- *“It would be good to use communication through smart meters.”*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? “It'd be great if...” (create your wish list)

Customers have a higher propensity to change their laundry usage times, heating and cooling the home

- Some have already made changes to their usage behaviour but the highest propensity for change is with laundry habits, heating and cooling. Around a quarter are looking for an incentive to help with such changes.



Online residential (n=12): Lower sample size due to time constraint

Q. How willing and able are you to move most of your household usage of appliances to the middle of the day (e.g. 10am to 4pm) to maximise the use of solar energy?

Q. Would you need information/incentives to make this change? (asked among those who can change current usage)

How did residential customers (online) respond to questions about flexibility?

Please note: flexibility was not discussed during this workshop to allow for the conversation about the weather event on February 12. However, we've included excerpts from answers to questions in individual surveys.

Willingness to move usage to the middle of the day and information/incentives to make the change

The few who responded indicated that a change would be inconvenient for them so a considerable incentive would be needed (\$100 per month) to compensate for the inconvenience.

What customers said

"I prefer to wash overnight. So to switch to the middle of the day is most inconvenient. I'd need to be shown why it would be better for me."

"Reduction on bills as I typically wake at 10am-12pm and don't consume a cooked meal until 10pm."

"% discount on energy."



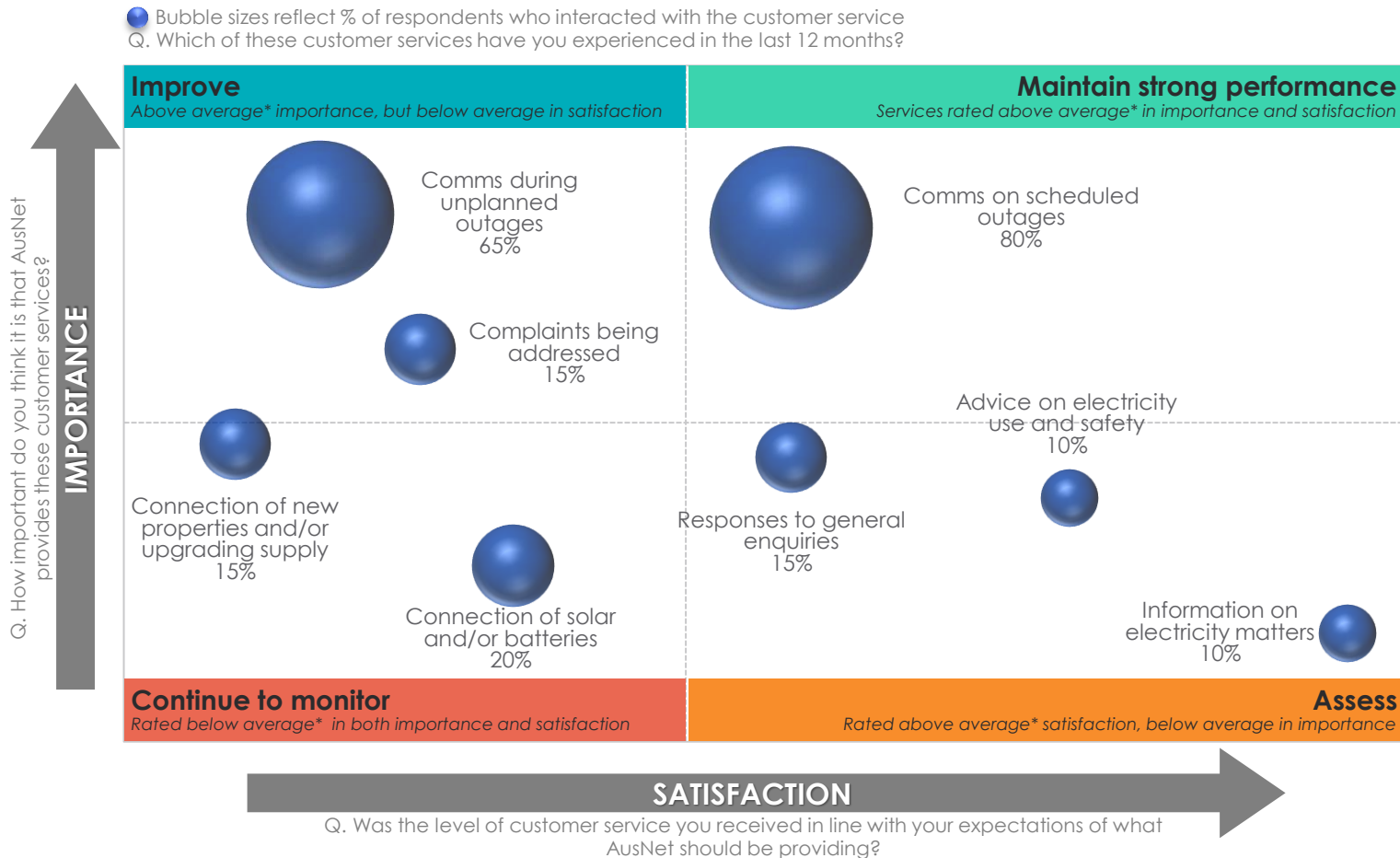
03 Business customers

Summary of findings from online business workshop

The summary below captures key points from the pages that follow. Please refer to pages 69 to 74 for more information and verbatim quotes from the workshop. The business group discussed three customer service interactions: communication during an unplanned outage, communication during planned outages, and customer service received when having complaints addressed.

- Business customers identified a need for improvement in **communication during unplanned outages**. This is critical for businesses because being kept in the dark impacts productivity, decision making and ultimately leads to lost income.
- When discussing **communication during unplanned outages in 2031...**
 - Business customers expect (as non-negotiables) to be able to access **fast, accurate and transparent information** through their preferred touchpoint which includes human and digital options. They need to know what's happening in order to make effective decisions and minimise the impact to them, their employees and their business.
 - On their wish list for 2031, they want **real-time accurate information (i.e. AI App)** and the ability to **access storage/back up electricity supply**.
- Views on performance of **planned outages** were fairly positive and they encouraged AusNet to maintain these performance standards. When discussing **communication during planned outages in 2031...**
 - Business customers expect (as non-negotiables) **plenty of notice and transparency** about the duration, date and time of the outage with stable and consistent messaging in the lead up and during the outage.
 - On their wish list for 2031, they nominated **compensation for lost time working** and an **AI App with real time information and two-way communication capabilities** (which will keep them adequately informed and provide reassurance).
- There is scope to improve how AusNet handles complaints. Our discussion about **addressing complaints revealed:**
 - Business customers expect (as non-negotiable) to **speak to a knowledgeable person**; who can **respond quickly** to their needs. They would also like the option of **speaking to a real person** but a chatbot could be helpful for less complex issues.
 - On their wish list for 2031, business customers **want faster resolution times** and being kept up to date with progress, possibly through use of an **AI app with two-way digital communication capabilities**.
- There was a reasonably strong propensity to change among business customers. This is not surprising given most of their operating hours tend to be during the day. Some have already made changes (approximately 20%) and among the rest, over half identified they are willing to change. Not many required incentives but for the few who did, they were looking for at least a 25% rebate, 25% discount, or up to \$100 off.

Business customers find AusNet's communication during scheduled outages to be strong, but want to see improvements with communication for unplanned outages and handling complaints.



*Average computed via the answers through the 5-point scale
 Online business (n=20)

Business customers are seeking improvement from AusNet with their communication during unplanned outages. Some mentioned they did not hear from AusNet at all, the communication was sparse, inconsistent or unclear. **Clarity needs to be prioritised.**

- “During the blackout I did not receive a text for a while letting me know when the power would be restored.”
- “I wasn't aware of the outage until a client told me. I heard nothing from AusNet.”
- “No communication or apology for issues with loss of power or updates... website not working either.”
- “There was a complete lack of communication re. the blackout.”
- “Lack of updates as to the reason for the outages.”
- “They often can't answer questions you have.”
- “We were told two hours. It was 8 hours.”
- “Information and what I needed to do re. My solar installation was clunky, complex and not explained clearly in a layman's understandable form.”
- “The time in between having solar panels installed and inspector sign off was long.”

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during unplanned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Proactive and fast communication through several different channels like social media, email, SMS.
- Provide details about to why the power is out
- Under promise/over deliver with ETA of when power will come back on
- Regular updates throughout the outage (if a long outage)
- Speaking with a real person, that can answer questions, without being automatic prompts, AI or someone in another country.

What customers said

- "I like being able to speak to a real person. Old school me would like to be able to pick the phone and speak to someone"
- Number 1, real life person. And a phone number. If its an outage, its very important."
- "Have the number really prominent so you contact someone, the amount of times I go on a website and can't find a number."
- "During an outage definitely want to speak to someone rather than a chat, I hate being on chat rooms, especially when I'm uninformed, I need help to guide which way to go."

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Provide options to customers
- Detailed and immediate communication about the issue and what has caused it
- Storage and backup of electricity can be accessed

What customers said

- "I'd love for there to be options. I have non verbal clients and they may benefit from digital app. If want to speak to a person, number to call, and if not there is a digital app and if not they are proactively letting us know about outages from several avenues, email, SMS and social media."
- "Comms that doesn't rely on electricity to get a message out to customers."
- "I love technology, I would like AI to respond to simple enquiries with the option to speak to a real person. Power of AI is great for something simple, when its out of the box, there is nothing more frustrating."
- "An app where you can go in, know location and gives you an answer straight away."
- "Super speed – so fast how the information gets communicated around to customers."
- "Quick response – pop up on the phone. So many algorithms hearing/suggesting things for you, that can come up with an answer."
- "Storage of power that businesses can access."

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: communication during planned outages

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Absolute transparency about why the outage is needed, when and how long
- Ensure plenty of time to rearrange/make plans for the outage
- Not to be any planned outages
- Stability in communication

What customers said

- *"I expect to have at least 2 weeks notice as well as well as a reminder 48 hours before."*
- *"Give us a reason why they are doing an upgrade so it keeps us up to speed about what they're doing."*
- *"Most of the information my business has got is good and it generally gives me time to plan for it but it needs to continue this way so we can pass this information onto customers."*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? "I expect..." (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Offer compensation for lost work due to power outage
- AI app for quick answers to questions.
- Plenty of notice and follow through of upgrade instead of constant notices and no upgrades.

What customers said

- *"You need to avoid the lack of customer support going down the modern technology line It would be great if we can have AI app to answer me 24hrs and give me answer in few seconds."*
- *"24-hour service, I can assess through my app on my phone. So I can get an answer about the outage quickly. Include a timeframe for the outage."*
- *"AI, I don't like it, but would be happy to give it a but then if it can't help, needs to be able to put me onto a person fairly quickly."*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? "It'd be great if..." (create your wish list)

Customer service in 2031 non-negotiables and wish list: addressing complaints

Non-negotiables

When asked to discuss non-negotiables for customer service in 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

- Human Interactions – someone to take the call immediately
- Quick Responses
- Options to speak with a customer service person or a user-friendly AI app for less complex complaints/issues.

What customers said

- *“Actually have a human on the other end, not a AI bot answering questions. If you listen carefully you can distinguish between the two. I understand AI chat and interaction and online is going to be part of our interface, but my expectation is to speak to a person that can give me the emotional responses I’m looking for.”*
- *“A person who lives in Australia who knows what is going on and understands the landscape.”*
- *“When I call an organisation, I want a customer service representative. We really need to have people, if we have them respond to us, we’re not going to get so upset with the responses we get.”*
- *“I had to speak to my bank, first had to speak to a bot then onto a person and it took to long.”*
- *“I’m born in America and I still say things that Australian AI doesn’t understand.”*

Q. Thinking ahead to 2031, what **must** customer service look like? “I expect...” (list of non-negotiables)

Wish list

When asked to come up with a wish list of customer services for 2031, customers nominated the following:

Key themes

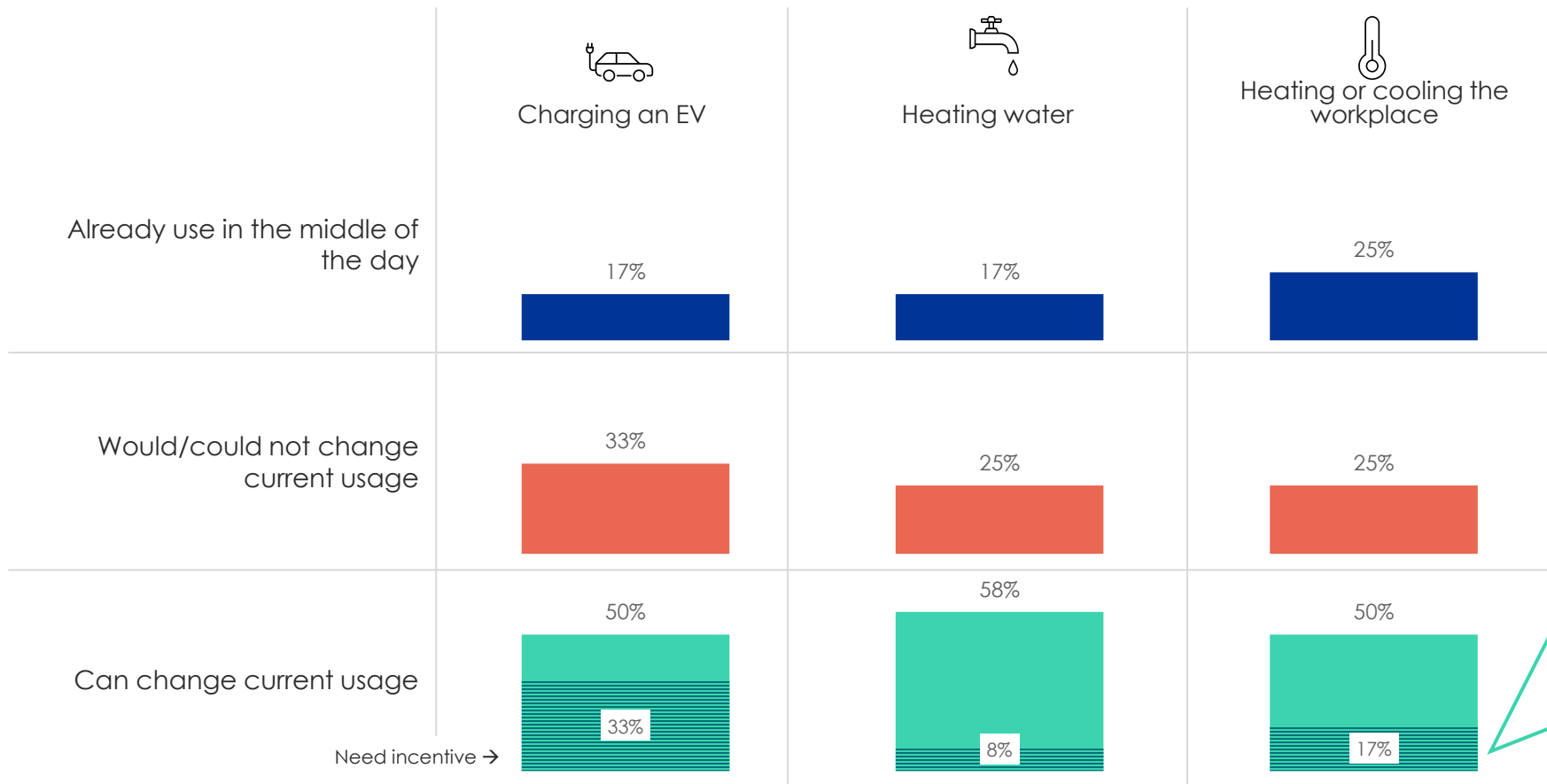
- A resolution time to be provided.
- Fast response to issues logged via SMS/Email notifications – Within about 5 minutes
- Backup systems for outages

What customers said

- *“Some companies don’t tell you how long it will take for a resolution so would like this to be an option.”*
- *“Apple give you scheduled phone calls as an option so to be able to schedule a call back time if needed.”*

Q. What **could** customer service look like in 2031? “It’d be great if...” (create your wish list)

Most business customers expressed a propensity to change usage behaviour. Desire for incentives vary, depending on appliance



Types of incentives (quotes):

Financial

- “45% incentive and information on what the saving would look like.”
- “% back in the form of direct debit into bank account.”
- “25% to 50% of the value.”
- “\$100 per day.”
- “Discount of about 25% to entice me to work harder to get everything done within those times. Or alternatively a better discount to install solar.”

Information

- “The ability to store the electricity for later use (in the evening).”
- “Would like to know when its cheaper to use these appliances At the end of the day if I need to use these I will.”

Online business (n=20)

Q. How willing and able are you to move most of your business' usage of appliances to the middle of the day (e.g. 10am to 4pm) to maximise the use of solar energy?

Q. Would you need information/incentives to make this change? (asked among those who can change current usage)

How did business customers responded to questions about flexibility?

Willingness to move usage to the middle of the day

Most business owners are willing to shift their power usage with some conditions:

- Batteries are provided so they can store unused electricity and use that in the peak times when energy is required by the business.
- If scheduling or usage times were very flexible, depending on business performance.

Among the rest, the propensity to change varies, depending on appliance type but some aren't willing to change their usage at all.

What customers said

"Yes, if there was another option for me to store that electricity, so I would need to use my electricity at certain times of the day and at certain times of the year. That's a non-negotiable, but what I would be prepared to do is if I have battery backup."

"If [batteries] is something you could offer as a service, then, Yes, I would be. But if I couldn't have that as an option, then it would be difficult for me to do it."

"I will not move usage, not without storage."

"I have some flexibility, but not all."

"I could shift my usage with some inconvenience depending on what I needed it for. Heating and cooling would be viable. However an EV would be needed during those hours."

"If it was something which was very flexible, you could choose which day and which hour, rather than having a set period like there might be some days where I could easily shift that business usage, and there's others where I couldn't, so I wouldn't want to be locked into some sort of weekly schedule."

"I want as much energy as I want at any time, and am willing to pay for it."

Information/incentives to make this change

A financial incentive may encourage business owners to use appliances at a certain time, but this depends on business performance and capacity at that time. Rebates or discounts of around 25% are desired.

Other suggested incentives include:

- Help with setting-up solar for businesses
- Discounted rates on solar installation
- Offering discounted batteries

What customers said

"It [a financial incentive] would be attractive. I couldn't give you an X dollar figure, cause it would really depend on what my business is doing at the time, and the capacity that I would need to store."

"I don't know but maybe the incentive is people can purchase solar out of heavily discounted rate."

"A percentage of the bill, rather than an amount."

"Able to shift energy usage for sure, and would do so if there was financial incentive, but would need to have the flexibility of choosing the days/hours and be able to change it at the last minute if our circumstances change."

"Yes, I have already moved most of my office usage to between 9.30am and 4pm. I have solar and my energy provider is a solar energy provider so I am using 90% green energy. I am moving into a shop on Phillip Island and am looking at solar which is a cost of \$4000 for a 6kw system and a 3 year plan to have battery backup off grid. Assistance with setup for small business would be greatly appreciated."

Appendix

- Recruitment methodology
- Sample details for residential participants
- Sample details for business participants
- Feedback from participants

Recruitment methodology

We spoke to 109 customers in five workshops

SenateSHJ worked with a professional research recruitment agency, [Focus People](#), to source participants. Most were recruited from their research panel, but a small selection were sourced through AusNet's Research and Engagement Panel network.

Due to the weather event on 13 February, we had to cancel and reschedule four of the five workshops which may have had an impact on overall attendance.

Residential (89 customers)

Business (20 customers)

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Morwell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday 12 February 21 customers Morwell Bowls Club 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Wangaratta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 12 March 24 customers Wangaratta Performing Arts and Convention Centre 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuesday 19 March 24 customers Hosted on Zoom 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Epping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wednesday 20 March 20 customers Epping RSL 	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: 1.2em;">Online</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monday 18 March 20 customers Hosted on Zoom
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Gender	Total sample (n=89)
Male	41%
Female	59%

Age	Total sample (n=89)
Under 30	10%
30-39	37%
40-49	29%
50-59	16%
60+	8%

Location	Total sample (n=89)
Metropolitan	33%
Regional	49%
Rural/Remote	18%

- Self-employed – 52%
 - 1 to 4 staff – 24%
 - 5 to 19 staff – 14%
 - 20+ staff – 10%
-
- Metro – 62%
 - Regional – 33%
 - Rural/Remote – 5%

Summary of residential workshop participants

A total of 89 residential customers attended these workshops and the sample included:

- a mix by gender (59% female, 41% male), age (47% aged under 40 and 53% aged 40+) and location (33% metropolitan, 48% regional and 18% rural/remote).
- 34% held one or more concessions, some had a disability (9%), health condition (12%), spoke a language other than English at home (10%) and two participants were Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander.

We sought a mix of family and work situations, home ownership status and gross household income.

Looking at participants' electricity and gas consumption, we found over a third (40%) have solar panels on the roof of their home, most use gas (92%) but few drive electric vehicles (3%).

Electricity usage typically increases as the day progresses and is heaviest in the mid afternoon through to evenings. Attitudinally we heard that the majority actively try to reduce household energy consumption and think it's important to move towards sustainable energy sources to reduce our impact on the environment, however only some (18%) intend to stop using gas in future.

A more detailed breakdown of participants is provided in the next section.



Summary of business workshop participants

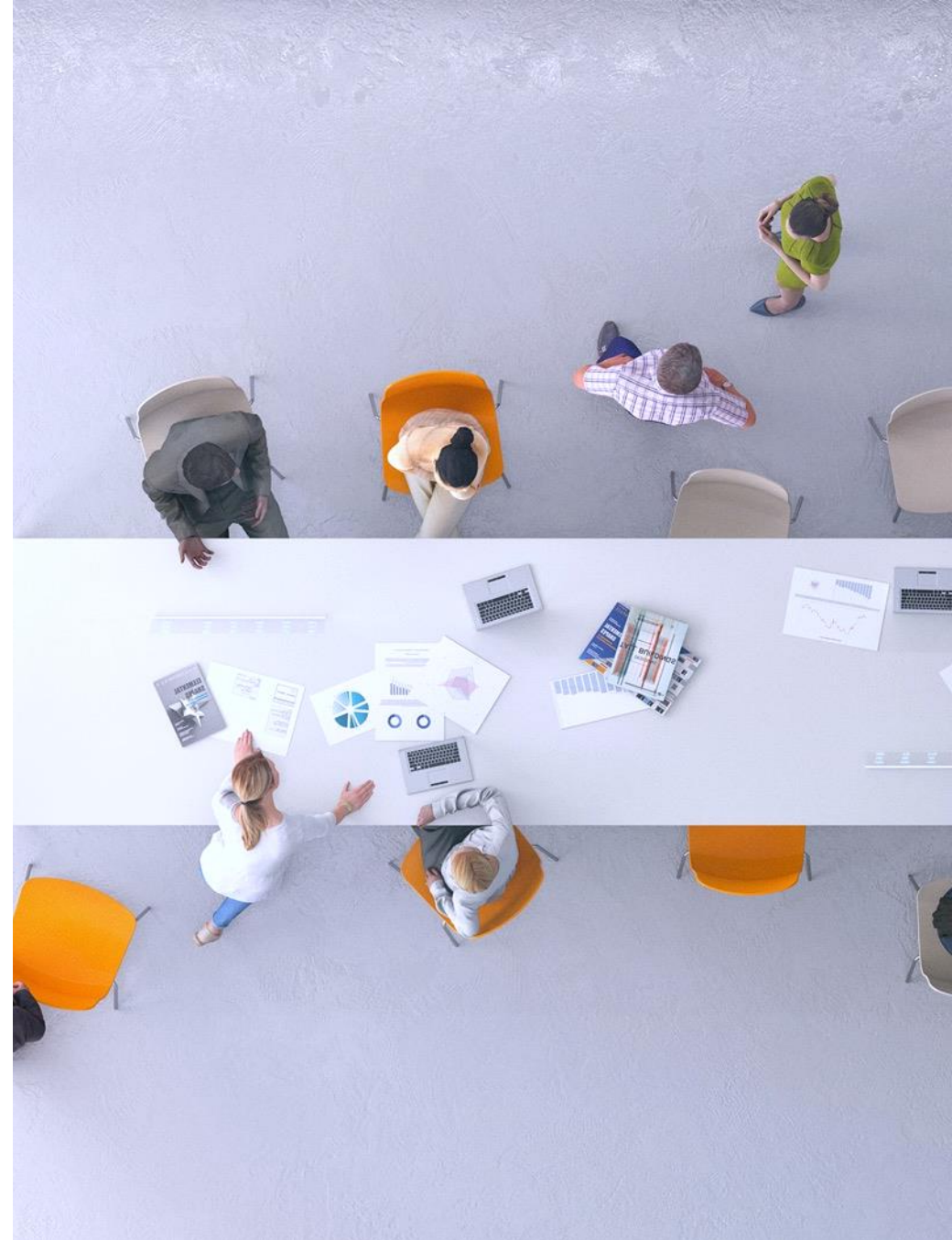
20 business owners/operators attended the online session. This group consisted of:

- A mix of self-employed (52%), and businesses who employ staff (24% with 1-4 staff, 14% with 5-19 staff and 10% with 20+ staff), operating across a range of industries/sectors.
- A spread by gender (52% female, 48% male), age (53% under 50 and 47% aged 50+) and location (62% metro, 33% regional and 5% rural/remote).
- People with different levels of education, with 51% having a tertiary education. A little under half (43%) are still paying their mortgage, while 33% own their home outright.
- Businesses mostly rely on electricity for their business operations (62% use electricity exclusively). A little under half have solar panels on the roof of their business premises (48%), and about one owns/operate an electric vehicle on behalf of the business.

During recruitment, it was noted that:

- Businesses' electricity use is highest during mid-morning to noon and wanes throughout the rest of the day.
- Owners/operators generally try to reduce business energy consumption and think it's important to move to sustainable energy sources to reduce the impact on the environment.
- A third (33%) of businesses who are currently using gas to operate appliances/ machinery, intend to stop using it in future.

A more detailed breakdown of participants is provided in the Appendix.



Sample details for residential participants

A total of 89 residents attended the workshops in Round 3

- 21 in Morwell
- 20 in Epping
- 24 in Wangaratta
- 24 in the online session

The following slides are an overview of the information collected during recruitment.

Gender, age and location

Gender	Total sample (n=89)
Male	59%
Female	41%

Age	Total sample (n=89)
Under 30	10%
30-39	37%
40-49	29%
50-59	16%
60+	8%

Location	Total sample (n=89)
Metropolitan	33%
Regional	49%
Rural/Remote	18%

Notes:
Rounding occurs
Total sample n=89

Concessions and suburb

Concessions	Total sample* (n=89)
Holds one or more concessions	34%
Has a chronic health condition	12%
Speaks a language other than English at home	10%
Has a disability	9%
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background	2%
None of the above	48%
Prefer not to say	2%

* **Note:** Multiple responses allowed

Notes:
Rounding occurs
Total sample n=89

Main suburbs	Total sample (n=89)
Wangaratta	22%
Traralgon	11%
Epping	10%
Morwell	10%
Mernda	5%

Other suburbs (2% or less)		
Bairnsdale	Ferntree Gully	Narre Warren
Bayswater north	Glenrowan	Newborough
Berwick	Gormandale	Ringwood East
Boronia	Hazelwood North	Sale
Boweya	Healesville	Seaview
Broadford	Kilmore	Tawonga South
Chruchill	Kilsyth	The Basin
Churchill	Laceby	Thomastown
Column n	Lucknow	Trafalgar
Croydon	Mickleham	Wantirna South
Doreen	Moe	Warragul
Euroa	Mooroolbark	Wollert

Household situation, gross household income, work status and home ownership status

Household situation	Total sample (n=89)
Couple with children at home	52%
Living alone	14%
Single parent with children at home	10%
Couple with no children	9%
Couple whose children have left home	8%
Living with housemates/other family	5%
Single with adult children at home	1%
Prefer not to say	1%

Gross Household Income (before tax)	Total sample (n=89)
Less than \$50,000	20%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	35%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	25%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	13%
\$200,000 +	4%
Prefer not to say	3%

Occupation	Total sample (n=89)
Employed full-time	47%
Self-employed	8%
Employed part-time/casual	18%
Engaged in home duties	7%
Not employed at the moment	7%
Retired/Semi retired	10%
Student	2%
Prefer not to say	1%

Home ownership status	Total sample (n=89)
Have a mortgage (still paying it off)	57%
Rent	25%
Own the home outright (no mortgage)	17%
Live with parents	1%

Notes: Rounding occurs. Total sample n=89

Electricity and gas behaviour and consumption

Role in the decision-making and administration of your electricity supply	Total sample (n=89)
I am the main person in my household	77%
I share the decision-making and administration with others in my household	23%

Drive an electric vehicle	Total sample (n=89)
Yes	3%
No	97%

Have solar panels on the roof of your home?	Total sample (n=89)
Yes	40%
No	60%

Use gas in your household for heating, cooking, etc.	Total sample (n=89)
Yes, we use mains gas	84%
Yes, we use bottled gas	8%
No, we use electricity only	8%

Note: Multiple responses allowed

Notes:
Rounding occurs
Total sample n=89

Electricity usage and attitudes

Now thinking about your household electricity usage on an average weekday, can you please indicate whether you use a lot, some (but not a lot), only a little bit/none at the following times throughout the day?

	A lot	Some but not a lot	Only a little bit/none
12am-6am	8%	31%	61%
6am-9am	20%	61%	19%
9am-12pm	15%	58%	27%
12pm-3pm	17%	53%	30%
3pm-6pm	57%	39%	4%
6pm-9pm	69%	25%	6%
9pm-12am	26%	49%	25%

Using the scale shown, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements relating to household electricity use?

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	N/A
I actively try to reduce my household's energy consumption	74%	22%	4%	-
I feel it is important to move to sustainable energy sources to reduce our impact on the environment	69%	29%	2%	-
I intend to stop using gas and use electricity only	18%	34%	35%	13%

Notes:
 Rounding occurs
 Total sample n=89

Sample details for business participants

A total of 20 business owners/operators attended an online workshop in Round 3.

The following slides are an overview of the information collected during recruitment.

Business operation

Working situation	Total sample (n=20)
I am self-employed and my business does not have any full-time or part-time employees	52%
I own or part-own a business with between 1 and 4 employees (including me and any business partner/s)	24%
I own or part-own a business with between 5 and 19 employees (including me or any business partner/s)	14%
I own or part-own a business with between 20 or more employees (including me or any business partner/s)	10%

Type of business	Total sample (n=20)
Construction	10%
Beauty Services	5%
Bookkeeper	5%
Coffee Wholesale	5%
Computer training and hardware	5%
Fruit shop	5%
Furniture Retail	5%
Graphic Design Services	5%
Hospitality	5%
House and Pet Sitting	5%
Online retail	5%
Pet food manufacturing	5%
Professional Administration Services & Online Management	5%
Retail / E Commerce	5%
Specialised Cleaning services	5%
Wholesale	5%
Community service	5%
Myotherapist	5%
NDIS disability support provider	5%
Residential home for people with a disability	5%

Notes:
 Rounding occurs
 Total sample n=20

Gender, age and location

Gender	Total sample (n=20)
Male	48%
Female	52%

Age	Total sample (n=20)
Under 40	24%
40-49	29%
50-59	33%
60+	14%

Location	Total sample (n=20)
Metropolitan	62%
Regional	33%
Rural/Remote	5%

Notes:
Rounding occurs
Total sample n=20

Education and home ownership status

Education	Total sample (n=20)
Tertiary education	51%
Secondary schooling completed	24%
Secondary schooling incomplete	5%
Vocational certificate	10%
Trade qualification	10%

Home ownership status	Total sample (n=20)
Have a mortgage (still paying it off)	43%
Own the home outright (no mortgage)	33%
Rent	19%
Live with parents	5%

Notes:
Rounding occurs
Total sample n=20

Electricity and gas behaviour and consumption

Role in the decision-making and administration of your business electricity supply	Total sample (n=20)
I am very involved and the main decision-maker in my business	75%
I am quite involved in decision-making and administration but share this responsibility with others in the business	20%
General/operations manager	5%

Does your business own and operate any electric vehicles	Total sample (n=20)
Yes	5%
No	95%

Have solar panels on the roof of any of your office/work locations?	Total sample (n=20)
Yes	48%
No	52%

Use gas to operate various appliances/machinery within your business?	Total sample (n=20)
Yes, we use mains gas	24%
Yes, we use bottled gas	14%
No, we use electricity only	62%

Note: Multiple responses allowed

Notes:
Rounding occurs
Total sample n=20

Electricity usage and attitudes

Now thinking about your business electricity usage on an average work day, can you please indicate whether you use a lot, some (but not a lot), only a little bit/none at the following times throughout the day?

	A lot	Some but not a lot	Only a little bit/none
12am-6am	5%	29%	66%
6am-9am	19%	57%	24%
9am-12pm	57%	29%	14%
12pm-3pm	52%	33%	15%
3pm-6pm	38%	43%	19%
6pm-9pm	24%	29%	47%
9pm-12am	5%	33%	62%

Using the scale shown, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements relating to your business's electricity use?

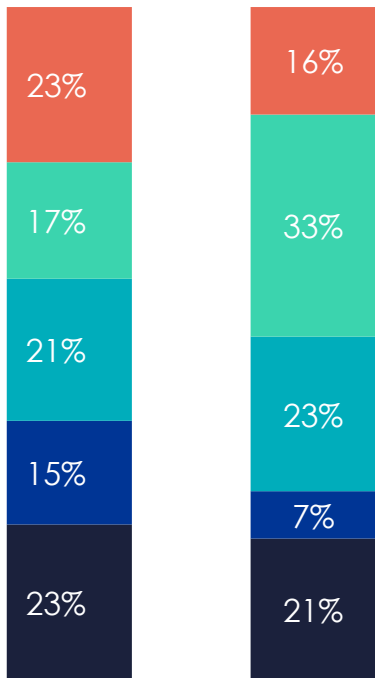
	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	N/A
Our business actively tries to reduce its energy consumption	71%	24%	5%	-
I feel it is important to move to sustainable energy sources to reduce our businesses impact on the environment	67%	29%	-	4%
Our business intends to stop using gas and use electricity only	33%	24%	29%	14%

Notes:
Rounding occurs
Total sample n=20

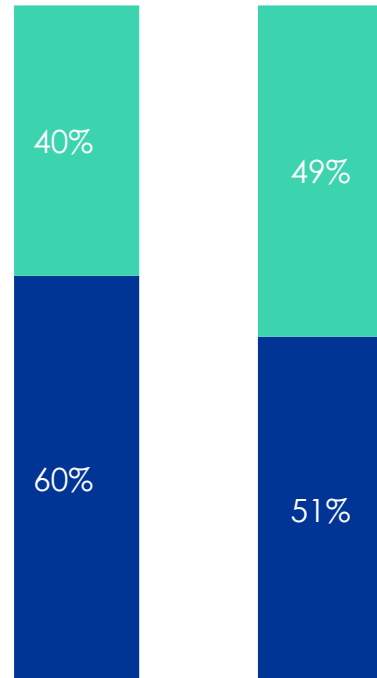
Feedback on workshops from participants

Most participants were happy with the workshops

Workshop attended



Workshop mode



Morwell
 Wangaratta
 Epping
 Business
 Online Residential
 Face-to-face
 Online

Total sample who responded: R2 n=52; R3 n=48

Overall feedback

ONLINE (n=21)

81%
Happy
(no change from R2)



“Workshop was great. I was very interested in seeing the impacts of February storm to other businesses in surrounding areas and got some valuable insight into solutions for outages”

“Very well run. Informative and thought provoking.”

19%
Lukewarm
(no change from R2)



“OK, the feedback session at the beginning was a little lengthy. I was tired at the end!”

“I felt too much time was spent listening to individual experiences, not a good use of everyone’s time. More time could have been spent on tasks..”

FACE-TO-FACE (n=22)

82%
Happy
(was 87% in R2)



“Brilliant! The setting was comfortable and the presenters were informative and kept things moving along really well.”

“Excellent - informative and comfortable and moved along well.”

“Well-run. Quite engaging.”

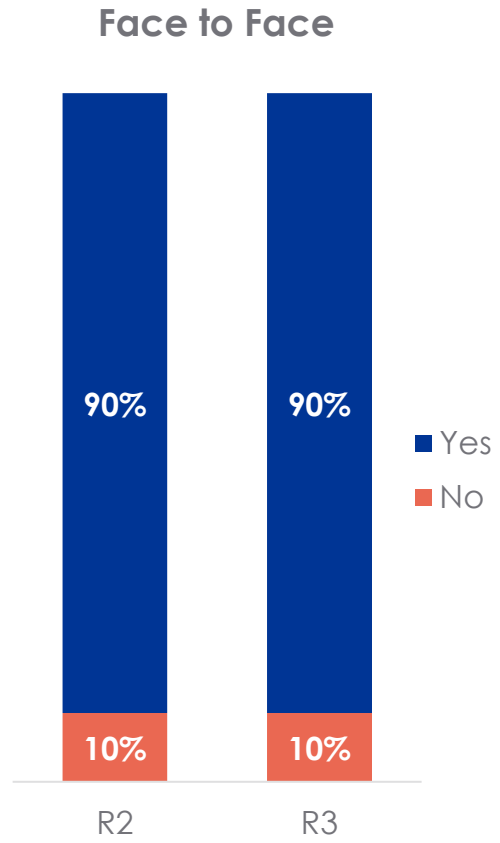
18%
Lukewarm
(was 13% in R2)



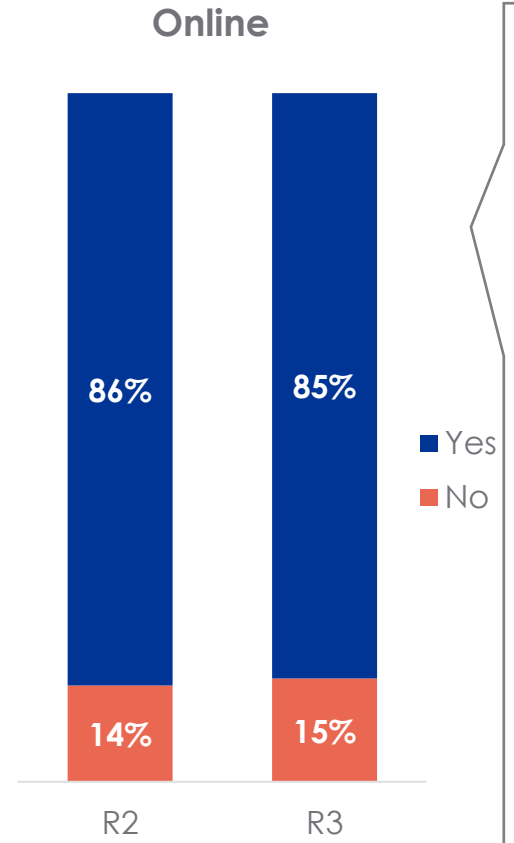
“Was ok.”
“Very boring.”

Overall, how did you find the workshop?

Nearly all were happy with the opportunity to contribute



- “Two hours was a good amount of time but I thought the first session went on a bit long. However, everybody had an opportunity to have a say”
- “Some groups have opinionated people. Allowing everyone to answer individually is better I think
- Well I hung back a bit in the workshop , didn't want to spoil for others , but enough for your team to hunt me up in the breaks , I can't see how you can improve , you did in this workshop , had a couple to new members , who made themselves known to me and expanded on what i bought up made a great addition



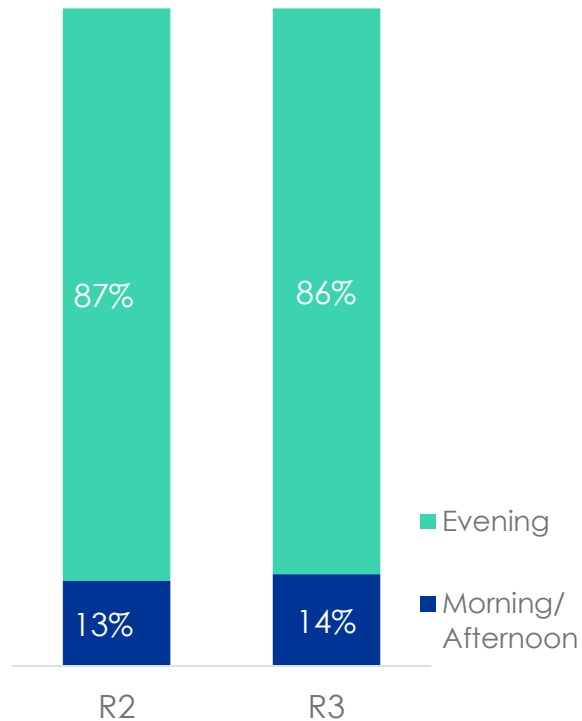
- “The moderators/group chat leaders ensure everyone is heard.”
- “Some of the questions relating to service and customer service are things I've never really thought about so I didn't really have much to say or better; I didn't have many ideas regarding my non-negotiables and wish list. Perhaps a list of suggestions may have been helpful with a poll of what we would like to see most compared to what we would like to see least. Then we could have given our reasons why. None of us work in the industry so it is hard to come up with examples when it's something we don't deal with day to day.

Did the discussion groups allow you to contribute as you would have liked to?
 Total Face-to-face: R2 n=31, R3 n=21

Evening sessions are preferred. General feedback about the workshops remains encouraging

Face-to-face

Time preference



General comments: + or -

"Nice experience indeed, very friendly atmosphere, gained lots of knowledge about AusNet energy distribution and future plannings, great arrangement and refreshment."

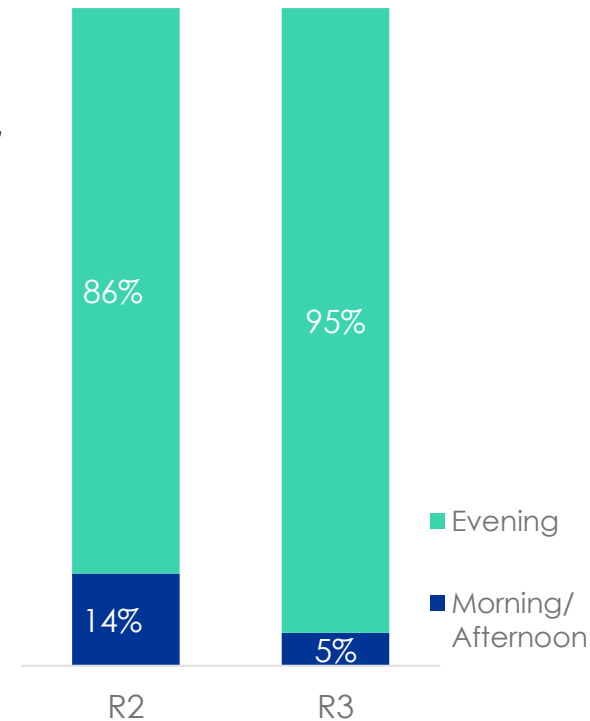
"They are very well conducted. I like that they finish on time, if not slightly earlier."

"I really enjoy being apart of this project. It is always good to sit with community members I wouldn't normally have the chance to chat with."

"Keep up the good work."

Online

Time preference



General comments: + or -

"Was a great session, expertly facilitated and with great discussions."

"I'm grateful to be able to take part. Even if my thoughts have no impact on the future, it is an interesting experiment to sit with others and discuss topics. As we discuss, we also learn, so I enjoy that aspect, too."

"I felt like this particular workshop may have been off track from what was meant to be, given the circumstances from Feb 13. But then again it was a probably a great feedback session for AusNet to get."

"A brief history on what the priorities were for consumers in the past and what measures were put in place by AusNet as a result? What worked/didn't work? How have priorities changed over the years and what drove this?"

At what time of day would you prefer to attend these workshops?

If you have any other feedback about these workshops, please share below. Total Face-to-face: R2 n=31, R3 n=21

Thank you.

To discuss this further, please contact:

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