



Jemena Electricity Networks (Vic) Ltd

2026-31 Electricity Distribution Price Review Regulatory Proposal

Customer Engagement

Attachment 02-01



Table of contents

Glossary	iv
Abbreviations	v
Overview	vi
1. Our approach to engagement	8
1.1 Our customers and stakeholders	8
1.2 Planning and co-designing the engagement program	9
1.3 Our engagement strategy	9
1.4 Our engagement objectives	10
1.5 Level of influence customers can expect to make	14
2. Our challenge and engagement remit	17
2.1 Our promise to customers	17
3. Our engagement streams	18
4. Delivering our engagement program	21
4.1 Residential People’s Panel (a Citizen’s Jury)	21
4.2 Residential Customer Voice Groups.....	22
4.3 Residential customer research	26
4.4 Large commercial and industrial customer engagement	26
4.5 Small and medium business engagement	27
4.6 Energy Reference Group	28
4.7 Local Councils	31
4.8 Retailers	32
4.9 Joint Victorian electricity distribution network service provider engagement	32
4.10 Customer Council engagement	33
5. Customer priorities and recommendations	35
5.1 People’s Panel Recommendations	36
5.2 Residential Customer Voice Group priorities	40
5.3 Residential customer research	46
5.4 Large commercial and industrial customer priorities	47
5.5 Small and medium business customer priorities	48
5.6 Local council priorities	49
5.7 Retailer priorities.....	50
5.8 Key themes from customer and stakeholder feedback	52
6. Consultation on our Draft Plan	58
6.1 Draft Plan survey	58
6.2 People’s Panel and Customer Voice Group recall session.....	59
6.3 Customer deep dives.....	59
6.4 Energy Reference Group feedback	64
6.5 Local councils	69
7. Responding to customer priorities and feedback	70
8. Evaluating Our Customer Engagement Process	80
8.1 Independent evaluation of our engagement program	80
8.2 Our engagement program assessed against the Better Resets Handbook	81
8.3 Building customers’ capacity.....	83
9. Ongoing customer engagement	85

List of tables

Table OV–1: List of customer and stakeholder engagement attachments	vii
Table 1.1: How we are responding to the IAP2 Core Values through our engagement	15
Table 6–1: Key Energy Reference Group recommendations and opportunities for the JEN 2026-31 Proposal.....	66
Table 7–1: Responding to customer priorities	70
Table 8–1: Evaluation of our engagement against the Better Resets Handbook	81

List of figures

Figure 1–1: Our customers and stakeholders	9
Figure 1.2: Customer engagement goals	10
Figure 1–3: Customer engagement objectives	11
Figure 1.4: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.....	14
Figure 3.1: Customer engagement program	19
Figure 4–1: People’s Panel demographics.....	22
Figure 4–2: Customer Voice Groups	23
Figure 4–3: Stakeholders represented at joint engagement sessions	33
Figure 5.1: Customer research – customer priorities rankings	47
Figure 5.2: Customer research – customer priorities by demographic	47
Figure 6–1: Customer education packages tested with customers	61
Figure 6–2: Innovation fund packages tested with customers	62
Figure 6–3: Network resilience packages tested with customers	64
Figure 8–1: Scores for developing customer capacity to engage in the engagement process	84
Figure 1–1: Our customers and stakeholders	9
Figure 1.2: Customer engagement goals	10
Figure 1–3: Customer engagement objectives	11
Figure 1.4: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum.....	14
Figure 3.1: Customer engagement program	19
Figure 4–1: People’s Panel demographics.....	22
Figure 4–2: Customer Voice Groups	23
Figure 4–3: Stakeholders represented at joint engagement sessions	33
Figure 5.1: Customer research – customer priorities rankings	47
Figure 5.2: Customer research – customer priorities by demographic	47
Figure 6–1: Customer education packages tested with customers	61
Figure 6–2: Innovation fund packages tested with customers	62
Figure 6–3: Network resilience packages tested with customers	64
Figure 8–1: Scores for developing customer capacity to engage in the engagement process	84

Glossary

JEN 2026-31 Proposal	Jemena Electricity Networks 2026-31 Proposal to the Australian Energy Regulator to reset distribution prices for the next regulatory period.
Draft Plan	An early version of our JEN 2026-31 Proposal on which we consulted without customers and sought their feedback.
Peoples Panel	Included approximately 50 diverse customers who make up a statistical representation of customers in our network area operating as a citizen's jury
Customer Voice Groups	Comprises six distinct customer groups, having different lived experiences. These included customers with disability, customers who experience mental health difficulties, customers from multicultural communities, young people, First Nations Peoples, and seniors.
Energy Reference Group	An expert energy panel that discussed complex issues and provided clear, independent advice and recommendations
next regulatory period	The 2026-31 regulatory control period

Abbreviations

AER	Australian Energy Regulator
AMI	Advanced Metering Infrastructure
CER	Customer Energy Resource
EV	Electric Vehicle
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
JEN	Jemena Electricity Networks (Vic) Ltd.
LED	Light Emitting Diode
LiDAR	Light Detection and Ranging
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
VPPs	Virtual Power Plant

Overview

Recognising our role as an essential service provider, Jemena Electricity Networks (Vic) Ltd. (**JEN**) are driven to continuously improve our customer-centric culture and strive to understand customer needs and expectations. Developing our **JEN 2026-31 Proposal** has provided us with a unique opportunity to allow our customers to help shape the services we offer and to inspire our teams to improve outcomes for them.

With customers at the heart of everything we do, we have sought to engage meaningfully with a broad spectrum of customers in our network. We partnered with a full range of our customers, including our energy-savvy customers, right through to those who have low energy literacy or face barriers to engaging with energy. Through engagement and open dialogue, we aim to position Jemena at the forefront of delivering innovative customer engagement to our diverse range of customers. Our engagement program has included 11 core engagement streams designed to enable us to deeply understand and engage with the full spectrum of customers we serve in ways that best suit them.

Throughout this price reset process, we purposefully and ambitiously set out not only to understand our customers' views but to build the energy capability of those members of the community who need it the most (see section 8.3). It is with this sentiment that we sought to reach deep into our community and engage with customer groups experiencing vulnerability or may have access issues to our services. We aimed to capture the views of customers whose voices, without specialist and purposeful engagement, would not be heard.¹ Where customers were unable to provide their voice, we sought the views of advocates or Victorian distribution network service providers.

Our comprehensive and purposeful engagement program carried out over a 20-month period, has ensured that our JEN 2026-31 Proposal has been truly shaped by our customers. The positive conclusion from the new Democracy Foundation, which undertook an independent evaluation of our engagement process, provides confidence that we have meaningfully engaged with our customers to understand their needs and expectations and that the feedback that we have obtained throughout our engagement process can be relied up to shape our plans.

This attachment sets out:

1. Our approach to engagement
2. Our challenge and engagement remit
3. Our engagement streams
4. Details on how we delivered our engagement program
5. Customer priorities and recommendations
6. Details of our consultation with customers and stakeholders on our **Draft Plan**
7. How we have responded to customer priorities and feedback in delivering our JEN 2026-31 Proposal
8. The findings from the independent evaluation of our engagement program
9. Our approach to ongoing customer engagement

¹ [AER - Better Resets Handbook - July 2024.pdf](#)

List of customer and stakeholder engagement attachments

Table OV-1: List of customer and stakeholder engagement attachments

Attachment	Name	Author
02-01	Customer engagement	JEN
02-02	Peoples Panel process report	MosaicLab
02-03	Small and medium business customer forum	MosaicLab
02-04	Customer Voice Group process report	MosaicLab
02-05	Large customer forum report	Gauge Consulting
02-06	Local Council forum report	Gauge Consulting
02-07	Retailer forum report	Gauge Consulting
02-08	Customer priorities research report	Sagacity Research
02-09	Energy Reference Group process report	MosaicLab
02-10	Joint VICDB engagement - Framework and Approach outcomes report 1	RPS
02-11	Joint VICDB engagement - Framework and Approach outcomes report 2	RPS
02-12	Joint VICDB engagement - Tariffs outcomes report 1	BD Infrastructure
02-13	Joint VICDB engagement - Tariffs outcomes report 2	BD Infrastructure
02-14	Joint VICDB engagement - Tariffs outcomes report 3	BD Infrastructure
02-15	Joint VICDB engagement - Vulnerability report 1	RPS
02-16	Joint VICDB engagement - Vulnerability report 2	RPS
02-17	JEN - Nation Partners Att 02-17- Joint VICDB engagement - Resilience report	Nation Partners
02-18	Draft Plan Feedback Report	JEN
02-19	People's Panel Recommendations	People's Panel
02-20	Independent Evaluation Report	newDemocracy Foundation
02-21	Draft Plan Recall Day - WWS report	MosaicLab
02-22	Customer Deep Dive Outcomes Report	MosaicLab
02-23	Energy Reference Group Report	Energy Reference Group
02-24	Engagement Strategy	JEN
02-25	Joint VICDB engagement - Small Bus Consultation Paper	Joint Vic DBs
02-26	Victorian Electricity Retailers Survey	BD Infrastructure

1. Our approach to engagement

1.1 Our customers and stakeholders

Jemena has a diverse customer base, with many factors contributing to and influencing their overall experience with electricity and energy.

For our residential customers, this includes the type of household they live in, if they rent or own their own home, age, socio-economic status, cultural background and diverse lived experiences, such as living with a disability or mental health difficulties. For our small to medium-sized businesses, large businesses, local councils and retailers, this includes the size of their business, the type of business and how they use energy.

Although each customer is unique, they have many overlapping and common factors or circumstances that make up their household. These contribute to our ability to have “cross-customer” impacts within the recommendations and decisions made in our regulatory proposal. It also allows us to have mature and robust conversations on equity and equality that consider a broad range of factors, circumstances and influences.

Our engagement program aims to meet the specific needs of our electricity customers, taking into consideration:

- the rich diversity of our customers
- learnings from previous price reset customer engagement processes
- industry best practice
- the unique requirements, issues and challenges our customers face and their growing expectations of Jemena and the energy industry
- our desire to engage with customers experiencing vulnerability and
- dedicated opportunities to create synergies with the other Victorian electricity distribution network service providers for joint engagement, where there are common themes amongst all Victorian customers, enabling consistency and efficiency in our engagement approach across all Victorian networks.

“Feeling like I’m being listened to is really important and being able to make a small contribution.” Customer Voice Group member.

Figure 1–1 outlines our customers and stakeholders identified for engagement.

Figure 1–1: Our customers and stakeholders



1.2 Planning and co-designing the engagement program

In May 2023, we reconvened our previous 2018-19 People’s Panel to seek their views on customer engagement through a co-design workshop. The purpose of this was to have customers help shape our engagement strategy and program for developing our JEN 2026-31 Proposal.

Twenty-four former People’s Panel members who shaped our 2021-26 regulatory proposal came together as part of this session. They shared their reflections on the experience, many expressing how invaluable the process was in building their energy literacy and being able to represent customers in their local communities. This included hearing their feedback on making the next People’s Panel a success and how we could engage more deeply with customers across our networks through dedicated customer voice groups. We also used the opportunity to share how we have progressed the recommendations they made in 2019.

We also used our engagement platform, **GridTalk.com.au**, to effectively engage with wider customer groups, including small—to medium-sized business customers and large commercial and industrial customers.

These inputs allowed us to co-design our work program with our customer base in mind. Details of our co-design process are included in our engagement strategy.²

1.3 Our engagement strategy

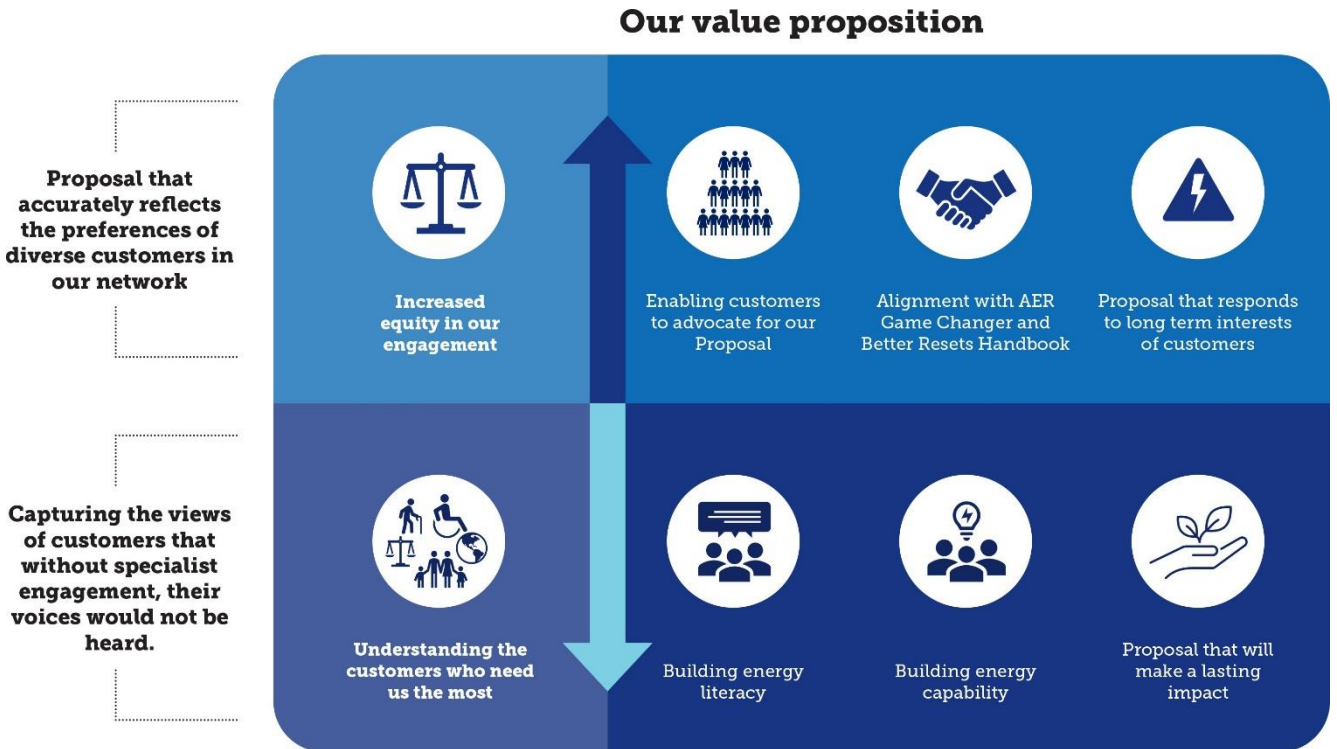
Our engagement strategy provides detailed information on our approach to our customer engagement program, including our engagement objectives, how we collaborated with customers and stakeholders to design our engagement program, and how their feedback has shaped our approach to this price reset.³

² See, JEN - Att 02-24 - Engagement Strategy – 20230601.

³ Ibid.

Our engagement strategy is underpinned by energy industry best practices, our engagement values and principles, and lessons learned from developing our past regulatory proposals. We recognise that we act as the conduit for our customers’ preferences, using their views to shape our proposal. To do this we needed to partner with our customers, listen to the voices that are heard the least, and engage with the customers that need us most.

Figure 1.2: Customer engagement goals



1.4 Our engagement objectives

In developing our engagement program, we set out to achieve four clear customer objectives, which are set out in Figure 1–3.

Figure 1–3: Customer engagement objectives



To achieve our first objective and enable customers to shape our regulatory proposal, we recognised that we would need to **deeply understand our customers' needs, views and expectations**.

To ensure our engagement process led to **a regulatory proposal that our customers helped shape**, we endeavoured to provide them with unbiased and easy-to-understand information.

To build customer understanding of the regulatory arrangements and **trust in our regulatory proposal**, we have involved customers throughout the entire price reset process, giving them access and opportunities to provide input and feedback and show them how this was used to shape this regulatory proposal.

To achieve our fourth objective of **supporting a customer-focused culture**, engagement sessions were attended by a combination of our executive team, senior managers, team members and where possible by our Board.

Our customer engagement journey

2023

May

- **Co-design workshop** with residential customers from previous People's Panel
- **Vulnerability Roundtables** Joint VICDB engagement
- **Framework & Approach Workshops** Joint VICDB engagement



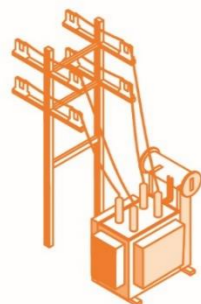
Aug

- **Framework & Approach Workshop** Joint VICDB engagement
- **Tariff Workshop** Joint VICDB engagement



Sep

- **Vulnerability Roundtable** Joint VICDB engagement



Nov

- **People's Panel** orientation
- **Energy Reference** Group meeting
- **Cultural Consultation** with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Land Council
- **People's Panel** all day forum
- **Seniors** Customer Voice Group session
- **Mental Health** Customer Voice Group session
- **Disability** Customer Voice Group session
- **Multicultural** Customer Voice Group session
- **Young People** Customer Voice Group session
- **First Nations** Customer Voice Group session
- **Energy Reference** Group meeting
- **Tariff Workshop** Joint VICDB engagement



Dec

- **Energy Reference** Group meeting



Oct

- **Energy Reference** Group meeting
- **Resilience Workshop** Joint VICDB engagement
- **Seniors Customer** Voice Group session
- **Mental Health** Customer Voice Group session
- **People's Panel** welcome event
- **Disability** Customer Voice Group session
- **Multicultural** Customer Voice Group session
- **Young People** Customer Voice Group session
- **First Nations** Customer Voice Group session



Tullamarine



Heidelberg



Essendon Fields



Footscray



Brooklyn



Newport



Williamstown

Our customer engagement journey

2024



9,286
visits to GridTalk

7,589
individuals directly engaged (including customers and stakeholders)

282
hours of facetime with customers

4
Board & Senior Management members involved

45
Jemena members involved

6
Customer Voice Group Champions from across the business

65
unique engagement sessions

288
contributions on the GridTalk website

150
residential customers on dedicated engagement groups

7
People's Panel sessions held

24
Customer Voice Group sessions held

2
Cultural consultations with Aboriginal Land Councils held.

1.5 Level of influence customers can expect to make

We place customers at the heart of our decision-making for the future of our electricity network. The highest level of engagement being sought through this process of the **International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) Engagement Spectrum** is **Collaborate**, and where possible **Empower**.

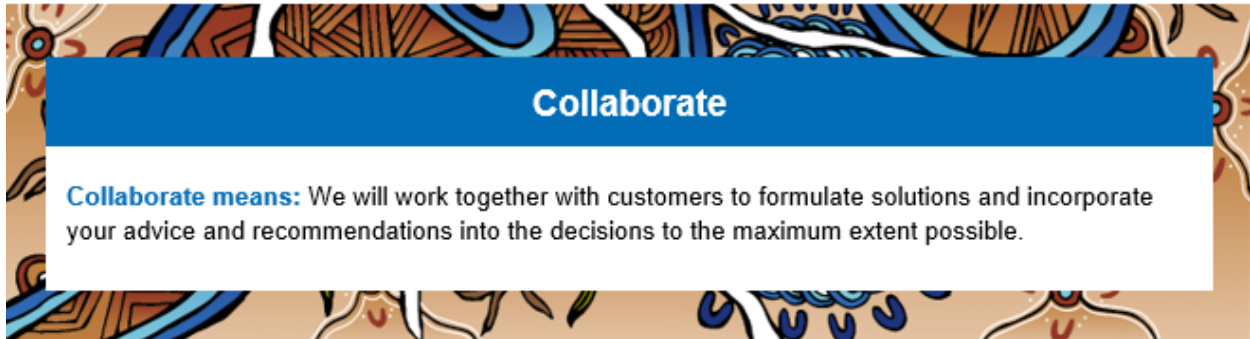









Figure 1.4: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Increasing impact on decision

	 Inform	 Consult	 Involve	 Collaborate	 Empower
Public Participation Goal 	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public 	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/2018_IAP2_Spectrum.pdf

Table 1.1: How we are responding to the IAP2 Core Values through our engagement

IAP2 Core Value	Our commitment to ensure this	Evidence of this
Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.	We will co-design the process with key internal and external people, including the previous panellists, small to medium businesses, large users and retailers to review the process and offer suggestions about best-fit design.	Dialogue between participants throughout the co-design process to identify the best approach to engaging participants.
Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.	Whenever possible, we will provide information in advance, in a format that works for them, so that participants can consider it prior to attending sessions. Information will be provided in a variety of channels, formats and plain language (including other languages) to make it interesting, informative, accessible and engaging.	A balanced set of information has been provided. Communication tailored for audiences and channels appropriately identified.
Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.	Throughout the information gathering and decision-making process we will regularly explain how and where participant input has influenced our decisions. We will be transparent about our decisions, clear about where there is and isn't agreement on complex issues and provide a clear rationale for the outcome.	Clearly demonstrated how participant input has influenced the process.
Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.	We will meaningfully engage with a broad spectrum of our customers so we can deeply understand and appreciate how our customers are affected by the decisions we make. We will ensure that our customers who are often not heard are supported to participate and that a random recruitment approach supports deliberative engagement.	Provided a clear problem statement. Decision-making process is clearly communicated. Affected stakeholders were identified and included.
Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.	We have committed to genuinely and transparently collaborating with our customers so they can help shape our Plan. At each engagement session we will clearly explain the scope of influence there is for the topic we are exploring and how participant influence will shape our decisions.	Appropriate level of engagement endorsed by internal decision makers. The level of stakeholder influence is clearly communicated to stakeholders.
Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.	Our engagement processes enable us to explore the needs, interests and values of all participants. Our goal is to deeply understand our customers' experiences and build energy capability of customers who may face barriers or may have access issues to our services. Recruitment of a People's Panel will be truly representative of the diversity of our customers. We will communicate and advocate for our customers' needs through the price reset and through other energy distribution avenues.	Understood of participant's values and interests. Engagement techniques identified to support interests and needs.
Public participation seeks out and facilitates the participation of those	We will seek to understand the diversity of our customer base, both individual and business, and we recognise that people are affected by our decisions in different ways.	Participation opportunities enabled contribution. Thorough stakeholder analysis completed.

IAP2 Core Value	Our commitment to ensure this	Evidence of this
potentially affected by or interested in a decision.	To more deeply understand those differences, we are establishing Customer Voice Groups to capture the lived experience of a diverse range of customer groups.	

2. Our challenge and engagement remit

With a constantly changing environment and cost of living pressures, providing a fair energy future has never been more important. With the increase in customer uptake of renewables and other technologies, people are rapidly changing both how they use electricity and what they expect from our electricity network. This compels us to rethink the best ways to plan for the future and charge for electricity in a way that is fair and equitable for everyone and meets different customer expectations.

Throughout the engagement process we asked our customers to think about and make suggestions and recommendations on the question:

How should Jemena prepare for a sustainable energy future while meeting customer and community needs today?

2.1 Our promise to customers

During our engagement with our customers, we made the following promises to our customers.

We promise to...

- Provide factual and easy to understand information to help build your knowledge
- Follow up on your information requests in a timely manner
- Be accountable for what we say we will do
- Hear, learn and understand from you and acknowledge that your lived experience is valuable
- Document, record and share all inputs
- Base the Regulatory Proposal on your ideas, priorities and recommendations to the maximum extent possible



3. Our engagement streams

Our engagement program has included 11 core engagement streams designed to enable us to deeply understand and engage with the full spectrum of customers we serve in ways that best suit them.

To strengthen and unify the engagement groups, we embedded ways to interconnect groups to cross-pollinate ideas and gather feedback. This included opportunities for groups to:

- meet each other and understand what each brings to the process
- have access to key messages and outcomes reports
- have dedicated connector roles to observe and report back.

This approach enriched the understanding of diverse customer needs and increased the understanding of customer needs and perspectives across all engagement streams.

It also included strong evaluation mechanisms and an independent evaluation of our deliberative customer engagement approach, ensuring that throughout the process, we built in evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure we meet and exceed best practice standards and regulatory requirements.

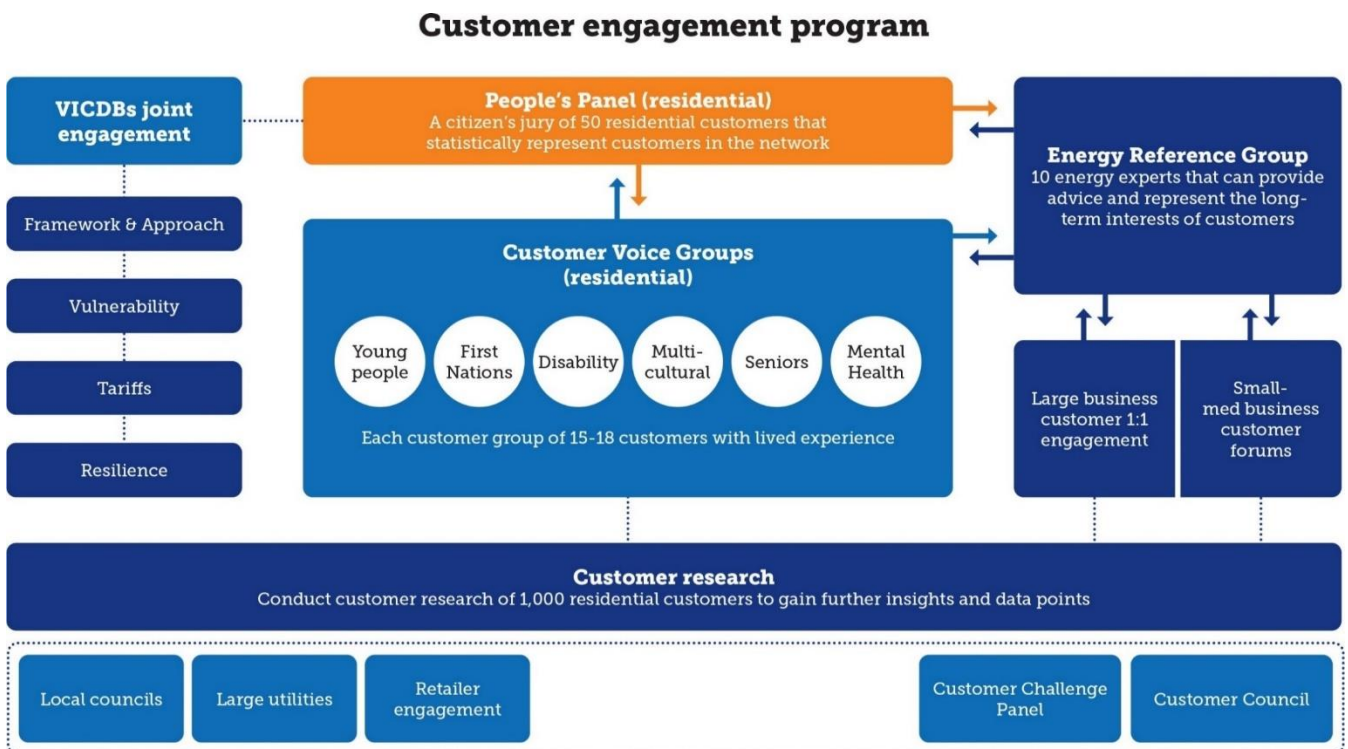
Our core engagement groups included:

- A **People’s Panel** – a People’s Panel which included approximately 50 diverse customers who make up a statistical representation of customers in our network area.
- **Customer Voice Groups** – six customer voice groups, including up to 18 members, met four times. These groups included customers with different lived experiences. This included customers with disability, customers who experience mental health difficulties, customers from multicultural communities, young people, First Nations Peoples, and seniors. Each group had a senior leader from Jemena to help champion the group to connect, listen and understand their needs. The groups each provided advice and insights to the People’s Panel for their consideration in making recommendations given their unique needs.
- **Customer research** – conducting a bespoke survey of 1,000 residential customers from across our network for the price reset to gain a broad spectrum of views and data points.
- **Large commercial and industrial customers** – surveys, large user forums and in-depth meetings to engage with large commercial customers.
- **Small to medium sized businesses** – small business forums, surveys and in-depth interviews/meetings with diverse small to medium sized businesses across our network.
- An **Energy Reference Group** – an expert energy panel that discussed complex issues and provided clear, independent advice and recommendations that have the long-term interests of customers in mind.
- **Local councils** - surveys, in-depth interviews/meetings and Local Council Forums to understand the needs of local councils and the local communities they service.
- **Retailers** – bespoke engagement with electricity retailers and retailer bodies, including retailer forums, surveys, in-depth interviews/meetings and engagement with customers affected by family violence.

- **Joint engagement by Victorian electricity distribution network service providers** – joint engagement sessions with Victorian electricity distribution network service providers across the topics of framework and approach, affordability and equity, reliability and resilience, network tariffs and customers experiencing vulnerability.
- Our **Customer Council** – involving our Customer Council members, including providing them ongoing oversight of the engagement program and a dedicated workshop on the price reset.

Figure 3.1 shows our 11 core engagement streams and the interactions between them. More details of our engagement program with each of these streams is included in section 4.

Figure 3.1: Customer engagement program





Executive and Board Level involvement in engagement

We had more than 45 Jemena representatives take part in our engagement program, including presenting to customers, answering questions and discussing customer needs. Our Managing Director and a member of our Board were involved in People's Panel sessions to listen to and connect with customers.

We also had strong executive team involvement participating in over 300 hours of engagement sessions.

4. Delivering our engagement program

4.1 Residential People’s Panel (a Citizen’s Jury)

A People’s Panel (also known as a citizen’s jury) is a democratic approach used to bring together a randomly selected group of people who broadly represent the community. People’s Panels or Citizens’ Panels are powerful examples of deliberative democratic engagement. This means the community affected by a decision we make are put at the centre of our decision-making process. It brings community members closer to Jemena’s Executive Team and the activity of decision making for the future of Jemena’s electricity network.

We partnered with MosaicLab, who are experts in deliberative engagement processes, to independently guide and facilitate our engagement with our People’s Panel.

Figure 4–1 contains the demographics of our People’s Panel members. Panel members were panel selected so that the People’s Panel was representative of the customers on our network, based on location, age range, gender, and solar and non-solar customers.

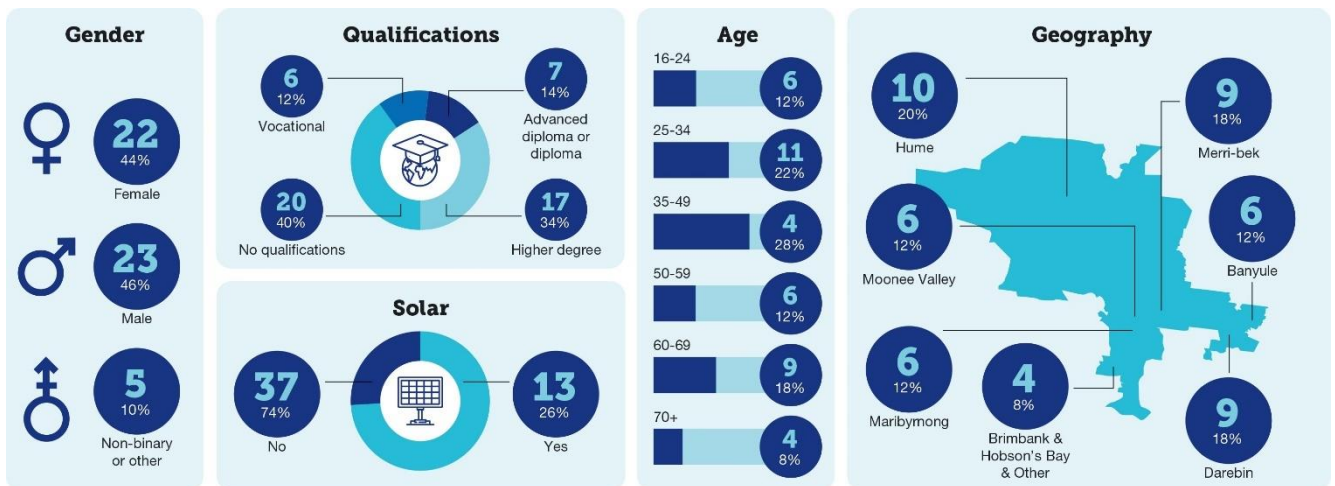
From October 2023 to April 2024, we held dedicated sessions with the People’s Panel. Activities undertaken to engage customers on the People’s Panel included:

- **clear question (remit)** to focus the deliberations on a broad range of information from a variety of sources relevant to the remit conversations
- **site tour of the Broadmeadows Substation** to understand how our assets work to distribute electricity demonstration of the role of a Line Worker and operational equipment to understand how our assets work to distribute electricity
- **access to information and experts**
- **Q&A with Jemena staff** and panel-identified key speakers
- **44.5 hours per person of discussion and deliberations across** seven panel sessions (two evening sessions including orientation, five full panel days) support from facilitators experienced in delivering deliberative processes
- **an online portal (GridTalk.com.au)** that provided a central place for participants to access relevant information inputs as well as a discussion forum
- **group agreement**, where a supermajority (80 per cent or more of the panel said they could live with it or better) was needed for a recommendation to be included in the final report.

After five full days of deliberative engagement, the group made 16 recommendations to us on how we should prepare for a more sustainable energy future while meeting customer and community needs today.

MosaicLab’s report on our People’s Panel process is included in *JEN - MosaicLab Att 02-02 Peoples Panel process report*.

Figure 4–1: People’s Panel demographics



4.2 Residential Customer Voice Groups

We established six dedicated **Customer Voice Groups** with diverse residential customers who may experience vulnerability or have greater barriers to accessing and navigating their way through the energy system.

We **partnered with 100 residential customers spread over six dedicated Customer Voice Groups** for:

- Customers with a disability
- Customers experiencing mental health difficulties
- Young customers
- Seniors
- Customers from multicultural communities, including new arrivals
- First Nations customers and communities.

We recognise intersectionality and the natural overlap that occurs across our Customer Voice Groups which reflect the richness of the diversity of our customers. The purpose of the core six groups was to capture views through a particular lens while considering the many characteristics, traits and experiences of each customer.

Each **Customer Voice Group** met four times over eight months to provide **constructive feedback on a range of topics**, including:

- energy usage, consumption and energy needs
- pricing, equity and fairness
- customer service and customer experience
- network reliability and resilience
- digitisation and automation of the electricity network and cyber security.

Each session **captured constructive feedback** by exploring lived experiences across each topic, deliberating trade-offs and dilemmas and seeking customer preferences and priorities for each topic.

Each session had a dedicated Jemena senior leader accountable to the group who acted as Champion of the Group. This leader connected, listened, and built an understanding of the customers' lived experiences and priorities. The leader answered questions in the session, shared learnings across the business, and helped advocate for the customers' needs.

Each session and topic had dedicated subject matter experts who presented and explained complex concepts simply, provided information in engaging formats (presentations, videos, analogies and diagrams), enabled customers to understand the challenges we face and the options for preparing for a more sustainable future, and answered questions in-session to help build customer capability to provide informed feedback.

The groups also intersected with Jemena's People's Panel, where they shared their top priorities and had the opportunity to attend a People's Panel session.

Sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.6 provides more information on each Customer Voice Group.

Figure 4–2: Customer Voice Groups



Full details of our Customer Voice Group engagement process are included in *JEN - MosaicLab Att 02-04 Customer Voice Group process report*

4.2.1 First Nations Engagement and Customer Voice Group

We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the oldest continuous culture in the world and the original inhabitants of the land on which we live and work.

We have a proud history of partnering with Aboriginal communities throughout the development of major projects across Australia, particularly in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Through the First Nations Customer Voice Group, we aimed to strengthen and build our relationships with First Nations peoples living and working in and around the Jemena electricity network in Victoria and as Traditional Owners.

We established the group in October 2023 as part of our commitment to reconciliation and willingness to learn from First Nations Peoples. The First Nations Customer Voice Group met four times online from October 2023 to April 2024 and included **18 First Nations Peoples** that were a mix of:

- First Nations Peoples living and working in and around Jemena's network

- Traditional Owners
- Customers
- Small and medium business customers.

Jemena's **Executive General Manager for People, Safety and Governance** was the Champion of the group, attending all sessions to connect, listen and advocate for the group's' needs.

After feedback from the first two sessions, we identified the need for an Indigenous Facilitator to strengthen cultural safety. Karen Milward, a First Nations Consultant, trainer, and facilitator and a proud Yorta Yorta woman based in Melbourne, facilitated the remaining two sessions, responding to the group's needs and enhancing the flow and depth of discussions.

4.2.2 Disability Customer Voice Group

People with a disability make significant and valuable contributions to the community. We know that one in six Australians has a disability⁴ and may face different barriers when accessing essential services.

In establishing a dedicated group for customers with a disability, our goal was to understand the barriers, needs and energy experiences of customers with a disability.

Established in October 2023, the group included **15 customers with lived experience of a disability**.

Jemena's **General Manager Procurement, Property and Fleet** was appointed the Champion of the Group and actively engaged with the members at each session.



The group gave rich insights into the lived experiences of customers with a disability and their energy experiences across a range of topics. Affordability and keeping energy costs as low as possible were a top priority. Another key priority was reliability and resilience given the critical impact power outages can have on customers with a disability who may rely on medical equipment or temperature-controlled environment to maintain health.

4.2.3 Mental Health Customer Voice Group



Forty-five per cent of Australians will experience mental health difficulties at some point in their life. We also know that one in five callers who ring the National Debt Helpline to raise an energy issue are also experiencing mental health difficulties.⁵ In October 2023, we established the Mental Health Customer Voice Group to ensure we can reduce barriers for customers who experience mental health difficulties and identify improvements we can make.

The group is made up of **17 customers who experience mental health difficulties** and Jemena's **General Manager, Regulation** was the group

4 [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, People with Disability in Australia \(2022\)](#)

5 Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC), [Exploring regulatory Approaches to Consumer Vulnerability: A Report for the AER](#), February 2020, ('CPRC report'), Page 29

Champion and involved in each session with group members.

Along with affordability, empathy in customer service was one of the group's top priorities. They identified the need for streamlined customer service processes, and interactions (online or phone) that display active listening, understanding, and are easy to navigate for customers who are experiencing mental health difficulties.

4.2.4 Multicultural Customer Voice Group

The residential customers in our network are a part of vibrant and rich multicultural communities. We know customers in our network speak 260 languages, come from more than 200 countries and follow 135 different faiths.

As a provider of an essential service, it is vital that we meet the needs of the diverse customer base in our network. Established in October 2023, the group included **18 customers from multicultural communities, including new arrivals**.

Jemena's **General Manager Digital Platforms and the Commercial Manager Electricity Distribution** were the Champions of the group who met and engaged with members at all sessions.

In addition to affordability, the group's top priority was ensuring we communicated authentically with all customers across a range of channels and found ways to listen to and understand their needs.

“What I was amazed at, was we’ve come from very diverse backgrounds yet we’re all very interested in sustainability. How do we actually maintain electricity distribution in the future? How do we do it in a way that’s good to us and good for the environment.” Customer Voice Group member



4.2.5 Seniors Customer Voice Group



In Victoria, there are over 1.5 million Victorians aged 60 years and over.⁶ The older population will increase more quickly than younger cohorts with an expected 60 per cent increase in the older population over the next 25 years, as opposed to the population aged 20 to 59 years that is expected to grow by 40 per cent.⁷

This means as an electricity distribution network service provider, we need to identify ways to meet the needs of senior customers and ensure our service delivery and customer service meets their needs.

Established in October 2023, the group included **18 senior customers**.

⁶ Ageing well in Victoria: an action plan for strengthening wellbeing for senior Victorians 2022–2026, Page 7

⁷ Ageing well in Victoria: an action plan for strengthening wellbeing for senior Victorians 2022–2026, Page 7

Jemena's **General Manager, Customer and Commercial** was the Champion of the group.

Accessible communication and affordability were top priorities for seniors—many had rooftop solar—who were concerned about the increase in their bill due to future tariff changes with the impact of excess solar on the grid. This caused an even greater priority to ensure that costs remain as affordable as possible.

4.2.6 Young People Customer Voice Group

Young people are our future leaders, policymakers, and decision-makers. We recognise their diverse perspectives to ensure we create a sustainable future for them.

Young people are often our newest customers, and some are our future customers. By capturing their voices, we aim to identify some of the challenges young people face and their hopes and aspirations for the future of energy.

Established in October 2023, the group included **11 young people** and Jemena's **Chief Digital Officer** as the Champion of the group who met and engaged with members at all sessions.

Affordability was a top priority for young people, who have less control over their energy consumption as many are renting or unable to invest in renewables. Young people recognise that change is investable and that there will be major shifts with the energy transition.

Young people want us to be as sustainable as possible and ensure we empower customers through the energy transition, invest in renewables, and lead by example in driving zero emissions to create a more sustainable future.

4.3 Residential customer research

In addition to the People's Panel, we engaged Sagacity to conduct quantitative customer research with 1,000 residential customers in July 2024 to seek feedback on a range of topics, including:

- network resilience and responding to extreme weather events
- network reliability
- digitising and automation of the network and new technologies
- accessible customer communication, including having access to information in multiple languages
- customer education.

The research aimed to understand the level of importance our residential customers place on the outcomes and priorities of our Customer Voice Groups and People's Panel.

Details of this research are included in *JEN - Sagacity Research Att 02-08 Customer priorities research report*

4.4 Large commercial and industrial customer engagement

We commenced engagement with large commercial and industrial customers in November 2023. We held a series of one-on-one in-depth meetings and conducted a survey to identify the challenges, energy priorities and goals of our large customers. The feedback from the survey and sessions informed the format for a Large Customer Forum held in February 2024.

The large customer forum included 17 large commercial and industrial customers, including Melbourne Airport, those from the health sector, telecommunication businesses and the engineering sector, along with

representatives from the Victorian Government’s Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and the Essential Services Commission.

The forum enabled these large customers to share their current and anticipated energy-related challenges and opportunities, describe their desired outcomes and communicate their expectations for Jemena’s role in supporting those outcomes.

Key topic areas explored during the forum included: network reliability and security, tariff structures, sustainability and decarbonisation, enabling growth, EV solutions for commercial/fleet and residential, digital solutions for engaging with Jemena and facilitation of energy trading

Details of our large customer forum *JEN - Gauge Consulting Att 02-05 Large customer forum report*.

4.5 Small and medium business engagement

We engaged with the small and medium-sized businesses in our network, including café and restaurant owners, independent supermarkets and design consultancies, by initially sending out 10,000 direct letters to take part in a small business survey and forum.

Through this recruitment process 17 small and medium businesses registered to take part in the forums in May 2024. We ran an information session for businesses on the challenges we face in preparing for the future and the price reset process. We ran two forums which nine businesses attended, providing in-depth feedback and advice on a range of topics including pricing and equity, electrification and the energy transition, and network outages (resilience and reliability). More detail on these forums is included in *JEN - MosaicLab Att 02-03 Small and medium business customer forum*.

We also distributed a survey to small and medium business owners to provide their feedback on tariffs and a Small Business Tariff Consultation Paper⁸ to have their say on tariff structures.



⁸ JEN - Att 02-25 - Joint VICDB engagement - Small Bus Consultation Paper

4.6 Energy Reference Group

An **Energy Reference Group** was established to provide expert advice on key issues relating to the 2026-31 regulatory control period (**next regulatory period**) while representing the long-term interests of our customers.

Ten energy experts were appointed from various industry, commercial, academic, and government sectors through a robust recruitment campaign.

Members include:

- Andrew Richards, Chief Executive Officer, Energy Users Association of Australia
- Gavin Dufty, National Director Energy Policy and Research, St Vincent de Paul
- Kate Hansen, Chief Operating Officer, CarbonLite
- Kellie Larson, Director Verve Strategic Consulting
- Lynda Osborne, Client Lead, Kraken Technologies
- Morley Muse (Dr), Co-Founder and Director, iSTEM
- Neil Watt, Network Strategy Adviser
- Ruchika Deora, Head of Product, SEC
- Ruth Harland, Utilities Officer Moonee Valley City Council
- Tim Callaghan, GM Strategic Initiatives, Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

We partnered with MosaicLab to deliver our engagement with our Energy Reference Group.

In a mix of in-person and online facilitated sessions, members were invited to provide advice, perspectives and recommendations on a range of topics and challenges that Jemena might face as an electricity distribution network service provider.



Energy Reference Group members provided advice on a range of regulatory topics, including:

- electricity network stability, network performance and reliability
- digitisation and automation of the network
- cyber security and data access
- bushfire risk and mitigation
- risk mitigation
- electrification and the energy transition
- export capacity and import to the electricity network
- incentive schemes, including Customer Service Incentive Schemes
- pricing and tariff structures
- digital systems
- resilience
- customer communication and engagement, including understanding customer priorities and needs.

Along with advice on dedicated topics, the Energy Reference Group made recommendations for the next regulatory period for Jemena to:

- be a trusted information source for information and decision making for customers
- focus on network stability in an unstable environment
- encourage batteries to realise network benefits
- accelerate electrification
- drive digital transformation
- make strategic investments in renewable energy to drive equitable and sustainable energy export decisions.

Energy Reference Group members also had oversight, involvement and connection to our customer engagement program, including:

- access to key insights from customer groups, including key messages and Outcomes Reports
- opportunities to connect with our residential customers and understand their needs
- participating in an expert panel at People’s Panel sessions to help build customer capability of the challenges across the energy industry.

The Energy Reference Group will continue to provide advice throughout the entirety of the price reset process.

Dr Morley Muse, an Energy Reference Group member, said: “When the opportunity came to participate in the energy reference group, I thought it was a brilliant opportunity as it aligns with my interests. I’m very passionate about the environment, climate change, and how renewables will play a big role in the energy transition.”

Full details of our Energy Reference Group engagement are included within *JEN - MosaicLab Att 02-09 Energy Reference Group process report*.



4.7 Local Councils



We recognise the vital and important role local councils play in supporting customers, our communities, and critical infrastructure across our electricity network. We also appreciate their dual role as both large electricity users and key stakeholders, and we value the strong partnership and open communication that we have developed with them.

We commenced engagement with local councils in August 2023 through a series of one-on-one meetings and a survey to identify their challenges, energy priorities and goals for the future. The feedback from the survey and one-on-ones informed the format for a Local Council Forum held in May 2024.

Local councils located in Jemena's network attended the forum to help contribute to shaping the future of Jemena's electricity network.

The forum had 25 Local Council representatives who provided input into:

- customer education and customer vulnerability
- resilience and how to support recovery
- network reliability and the effect on pricing for increased or decreased reliability
- pricing and tariff structures and how we charge for electricity distribution
- sustainability and preparing for a low-carbon future
- digital solutions that make engaging with us on everyday transactions easier.

Details of the local council forum are included in *JEN - Gauge Consulting Att 02-06 Local Council forum report*.

JEN provides public lighting services to 14 public lighting customers, of which 13 are local councils. A detailed overview of the engagement with local councils on the topic of public lighting is included within *JEN – Att 11-02 Public Lighting*. We anticipate further consultation will take place with our public lighting customers throughout 2025.

4.8 Retailers

Retailers play an important role in the energy supply chain and a vital role in servicing, supporting and interacting with electricity customers.

We commenced our engagement with retailers in 2023 through to May 2024. We engaged with retailers operating in our network through Joint Victorian electricity distribution network service provider tariff engagement workshops.

In May 2024 we held a retailer forum. This meeting enabled retailers to:

- receive an update on the priorities customers have been sharing on the engagement program
- share their thoughts on how retailers and Jemena might work together to help respond to these priorities
- share their feedback on proposed pricing levels (tariffs) and future network opportunities.

The forum was attended by 19 representatives from nine retailer organisations, as well as staff from the Victorian Government’s Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and the Essential Services Commission and 13 Jemena staff members.

Details of the retailer forum are included in *JEN - Gauge Consulting Att 02-07 Retailer forum report - 20240106 – Public*.



4.9 Joint Victorian electricity distribution network service provider engagement



We worked with Victorian electricity distribution network providers to jointly engage stakeholders on select energy topics. Joint engagement occurred across select topics such as:

- the framework and approach
- customer vulnerability
- resilience
- tariff structure statements.

We held two online sessions on the topic of **Framework and Approach** with energy stakeholders and customer advocates across Victoria.

We held two in-person **customer vulnerability** workshops to understand the needs and challenges of customers experiencing vulnerability. As part of our joint engagement with Victorian electricity distribution network service providers, we conducted our last joint engagement on tariffs. At the third and final forum in April 2024, more than 50 stakeholders, including energy experts, customer advocates, and electricity retailers, contributed to a statewide approach to tariffs.

Joint tariff engagement explored topics of equity, efficiency and customer bill impacts and will help inform our Tariff Structure Statements.

Figure 4–3: Stakeholders represented at joint engagement sessions



Key themes to date have included:

- residential tariffs and the introduction of a universal ‘solar soak’⁹
- moving customers to a proposed new tariff structure
- residential ‘Time of use’ tariff structure changes
- support for 4pm – 9pm as the new ‘peak’.

Attachment 02-10 to Attachment 02-17 include each of the engagement reports from the joint engagement forums.

4.10 Customer Council engagement

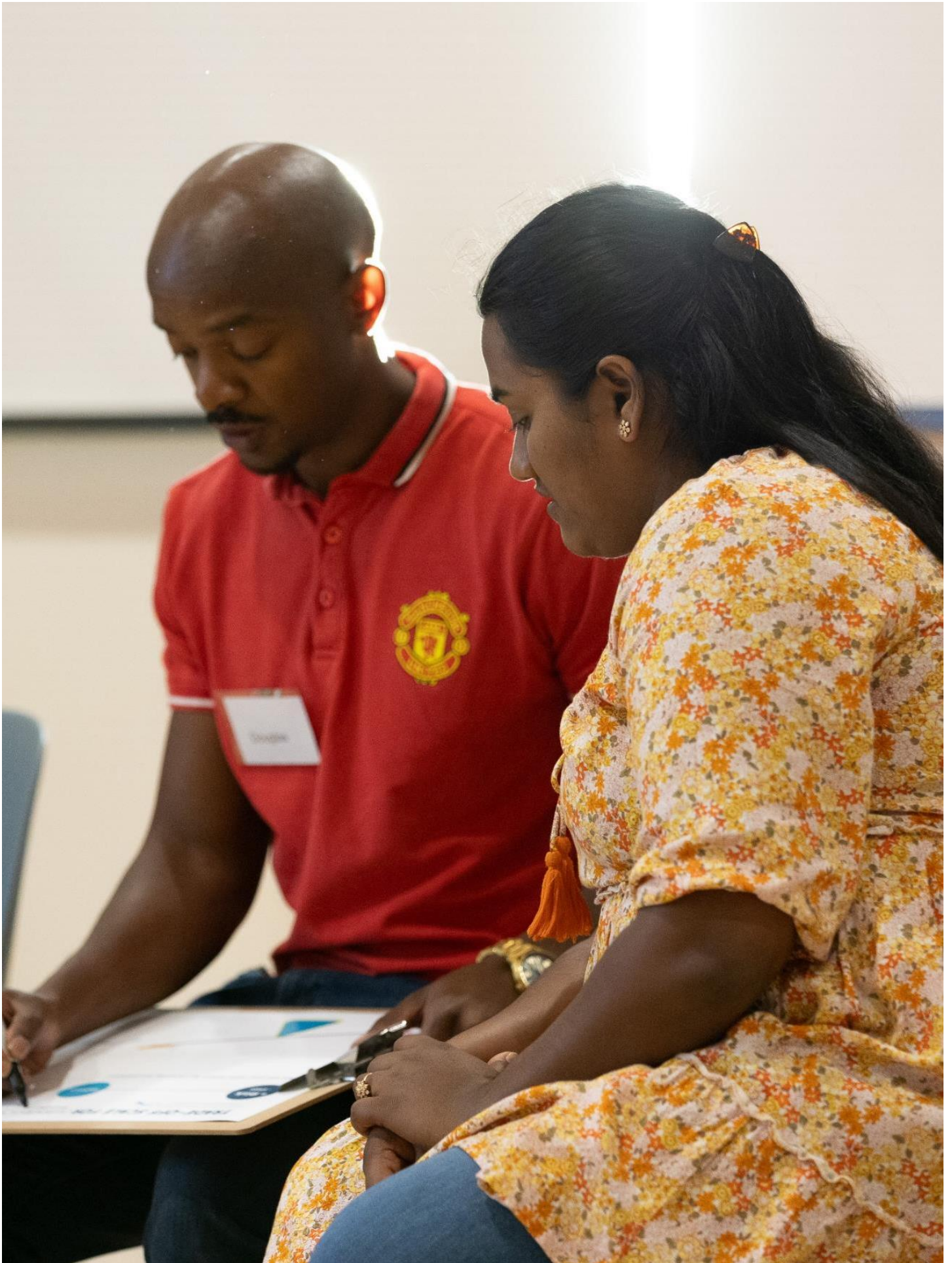
The Jemena Customer Council was established in November 2011 to build strong working relationships with industry stakeholders, key customers and customer advocates. Through our Customer Council, we have an ongoing source of the voice of customers from across our customer and stakeholder groups.

As we developed our Draft Plan, we met with the Customer Council at each phase of our engagement program to seek their input and advice on both the structure and the content of our engagement program.

We provided regular updates and oversight of the engagement plan at quarterly meetings from March 2023 to September 2024.

We also held price reset workshops with Customer Council members in May 2024 to hear their views and seek expert advice on specific topics related to our regulatory proposal.

⁹ During the middle of the day, a lot of energy is generated through photovoltaic rooftop systems. This generation has grown so much that it is causing the electricity system to become unstable. One way to address this issue is to increase electricity usage at the same time the electricity is being generated. We are proposing a lower tariff charge in the middle of the day to encourage customers to increase their usage, thereby “soaking up” a lot of the excess rooftop generation.



5. Customer priorities and recommendations

We understand that our customers and stakeholders have unique circumstances and realities regarding their household, business, organisation, or industry.

Through our engagement, we have spent time deeply listening to and understanding our customers' needs, preferences and priorities. This section captures the priorities and recommendations from across our core customer engagement groups and from our customer research.

A summary of the priorities and recommendations from across our core customer engagement groups, which we have synthesised into common themes, is included in section 5.8.

5.1 People's Panel Recommendations

The People's Panel provided the below recommendations on how we should prepare for a more sustainable energy future. A full copy of the report detailing the recommendations of our People's Panel is included in *JEN - Att 02-19 People's Panel Recommendations*. **Please note that we have elected to produce these recommendations in the language and form presented by the People's Panel and these recommendations have not been edited or curated by Jemena.**

Recommendations	Description	Why this is important
1. Equitable and Fair Tariff Reform	<p>Implement a tariff structure that is fair for different types of consumers e.g. solar (with or without battery) vs non solar.</p> <p>Tariff structure to be as follows to make it fair based on your usage and supply capability.</p> <p>Consumption Charges: (applies to everyone)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply Charge - 3 tiers of supply charge based on how much you use during the day, e.g. low, medium, high consumption Consumption Rate - 3 tariffs of consumption, Off Peak, Solar Soak, Peak Feed In Credit (reward for feeding in solar): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daytime solar soak reduced Credits Nighttime peak time higher feed in Credit (benefits battery owners) Export Tariff: opt in charge for users to export to the grid, this gives access to higher feed in credits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure inclusivity and financial benefits for different consumer groups, i.e. socio-economic backgrounds. Incentives everyone to tailor their consumption behaviour to suit their requirements Vs cost savings Balances the load/generation on the grid reducing over generation during the day meaning lesser requirement to augment the grid to support over generation. Encourages continued sustainable energy adoption and practices (solar, battery and consumer behaviour). Incentives generators (solar owners) to take on in home battery systems to get better feed in rates. Tiered supply charges make it fairer for different consumers, e.g. lower consumption means lower supply charge, whereas currently it is a single supply charge for all
2. Corporate responsibility - addressing sustainability /carbon footprint	<p>Jemena to commit and continually improve on its environmental practices and continuously reduce its impact on the environment. Jemena to undertake and investigate improvements to its own operations (e.g. electrified fleet vehicles, office spaces to use solar), to reduce the impact on the environment. Currently implemented equipment to be replaced with sustainable options once they reach the end of their life cycle (e.g. wooden or concrete poles) Jemena to clearly communicate their net-zero plan and carbon offset strategies to customers and the public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should be long term commitments toward environmental targets to ensure a sustainable future. Communication and transparency with customers builds trust and overall satisfaction with Jemena's business practices. By implementing new technologies or sustainable options in their practice, Jemena can further reduce its impact on the environment without putting the cost on customers
3. Network Reliability	<p>Jemena needs to prioritise investing in reliability by assessing, building, and maintaining the network to meet changes in operating conditions and withstand network failures</p>	<p>It is important to invest in network infrastructure with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving and maintaining service standards and customer experience Reduced frequency in power outages Continue to invest in upgrading the network's ability to "self-heal" Flexibility to accommodate network growth and demand
4. Network Resilience	<p>Jemena needs to prioritise investing in network resilience so it can withstand and recover from the effects of a natural hazard or disaster</p>	<p>It is important to invest in network infrastructure with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacing and upgrading fragile assets Using technology to better predict, manage and respond to significant outages Minimise impact on the customer Develop, maintain and implement a Resilience Strategy
5. Digitisation and automation to increase economic efficiency	<p>Innovation to achieve greater efficiency with a lower network cost recouped over time Use digitisation and automation technology (AI programs) Using advanced monitoring equipment for determining replacement/upgrading of wires Upgrade & reconfigure network i.e. to increase & decrease voltage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make smarter decisions based on factual parameters (consumer usage, distribution factors) Monitor the network to rationalise the distribution to maintain the network stability Generate efficiency to reduce cost (such as cost of upgrading network) Drive efficiencies and reduce costs associated with network upgrades by adopting digital technologies and automated processes Long term savings through less maintenance of assets and less operational manual inputs
6. Enable storage by distributors	<p>Research and develop options and alternatives for energy storage with the intention of installation. Advocate to regulators and governments to allow network service providers to own and operate batteries. Collaboration with Victorian Government and peer Victorian electricity distribution network service provider to share learning and develop common standards. Standardising battery connection arrangements using a simplified model to minimise costs and accelerate distribution. Utilising mobile</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batteries act as a communal backup for severe weather events and also for damage to infrastructure and enhance maintenance downtime. To reduce grid instability, promote efficient use of electricity during peak times, and allow customers to utilise electricity flexibly without being affected by the export charge. To improve grid stability by removing over supply issues and remove the need for the export tariffs.

Recommendations	Description	Why this is important
	<p>storage to react to major events and provide network support where needed on a short-term or temporary basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large scale storage is more commercially viable and environmentally feasible than individual household/business batteries. • Help combat the disruption of solar export across the grid. • Jemena could possibly use this stored energy to offset operational costs e.g. charge EV trucks, offices etc. (This may cause problems as power is generated by customers.) • Jemena could also pull data from existing case studies or other implementations of communal batteries to further justify use-cases that we haven't thought of yet. May even refer to other countries who have a different rule set to us and analyse the pros/cons of the situation.
<p>7. Customer Education</p>	<p>Provide customers with tailored information to guide their decisions about energy usage and investments to reduce their costs and use renewable energy, for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How time-of-use tariffs affect bills, and strategies to benefit from this • Benefits of investing in rooftop solar, batteries, and EVs ○ Impact of appliances on bills and sustainability <p>Ensure information is easy to access, understood by all customers, relevant and practical. Particularly important to communicate through diverse channels and media to reach customers with different abilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence customer behaviour and investment decisions that would contribute to the grid stability with minimal upgrade to the grid infrastructure. • Empowering customers to engage in behaviour and decision-making that increases sustainable energy usage and is cost saving. • Promote transparency and understanding in billing and costs relative to customer usage and energy sources.
<p>8. Jemena to maximise green energy within their focus</p>	<p>Jemena to research and investigate solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to uptake more green energy from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consumer Energy Resource) – Green energy generators • to create an ideal grid that is more conducive to solar uptake and distribution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce carbon footprint and promote sustainability. Support the growing push/options for green energy. Current network setup is not ideal to uptake more CER.
<p>9. Collaboration to ensure efficiency</p>	<p>Widen collaboration (sharing of ideas and information, getting advice, discussing strategy and implementation) with various groups/stakeholders within their areas of expertise, allowing a streamline in effort, time, and cost expended.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To collaborate on recommendations in line with respective parties' expertise to seek cost effective and sustainable outcomes for best practice. • Collaborating with peer energy distribution network service providers to ensure investments in infrastructure and technological advancements being implemented are most beneficial. • Collaboration with energy groups, councils, on sustainability approaches and implementation • Collaboration with retailers and end users on consumer experience and expectations. <p>The above would reduce duplication of effort, share cost benefit across the industry, and encourage joint investment in technology and sustainability practices.</p>
<p>10. Incentivise battery take-up</p>	<p>Encourage investment in batteries to help offset the increasing amount of solar being generated by more and more households.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable incentives to support battery uptake (such as rebates, lower tariffs etc.) to allow Jemena to better manage solar soaking. • Redistribute the stored energy during nighttime peak across the network, providing lower tariffs for all customers (both solar and non-solar). This makes the distribution more efficient and cost effective for everybody (including Jemena). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce grid stress and prepare for future increase of solar implementations. • Trigger enablement of new systems which are needed to manage a new era of upcoming technologies which are inevitably required. • Benefit ALL customers by redistributing excess stored energy.
<p>11. Long-term sustainable operation of Jemena's grid and network</p>	<p>Jemena to commit to environmentally sustainable operations of the company. Using technology and sustainable alternatives for the management and development of the grid infrastructure that would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be cost effective in maintaining the future network. • Provide long-term savings to Jemena and its customers. • Be adaptable and scalable for future needs*. • Reduce Jemena's overall carbon footprint. <p>This recommendation should not impact network resilience or reliability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise environmental sustainability. • Achieve carbon reduction targets. • Ensure affordability while meeting ethical and community expectations.
<p>12. Preparing for Electric Vehicle charging increase</p>	<p>Jemena to plan and monitor the use of EV. Use the data to encourage EV charging station providers to install publicly available charging within the Jemena network area. Align goals with projected EV demand. Support industry partners in increasing the number of EV chargers, enabling an operating model that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly available chargers would allow people to charge their vehicles during the daytime, contributing to grid stability to solar soak periods. Public places could include train stations, shopping centres and hospitals; anywhere people leave their cars for

Recommendations	Description	Why this is important
	minimises negative impacts on the grid and customer costs. Develop and communicate clear guidelines to EV charging customers (e.g. how to use, when to use, charger locations). Collaborating with councils to optimise EV charging solutions (e.g. EV car spaces and location selections)	long periods of time during the day. Communicating clear guidelines to customers ensures they know the best way to utilise EV charging.
13. Transparency in Tariff Structures to allow consumer choice	Provide clarity of tariff structures (relevant times/prices) to assist consumers in making informed decisions that align with their energy needs and preferences against the offered tariff structures. Achieve better understanding of the different advantages/disadvantages of various tariff structures for solar and non-solar customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of different tariff structures available ensuring customers can choose one that best suits their needs (potentially by working with retailer during sign up etc) • Ensuring that tariff information is accessible and understandable to everyone
14. Jemena to champion renewable energy in new developments & housing estates	Jemena to champion the use of renewables (solar) and energy storage (batteries) in new building developments and housing estates. Jemena to encourage the use of renewables and energy storage where possible to help reduce network and customer costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installing energy storage from the start reduces cost of acquisition. • Future proofing building for renewables whilst reducing distributor network costs. • Reduces ongoing costs for all customers on the network
15. Efficient and accessible communication from Jemena to customers	Increase access to special needs customers with accommodations for advocates or a proxy as point of contact. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible and varied channels of communication to ease customer access • Timeliness of communication • Transparent and clear information • Make Jemena more approachable to customers through two-way communication • Continuous development focused on improved communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase public understanding of information from Jemena and reduce confusion • Improve customer service and satisfaction • Reduce anxiety and uncertainty of customer
16. Ongoing service excellence to Jemena customers	Ensuring ongoing service standards to its customers in the delivery of Jemena's services across the board. Ensure Jemena's excellence at all levels, benchmarked with its peers (other distributors), the regulatory body and its customers. Service excellence focused on KPIs that's transparent, monitored, tracked and communicated publicly. Ongoing improvement through implementation of latest technology. Provide opportunities for feedback, and perform internal reviews, to identify opportunities of improvement to service standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Jemena's reputation and standing • Improve customer satisfaction across the board • Ensure Jemena is held accountable and maintains customer interest at heart



5.2 Residential Customer Voice Group priorities

Through listening, connecting and engaging with our residential Customer Voice Groups, a range of customer priorities have been identified. Each group had similar but nuanced energy priorities with different reasons for why they were important and meaningful to them. The section outlines the priorities of each group and their importance. More detailed information is included within *JEN - MosaicLab Att 02-04 Customer Voice Group process report*.

5.2.1 First Nations Customer Voice Group

The table below highlights the priorities of the First Nations Customer Voice Group based on group discussions.

Priority	Why this is important
Affordable electricity supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the significant increase in the costs of living, First Nations customers want the most affordable price for electricity as possible. It is of high importance to keep costs down and to note the strong sense of community, and that many First Nations Peoples often play a role in supporting their families.
Cyber security & data protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyber security and data protection is critical to the First Nations group, especially the protection of sensitive customer data such as contact details (phone numbers and addresses). The group identified the increased risk of family violence for First Nations communities as opposed to non-Indigenous Australians, making the protection of sensitive customer information critical to customer safety.
Sustainable operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The First Nations group wants the operations of our electricity network to be as sustainable as possible and for Jemena to strive to meet sustainability and zero emissions targets. This will ensure we are reducing our impact on the environment and contributing to a more sustainable energy future for generations to come.
Conservation & protection of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The First Nations group want to ensure the operations and maintenance of assets across the network to conserve and protect the lands across the network and surrounds.
Reliable and resilient network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group expects the electricity network to maintain high levels of reliability and increase the resilience of the network by responding quickly to extreme weather events. They noted that many Elders and First Nations community members may need support in getting back onto the electricity network and checking in on who would be severely impacted by power outages. In contrast, some community members would be able to live "off-grid" for shorter periods of time.
Community and customer education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group identified that Jemena needs to help educate First Nations customers and communities on the energy supply chain, energy-efficient appliances and ways to seek services or support. There is a need to partner with First Nations community organisations so that information reaches First Nations Peoples and is tailored to them as an audience.
Tailored customer service (culturally specific)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver tailored customer service to First Nations customers, the group would like us to explore a dedicated First Nations Liaison/ contact point (identified Indigenous person) to act as a point of contact for First Nations customers. The aim for this would be to build our capability to respond to First Nations customers in a culturally safe way for their electricity service needs.
First Nations employment, retention and procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drive recruitment of First Nations Peoples, including graduates who can be in engineering and IT roles to support digitisation (low ranges of Indigenous people in IT roles).

Priority	Why this is important
First Nations procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group wants Jemena to increase the economic outcomes for indigenous peoples through procurement and supporting First Nations businesses.
First Nations cultural training for employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural awareness training within Jemena was a strong priority of the group. The aim is for us to not only further support Reconciliation and build a deeper understanding of First Nations communities and cultures, but as a way to retain Indigenous employees and ensure the workplace is culturally safe.
First Nations grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a part of Jemena's Community Grants Program, it would be valuable and beneficial to consider a First Nations specific category or application process to further encourage and support Indigenous organisations and communities seeking access to the grants.

5.2.2 Disability Customer Voice Group

The table below outlines the top priorities of customers with a disability based on discussions and feedback on a range of topics, trade-offs and dilemmas discussed with the group.

Priority	Why this is important
Affordability and stability of electricity prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers with a disability see affordability and stability in electricity pricing as a top priority. It is of high importance to keep costs down as much as possible to cater for a broad range of customers with a disability. Depending on the disability, there may be high costs associated with equipment or medical costs and their income may be low or rely solely on the Disability Support Pension. The group want us to keep in mind that people living with a disability can be more vulnerable (medically and physically) and have increased needs for support and reliability but are also on a fixed income and financially vulnerable. They need the benefits of increased reliability but are often unable to absorb the required additional costs. The impact of the prices of energy can be significant for customers with a disability who also face costs of living and interest rates along with costs associated with their disability.
Reliable and resilience network with minimal disruptions and outages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each disability is different, and each person has different needs. Depending on the disability, the energy needs of customers with a disability will be different. This means that power outages can be critical to some customers and have minimal impact on others. The group noted the important of outage notifications and knowing accurate restoration times to that customers with a disability can put plans in place to protect their health. Customers with a disability expect us to future proof our assets as much as possible to maintain high reliability and to withstand extreme weather events to minimise outages.
Accessible and clear communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible and efficient communications to customers is paramount to customers with a disability. The group want us to enhance our communications to ensure the information we provide customers is easily understood, easy to find across multiple channels and that there are opportunities for customers to have two-way conversations with customer service team members (online, chat or phone).
Customer education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group see great value in increasing our customer education and helping empower customers by building energy literacy and a greater understanding of energy-saving tips, how to navigate through the energy system and what the future of energy will look like.

Priority	Why this is important
Ongoing customer engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group would like to see us maintain ongoing customer engagement, particularly to give customers with a disability and other customer groups a voice and be able to see the changes customers are advocating for on an ongoing basis.
Continue the Uniting Energy Assist Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers supported Jemena's Uniting Energy Assist Program and would like this work to continue to support customers experiencing hardship or vulnerability. It was noted (as with all groups) that we need to do more to promote the program and make it easily available on the Jemena website so customers who need help are able to access support.

5.2.3 Mental Health Customer Voice Group

The table below outlines the top priorities of customers who experience mental health difficulties based on discussions and feedback on a range of topics, trade-offs and dilemmas explored with the group.

Priority	Why this is important
Affordable and stable electricity prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordability was a top priority for the group but equally having stability in electricity prices was just as important. Customers told us that the uncertainty of electricity prices for some customers can trigger anxiety, fear, and stress and impact their mental health. Therefore, the stability of the price and being able to budget and forecast expected electricity costs is crucial, with prices that are as low cost as possible without impacting the reliability of the network.
Empathy in customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displaying empathy and understanding in customer service is important to customers experiencing mental health difficulties. It makes customers feel safe, calm and comfortable talking to our team members or access information. Sometimes customers with mental health difficulties can be impacted when a bill is not paid on time, or they are prolonged when speaking to a customer service representative. This may lead to delayed action which could escalate to a disconnection notice. Helping reduce anxiety for customers and showing empathy through customer service is a key part of meeting customer needs. Making customer service as streamlined as possible helps reduce the times customers need to repeat their story and reduces the anxiety customers feel when contacting us.
Accessible communication across more channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group recognised that all customers are very different and have their own communication and customer service needs. The way they interact and what they value differs. Some will talk a lot, some not enough. Some prefer text; some prefer the phone. Valuing diverse interaction methods will give a better pathway to understanding customers' actual needs. They would like to have multiple channels to access help or support and recognise that their mental health might impact their ability to pick up the phone and make a call. They would much prefer to use a chatbot or send an email to get in touch with us. Choice is also key to customers feeling they are in control of how they seek out information or support.
Increase resilience and maintain high reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the increasing number of extreme weather events impacting the electricity network, the group felt it is essential for us to increase our resilience to withstand and recover from these events while also maintaining high reliability.

Priority	Why this is important
Digitise and automate the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group wants us to invest in the network to adopt new technologies by digitising and automating the network to be prepared for future energy-related issues. It is important to customers that we stay at the forefront of technology and maximise the benefits of a smarter network.
Fair and equitable tariffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group wants fair pricing and tariffs so that no one gets an unfair advantage based on who they are, their home situation or socio-economic status. They didn't want to see customers cross-subsidising solar customers due to costs associated with excess solar in the electricity network.
Continue the Uniting Energy Assist Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers supported Jemena's Uniting Energy Assist Program and would like this work to continue to support customers experiencing hardship or vulnerability. It was noted (as with all groups) that we need to do more to promote the program and make it easily accessible on the Jemena website so customers who need help can access support.

5.2.4 Multicultural Customer Voice Group

The table below outlines the top priorities of multicultural customers based on discussions and feedback on a range of topics, trade-offs and dilemmas discussed with the group.

Priority	Why this is important
Affordability while maintaining reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, the Multicultural Customer Voice group told us affordability was a top priority while ensuring Jemena can maintain its service standard and not compromise the electricity supply to customers. Reliable and fairer costs will prepare them for a sustainable future.
Accessible communication and information in multiple languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multicultural customers want our communications to be tailored and accessible to cultural and language differences across all of our channels, websites, and media platforms. They see great value in utilising new technologies that enable multicultural customers to have their say on energy and have two-way conversations with customer service teams in their own language. This builds greater participation and involvement of the full diversity of customers in our network.
Resilience and reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because of the recent extreme weather events in Jemena's network over the last three years (Maribyrnong flooding and the 13 February storm event), Multicultural customers see it is critical to increase our network resilience and be prepared for more frequent extreme events that impact the network.
Digitise and automate the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multicultural customers want us to incorporate AI and invest in new technologies to digitise and automate the electricity network as much as possible to prepare for future demand while upgrading outdated or old technologies. Customers felt this would help us prepare to cope with challenges and make the investment at the right time so the network would be efficient for our future needs.
Utilise energy storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multicultural customers believe utilising energy storage solutions will help reduce stress on the electricity network through excess solar and help increase the use of renewables across the network.
Continue the programs that support customers experiencing vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group supported Jemena's Uniting Energy Assist Program and would like this work to continue to support customers experiencing hardship or vulnerability.

Priority	Why this is important
(Uniting Energy Assist Program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was noted (as with all groups) that we need to do more to promote the program and make it easily accessible on the Jemena website so customers who need the help are able to access support.

5.2.5 Seniors Customer Voice Group

The table below outlines the top priorities of senior customers based on discussions and feedback on a range of topics, trade-offs and dilemmas explored with the group.

Priority	Why this is important
Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors want their electricity bills reduced as much as possible. They recognise that many seniors are on the Age Pension or have low incomes and are impacted by the increase in living costs. Many senior customers had rooftop solar and were concerned about the increase in their bill due to future tariff changes with the impact of excess solar on the electricity network. This caused an even greater priority to ensure that costs remain as affordable as possible.
Fair and equitable tariffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior customers want us to have fair and equitable tariffs for our customers, especially customers who have made investments in rooftop solar. They want to maintain reasonable solar rebates and help customers find alternative energy solutions such as batteries. They noted that they didn't want solar customers to be penalised for exporting excess solar back into the electricity network and that customers with solar should be able to see the benefits of their investment through bill reductions as much as possible.
Digitise and automate the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors want us to invest in the network to adopt new technologies by digitising and automating the network to be prepared for future energy-related issues.
Customer education campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior customers want us to implement an education campaign that can help increase their understanding of the role of the Jemena, along with the electricity supply chain, how to access information about energy usage and energy saving tips.
Clear and accessible communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior customers would like us to prioritise clear and accessible communications and enhance the way we communicate and connect to customers. They recognise that as we age, we need information in clearer and simpler formats and often find the easiest way to communicate with an organisation is to speak to them on the phone. Seniors also wanted us to ensure that information was available in multiple languages and accessible to people with disabilities or mental health difficulties. They also noted that information needs to be available in easy formats for people who may have Alzheimer's or early-onset Alzheimer's.
Cyber security & data protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyber security and data protection is critical to seniors, especially the protection of sensitive customer data such as contact details (phone numbers and addresses).
Network reliability and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group recognised the significant impact that power outages can have, both short- and long-term outages, on Seniors. The group want us to maintain high levels of reliability and strengthen our resilience so we can respond quickly to power outages and get customers back on the grid as quickly as possible.

Priority	Why this is important
Continue the programs that support customers experiencing vulnerability (Uniting Energy Assist Program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seniors supported Jemena's Uniting Energy Assist Program and would like this work to continue to support customers experiencing hardship or vulnerability. It was noted (as with all groups) that we need to do more to promote the program and make it easily available on the Jemena website so customers who need help can access support.

5.2.6 Young People Customer Voice Group

The table below outlines the top priorities of young people based on discussions and feedback on a range of topics, trade-offs and dilemmas explored with the group.

Priority	Why this is important
Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young People have felt the impact of increases in the costs of living. Many young people are renting and don't have the ability to access renewable energy sources to reduce the cost of their bills. The group also noted that many young people are studying or at the beginning of their careers, and their incomes are, on average, lower, leading to increased cost pressures impacted by energy bills.
Fair and equitable tariffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people want us to have fair and equitable tariffs for our customers and that customers who are exporting excess solar energy back into the electricity network, should have appropriate tariffs that reflect their needs versus customers without solar. This is important to young people so that customers without solar do not cross-subsidise those that have the benefits of solar.
Reliability, resilience and futureproofing the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people want us to focus on futureproofing the network and increasing our resilience to extreme weather events and future demand. Young people are reliant on electricity and want to see our reliability maintained at high levels. The group also told us as we head into the energy transition, we can't scale up renewables or focus on sustainability without upgrading the network to meet future demand.
Network growth to achieve cost savings for all customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people see the benefits of growth in our network (such as with network growth through data centres) and the benefits this creates for all customers in creating cost savings.
Renewables and a green energy focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group want to ensure the electricity network is able to handle the shift to 'green' energy and we can help incentivise and drive EV, solar and battery use by customers.
Sustainability and corporate social responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If we can make customers aware of the impact Jemena's investments are having, customers believe it would drive further customer engagement and education, leading to an increased awareness of customer behaviours and their impact on the electricity network and the climate. They would like Jemena to commit to continuously improving its environmental practices and reducing its impact on the environment.
Information, data and digital communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people greatly value data and information sharing and would like to see a transparent approach to data usage.
Customer education, transparency and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young people would like us to empower customers through increasing our education and awareness campaigns to help them make informed choices and decisions that lead to better outcomes.

Priority	Why this is important
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They recognised that many customers are unaware of the energy supply chain and energy saving tips and were to seek more information and deserve to have the knowledge to take control of their energy consumption and bill.
Continue the programs that support customers experiencing vulnerability (Uniting Energy Assist Program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people supported Jemena’s Uniting Energy Assist Program and would like this work to continue to support customers experiencing hardship or vulnerability. • It was noted (as will all groups) that we need to do more to promote the program and make it easily available on the Jemena website so customers who need the help are able to access support.

5.3 Residential customer research

We surveyed 1,000 residential customers and asked them questions about what services they felt were important to them when thinking about the future of the network. We described the services provided and asked them to rate how important they were to them, with 0 – 4 being not at all Important and 9 -10 being Extremely Important.

Figure 5.1 indicates the level of importance they placed across these key priority areas.

Customers surveyed identified network reliability, defined as ‘the ability of the electricity network to perform its function adequately for the period of time intended’ as of high importance, along with network resilience, defined as ‘the ability of the electricity network to withstand and recover from the effects of a natural disaster, such as floods, storms and bushfires and accessible and efficient communication. Customers also felt that the digitisation and automation of the electricity network were important to the operation of the network and placed importance on having communications in multiple languages with a dedicated online customer portal.

When thinking about paying household bills, including electricity, 49 per cent of residential customers sometimes or often struggle to pay their bills, making affordability a key priority.

The results confirmed, as outlined in Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2, the top priorities of our residential customers through our deliberative engagement processes with the People’s Panel and Customer Voice Groups. This is reflected in the key initiatives we are implementing to prepare for a more sustainable energy future that meets customers’ needs today.

Details of this research are included in *JEN - Sagacity Research Att 02-08 Customer priorities research report*.

Figure 5.1: Customer research – customer priorities rankings

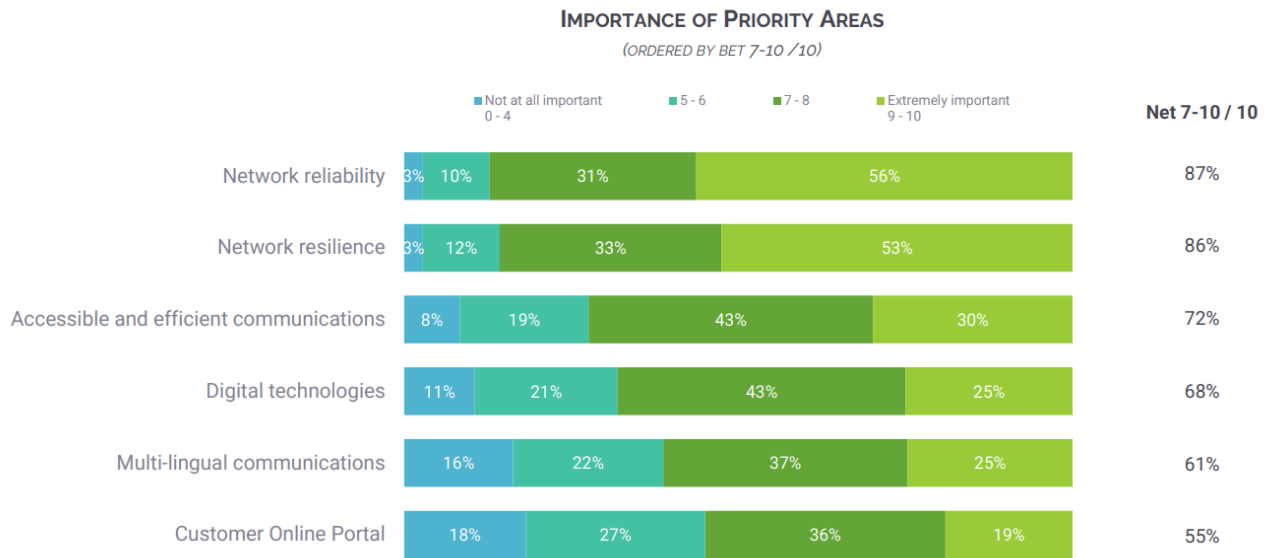


Figure 5.2: Customer research – customer priorities by demographic

% (7-10/10)	Total	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+	Hardship*	CALD^	Have solar	Use natural gas	Contacted Jemena (last year)
	n=1,007	n=304	n=336	n=208	n=159	n=99	n=85	n=361	n=925	n=116
Network reliability	87	79	90	90	95	83	85	87	87	89
Network resilience	86	81	88	85	92	77	81	87	86	88
Accessible and efficient communications	72	72	75	72	69	75	81	72	73	84
Digital technologies	68	66	70	71	66	66	77	70	68	73
Multi-lingual communications	61	59	63	60	63	66	73	66	62	73
Customer Online Portal	55	56	58	54	48	54	68	55	54	65

red/green Statistical differences (95%)

* Customers experiencing hardship, defined as those who state they “often struggle to pay their bills” A Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, defined as had immediate Asian or Middle Eastern ancestry, AND spoke Hindi, Mandarin, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Arabic or Sinhalese

5.4 Large commercial and industrial customer priorities

The table below outlines the top priorities of large commercial and industrial customers. More information on these priorities and our large customer forum *JEN - Gauge Consulting Att 02-05 Large customer forum report*.

Priority	Why this is important
Transparent, consistent tariffs and more information on tariff structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing more tools and information on tariffs can help large customers predict the impact of different investment decisions and improve budgeting and forecasting. Clear and consistent tariffs and guidelines to easily explain tariff structures enables businesses to better understand and communicate their maximum demand, energy consumption and pricing signals. Tariffs that have pricing signals that large customers can respond to (within their control) creates meaningful levers customers can pull.

Priority	Why this is important
More information and data sharing (in advance and real time)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively providing information and data on disruptions to power supply, load shedding events, impacts to power quality, planned outages and restoration times is critical to large customers and their operations. Providing information in real time or in advance where possible, enables large customers to make informed decisions on services, operations or production supply, and the deployment of resources. It can also determine how large customers future-proof assets, make investment decisions, and respond to outages. Sharing information through consultation processes before final decisions are made (e.g. before rolling out new technologies), helps large customers have a say in decision making and equips them for future planning and operations.
Support to enable business growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing greater clarity and certainty on cost schedules and future price signals (e.g. through master agreements or fixed costs arranged upfront). Supporting customers to more cost-effectively retrofit assets to ensure they are fit-for purpose for the modern network. This might include Jemena sharing its expert knowledge of new generation technologies, to help customers persuade more cautious internal decision-makers. Improving coordination of customers' large assets (e.g. data centres and renewable generation technologies) through a more streamlined interface between the customer and Jemena. Making new connections quicker and less resource-intensive for customers, especially high capacity and generation connections. E.g. gather all required customer info up front.
Support to drive sustainability and decarbonisation, including information sharing, pricing signals and improved connections processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making it easier for large customers to invest in renewable assets supports their sustainability goals. This might include tariffs that better incentivise sustainable investments, information on best locations for battery energy storage systems (BESS) and/or lobbying for customers to be able to build large-scale batteries without a certificate. Exploring joint investment (e.g., through grants / EOLs) or improving the sharing/interfaces of regulated and non-regulated infrastructure, land, and assets helps large customers accelerate their sustainability and electrification needs. Exploring opportunities for large customers to export all of their energy at certain times, will help support the network and customer operations. Improving renewable generation connection processes can help large customers to connect CER quicker and more often.

5.5 Small and medium business customer priorities

Through our engagement with small and medium business customers in our network, we learnt about their top priorities for the future of the electricity network and why they are important. More detail on these is included in *JEN - MosaicLab Att 02-03 Small and medium business customer forum*.

Priority	Why this is important
Fair and affordable pricing and tariff structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small businesses have growing concerns about the return on investment of solar and batteries, collectively known as CERs, the cost-effectiveness of electric vehicles, and the impact of energy prices on their operational expenditure. Businesses highlighted the importance of reducing non-negotiable expenses such as electricity and gas. They stressed the need for cost-saving measures and better government support for renewable energy investments, particularly for sole business owners.

Priority	Why this is important
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing costs and having a clear understanding of the benefits of CER enables businesses to budget accordingly and forecast expected expenses to ensure the profitability of their business.
Network reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The reliability of the electricity network emerged as a significant concern to reduce impacts on businesses and the services and goods they provide. Businesses underscored the importance of having advance notice for planned outages and effective communication during unplanned outages so it can help minimise the impact on their business and they can plan and adapt their operations accordingly.
Network resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability for Jemena to respond to extreme weather events and reduce longer-term outages can help businesses return quickly to operating and reduce the associated costs with closures.
Support for renewable energy transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was strong interest in transitioning to renewable energy sources and the role Jemena could play in empowering businesses to achieve their sustainability and energy goals. Businesses expressed a need for collaboration on balancing the electricity network using privately owned solar and battery setups.
Improved communication and outage notifications systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact of both planned and unplanned outages on business operations was a recurring theme. Businesses appreciated the reduction in outages over the years but called for improved notification systems and contingency plans to mitigate the impacts of power disruptions on their business. Improved communications and outage notifications can help alleviate the stress of unplanned outages and help business make informed decisions about their operations.
Ongoing customer engagement and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sessions demonstrated the value of customer engagement, with businesses appreciating the opportunity to share their views and influence Jemena's regulatory proposals. There was a clear demand for continued dialogue and more engagement activities to ensure customer priorities are reflected in future plans.

5.6 Local council priorities

Through our engagement with local councils, we have identified their top priorities, as shown in the table below. More details are included with *JEN - Gauge Consulting Att 02-06 Local Council forum report*.

Priority	Why this is important
Innovative public lighting program and technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local councils want to develop innovative public lighting programs to improve and increase the public lighting options available. This includes replacing old inefficient public lights with LEDs in the next regulatory period. Working with councils to develop a 'smart light operating policy will help to manage the operation of the smart lighting system within the next regulatory period. Implementing smart lighting and controls (i.e. shifting from a default-on approach to task-based lighting) improves local council electricity network management. Include other light types (such as high-pressure sodium lamps) through an equitable, coordinated bulk replacement program. This approach flexibly allows for local councils to elect to lead the procurement of materials (estimated to be 25 per cent cheaper) and project management services in the relevant network areas.

Priority	Why this is important
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing 360-degree lighting that can embed solar panels, PA warning systems, CCTV (including with AI) and Electric Vehicle chargers will improve options local councils have to contribute to public safety and meet community needs.
Collaboration with local councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local councils want support from Jemena to secure funding or available grants, including for smart/ remote control lighting, especially on bike paths. This enables local councils to trial new technologies and introduce initiatives that meet community needs and expectations.
Clear pricing and tariff structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local councils would like to see consistent and clear pricing and tariff structures across our network that are cost reflective. They'd like to ensure we have the right pricing signals in place to better support our customers and communities and their growing concerns on the costs of electricity.
Network reliability and power quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network reliability and power quality is a high priority to local councils to ensure stability of community services and critical infrastructure severely impacted by power outages.
Network resilience and supporting local councils before, during and after extreme weather events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local councils want support to identify risks and potential impacts to communities before, during and after extreme weather events. Local councils benefit from customer and community education on what to do pre and post extreme weather events that impact power. For example, by educating people on how to put plans in place for prolonged outages (e.g. preparing handheld power storage/ back up charging options), manage stress and panic during outages, access to emergency relief centres
Enhancing customer communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local councils want us to provide effective easily accessible information to customers and communities and increase our accessibility, including improved Jemena website functionality. Simple English that is easily translatable and pictures and videos that are highly 'shareable' to help provide information in more accessible formats to diverse customers.
Increasing customer education	<p>Local councils want us to increase our customers education to empower customers and create consistent messages, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improving the Jemena website with clear and transparent explanations of tariffs front and centre to help increase energy literacy briefing local councils on educational material (e.g. via its staff rep on Local Emergency Management Committees) and directly or indirectly support community education via schools, libraries, seniors' groups and other forums that councils can leverage developing shared messaging with local councils about responsibilities, processes and timelines for repairing public lights.
Supporting customers experiencing vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local councils want us to work with them to support customers experiencing vulnerability, including to support programs and collaborate with frontline social service providers where possible. This is important to help the continuation of the Uniting Vic Energy Assist Program and help communities and customers get the support they need.

5.7 Retailer priorities

The priorities of retailers are captured below from our engagement with tariffs through the joint Victorian electricity distribution process, and through the Retailer Forum held in May 2023. Details of the retailer forum are included in *JEN - Gauge Consulting Att 02-07 Retailer forum report*.

Priority	Why this is important
Providing more information and data (in advance and real time)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing technical information and data (with customers' permission) helps retailers identify and support customers, including customers who experience vulnerability, and enhances their service delivery. • Providing up-to-date information (and ideally advanced notice) to retailers enhances service delivery to customers.
Customer education and building energy literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing customer education and energy literacy helps empower customers and their ability to take control of their energy usage, understand their bill and seek out support if needed. It is also important to help build an understanding of where customers can go to seek support, which enables customers to connect to the support they need.
Improving communications, including the Jemena website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the effectiveness of Jemena's website, including through customer testing, is important for increasing accessibility of communications to customers and their engagement in electricity services. • Providing easily understandable information as soon as possible (e.g. comparisons of tariffs, explaining how this applies to their own energy usage and lives, giving advanced notice of changes and tips for managing energy usage) helps customers make informed choices.
Tariffs that are consistent, cost reflective and simple to understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tariffs that align with other Victorian distributors is valued by retailers as it provides a consistent approach to tariffs for all customers, reducing complexity and confusion in tariff implementation. • Retailers support an opt-in tariff for customers with batteries who would benefit from the export and import of solar. • Cost-reflective tariffs are an important part of supporting customers through the energy transition. Creating customer incentives/rewards are needed so that solar customers don't end up being subsidised by the rest of the electricity network.
Roadmap for future services adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a roadmap for future services to be adopted by customers will give retailers a clear understanding of the products and CER opportunities available to customers. • This also means it can be easier to identify opportunities to partner with retailers to support customers and CER opportunities.
Digitising the grid and using new technologies to enable new services and products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digitising the electricity network and using AI to help free up electricity network capacity and solve other challenges across the network. • Retailers want us to use technology to create a platform for new services and products for customers (e.g. virtual power plants, community batteries) to help meet customer expectations as growth in CER increases.
Supporting resilience and progress to net zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retailers want us to increase our resilience as we face greater extreme weather events that impact the network to continue to provide a reliable and safe network to customers. This includes restoration times and the ability to recover quickly from power outages. • Retailers also want us to progress our net zero targets and lead by example in reducing emissions to meet customer and community expectations.
Continuing to deliver rich customer engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retailers would like us to continue to deliver rich customer engagement and share customer insights. This helps build energy literacy and customer confidence in energy services and builds deeper shared understanding of customer needs and preferences.

5.8 Key themes from customer and stakeholder feedback

This section summarises the priorities and recommendations from across our core customer engagement groups and from our customer research, which we have synthesised into common themes.

1. Affordable electricity prices

- Affordable electricity was a top priority for all customer groups, with a specific emphasis on stability to alleviate cost-of-living pressures and reduce financial anxiety.
- Customers across various customer voice groups, including First Nations, Disability, Mental Health, Seniors, Young People, and Multicultural communities, highlighted the critical importance of affordable electricity prices. Many of these groups face financial vulnerabilities, fixed incomes, or significant cost pressures from rising living expenses.
- Seniors and First Nations customers emphasised the need for stable pricing, especially given the increasing costs of living.
- Across all groups, maintaining affordability alongside reliability was considered essential for equitable energy access.

2. Accessible and efficient communication from Jemena to customers

- Clear, transparent, and accessible communication channels were universally requested by many customers.
- Customers emphasised the need for communication tailored to diverse needs, including multiple languages and accommodations for disabilities.
- Multichannel approaches, such as online platforms, phone support, and chat options, were highly valued.
- Enhancing communication accessibility was seen as a way to reduce confusion, increase trust, and improve overall customer satisfaction.

3. Champion renewable energy in new developments & housing estates

- Customers, including the People’s Panel and Young People, advocated for Jemena to integrate renewable energy solutions like solar and batteries into new housing developments and estates.
- Small businesses expressed interest in working with Jemena to balance network usage through privately owned solar and battery setups, while retailers called for tariffs and incentives to encourage the adoption of renewables.
- Early investments in renewable solutions were viewed as a means to lower long-term operational expenses and promote green living.

4. Collaboration to ensure efficiency

- Collaboration was identified as a critical pathway to achieving efficiency across various stakeholder groups, including the People’s Panel, Local Councils, and small businesses.
- Customers recommended that Jemena work with councils, community groups, and peer energy networks to streamline efforts, reduce duplication, and implement best practices.

- Small businesses advocated for stronger partnerships with Jemena to facilitate smoother connections and cost-effective infrastructure upgrades. Retailers highlighted the need for collaboration to align tariff structures and create new opportunities for customers to adopt emerging technologies.
- Local councils proposed partnerships on sustainability initiatives and public lighting projects, while commercial customers recommended joint investments and streamlined processes for renewable energy projects.
- Customers agreed that collaboration could reduce duplication, optimise resources, and achieve cost-effective outcomes.

5. Corporate responsibility - addressing sustainability and carbon footprint

- Customers across all segments called on Jemena to lead by example in reducing emissions and achieving net-zero targets.
- Suggestions included electrifying fleet vehicles, adopting sustainable practices, and increasing transparency around sustainability initiatives.
- Young people specifically highlighted the importance of clear communication on the impact of Jemena's investments in driving customer engagement and support for green initiatives.

6. Customer education and building energy literacy

- Customer education was a universal priority across many customer groups. They widely emphasised the importance of customer education to empower informed energy usage and investment decisions.
- Key topics included time-of-use tariffs, energy-saving strategies, and the benefits of renewable technologies like solar and batteries.
- Tailored campaigns, culturally relevant materials, and partnerships with community organisations were recommended to address diverse customer needs.
- First Nations groups advocated for culturally specific education, while seniors sought simplified resources.
- Across all groups, accessible and practical information was deemed essential for promoting sustainable energy behaviours.

7. Customer engagement (ongoing)

- Ongoing engagement was valued by all stakeholders, with a strong emphasis on maintaining two-way communication.
- Demonstrating how customer feedback shapes Jemena's plans was seen as crucial to building trust.
- Stakeholders also appreciated opportunities to influence decision-making and suggested regular engagement activities to ensure alignment with customer priorities.

8. Conservation and protection of land

- First Nations groups prioritised the conservation of land and sustainable management of assets to protect cultural heritage.

- They emphasised the importance of incorporating traditional knowledge into land management practices and ensuring that Jemena’s operations align with conservation goals to safeguard natural and cultural resources.

9. Cyber security and data protection

- Robust data protection measures were a significant concern across customer groups.
- First Nations communities highlighted the heightened risks associated with sensitive data, particularly in the context of family violence.
- Ensuring customer safety through secure data handling was identified as critical to building trust and protecting vulnerable populations.

10. Digitisation and automation to increase economic efficiency

- Customers supported investments in digital technologies to enhance network management, reduce operational costs, and prepare for future energy challenges.
- Mental health and multicultural customers stressed the importance of adopting advanced systems to improve efficiency and reliability.
- Digitisation was viewed as a vital step toward creating a smarter, more resilient network.

11. Electric Vehicles and preparing for the future

- Preparing for increased electric vehicle (EV) adoption was a shared priority among all groups.
- Stakeholders encouraged Jemena to expand charging infrastructure, collaborate with councils and industry partners, and optimise grid usage to accommodate EV growth.
- Proactive planning and investment were seen as essential to supporting the transition to a greener transport system.

12. Empathy in customer service & tailored customer service

- Empathy and personalised service were key themes among residential customers, First Nations communities, and mental health groups.
- Stakeholders emphasised the importance of culturally appropriate support, streamlined interactions, and reducing anxiety through understanding and responsive customer service.
- A dedicated liaison for First Nations customers was suggested to enhance cultural safety and support.

13. Energy storage by distributors

- Energy storage solutions were widely supported as a means to improve grid stability, enhance resilience, and manage solar oversupply.
- Stakeholders recommended exploring communal and distributed battery systems to address these challenges.

- Energy storage was also seen as an opportunity for Jemena to innovate and collaborate with regulators and governments.

14. First Nations Cultural Priorities

- First Nations groups highlighted the importance of cultural training for Jemena staff, increasing employment and procurement opportunities for First Nations peoples, embedding meaningful artwork, and offering specific grants.
- Building strong relationships through ongoing engagement and incorporating cultural knowledge into operations were seen as vital for reconciliation and inclusion.

15. Information and data sharing

- Transparent and proactive data sharing was requested by large commercial customers and other stakeholders.
- Providing real-time and advance information on outages, tariff changes, and energy usage was identified as a way to support planning and operational decisions.
- Enhanced data sharing was also seen as a means to build trust and improve customer confidence.
- Large businesses and retailers recommended proactive sharing of technical data and real-time information to improve customer decision-making and operational planning. Retailers also sought greater transparency in data sharing to better support vulnerable customers.

16. Incentivise battery take-up

- Financial incentives for battery adoption were widely supported as a strategy to manage solar oversupply and improve grid efficiency.
- Stakeholders viewed such incentives as beneficial for both customers and the network, enabling better utilisation of renewable energy and reducing peak demand pressures.

17. Maximise green energy

- Customers, including the People's Panel and Young People, urged Jemena to maximise green energy uptake by upgrading infrastructure and creating a more renewable-friendly grid.
- This included supporting customer participation in green initiatives and investing in technologies to enable greater adoption of solar and other renewable sources.
- Maximising green energy was seen as essential for reducing the carbon footprint and promoting sustainability.

18. Network reliability and power quality

- Maintaining high levels of network reliability and power quality was a top priority for all customers.
- Customers stressed the importance of timely outage notifications and resilience planning to minimise disruptions.
- Retailers similarly prioritised reliability as essential to maintaining customer trust and satisfaction.

- Investments in infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events and future demand were seen as crucial for ensuring consistent and reliable energy supply.

19. Network resilience

- Customers, including Local Councils, underscored the importance of investing in resilience to withstand extreme weather events. They called for measures to ensure rapid recovery and minimal impact on customers.
- Small businesses supported network upgrades to better handle operational risks posed by extreme weather.

20. Ongoing service excellence to JEN's customers

- The Energy Reference Group and People's Panel supported Jemena's efforts to maintain service excellence.
- Small businesses called for clear performance metrics to ensure accountability, while retailers encouraged Jemena to benchmark its service against peers and regulatory expectations.

21. Public lighting – Innovative program with smarter technologies and collaborating with Local Councils on trials and grants

- Local Councils advocated for innovative public lighting solutions, such as LEDs and smart systems, to improve safety and efficiency. Collaboration with councils was seen as essential for piloting these initiatives and securing funding.

22. Long-term sustainable operation of JEN's network

- Customers, including Young People and the People's Panel, recommended adopting environmentally sustainable practices to ensure the network remains cost-effective, resilient, and adaptable to future needs.

23. Tariff communications to create clarity and consistency

- Clear and consistent tariff communications were supported by Seniors, Retailers, and Local Councils.
- Customers emphasised the need for transparency to enable customers to make informed choices.

24. Tariffs that are cost-reflective and equitable

- All groups highlighted the importance of equitable tariffs that fairly balance the needs of diverse customer types.
- Small businesses expressed the need for clear, equitable tariffs that enable better budget planning and profitability.
- Retailers highlighted the importance of cost-reflective tariffs to ensure fair pricing across customer types and prevent cross-subsidisation.



6. Consultation on our Draft Plan

In August 2024, we published our Draft Plan, which was shaped by the feedback from our customers and stakeholders. We promoted our Draft Plan across social media, Jemena and [GridTalk](#) websites, via a media release and through direct communication with customers and stakeholders.

Following the release of our Draft Plan, we consulted extensively with our customers and interested stakeholders, with a view to understanding whether we had adequately understood and actioned the feedback that they had provided to us. Based on this further feedback, we have further refined our plans for the 202-31 regulatory period and reflected it within our JEN 2026-31 Proposal.

Our engagement on our Draft Plan included:

- An open online survey to gain feedback on the Draft Plan
- A recall session for People’s Panel and Customer Voice Groups
- Customer Deep Dives on affordability and expenditure

We also published a Public Lighting Consultation Paper for Local Councils and received six submissions specifically on the public lighting approach.

6.1 Draft Plan survey

We encouraged and invited customers to have their say through a Draft Plan survey. We promoted the survey across social media, direct customer communications, media and the Jemena and GridTalk websites. It was a top priority for us to ensure that the Draft Plan meets the needs of customers and the communities we serve.

We received 42 survey submissions on the Draft Plan and additional correspondence on key items. We also had 2,770 views¹⁰ of the Draft Plan web page which shows strong engagement with the document. We asked customers and stakeholders to use a sliding scale from does not meet to meets to exceeds to identify if the Draft Plan met the goal of meeting needs.

The survey results indicated that **83% of customers and stakeholders believed that the Draft Plan either meets or exceeds customer and community needs.**

This reflects that our Draft Plan was shaped by customers and responds to the priorities and preferences that we responded to through the initiatives we proposed.

Highest Priority items

- New digital technologies to improve electricity system management and enable new sustainable products and services.
- Ensure all customers receive a minimum two per cent reduction in distribution charges during the next regulatory period (excluding inflation).

Medium priority items

- New tariff structures that encourage better network utilisation and improve price equity between solar and non-solar customers.
- Upgraded systems to keep customers better informed with near real-time information at times they need it the most. Broad-based zone-substation redevelopment program to maintain the current reliability levels.

¹⁰ Views of the draft plan refers to the total number of times a visitor on your sites views any page on your site or project. Page views are recorded each time a page is visited, regardless whether the user has previously visited that page.

- Broad-based zone-substation redevelopment program to maintain the current reliability levels.
- Connect over 33,300 new residential customers and 2,585 businesses in North-west Melbourne.

Low priority

- Large-scale assets to serve new large customers such as data centres and hospitals.
- A new portal to provide tailored information based on customer preferences and language needs with energy information.
- Replacement of fleet vehicles with those that are more environmentally friendly to increase the sustainability of our operations

See *JEN-Att 02-18 – Draft Plan Feedback Report* for a summary of the feedback received on the Draft Plan survey, including verbatim feedback from the completed surveys.

6.2 People’s Panel and Customer Voice Group recall session

On 31 August 2024, we hosted a session with 46 residential customers from our People’s Panel and Customer Voice Groups to engage them in the Draft Plan and seek feedback on network resilience.

The session:

- Outlined key initiatives in the Draft Plan in response to customer feedback
- Allowed customers to speak to experts to answer their questions on key initiatives
- Tested the approach in the Network Resilience Addendum and approach to understand customers’ preferences on investment
- Gave an opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Plan

For further information on the recall session, see *JEN—MosaicLab Att 02-21 Draft Plan Recall Day—WWS* report.

Although we received strong support for our Draft Plan, some customers felt that we needed to work harder to demonstrate how our regulatory proposal is responding to the theme of affordability. It was as a result of this feedback that we held two deep dives with members of our People’s Panel and Customer Voice Groups. We also used the deep dives to revisit the topic of network resilience and understand customer preferences on different investment packages.

6.3 Customer deep dives

In response to feedback from some of our customers and from the Australian Energy Regulator (**AER**) on our Draft Plan and to ensure we comprehensively addressed the topic of affordability in our JEN 2026-31 Proposal, Jemena held two Deep Dive sessions. The purpose of these sessions was to present the residential bill impacts of our customer education, network resilience and innovation initiatives to enable us to gain insights on customers’ willingness-to-pay for these services and to create value for our customers today and for future generations.

Deep Dive attendees consisted of a mix of Customer Voice Group and People’s Panel participants (35 in session 1 and 33 in session 2). The attendees participating in these sessions comprised a representative mix of our customer base across age groups, education, electricity literacy and also included customers experiencing vulnerability or who may experience issues with accessibility to our services.

Customers were provided with package options to reflect on in small working groups and then later provided their feedback to all attendees.

These additional sessions allowed for further meaningful and considered discussions as to how the JEN 2026-31 Proposal will address affordability, and they also provided an opportunity for JEN to collaborate with our consumers as partners and seek input on operating expenditure step changes.¹¹

The following sections summarise the key outcomes of the deep dive sessions. More information is contained within *JEN - MosaicLab Att 02 - 22 Customer Deep Dive Outcomes Report*.

“Such an interesting group of people to listen to and learn from. I’ve learnt that a lot goes into keeping the network running and we are lucky to live in Australia and Jemena’s network.”

“Consulting with its constituents...and valuing their inputs. I definitely feel heard and hopefully added some level of valued input.”

- *Deep Dive session participants and Jemena customers*

6.3.1 Affordability

The first issue explored during the deep dives was affordability. We first explained how we had approached prioritising affordability when developing our Draft Plan and then provided customers with an opportunity to reflect on this issue in small groups. Following the small group discussions, customers were asked what they would like Jemena to keep in mind as we considered affordability. The key themes captured from the customer responses included:

- Affordability and reliability: Affordability is not solely about cost-cutting but also maintaining consistent and reliable service. Balancing affordability with essential priorities like digitization, sustainability, and climate change mitigation.
- Efficiency as a path to savings: Emphasis on improving efficiency as a means to achieve affordability. Savings can result from smarter operations rather than direct cost-cutting.
- Customer-centric equity: Differentiated impact of costs on customer types (e.g. homeowners vs. renters, large vs. small customers). Importance of equitable pricing and addressing diverse customer profiles.
- Long-term vs. short-term decisions: Concerns about trade-offs between affordability and long-term grid reliability. Highlighting the necessity of forward planning (e.g., investments in substations and climate resilience).
- Profitability and transparency: Acknowledgment of Jemena’s right to make profits but emphasis on responsible spending. Requests for clarity on how cost savings are passed on to consumers.
- Environmental responsibility: Climate change as a priority requiring action despite potential short-term cost increases. Balancing environmental goals with affordability.
- Consumer trust: Jemena’s approach to affordability and efficiency should be communicated to gain goodwill. Providing context on challenges (e.g., insurance costs driven by climate change).

In response to this concern, all customers (residential, large, small and medium businesses) will receive a reduction in network charges for our customers is an average of 12% in 2026-27 and then 5.6% each

¹¹ [AER - Better Resets Handbook - July 2024](#)

year for the remaining 4 years during the next regulatory period (excluding inflation). This will create stability in the electricity distribution costs that customers are charged.

6.3.2 Customer education

People’s Panel and Customer Voice Group feedback indicated that our customers require accessible, tailored information in multiple languages to make informed decisions about energy usage, reduce costs, and invest in renewable resources. Such information empowers them, enhances energy literacy, and influences behaviour and investment choices that contribute to grid stability with minimal infrastructure upgrades. However, current barriers include a lack of easily available information that accommodates disabilities, low literacy rates, and non-English speakers.

To ensure that the design of a customer education package meets the expectations of our customers, we used to the Deep Dive sessions to test three distinct customer education packages with our customers, with a view to incorporating their preferred option within our JEN 2026-31 Proposal.

Figure 6–1: Customer education packages tested with customers

PACKAGE	COST, OVER 5 YEARS	COST PER YEAR FOR EACH RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER	OUTCOME
1 - Essential Education	\$5.4 million	\$1.15	Customers informed through resources available on Jemena channels to self-empower
2 - Education & Customer Empowerment	\$8.2 million	\$1.75	Customers empowered through education & broad awareness across all channels
3 - Education & Customer Empowerment PLUS	\$10.2 million	\$2.18	Customers empowered & communities engaged through hands-on education & broad awareness

After exploring the details of each package, customers had the opportunity to vote on their preferred package. Of the three options presented, participants selected **Package 2 – Education & Customer Empowerment**, agreeing it focuses on a balanced approach to education and empowerment - leading to customers who are informed and engaged across all channels.¹² They appreciated this packages’ attention to increasing their awareness across a range of channels which makes it more accessible.¹³ They found it to be less complex than Package 3 in that it offers practical solutions but does not require significant resources. Participants advised Package 2 would empower customers to take control and enabling them to make more informed decisions.

Based on the preferences expressed by our customers, we have incorporated Package 2 into our JEN 2026-31 Proposal. More information on this package is included in Attachment 06-04 Operating expenditure step change, where we introduce “Customer systems and education” and in the document “ICT Investment Brief - Customer systems”.

¹² AER - Better Resets Handbook - July 2024.

¹³ Mosaic Labs Customer Deep Dive Outcomes Report, November 2024, p9

6.3.3 Innovation fund

In response to customer feedback around the proactive role they wish Jemena to play in the energy transition, and their concerns around affordability, we developed four distinct **Innovation Fund** packages to present the the residential bill impacts of our customer education, network resilience and innovation initiatives to Deep Dive attendees to ensure we appropriately balanced these preferences with customers’ affordability concerns.

The packages were presented, reviewed and discussed in working groups. Attendees were tasked with considering the impact of each package for **all customers**. Thinking of the full spectrum of customers allowed for deep, considered engagement and offered many varied opinions.

Participants advised Jemena should play a pivotal role in driving sustainability targets and fostering a sustainable energy future¹⁴ and that customers should be empowered to adopt consumer energy resources such as electric vehicles (EVs) and batteries and believe that **Jemena should ensure that no customer is left behind**.

Participants recognised the baseline package as a solid foundation whilst also suggesting broader industry collaboration for higher-tier solutions to enhance value.

“We prefer it is cost-effective and has push-pull communication topology.” – Jemena Deep Dive Participant and Customer - Jemena Deep Dive Session participant and customer

Figure 6–2: Innovation fund packages tested with customers

PACKAGE	COST, OVER 5 YEARS	COST PER YEAR FOR EACH RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER	OUTCOME
0 – Baseline Option	n/a - absorbed by Jemena	\$0.00	Jemena absorbs the baseline package over 5 years with minimal delivery .
1 - Innovation with Ingenuity	\$3.9 million	\$0.67	Jemena is able to support innovation & help to drive sustainability for customers and communities
2 – Innovation with Impact	\$8.15 million	\$1.39	Jemena is a genuine & active innovation partner to drive sustainability for customers and communities
3 – Innovation with Influence	\$13.05 million	\$2.23	Jemena is an innovation leader , partnering with others & help shape the national innovation agenda to drive sustainability for customers & communities

By bridging the gap between the baseline offerings of Package 1 and the more advanced offerings of Package 3, participants advocated for adopting **Package 2 – Innovation with Impact**, as they suggest it provides practical, actionable insights that are more tailored to everyday electricity users.

¹⁴ Mosaic Labs Customer Deep Dive Outcomes Report, November 2024, p16.

Deep Dive engagement participants appreciated this packages' cost-effectiveness and its facilitation of clear, two-way engagement and said Package 2 offers more immediate, actionable outcomes without the risk of overreaching and will also serve as a great foundation for an eventual expansion to Package 3.

Based on the preferences expressed by our customers, we have incorporated Package 2 into our JEN 2026-31 Proposal. More information on this package is included in Attachment 03-02 Innovation fund.

6.3.4 Network resilience

We originally engaged with our customers on network resilience during our People's Panel sessions, including seeking their preferences on different resilience packages during the Draft Plan recall day. Recognising that there have been a number of further developments¹⁵ in network resilience in recent months, we used the Deep Dive sessions to further engage with our customers on this important topic.

We engaged customers during the deep dive sessions through a structured approach to inform them of developments that have taken place since the previous customer discussions on the topic, and to respond to some of the concerns raised during the recall day around a need for refined cost estimates, potential for bundling of projects to reduce costs, and examining internal processes to absorb costs where possible.

To ensure improvements aligned with our customer's needs, we presented three packages on network resilience which focused on our customer's priorities of fairness, reliability and preparedness.

Each of the three packages has been designed to address an approach that meets the immediate needs of our customers and the long-term objectives across all customer groups.

"Putting our foot in the door for innovation and opportunities from 3rd party investors and / or government grants" Jemena Deep Dive Session participant and customer

¹⁵ AEMC, [Including distribution network resilience in the National Electricity Rules | AEMC](#), 2024.

Figure 6–3: Network resilience packages tested with customers

PACKAGE	COST, OVER 5 YEARS	COST PER YEAR FOR EACH RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER	OUTCOME
1 - Essential Resilience	\$6.9 million	\$1.34	Enhancing resilience preparation and response for all customers across the network
2 - Equitable Resilience	\$23.5 million	\$1.68	Enhancing network resilience, including along the Maribyrnong River, & creating equity of network resilience for customers, along with improvements to our resilience preparation and response for all customers
3 – Strengthening Resilience	\$40 million	\$2.02	Enhancing network resilience, including along the Maribyrnong River, West Footscray and Heidelberg, along with improvements to our resilience preparation and response for all customers

Session participants reflected on these in small workgroups then presented their considerations, choosing **Package 2 – Equitable Resilience**, which they explained they felt took into account resilience efforts for vulnerable and underserved customers and that “no customer was left behind” in this package.

This package covers it all off and is more feasible to do other work (that is) outlined in Package 3 later down the track”

- Jemena Deep Dive Session participant and customer

Based on the preferences expressed by our customers, we have incorporated Package 2 into our JEN 2026-31 Proposal. More information on this package is included in Attachment 06-04 Operating expenditure step changes.

6.4 Energy Reference Group feedback

Following publication of our Draft Plan, in November 2024, the Energy Reference Group provided a formal submission on our plans.

The Energy Reference Group provided positive feedback on our Draft Plan, with approximately 90% overall approval of Jemena’s plans to support a sustainable energy future while meeting customer and community needs.

The feedback and recommendations from the Energy Reference Group spanned across a range of critical topics of concern for our customers in relation to the Draft Plan and was provided after multiple structured, in-depth cross-collaboration sessions which also included the People’s Panel. The Energy Reference Group listened to

diverse viewpoints from the People’s Panel and offered expert advice summarised in the Table 6–1. The full report by the Energy Reference Group is included in *JEN - Att 02-23 Energy Reference Group Report*.

The Jemena team deserves commendation for their open, constructive engagement and curiosity throughout this process.

– Energy Reference Group Member

Table 6–1: Key Energy Reference Group recommendations and opportunities for the JEN 2026-31 Proposal

Key Topics	ERG Feedback on Jemena’s engagement efforts	Opportunity
Affordability and stability of electricity prices	<p>All groups had a clear understanding of critical issues around the affordability of energy, the need for change to renewables, and the specific customer requirements during this transitional phase</p> <p>The ERG believe the balance between affordability and necessary investments has been achieved while prioritising investments that meet customer expectations</p> <p>Jemena’s investments plans are essential for electrification and future cost reductions. Immediate investments mean future costs will be lower, preventing a scenario of "missing the boat" and facing prolonged higher expenses</p>	<p>Transparent communication of how network investments directly benefit customers will be crucial in maintaining their support</p> <p>Exploration of potential efficiency gains and innovations could help manage future costs while ensuring service excellence and resilience</p> <p>Including Jemena's debt rating would be beneficial for understanding the company's ability to refinance debt against its Regulatory Asset Base (RAB)</p>
Reliable and resilience network with minimal disruptions and outages	<p>Expenditure step change will mean lower future costs while ensuring service excellence</p> <p>The ERG support Jemena’s strategic replacement of ageing Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters and the extension of replacement timeframes to ensure prudent use of resources</p>	<p>Building network resilience through decentralisation (such as microgrids and localised energy storage) and smart grid technologies should be a focus</p> <p>Investment in measures to withstand extreme weather to fortify the network’s capacity to manage and recover from such disruptions, safeguard the integrity and reliability of the system is essential, as is communicating the long-term benefits and value proposition clearly to consumers</p> <p>Proactively engage customers with clear communication around meter replacement and maintaining compliance with smart meter inspection obligations ensuring concerns such as scheduling, data security, cost transparency and consumer experience during the replacement are addressed</p>
Accessible and clear communication	<p>The ERG commend Jemena’s efforts to empower stakeholders by providing accessible and informative content</p> <p>Demonstrated commitment to listening to and acting on diverse perspectives</p>	—No opportunities were identified

Key Topics	ERG Feedback on Jemena's engagement efforts	Opportunity
Ongoing customer engagement and education	<p>Jemena identified and addressed engagement challenges which allowed for further refinement of its Draft Plan into its JEN 2026-31 Proposal</p> <p>All ERG members rated Jemena's customer engagement highly and agree Jemena have listened to and acted on customer and stakeholder feedback and has taken into account a multitude of views</p> <p>Customer and community engagement have been broad, deep, exemplary, class-leading and well-tailored to the attributes of their network</p> <p>Jemena made noteworthy efforts to target both minority and mainstream customers and ensure all groups were well-educated across the next regulatory period</p>	<p>Bringing insights together from other DNSPs, AER, AEMC, ESC and ACCC may be a value-add to the engagement process</p> <p>Create engagement and capture consumer presence throughout the regulatory period, not just the second half, to proactively address consumer concerns</p> <p>Identify and remove barriers to communication with retailers</p>
Tariffs	<p>Current tariff proposals largely reflect the goal of effective price signals to optimise network usage across all customer segments while providing practical options for improved affordability</p>	<p>Direct communication with consumers, and co-ordination with retailers, to facilitate implementation of opt-out tariffs and dynamic operating envelope tariff structures based on seasonality</p>
Energy transition & Future Network Strategy	<p>Jemena's strategy outlines a clear vision for supporting Victoria's energy transition towards net zero by 2045, focusing on electrification, customer engagement and digital transformation</p> <p>Building a digital, data-driven infrastructure ensures Jemena can handle the growing complexity of energy systems</p> <p>The future network strategy's main pillars and drivers are appropriate and, the ERG believes that Jemena is on the right track with its network strategy</p>	<p>Consideration of the effects of extreme weather to the pipeline and stress to the grid</p> <p>Continue to ensure all customer segments, including vulnerable populations, have equitable access to the benefits of electrification and renewable energy</p> <p>Development of flexible pricing models that encourages shift to off-peak times or participation in demand-response programs</p> <p>Close collaboration with renewable energy developers will be essential to ensure that renewable energy generation and storage assets can be smoothly integrated into the grid</p>



We appreciate the effort put into crafting a proposal that balances affordability, resilience, and the facilitation of the energy transition. The transparent communication of how network investments directly benefit customers will be crucial in maintaining their support for the proposed revenue increase. Additionally, exploring potential efficiency gains and innovations could help manage future costs while ensuring service excellence and resilience.”

– Energy Reference Group

6.5 Local councils

In an independent Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (EAGA) survey of local councils conducted in November 2024, local councils showed their overwhelming support for replacing old public lights with LEDs in the next regulatory period as well as other key recommendations.

Survey Question	Response
Do you agree with the proposed approach to bulk LED upgrades?	100% Favourable
Do you agree that councils should be given the option to include smart lighting within their bulk upgrade (and beyond)?	100% Favourable
Do you support a working group to be established to gather Council feedback and fine tune the approach with Jemena?	100% Favourable
Do you agree that Jemena should offer 3000K versions of each light? ¹⁶	92% (8% Unfavourable) ¹⁷

A detailed overview of the engagement with local councils on the topic of public lighting is included within *JEN – Att 11-02 Public Lighting*. We anticipate further consultation will take place with our public lighting customers throughout 2025.

¹⁶ Gauge Consulting, *Local Council Forum Report*, June 2024.

¹⁷ Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action, *Public Lighting Survey*, December 2024.

7. Responding to customer priorities and feedback

We are committed to reflecting the needs, preferences, recommendations and priorities of our customers in our plans. We have carefully considered our customer and stakeholder priorities for the future of our network, and in Table 7–1 we have outlined how we are responding to each priority. We also include cross-references to relevant chapters of our JEN 2026-31 Proposal

Table 7–1: Responding to customer priorities

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
Affordable electricity prices ¹⁸ (All customers)	All customers (residential, large, small and medium businesses) will receive a reduction in network charges for our customers is an average of 12% in 2026-27 and then 5.6% each year for the remaining 4 years during the next regulatory period (excluding inflation). This will create stability in the electricity distribution costs that customers are charged. This proposed price reduction is enabled by an increase in load used by data centres, major connections and increased utilisation from existing customers due to electrification.	
Accessible and efficient communication from Jemena to customers (All customers and stakeholders)	Enhancing our accessibility and communication with customers is a vital step to increasing the positive experience customers have when engaging with us. We have dedicated expenditure to enhance the communication to all of our customers by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing simple and accessible customer communications across all our channels and in multiple languages to support customer needs Upgrading customer systems to allow for near real-time communications with customers using web chat and two-way SMS to meet their needs better Collaborating with local councils, community groups, the Victorian Government, and emergency services to improve customer communications, particularly on policy development and during major outages and emergencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5 – Capital investment and Chapter 6 – Operating expenditure
Champion renewable energy in new developments & housing estates (Large commercial and industrial customers)	We will champion the use of renewable energy generation by exploring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing batteries in Underground Residential Distribution Developments (BURDD). Encouraging high voltage connected grid-scale energy solutions to large commercial and industrial customers and partners by enhancing our connection processes. We could also undertake research to identify the impacts on the electricity network through analysis to allocate hosting capacity for electricity exports more equitably Supporting shared energy infrastructure solutions in greenfield sites, such as batteries, EV charging, and community generation Working with developers on standards and requirements for 'green estates' that integrate energy storage with solar generation from the outset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3 – The energy transition
Collaboration to ensure efficiency	Within our existing capability to ensure efficiency by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborating with our peer electricity distribution network service provider (nationally and internationally) on innovations and sharing learnings (for example, technical specifications and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 6– Operating expenditure

¹⁸ Affordability was a theme we sought to tackle in our deep dive session. Refer to section 6.3.1.

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
(Large commercial and industrial customers, Local Councils and stakeholders)	<p>sharing on energy storage, tariffs, data sharing, digitisation and electrification)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating and information sharing with the Centre for New Energy Technologies (C4NET) to understand energy and customer data, research and insights. • Collaborating and sharing information with the Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action and the AER to investigate network efficiencies. • Collaborating and engaging with retailers to deliver beneficial outcomes to customers. • Use trials, partnerships and research as a means of wider collaboration and socialisation. 	
Corporate responsibility - addressing sustainability and carbon footprint (All customers and stakeholders)	<p>As a part of our existing practices, we will build upon our existing work to ensure corporate responsibility and address sustainability by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing policies and practices that support a more sustainable business, including our: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – corporate-level net-zero commitment by 2050. – carbon offset strategies, including pursuing re-vegetation initiatives. – sustainability requirements as part of procurement policy and strategy • Implementing sustainable procurement strategies to ensure that materials we purchase to build the electricity network contribute to a circular economy • Aligning our operations to the Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia rating criteria. • Implementing a sustainability management system – for the entire asset lifecycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 – Capital investment
Customer education and building energy literacy (All customers and stakeholders)	<p>To educate customers we need a dedicated awareness campaign, <i>and</i> a customer facing channel that helps empower customers to increase their knowledge and energy literacy in a way that suits them.</p> <p>We will use this expenditure to deliver customer education by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a new dedicated customer online portal that provides tailored information to customers based on their expressed preferences, language, and needs. The portal would also include AI to drive tailored information to empower customers to make decisions about sustainable energy usage. • Developing an integrated marketing campaign to generate awareness of energy-saving tips, the energy supply chain, rooftop solar, energy-efficient appliances, pricing and tariffs, and understanding electricity bills • We will enhance our existing customer channels and touchpoints by integrating our customer applications and back-end customer knowledge management and providing customers with one seamless customer experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 – Capital investment Chapter 6 – Operating expenditure.

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with local councils and community groups to build broader awareness of energy-saving tips, energy-efficient appliances and understanding of electricity bills. <p>We further explored the topics of customer education with our customers during our deep dive session. We aimed to better understand their specific preferences from a range of options. Based on this feedback, we have incorporated Package 2 into our JEN 2026-31 Proposal. More information about this package can be found in <i>Attachment 06-04, Operating expenditure step change</i>, where we introduce “Customer systems and education,” as well as in the document “ICT Investment Brief - Customer systems.”</p>	
<p>Customer engagement (ongoing)</p> <p><i>(All customers and stakeholders)</i></p>	<p>We will take the learnings and insights from the engagement process to evaluate our business-as-usual engagement with our electricity customers to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ways we can continue to build our relationship with First Nations communities in our network area and across Victoria new approaches to ongoing engagement with our customers, including ongoing engagement with diverse residential customers ways we can continue our engagement with customers and stakeholders who participated in the engagement process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This work will take place in 2024 with the aim to start ongoing engagement groups by 2025.
<p>Conservation and protection of land</p> <p><i>(All customers and stakeholders)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure the protection of land and mitigate the risks to the environment caused by the interaction of trees and power lines through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continuing to develop and improve methods of environmental management and ongoing development of fire-safe distribution assets implementing training standards to provide the ‘best practice’ management of vegetation annually researching and compiling lists of trees deemed to be culturally or environmentally significant annually researching and compiling listings of habitat trees containing fauna that is listed in the Threatened Invertebrate/Vertebrate Fauna List with a conservation status in Victoria of ‘vulnerable’, ‘endangered’ or ‘critically endangered’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Captured in our Electric Line Clearance Management Plan, which is reviewed and updated each year. In 2026 a new five-year plan will be developed.
<p>Cyber security and data protection</p> <p><i>(All customers)</i></p>	<p>We will increase our cyber security and strengthen data protection for our customers by integrating new digital capabilities into the network and dynamic operations.</p> <p>This will increase the data, analytics, systems, and cyber security capabilities required to meet our customers’ needs, support the network and the integration of renewable energy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5 – Capital investment Chapter 6 – Operating expenditure
<p>Digitisation and automation to increase economic efficiency</p> <p><i>(All customers)</i></p>	<p>We will implement digital technologies that enable devices across the electricity network to communicate and share data that might be useful for both customers and electricity network management.</p> <p>This includes smart meters, sensors, automation, and other digital network technologies, as well as advanced metering infrastructure and smart grid technologies, to reduce other costs in the electricity supply</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5 – Capital investment Chapter 6 – Operating expenditure Chapter 10 – Smart Metering.

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
	<p>chain, including network investments, to realise financial savings in the long term.</p> <p>We will achieve this by Implementing a Future Network Strategy that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of near real-time Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) data, the metering and communications infrastructure we use to read meters remotely and obtain data for analysis. We use this data to help run the electricity network more efficiently and resolve problems more quickly. • Dynamic network configuration that performs hourly dynamic status changes of sectionalising and tie switches to reduce network line losses, minimise loss of load, or increase hosting capacity for distributed energy resources. • Dynamic voltage management, an advanced operating technology that automatically optimises voltages on the electricity network depending on conditions throughout the day. • Flexible services, a range of services (for example, load switching at critical times) that we can procure from customers and their representatives to avoid expensive electricity network upgrades. This allows us to run the network more efficiently. • Grid stability market enablement, a suite of digital systems that allow us to procure and trade flexible services. • Network analytics program – is a suite of sophisticated machine learning and artificial intelligence systems that allows us to analyse network data in new ways to identify opportunities to deliver better service and run the electricity network more efficiently. • Increasing data, visibility and analytics through a Strategic Network Analytics Platform, a platform for building and delivering network analytics applications to meet regulatory, compliance and operational requirements. <p>We will also invest in technologies that enable better management through technological innovation, providing future generations with improved service levels at a reduced cost.</p> <p>During our deep-dive session, we further explored the topic of innovation with our customers, aiming to better understand their specific preferences from a range of options. Based on this <i>feedback</i>, we have incorporated Package 2 into our JEN 2026-31 Proposal. More information on this package is included in <i>Attachment 03-02 Innovation fund</i>.</p>	
<p>Electric Vehicles and preparing for the future (All customers and stakeholders)</p>	<p>We will enable greater accessibility and optimisation of EV charging by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting industry partners in assessing and facilitating the implementation of an increased number of public EV chargers and enabling an operating model that minimises negative impacts on the electricity network and customer costs. • Facilitate and develop policies that promote the complex interactions of Vehicle-to-grid/home/business/load 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3 – The energy transition

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabling EV charging units to be mounted on Jemena assets where allowable under the National Electricity Rules and safety regulations. Trialling smart poles that are designed to deliver and combine intelligent technology such as lighting and telecommunication assets and EV charge points Collaborating with councils to optimise EV charging solutions where possible. Solutions could include EV car spaces and location selection Improving EV connection processes, including providing more information on localised network constraints (which can cause connection issues), the cost to connect (including network augmentation requirements) and timeframes to connect. Increasing and expanding analytics and data on EVs, including location, loads, profile and forecasts over time. Developing and communicating clear guidelines to EV charging customers in conjunction with industry partners. 	
<p>Empathy in customer service & tailored customer service <i>(Residential customers)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will conduct qualitative research with customers (including the groups identified in our Customer Voice Groups) to further identify the experiences where greater empathy in service delivery is required. We will review our work practices to identify ways we can enhance empathy in service delivery and tailor customer service (including responding to First Nations customers) to meet customer needs, utilising additional data from customer research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will complete this work over the next two years and aim to conduct further research on empathy in customer service with customers from our Customer Voice Groups.
<p>Energy storage by distributors <i>(All customers and stakeholders)</i></p>	<p>Building upon our existing work, we will enable energy storage by exploring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researching and developing energy storage options and alternatives, including placing and sizing batteries in areas that need them most. Collaborating with the Victorian Government and peer Victorian electricity distribution network service providers to share learning and develop common standards Standardising battery connection arrangements using a ‘plug-and-play’ model to minimise costs and accelerate deployment Utilising mobile battery storage to react to major events and provide network support where needed on a short-term or temporary basis Advocating to regulators and governments to allow distribution network service providers to own and operate batteries Partnering with large-scale grid-connected battery providers to provide backup storage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5 – Capital investment and Chapter 6 – Operating expenditure.
<p>First Nations cultural training <i>(Jemena, First Nations customers and communities)</i></p>	<p>In alignment with our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of the cultural learning needs within our organisation to ensure the cultural learning strategy scoped during Reflect is fit for purpose and up to date. Update the learning strategy as/if required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Captured in our Innovate RAP, this work will commence in 2024 and will last for over two to three years.

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a review of HR policies and procedures to identify existing anti-discrimination provisions, as well as future needs. Research best practice and engage with the Indigenous Employee Network to explore the benefits of developing and implementing a standalone anti-discrimination policy for our organisation <p>As part of the cultural learning strategy, including how to educate senior leaders, managers, and team members on the effects of racism</p> <p>Executive Leaders to meet with the Indigenous Employee Network at least once per year to build knowledge and understanding of matters that negatively impact the day-to-day experiences of First Nations employees within our business.</p>	
<p>First Nations employment and retention <i>(Jemena, First Nations customers and communities)</i></p>	<p>In alignment with our Innovate RAP, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop principles for communication in relation to employment and business opportunities, and Environmental, Social and Governance practices. Build an understanding of current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staffing to inform future employment and professional development opportunities. Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to develop and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention and professional development strategy. Review channels and partners used to advertise job vacancies to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders Include in all job advertisements, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are encouraged to apply.' Review HR and recruitment procedures and policies to remove barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in our workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Captured in our Innovate RAP, this work will commence in 2024 and will last for over two to three years.
<p>First Nations procurement <i>(Jemena, First Nations customers and communities)</i></p>	<p>In alignment with our Innovate RAP, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cocreate and implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement strategy Develop and communicate opportunities for procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to staff. Review and update procurement practices to remove barriers to procuring goods and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Captured in our Innovate RAP, this work will commence in 2024 and will last for over two to three years.
<p>First Nations artwork to be embedded in a meaningful way <i>(First Nations customers and communities)</i></p>	<p>We will partner with Indigenous artists to commission artwork for our electricity network, including assets located across the network, such as community batteries, along with embedding artwork in our publications and materials for our electricity network where it is meaningful and respectful to the community and Country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are commencing the embedding of Indigenous artwork in a meaningful way this year and see this work ongoing.

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
First Nations specific grants	We will review our Community Grants Application Process and criteria to explore how the process could be improved for First Nations community organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will form work that will be completed in 2024 prior to the 2025 Community Grants Application process.
First Nations relationship building and ongoing engagement	<p>To strengthen our relationships with First Nations customers and communities and in alignment with our Innovate RAP, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult local communities and/or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members to inform our cultural learning strategy, implementation approach and communications. Establish a First Nations Community Leaders Council for each state and territory we operate in and meet with each of them at least annually to build and/or maintain mutually beneficial partnerships and opportunities for First Nation peoples and communities. Develop and implement a communication approach and engagement strategy to support connection and collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, stakeholders and organisations. <p>We will also consider how we engage with First Nations customers on an ongoing basis and extend the relationships we have built through the First Nations Customer Voice Group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Captured in our Innovate RAP, this work will commence in 2024 and will last for over two to three years.
Information and data sharing (All customers)	<p>To increase our information and data sharing we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enable self-serve via an online portal and enabling customers to provide their contact details for outage notifications via the Jemena Customer Portal provide electronic notifications faster than currently, and utilise the contact details provided via the Jemena Customer Portal enhance our existing customer channels and touchpoints by integrating our customer applications and back-end customer knowledge management and providing customers with one seamless customer experience explore opportunities to provide identification and notification of the momentary power dips where feasible to large customers explore the feasibility of obtaining real time power quality data and providing electronic notification either via the Customer Portal or emails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5 – Capital investment Chapter 6 – Operating expenditure Chapter 10 – Smart Metering.
Incentivise battery take-up (All customers)	<p>We will create incentives for customers to engage in batteries by exploring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlining current connections for customers with batteries to incentivise battery connections Enabling bidirectional charging solutions to enable vehicles to act as batteries on the electricity network Trialling a community battery tariff for residential customers Trialling a tariff that supports and incentivises customers with solar and batteries to consume more, store during excess generation periods and export during peak demand periods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 5 – Capital investment

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
<p>Maximise green energy (All customers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting and collaborating with Virtual Power Plant (VPPs) operators. <p>We will use this expenditure to maximise green energy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with industry partners on VPPs opportunities. • Developing and implementing policies, processes and practices that encourage and drive sustainable business, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – streamlining the connections process for consumer energy resource connections such as rooftop solar, EV and batteries – Standardising connection of small-scale renewable generation to the electricity network – Investing in research and development to learn how renewable generation and storage connect and interact with the electricity network. • Develop a campaign to deliver accessible information to customers via trusted sources and stakeholders such as retailers and local councils • Develop an education campaign to increase customers' knowledge and understanding of installing renewables, including the benefits and potential risks, so they are well-informed and empowered. • Developing an online renewables hub with key information for customers to encourage engagement and use of renewables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 – Capital investment
<p>Network reliability and power quality (All customers)</p>	<p>We will implement digital technologies that enable devices across the electricity network to communicate and share data that might be useful for both customers and electricity network management.</p> <p>This includes smart meters, sensors, automation, and other digital network technologies, as well as advanced metering infrastructure and smart grid technologies, to reduce other costs in the electricity supply chain, including network investments, to realise financial savings in the long term.</p> <p>We will achieve this by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a Future Network Strategy that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Analysis of near real-time AMI data, the metering and communications infrastructure we use to read meters remotely and obtain data for analysis. We use this data to help run the electricity network more efficiently and resolve problems more quickly. – Dynamic Network Configuration that performs hourly dynamic status changes of sectionalising and tie switches to reduce network line losses, minimise loss of load or increase hosting capacity for distributed energy resources. – Dynamic Voltage Management is an advanced operating technology that automatically optimises voltages on the electricity network depending on conditions throughout the day. – Flexible services, a range of services (for example, load switching at critical times) that we can procure from customers and their representatives as a means to avoid expensive electricity network upgrades. This allows us to run the network more efficiently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 – Capital investment

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Grid Stability market enablement, a suite of digital systems that allow us to procure and trade flexible services. 	
<p>Network Resilience (All customers)</p>	<p>We have increased expenditure in the network to prioritise increasing the resilience of the network by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacing and upgrading assets that are more ‘fragile’ and pose a risk to the continued operation of the network. As our assets face an increase in extreme weather events and frequently face more stress, more fragile assets pose a greater risk to network resilience now more than ever. • Using technologies such as Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR), a mapping and information tool that overlays different flood and wind zones, to manage the network better and more quickly. LiDAR can be overlaid against different flood and wind zones across the network to manage the network better and more quickly, and the Digital Twin technology helps understand situations in real-time. • Sharing data with stakeholders to support customers during extreme weather events (for example, mapping data on flood planes and wind flow) • Develop a comprehensive resilience strategy. <p>During our deep-dive session, we further explored the topic of network resilience with our customers, aiming to better understand their specific preferences from a range of options provided. Based on the preferences expressed by our customers, we have incorporated Package 2 into our JEN 2026-31 Proposal. More information on this package is included in Attachment 06-04 Operating expenditure step changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 – Capital investment and Chapter 6 – Operating expenditure.
<p>Ongoing service excellence to Jemena customers (All customers)</p>	<p>We will deliver ongoing service excellence to customers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a Customer Service Incentive Scheme to hold Jemena accountable for achieving service excellence and high-quality customer service • Benchmarking against peer businesses for transparency and objectivity, communicating and publishing the results for customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 – Capital investment • Chapter 6 – Operating expenditure • Chapter 7 - Incentive Schemes
<p>Public lighting – Innovative program with smarter technologies and collaborating with Local Councils on trials and grant (Local Councils)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a role to provide, construct and maintain emerging public lighting technology. However, our approach to public lighting is customer-driven, which means we work with local councils and VicRoads to ensure that we embrace technological developments that meet our customers’ needs. • We are keen to explore the smart lighting opportunities (including trial funding) further with our customers through this consultation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 11 – Other services
<p>Long-term sustainable operation of</p>	<p>We will use expenditure to enable long-term sustainable operations of the network and its infrastructure by:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 – Capital investment

Customer Priority	How we are responding	Chapter
<p>Jemena's network <i>(All customers and stakeholders)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrifying our operational fleet and installing EV charging stations at Jemena sites, including depots. • Accelerating the replacement of SF6 gas with a more sustainable option (g3 or equivalent) • Encouraging renewables (policies, tariff structures) • Finalising the roll-out of energy-efficient public lighting, replacing mercury vapour and incandescent globes with LED • Driving renewable generation enablement activities • Trialling the deployment of solar and batteries to decarbonise operations (depots, offices, etc). • Maturing sustainable materials sourcing practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 11 – Other services
<p>Tariff communications to create clarity and consistency <i>(All customers and stakeholders)</i></p>	<p>We are using existing expenditure (passing on no additional costs to customers) to explain and communicate tariffs and tariff structures to customers.</p> <p>We will implement and explain transparent tariff structures by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing dedicated and tailored communications on network tariffs and bill impacts and making them accessible to customers, including providing an easy-to-read set of information on the Jemena website. • Removing network tariffs with components that can be confusing to customers (for example, the A10D – residential demand tariff), which has proven difficult for retailers to explain. • Aligning existing network tariffs as much as possible within Jemena and to other Victorian electricity distribution network service provider so that customers can be confident that their tariff structure is the same whenever they move around Victoria or choose to change their tariff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9 – Network Tariffs
<p>Tariffs that are cost-reflective and equitable <i>(All customers and stakeholders)</i></p>	<p>We will ensure cost-reflective and equitable tariffs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing a cost-reflective solar soak tariff, enabling customers connected to the network to benefit from rooftop solar generation, even if they don't own solar panels themselves • Implementing an optional (not mandatory) export tariff to encourage self-consumption of rooftop solar generation and promote battery uptake • Plan and work towards shifting customers off single-rate tariffs to the new solar soak tariff. • Continuing our advocacy work with the Victorian government and Australian Energy Regulator to highlight the need for cost-reflective tariffs and the benefits of our new solar soak time of use tariff. • Collaborate with the Victorian Government and peer Victorian electricity distribution businesses to gain agreement and support to implement these initiatives. • Engage with electricity retailers to co-design customer-facing tariffs to ensure the benefits in the network tariffs are passed through to customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9 – Network Tariffs

8. Evaluating Our Customer Engagement Process

It is crucial to conduct an independent evaluation to understand how effective our customer engagement process has been and to gauge how much we can rely on the feedback to develop our JEN 2026-31 Proposal. Below, we outline several evaluation activities.

8.1 Independent evaluation of our engagement program

As a part of our continuous improvement objectives, to be successful throughout our engagement program, and to **measure the effectiveness of the engagement process**, we:

built in a feedback loop at the end of each session to identify opportunities for improvement

provided one-on-one meetings and follow-up with customers who needed more discussion, information or support

submitted a Draft Proposal and,

engaged an independent evaluator ([newDemocracy Foundation](#))

The newDemocracy Foundation focuses on the design, oversight, and research of deliberative engagement processes to strive for more trusted decisions informed through deliberative processes.

Internationally, the newDemocracy Foundation offers advice to a range of national governments and parliaments and is a member of the **OECD** Innovative Citizen Participation Network (where it has contributed to the development of the OECD Evaluation Guidelines for Representative Deliberative Processes).

The newDemocracy Foundation has extensive experience reviewing stakeholder and customer engagement programs and activities for regulated businesses and has worked with and supported many organisations around Australia with similar advice on the design and delivery of deliberative engagement projects.

The newDemocracy Foundation monitored and evaluated engagement¹⁹ against the International Deliberative Engagement Evaluation Framework and the AER's Better Resets Handbook to provide a customer lens on the effectiveness of JEN's engagement.

The newDemocracy Foundation also set out to measure JEN's engagement against the Better Resets Handbook expectations, the People's Panel and supporting engagement processes.

The newDemocracy Foundation concluded that:

Overall, the People's Panel was very well run and allowed participants the opportunity to meaningfully influence Jemena's Business Plan 2026-2031. It met and exceeded all the Better Resets' expectations of customer engagement.

Jemena's approach to customer-led decision-making and the integration of deliberative engagement practice into its decision-making processes for the development of the 2026-2031 Business Plan place it at the forefront of global innovation.²⁰

This positive conclusion from the newDemocracy Foundation gives confidence that we have meaningfully engaged with our customers to understand their needs and expectations, and that the feedback that we have obtained throughout our engagement process can be relied on to shape our plans.

¹⁹ [AER - Better Resets Handbook - July 2024.](#)

²⁰ JEN - NewDemocracyFoundation Att 02-20 Independent Evaluation Report - 20240901.

Jemena continually maintained sincere and honest engagement demonstrated by regular attendance from senior staff and dialogue between customers and business leadership. Participants were informed, had multiple accessible channels for engagement and ultimately directly influenced the draft plan. - newDemocracy Foundation

This independent evaluation provides confidence that our customer engagement program has been robust and that we can rely on the feedback we received from our customers and their preferences to develop the JEN 2026-31 Proposal.

8.2 Our engagement program assessed against the Better Resets Handbook

In addition to the independent evaluation, we undertook an assessment of our customer engagement activities against the AER's Better Reset Handbook. Table 8–1 provides an overview of how we have met the AER's requirements for customer engagement, as set out in the Better Resets Handbook.

Table 8–1: Evaluation of our engagement against the Better Resets Handbook

AER Better Reset Handbook requirements	What's expected of us	How this contributed to shaping our customer engagement program
Nature of engagement (sincerity, partnership, equipping customers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sincerity of engagement: understand and reflect customer preferences in the regulatory proposals. • Consumers as partners: collaborate and empower consumers when developing proposals. • Equipping consumers: provide accurate and unbiased information and transparent governance. • Accountability: delivering on commitments and improving relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active listening and reporting back, showing what we've done with customer feedback. • Co-designing our engagement and proposal with stakeholders and customers • Creating authentic and genuine engagement opportunities • Keeping a focus on deliberate engagement that puts decision-making in the hands of customers where appropriate and partners with them to share our proposal • Information is provided genuinely, openly, and transparently, and education is used to help with decision-making. • High level of buy-in and attendance at engagement events
Breadth and depth (outcomes and inputs, multiple channels, consumer influence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible, clear and transparent engagement: set out engagement plans, overall objectives, and influence consumers can expect. • Consultation on desired outcomes and then inputs: consumers guide the development of proposals. • Multiple channels of engagement: use of varied channels aligned to customer preferences. • Consumers' influence on the proposal: 'collaborate' and, where 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high level of resources • Conversations with customers that may be 'strategically uncomfortable' for Jemena such as 'stranded assets' conversation and timelines for these. • See it more than just a 'five-year endeavour'. • Consultation is focused on long-term outcomes. • Channels are used to target different customers, and they decide how they participate.

AER Better Reset Handbook requirements	What's expected of us	How this contributed to shaping our customer engagement program
	<p>appropriate, 'empower' customers (IAP2 spectrum)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporation of customers' willingness-to-pay learned from costed options presented at Deep Dive sessions on expenditure Multiple engagement channels used from websites, surveys, virtual and in-person sessions Inclusion of vulnerable customers including: indigenous, seniors, customers facing mental health issues and youth in engagement sessions specifically designed to address the specific concerns of those respective groups Incorporation of customer recommendations identified by the Customer Voice Groups and People's Panel
Evidence of impact (preferences, independent support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals linked to consumer preferences: There is a clear link between research, engagement, and representation and testing customer perspectives. Independent consumer support for the proposal: demonstrated through submissions or independent reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity and alignment on what we collect evidence on Taking the opportunity to engage early. Chance to test and revert our assumptions. Independent consumer review and report. Confirmation of customers' willingness to pay for services
Consumers as partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous business-as-usual engagement process: Not a one-off process Consumers partners in forming proposals 	<p>Sincere partnership with our customers across multiple sessions of meaningful, impactful engagement via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Deep Dive sessions¹ Recall sessions Energy Reference Group sessions People's Panel sessions Vulnerable customer sessions Residential customer sessions Various business size sessions
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing engagement Transparent reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement throughout the development of our 2026-2031 proposal to capture customers' views across topics most pressing to them Recall Day demonstrating the People's Panel contributions to the Draft Plan Regularly published website updates after People's Panel sessions to allow for consistent and transparent communication throughout the process
Accessible, clear and transparent engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation timeframes should have regard to the complexity of the issues: Provide consumers with adequate time to understand and assess the regulatory proposal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility in 15 languages on JEN's GridTalk website based on customer feedback from the Draft Plan²¹ of a desire for a new portal to provide tailored Multi-year strategic engagement beginning early 2023

²¹ Energy Reference Group *Feedback on Jemena's Draft Plan 2025-2031 Report*, p5.

AER Better Reset Handbook requirements	What's expected of us	How this contributed to shaping our customer engagement program
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44.5 hours of deliberation (over 7 months) by the People's Panel • Collation of multiple insights on each issue
Independent Consumer Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide submissions on a draft regulatory proposal or an independent report setting out consumer perspectives on a proposal as lodged to the AER 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Energy Reference Group Feedback on Jemena's Draft Plan 2025-2031 Report • See MosaicLab Lab's report written on behalf of the People's Panel; Peoples Panel process report • See MosaicLab Lab's report written on behalf of the CVG;s; Customer Voice Group process report

8.3 Building customers' capacity

When we first set out on our first People's Panel session, many of the members had little understanding of the electricity sector, customer engagement, or even what to expect. Over the subsequent sessions we held, the panel members were exposed to a broad range of information and independent experts to allow them to learn more about the electricity sector and what Jemena does as an electricity distribution business. Over time, they gained knowledge, which allowed them to be confident in the recommendations they put forward to us.

The AER's Better Reset Handbook recognises the importance of customers being informed to put forward meaningful recommendations and the distribution network's service providers' responsibility to help build customers' capacity:

We assign weight to engagement that enhances customer insight and builds customers' capacity²²

To understand whether we have been effective in building our customers' capacity, we surveyed them at the start and again at the end of the process. The results of the survey are shown in

²² [AER - Better Resets Handbook - July 2024, s. 7.2.2.](#)

Figure 8–1 below.

Figure 8–1: Scores for developing customer capacity to engage in the engagement process²³**Involvement in Civic Affairs****273%**
Growth

in the number of participants who said they would be 'involved' or 'highly' involved in civic affairs.

60 Percentage points increase

PRE 22% to POST 82%

Confidence in Influence Over Decision Making**950%**
Growth

in the number of participants who said they felt 'confident' or 'very confident' that they would have influence over the decision.

76 Percentage points increase

PRE 8% to POST 84%

Confidence in Implementation of Recommendations**75%**
Growth

in the number of participants who were confident or very confident that Jemena would implement the panel's recommendations.

36 Percentage points increase

PRE 48% to POST 75%

Trust and Accountability**102%**
Growth

in the number of participants who said they believe the sponsoring organisation is 'fairly' or 'very' trustworthy and accountable.

48 Percentage points increase

PRE 47% to POST 95%

Process Authenticity and Collaboration**187%**
Growth

in the number of participants who said they believed the process was collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' or 'very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' (compared to past community engagement activities).

58 Percentage points increase

PRE 31% to POST 89%

Quality of Information**92%**

of participants felt that information provided during the deliberative process was 'clear, useful and balanced' or 'very clear, useful and balanced'. Note: this question was asked in the post-deliberation survey only.

As can be seen, the score has significantly improved, indicating that we have been effective in building our customers' capacity and, in turn, can be confident in their recommendations.

²³ MosaicLab, *Peoples Panel process report*, May, 2024.

9. Ongoing customer engagement

The engagement we achieved through the price reset process and building on the strong base established in the last price reset has continued to highlight the benefits and advantages of engaging with a diverse range of customers. We have built new relationships with our diverse range of customers and strengthened existing relationships.

The engagement process has not only enriched us with insights into customer needs, but it has elevated our value of placing customers at the heart of our business.

We will take the learnings and insights from the engagement process to evaluate our business-as-usual engagement with our electricity customers to identify:

- ways we can continue to build our relationship with First Nations communities in our network area and across Victoria
- new approaches to ongoing engagement with our customers, including ongoing engagement with diverse residential customers
- ways we can continue our engagement with customers and stakeholders who participated in the engagement process.

