



Engagement Strategy Jemena Electricity Networks 2026-31 Price Reset

June 2023





Acknowledgement of Country

Jemena acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Artwork is by Chern'ee Sutton a contemporary Indigenous artist from the Kalkadoon people from the Mount Isa area in Queensland.

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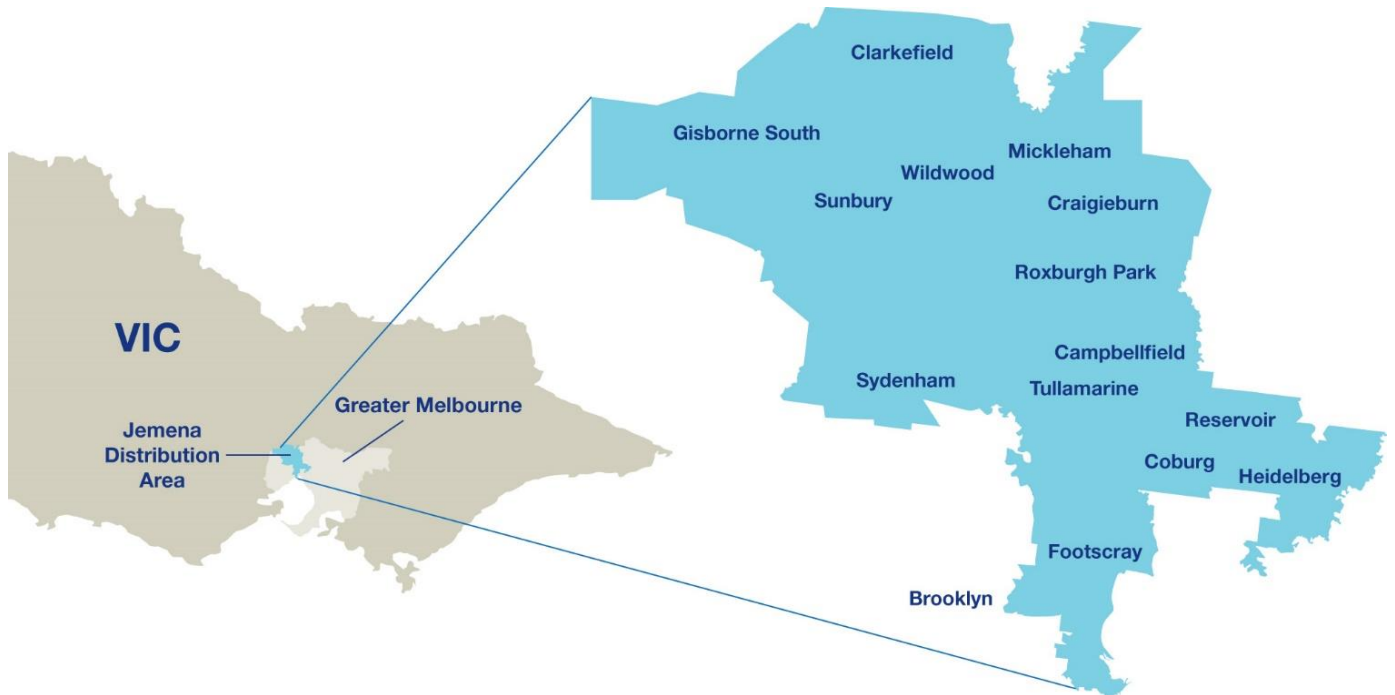
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1. Our electricity network

Our electricity network is one of five electricity distribution networks operating in Victoria. We are the sole distributor of electricity in north-west greater Melbourne. Every day we help deliver electricity to over 387,000 homes and businesses across north and western Melbourne.

We build and manage the infrastructure that transports electricity across a 950 square kilometre area and provide energy to support businesses and critical infrastructure such as Melbourne Airport, which sits in the middle of our distribution area.

Figure 1.1 - Jemena network map in Victoria



Operating environment

The distribution area we manage covers a mix of industrial, commercial and residential customers, including established inner suburbs, some major transport routes and Melbourne Airport. Our network covers semi-rural areas around Sydenham, Sunbury and Coolaroo, some of which have a high bushfire risk.

Our network environment is mainly flat land with a few exceptions, such as Greenvale and Reservoir,

which have minor undulations. It includes Maribyrnong River, Merri Creek, Darebin Creek, and Steele Creek as waterways and is bordered by the Yarra River in the east and Port Phillip Bay in the south. Underground, Jemena experiences a diverse mix of ground types ranging from soft sand bases to hardened basalt rock.

Our total distribution area covers approximately 12 per cent of the Victorian population.

Our role as an electricity distribution network

As our society increases its reliance on electricity for our day-to-day lives and we progress towards a decarbonised future, the electricity system has and will continue to change. As it transforms, so too does our role as an electricity distribution network provider. We also see an evolution in the workforce we engage with and the technologies we procure to support this change.

Customers want to connect to and interact with the electricity system in many ways, this includes using

new technologies such as electric vehicles and community batteries. They also want to generate electricity that can be exported back into the electricity network from rooftop solar and do their bit for the environment. As we move to more electricity use and small-scale generation, we need to manage the congestion of the network and the electricity that flows back to the electricity network.

We are also seeing emerging market trends with new products and services coming online such as virtual power plants where customers can benefit from aggregating exported energy or orchestrating customer electricity usage; we also play a part in transporting electricity with these emerging products and services.

The transition to this new role will be heavily influenced by customers, governments and regulators, as well as other changes in the broader electricity market. With a changing role, we need to pre-empt the transformation, minimise the impact, and embrace the opportunities it presents. We see that greater dependence on data and communications will be necessary, and our interactions with markets, new market players and customers will increase which we need to prepare for.



2. Purpose of our regulatory reset

As an electricity distribution network service provider, we are subject to economic regulation overseen by the **Australian Energy Regulator (AER)** under the **National Electricity Rules (NER)**. A key function of the AER is to set maximum prices for the services we provide to customers.

The AER approves our prices in five-year cycles. In the build-up to each new term, we submit a Regulatory Proposal to the AER that outlines our plans for the 2021-26 regulatory control period and how we expect to fund them.

The Regulatory Proposal must outline:

- the services we will offer
- the costs we are likely to incur in providing these services
- the prices we propose to charge during the next regulatory period.

The cost of distributing energy across the electricity network is paid for through the network charges included in customers' electricity bills. Typically, network and metering charges make up approximately 33 per cent of a household customer's total bill.

The AER only approves the proposal if it complies with the National Electricity Rules and promotes the long-term interests of our customers.

The AER regulates energy networks and must ensure that its decisions promote customers' long-term interests.

As part of its five-yearly assessment of the regulatory proposals from each of the electricity distribution network service providers, the AER considers—among other factors—the extent and quality of consumer engagement we have undertaken during the development of this draft proposal. It also looks for evidence that our regulatory proposal reflects the outcomes of that process.

Figure 1.1 – Example of the 2021-26 proposal





3. Strategy purpose and vision

As an organisation and in recognising our role as an essential service provider, we are driven to continuously improve our customer-centric culture and strive to understand customer needs and expectations.

Our Draft Plan for the next regulatory period gives us 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 will engage meaningfully with a broad spectrum of customers in our network. We want to partner 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 will aim to position Jemena at the forefront of delivering innovative customer engagement to our diverse range of customers.

Through this price reset process, we will 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. It is with this sentiment that we will reach deep into our community and engage with customer groups who face barriers or may have access issues to our services.

We aim to capture the views of customers whose voices, without specialist and purposeful engagement, would not be heard. Where customers are unable to

provide their voice, we will seek out the views of advocates or service providers.

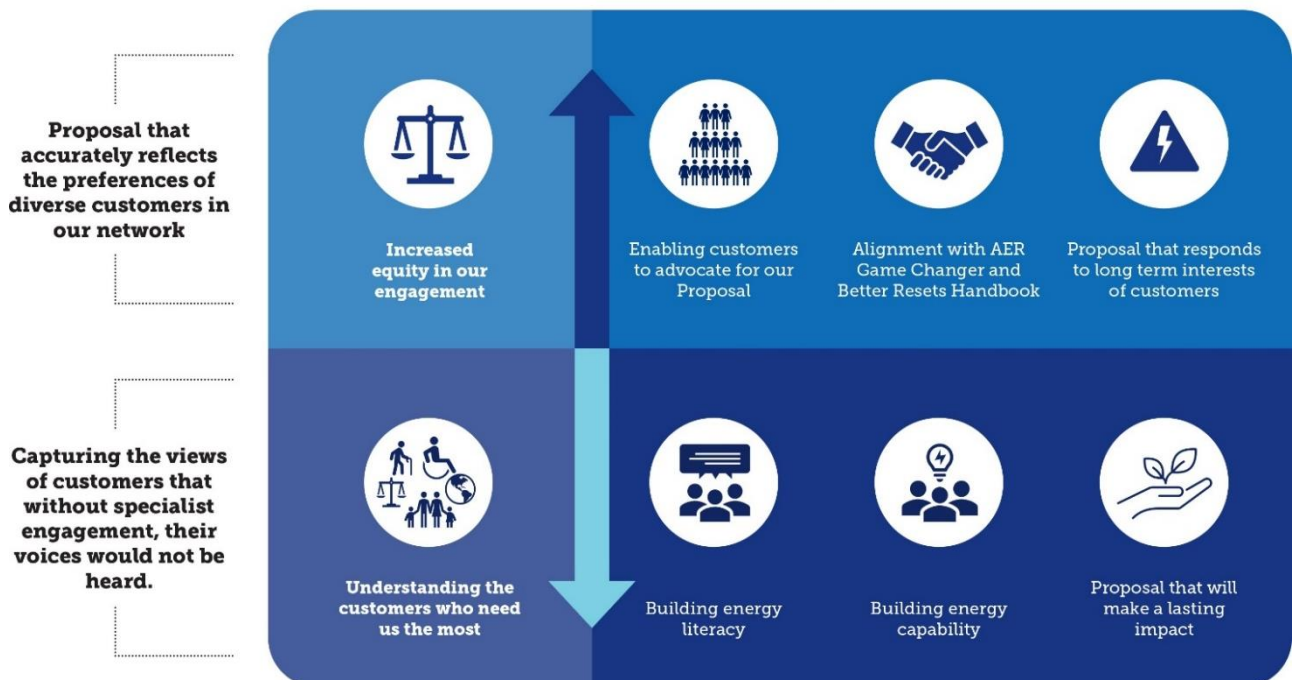
Our engagement aims to meet the specific needs of Jemena's electricity network customers, taking into consideration:

- the rich diversity of our Victorian customers
- learnings from previous price resets
- the unique requirements, issues and challenges our customers face
- engage with customers experiencing vulnerability.

Our vision for our customer engagement is for it to:

- be at the forefront of best practice customer engagement and foster innovation
- achieve both breadth and depth in engagement
- meet and exceed regulatory expectations and align with the Australian Energy Regulator's Better Resets Handbook
- build upon foundations set in the previous price reset
- enable stakeholders to advocate for Jemena's proposal
- be fit for purpose engagement to meet customers' specific needs.

Figure 3.1: Engagement goals





4. Customer engagement precedent

Jemena has a strong and proud track record of undertaking comprehensive, genuine and collaborative engagement with its customers. In 2019 Jemena was awarded the Consumer Engagement Award at the Energy Networks Australia and Energy Consumers Australia Awards for engagement on the 2021-2026 Jemena Electricity Networks price reset.

Jemena was recognised for “showing a greater commitment to working directly with customers, exploring new ways to engage and make energy more affordable for households and small businesses.”

Jemena Electricity Networks was also a finalist for the 2019 International Association for Public Practitioners (IAP2) core values award, recognising the quality of engagement outside of our industry.

The 2021-26 price reset also achieved high levels of public participation, enabling customers’ preferences and recommendations to be at the centrepiece of the proposal.

Our vision is ‘Creating sustainable energy solutions with communities’. Putting customers at the heart of everything we do is part of our DNA. To drive this through the organisation, we have established ‘Think like a customer’ as one of our five company values, and through this, we commit to ensuring that our actions consider our customers, community and other stakeholders.

Layered underneath our vision and values is our strategy of fostering a customer-focused culture through continuous improvement, innovation, competitiveness, and preparation for the future.

For our 2026-2031 price reset we will build upon the strong precedent we have set with our customers and find new ways and approaches to remain at the forefront of engagement. We believe, following from the release of the [AER Game Changer](#), there is a new opportunity for us to build a greater understanding of customers experiencing vulnerability and the customers who need energy capability building the most.



5. Engagement objectives

Our engagement strategy is underpinned by energy industry best practices, our engagement values and principles, and lessons learned from developing our past regulatory proposals.

This means our engagement design and delivery is informed by:

- **Australian [Energy Charter](#)**: to ensure our proposal is closely aligned with the charter principles
- **AER [Better Resets Handbook](#) and the [Early Signal Pathway](#)**: ensuring we meet and exceed regulatory expectations and invite customers to shape our proposal.
- **[AER Game Changer](#)**: to ensure we connect, engage and understand customers experiencing vulnerability, providing specialist engagement to gain their views.
- **Human-centred design**: to ensure we place people (customers) at the centre of our engagement and draft proposal.
- **IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum**: to guide us to achieving high levels of public participation on the spectrum and be clear with customers of our goal and commitment to them.

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.

To achieve our first objective and enable customers to shape our Draft Plan, we recognised that we would need to deeply understand our customers’ needs, views and expectations.

To ensure our engagement process leads to a Plan that our customers shape, we will endeavour to provide them with unbiased and easy-to-understand information.

To achieve our objective of supporting a customer-focused culture, our Board, Executive Team, Senior Managers and team members will play an active role in the engagement process.

Finally, to build customer understanding of the regulatory arrangements and trust in our regulatory proposal, we plan to involve customers throughout the entire price reset process, giving them access and opportunities to provide input and feedback to shape our Draft Plan.

Figure 5.1: Engagement objectives





6. Our customers and stakeholders

Jemena has a diverse customer network, 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 which we must seek to understand through our engagement and our overall ‘customer priorities.’ Engaging with our diverse customer base 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.

Figure 6.1: Our Customers & Stakeholders



7. Achieving high levels of public participation

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**.

The IAP2 spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, time frames, resources, and levels of concern in the decision to be made. The spectrum sets out the promise being made to the public (customer) at each participation level and shows the impact that the community has on decision-making, with the peak of decision-making sitting at 'empower,' placing full decision-making in the hands of the community. 'Collaborate' enables a partnership approach to understand and identify preferred solutions or recommendations from the customer for consideration.

Historically Jemena has placed little decision-making power in the hands of its customers, with Jemena consulting and informing customers on the 2016-2020 price reset. In the 2021-2026 price reset, Jemena set a new precedent for customer engagement and achieved high levels of public participation, achieving

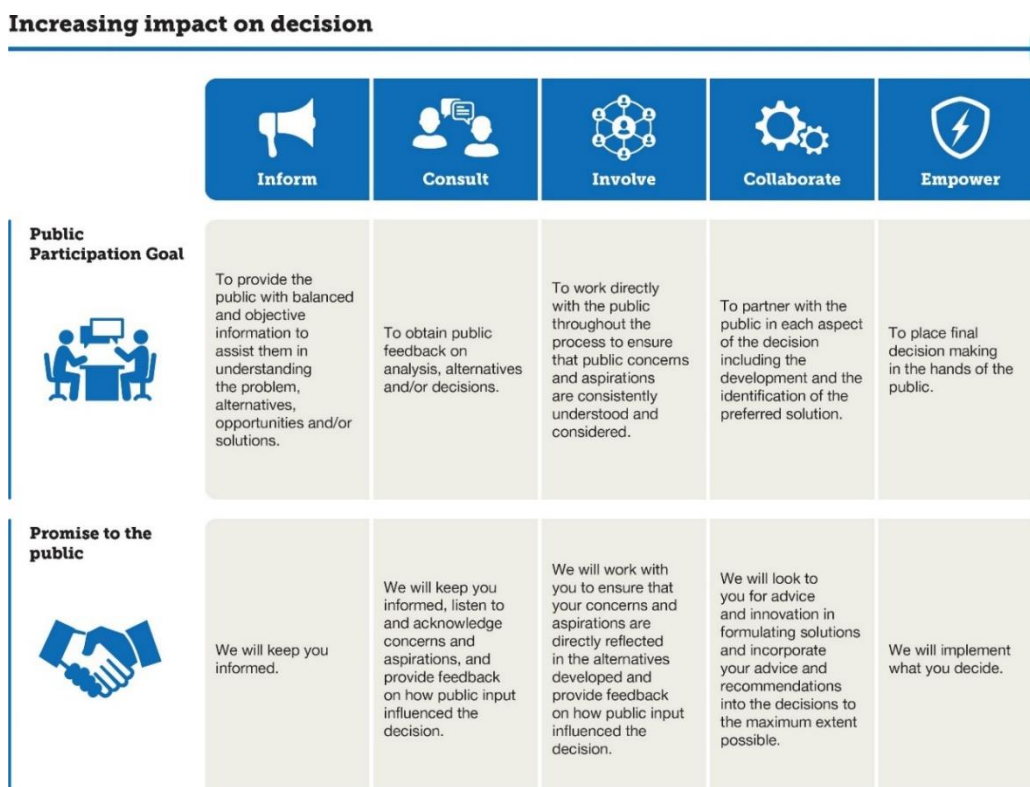
'collaborate' and for select decisions 'empower'. This saw Jemena deeply engage with customers and take onboard their recommendations to shape the proposal.

Achieving high levels of public participation enables our proposal to accurately reflect the interest and preferences of customers. It also reduces and mitigates the risk that our proposal will not reflect customer needs or preferences and therefore not be accepted by the AER. As the energy industry is heavily regulated with a range of complex topics and issues, we aim to 'collaborate' with customers.

Our engagement program will focus on achieving:

- Collaborate** – We will work together with customers to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
- Empower (where possible)** – placing the decision making will occur on very discrete, select items that based off a strict criterion in the hands of customers, making their decision on key areas as final to inform the proposal.

Figure 7.1: IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum



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

Table 7.1: How we will respond 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 our customers that are often not heard are supported to participate and that a random recruitment approach will support the deliberative engagement.	Provided a clear problem statement. Decision-making process is clearly communicated. Affected stakeholders 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. Level of stakeholder influence 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 participants values and interests. Engagement techniques identified to support interests and needs.
Public participation seeks out and facilitates the participation of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.	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. To more deeply understand those differences, we are establishing Customer Voice Groups to capture the lived experience of a diverse range of customer groups.	Participation opportunities enabled contribution. Thorough stakeholder analysis completed.

8. 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 will ask 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?

1.1 Our promise to customers

During our engagement with 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.



9. Driving customer-centric culture

Our customers have told us they value the presence of Jemena team members at engagement sessions, especially members from senior levels of the business. It strengthens customers' view of our ability to listen and understand their views and perspectives. Active participation in engagement sessions and the presence of leaders, managers, team members and subject matter experts, is critical to our success. It showcases the diversity of our people, builds capability in engaging with customers, and strengthens trust.

We aim to take a partnership approach to our engagement which means working together to build the capability of energy literacy in customers, while building our own capability to connect, engage and understand our customers. It is with this sentiment that we require clear engagement responsibilities to actively participate and engage with customers. To strengthen our partnership with customers we have also outlined co-chairing responsibilities to further strength relationships and trust.

Participation is also an opportunity for subject matter expertise and leadership to be valuably used and highlighted to our customers and their communities.

We will make a commitment to:

- Involve the Jemena Board and Executive Leadership Team in engagement events and sessions
- Executive Team & Senior Managers champion engagement, including by assigning formal roles such as Customer Voice Group Champion role
- Involving a diverse range of subject matter experts in engagement sessions, including opportunities to present information, connect with customers, explain concepts and answer questions
- Encourage involvement in engagement sessions across the business to create opportunities to connect with customers and understand their energy needs and preferences.



9. Co-designing engagement

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 Plan.

Twenty four former People's Panel members who shaped our 2021-26 regulatory proposal came together as part of this session. We also used the opportunity to share how we have progressed the recommendations they made in 2019.

The former People's Panel members 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 electricity distribution network through dedicated customer voice groups.

The co-design session outcomes included dedicated input into our engagement streams, key feedback included:

- Ensuring the Customer Voice Groups are facilitated and are inclusive and accessible to maximise participation.
- Having young people included in our engagement and that they have opportunities to shape the future of our network.
- Sharing the expertise from the Energy Reference Group with residential customers and giving them opportunities to ask questions and have access to energy experts.
- Focusing on education with customers and using engagement to help build the energy literacy.

Their input allowed us to co-design our engagement program with our customer base in mind and strengthened our approach across engagement streams.



A person with long, wavy brown hair is seen from behind, wearing a bright blue t-shirt. The word "FACILITATOR" is printed in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the back of the shirt. The person is wearing white long-sleeved sleeves underneath. In the background, several other people are visible, including a man in a dark shirt and a woman in a grey jacket, all slightly out of focus. The setting appears to be an indoor space with wood-paneled walls.

FACILITATOR

10. Customer insights and learnings

Our engagement plan is informed by insights on our customers including their needs, preferences and priorities. We received customer insights from our previous price reset engagement and have identified insights on the increase in challenges customers now face. We also acknowledge that since the introduction of the [AER Game Changer](#), the energy industry is making a greater commitment to understand the vulnerabilities customers experience albeit transient or permanent.

Customer	Key insight/learning/opportunity	Our approach this reset
Residential customers	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Our customers’ feedback through the last reset confirmed that standard engagement processes tend to struggle to reach a broad section of the community, and time pressures lead to frustrations because of a lack of information about the subject and give little chance to hear other views. The People’s Panel was established in response to this feedback and was highly valued by customers.2. Customer’s experiences and needs have changed since the last engagement program was design. Customers valued the co-designed engagement approach, which increased confidence and trust in Jemena and the price reset process, enabling engagement activities to match customer expectations.3. Customers that may experience vulnerability or hardship (either transient or permanent) may be forgotten or get lost in the engagement process. Customers experiencing vulnerability may face greater barriers to engaging with us or not have the ability to advocate their energy views or preferences.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Re-establish the People’s Panel as an engagement method to gain views of a diverse representation of customers in our network.2. Conduct a co-design approach with previous People Panel members to inform the engagement program to ensure it meets their needs and responds to their current needs and challenges.3. Establish engagement activities that can capture the voices of customers who may experience vulnerability including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– People with disability– People with lived experience of mental health issues– Multicultural communities– Seniors– First Nations People– Young people.

Customer	Key insight/learning/opportunity	Our approach this reset
Small to medium business customers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation from previous price set identified a half day form would be valuable to attend if given sufficient notice/lead time to attend. 2. Incredibly time poor and require long lead up times to enable participation and alternative ways to contribute outside of hours 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Run small to medium business forums for customers and have long recruitment/advertising lead up times to enable full participation at the forums. 2. Provide opportunities for small to medium businesses to have their say via a survey they can complete in their own time.
Large customers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Large customers want to use the existing ongoing channels of engagement where it makes sense and involve those within Jemena who own the relationship as not create duplication. 2. Large customers want the dedicated opportunities to collectively discuss the future of energy with other industries to identify common challenges and opportunities we can prepare for a more sustainable energy future while meeting their needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise one-on-one engagement in partnership with Business Account Leads. 2. Run dedicated sessions for large customers to discuss topics and seek input across a range of industries.
Local councils	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local Councils are large and complex organisations with a diverse range of subject matter experts across electricity distribution, energy, sustainability, public lighting and customer and communities. Local Councils want to ensure there are meaningful opportunities for involvement from a broad range of representatives so that input can be provided across a broad spectrum of topics. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organise a Local Council forum that has dedicated topics that can suite a broad range of needs, including resilience, customer education, tariffs, sustainability, public lighting and more. 2. Hold dedicated one-on-one engagement in partnership with Business Account Leads to seek dedicated feedback on topics of importance with Local Council subject matter experts (for example public lighting).

11. Understanding customer vulnerability

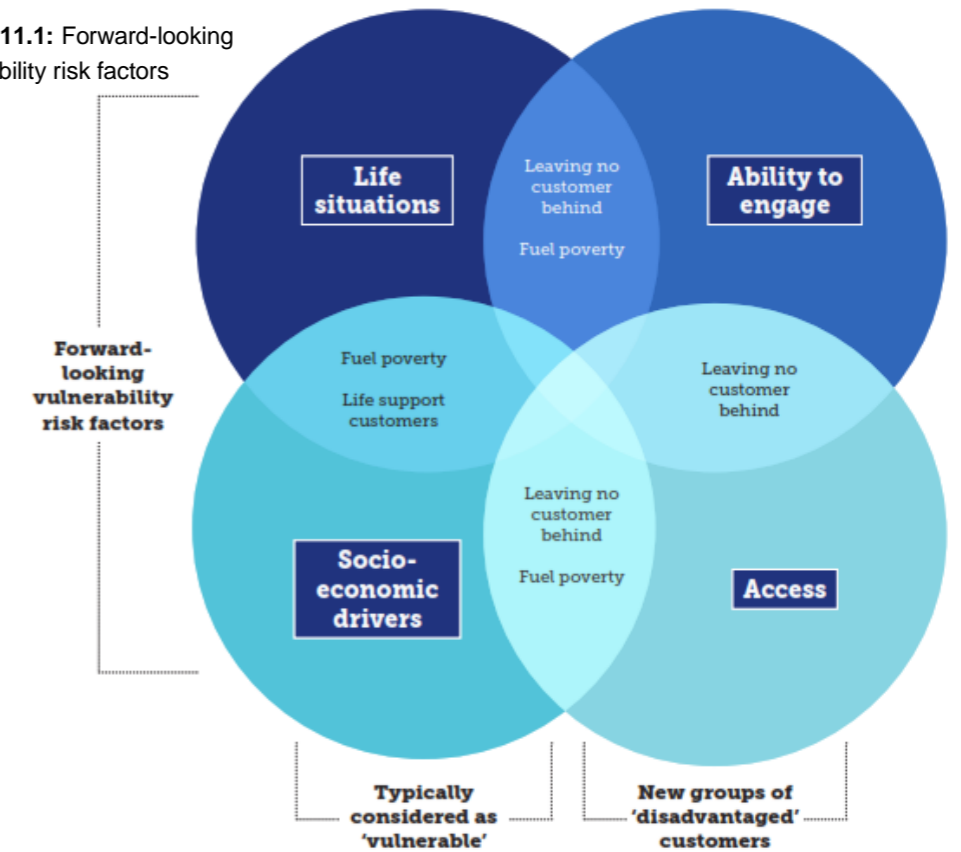
To engage with our customers and to fully represent their needs and preferences in our price proposal, we need to have an understanding of the diverse spectrum of customers and the challenges they may face.

The uniqueness of our customers' situations is defined by how different circumstances overlap with aspects of the energy industry to create different needs and requirements.¹

Figure 11.1 and the table below shows the *Forward-looking vulnerability risk factors*² and the diverse spectrum where customers may experience vulnerability or hardship. It recognises the transient nature of customers experience vulnerability or hardship, in addition to customers that experience ongoing vulnerability or hardship. It includes:

- **Life situations** –permanent and temporary health issues as well as significant life events that may make someone less able to engage with the energy market or more susceptible to the detriment in interacting with it. Examples include mental and physical disabilities, recovering from hospitalisation, and bereavement.
- **Socio-economic drivers** – broad societal factors that impact a customer's wellbeing with implications reaching far beyond the energy market. An increasingly ageing population, higher rates of disability, the rise of single-person households are key drivers of circumstances that impact the ability of our customers to engage with the energy market.
- **Ability to engage** –variety of obstacles that customers may face in engaging with the energy industry, including the willingness to engage and the ability to interact with the required technology. This issue is exacerbated by the increasing complexity of information and interactions required to adopt new products and technologies. Examples include physical inability to interact with smart devices and not being able to understand complex options and information.
- **Access** – Includes all obstacles that customers may face in engaging with the energy market due to the solutions available to them. The lack of specific network solutions means that fewer options and potential benefits are available to customers in these situations.

Figure 11.1: Forward-looking vulnerability risk factors



Outcomes we want to achieve for the customers and communities we serve					
Vulnerability risk factors	Examples	Protection and safeguarding	Affordability of the electricity supply	Fair and appropriate access	Wider social value
	Life situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, people may be more at risk during a power cut due to temporary or chronic conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, people relying on electrical medical equipment for health conditions may experience higher electricity consumption and costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, people with disabilities may not be able to benefit from educational materials or offerings if not accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, personal circumstances may exclude people from local community resilience opportunities.
	Socio-economic drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, social isolation may put people more at risk during a power cut because they cannot rely on their social network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, low-income households may not be able to afford the cost of any changes required to their electricity supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, cultural barriers may prevent certain communities from participating in emerging opportunities of the energy market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, low-income households may experience financial challenges in opting for greener options.
	Ability to engage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, social isolation may put people more at risk during a power cut because they cannot rely on their social network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, low energy literacy or bill understanding may limit the ability of people to benefit from the cheapest offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, lack of digital skills may be a barrier for people to sign up to app-based flexibility offerings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, lack of knowledge of green solutions may result in communities missing out on environmental benefits
	Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, people off gas grid may be more at risk during a power cut if they fully rely on electricity as their only source of energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, people living renting properties may not be able to receive appropriate advice and financial support to get out of fuel poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, people living in blocks of flats cannot access the flexibility market if they cannot install their own technologies (batteries, solar panels, charge points) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, living in a community without EV charging infrastructure may result in worse air quality compared to other areas in the future

¹ [UK Power Networks Vulnerability Strategy](#), page 17, *Forward-looking vulnerability risk factor*

² [UK Power Networks Vulnerability Strategy](#), page 17, *Forward-looking vulnerability risk factor*

12. Engagement program

Our engagement strategy includes 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 will embed ways to interconnect groups to cross-pollinate ideas and gather feedback.

This includes 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 will aim to enrich the understanding of diverse customer needs and increase the understanding of customer needs and perspectives across all engagement streams.

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

Our core engagement groups include:

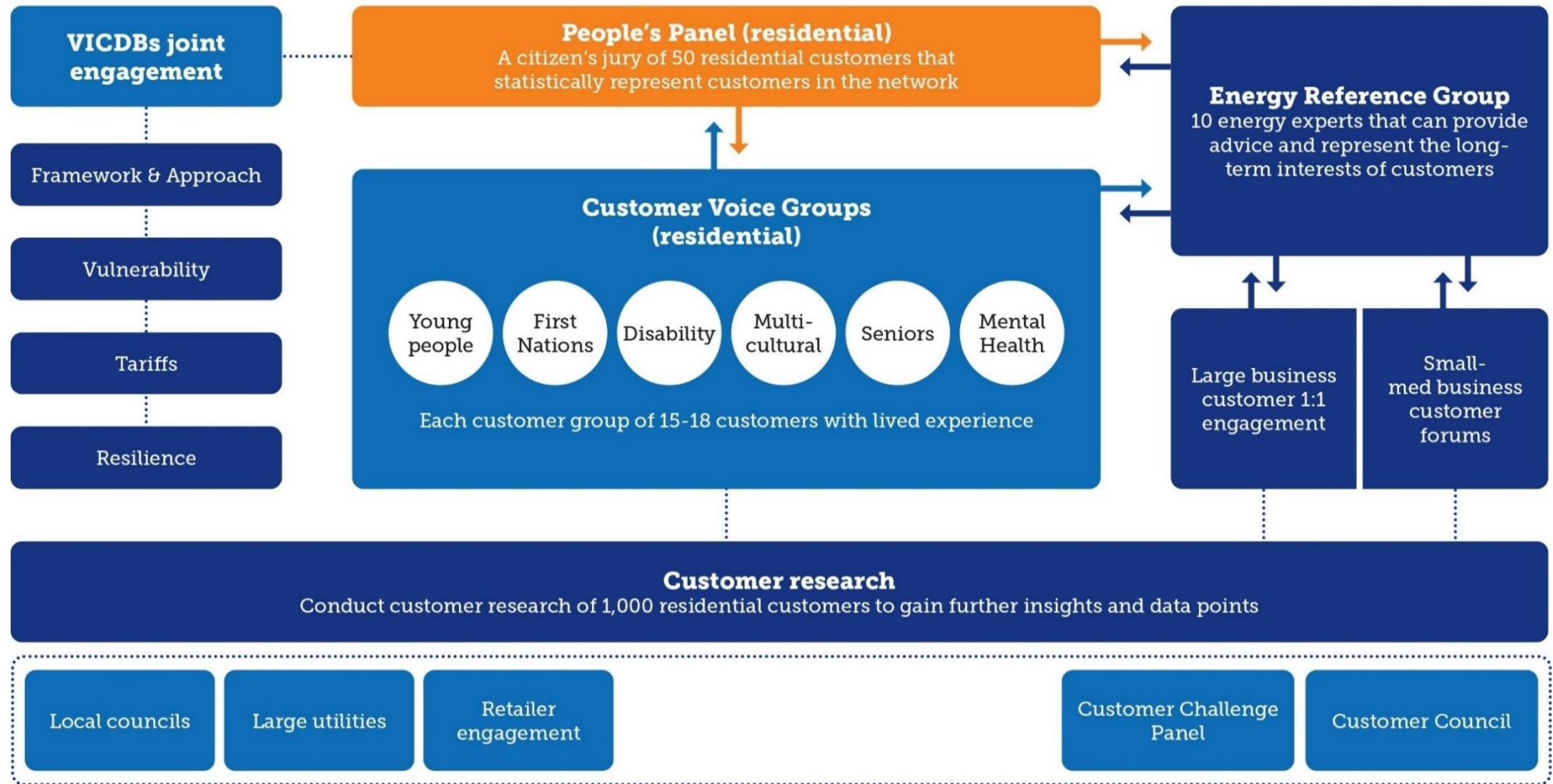
- Establishing an **Energy Reference Group** – an expert energy panel that will discuss complex issues and provide clear, independent advice and recommendations that have the long-term interests of customers in mind.
- Establishing a **People's Panel** – a People's Panel which will include approximately 50 diverse customers who make up a statistical representation of customers in our network area.
- Establishing **Customer Voice Groups** – six customer voice groups of customers with different lived experience. This includes customers with disability, customers who experience mental health difficulties, customers from multicultural communities, young people, First Nations Peoples, and seniors. Each group will have a senior leader from Jemena to help champion the group to connect, listen and understand their needs. The groups will provide advice and insights to the People's Panel for their

consideration in making recommendations given their unique needs.

- **Customer research** – conduct 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.
- **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.
- **Small to medium sized businesses** – small business forums, surveys and in-depth interviews/meetings with diverse small to medium sized businesses across our network.
- **Large commercial and industrial customers** – surveys, large user forum and in-depth meetings to engage with large commercial customers.
- **Developers** – survey housing developers and designers of houses to understand their needs.
- **Electricity retailers** – bespoke engagement with electricity retailers and retailer bodies, including retailer forums, surveys, in-depth interviews/meetings.
- **Local councils** - surveys, in-depth interviews/meetings and Local Council Forums to understand the needs of local councils and the local communities they service.
- 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 12.1: Customer engagement program

Customer engagement program



9.1 People's Panel (a Citizen's Jury)

Our network area's residential customers and communities are diverse, spanning some of Victoria's fastest-growing Local Government Areas including Hume, Merri-bek, Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley.

Our residential customers are made up of diverse households that include:

- Households with solar
- Households with electric vehicles
- Households with batteries
- Dual fuel households with gas and electricity
- Households with electricity only
- Renters and homeowners
- Households of different densities
- (low, med and high)
- Households with different socio-economic status
- Customers with lived experience of disability and mental health difficulties
- First Nations peoples
- Seniors
- Young People
- Multicultural households.

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 will recruit a People's Panel to create a statistical representation of customers across our network.

Once established, we will:

- **Use our engagement remit** to focus the deliberations on a broad range of information from a variety of sources relevant to the remit conversations
- **Provide site tour of a substation** to understand how our assets work to distribute electricity
- **Provide opportunities to meet Line Workers and access operational equipment** to understand how our assets work to distribute electricity
- **Provide access to information and experts and opportunities to ask Jemena staff questions.**

The People's Panel will be a deliberative engagement process that will be independently facilitated by deliberative engagement experts.

This enables a level of independence from Jemena and ensures customers are in a safe, inclusive environment with professional facilitators to help maximise participation, and ensure deliberative engagement processes are followed.

9.2 Customer Voice Groups

We will establish 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 will partner with 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.

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 will aim 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 also aim to understand the energy needs and preferences of First Nations Peoples and how we can prepare for a more sustainable energy future.

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 disability³ and may face different barriers when accessing essential services.

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

The purpose of the core six groups is to capture views through a particular lens while considering the many characteristics, traits and experiences of each customer.

The Customer Voice Groups will include components of deliberative engagement and will be independently facilitated by engagement experts. This enables a level of independence from Jemena and ensures customers are in a safe, inclusive environment with professional facilities to help maximise their participation.

We will ensure the groups intersect with Jemena's People's Panel, so their voices and top priorities are shared, along with the opportunity to attend People's Panel sessions.

We will also appoint a Jemena senior leader as a Champion for each group to build relationships and help advocate across the business for their needs.

We actively recruit and establish a First Nations Customer Voice Group that will include:

- First Nations Peoples living and working in and around Jemena's network
- Traditional Owners
- First Nations customers
- First Nations small and medium business customers.

We will appoint a Jemena senior leader to be a Champion of the First Nations Customer Voice Group to attend all sessions to connect, listen and advocate for the group's' needs. We will also provide cultural safety to the group and ensure their feedback is taken on board throughout the sessions to ensure appropriate facilitation.

We will recruit and establish a dedicated Disability Customer Voice Group with approximately 15 to 18 customers with lived experience of disability. We will appoint a Jemena senior leader to be a Champion of the Disability Customer Voice Group to attend all sessions to connect, listen and advocate for the group's' needs.

³ [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, People with Disability in Australia \(2022\)](#)

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.⁴

We will recruit and establish a dedicated Mental Health Customer Voice Group with approximately 15 to 18 customers with lived experience of mental health difficulties.

This will enable us to understand the barriers, energy preferences and priorities of customers with mental health difficulties and how we can better meet customers' needs.

We will appoint a Jemena senior leader to be a Champion of the Mental Health Customer Voice Group to attend all sessions to connect, listen and advocate for the group's' needs.

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.

We will recruit and establish a dedicated Multicultural Customer Voice Group with approximately 15 to 18 customers from multicultural communities.

We will appoint a Jemena senior leader to be a Champion of the Multicultural Customer Voice Group to attend all sessions to connect, listen and advocate for the group's' needs.

Seniors Customer Voice Group

In Victoria, there are over 1.5 million Victorians aged 60 years and over.⁵ 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.⁶

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.

We will recruit and establish a dedicated Seniors Customer Voice Group with approximately 15 to 18 senior customers.

We will appoint a Jemena senior leader to be a Champion of the Seniors Customer Voice Group to attend all sessions to connect, listen and advocate for the group's' needs.

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.

We will recruit and establish a dedicated Young People Customer Voice Group with approximately 15 to 18 young customers.

We will appoint a Jemena senior leader to be a Champion of the Young People Customer Voice Group to attend all sessions to connect, listen and advocate for the group's' needs.

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

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

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



9.3 Residential customer research

To strengthen our understanding of residential customer needs and priorities, we will conduct quantitative customer research with 1,000 residential customers.

We will aim to seek feedback on a range of topics, mainly the top priorities we identify through our deliberative engagement and customer engagement from the People's Panel and Customer Voice Groups.

This will ensure we can use quantitative research to test the priorities of customers across a larger set of residential customers.

The research will aim to understand the level of importance our residential customers place on the outcomes and priorities that are unearthed from the Customer Voice Groups and People's Panel.





9.4 Large commercial and industrial customer engagement

Our large commercial and industrial customers—made up of over 2,700 customers in north and western Melbourne—consume more than 50 per cent of the electricity that flows through our network. Large customers come from a range of industries including:

- aviation
- transport
- data centres and high-tech industries
- property development
- health and medical
- education
- logistics
- food manufacturing

- telecommunications
- other utilities.

Each large customer has different energy priorities that reflect the realities of their industries and the customers they serve.

We will engage with large commercial and industrial customers in our network and seek their feedback through:

- dedicated large customer forums that are independently facilitated
- online survey
- one-on-one sessions.

Small & medium businesses engagement

Our small to medium-sized business customers are made up of over 32,300 diverse customers across north and western Melbourne.

Small to medium sized businesses in our network are a vital part of our rich and vibrant communities.

Each small and medium business has unique circumstances and ways of operating, including different working environments, retail spaces and office locations.

Small to medium sized businesses include a large mix of sectors and professions, for example:

- accommodation and hotels
- florists
- agriculture
- furniture building and restoration

- bars, clubs and breweries.
- printing and design
- cafes, food stalls and restaurants
- real estate
- clothing
- retail
- small goods, delicatessens and butchers.
- entertainment and music and more.

We will engage with the small and medium-sized businesses in our network and seek their feedback through:

- dedicated small business forums that are independently facilitated
- online survey
- one-on-one sessions.

9.5 Energy Reference Group

Establishing an **Energy Reference Group** made up of independent energy experts and customer advocates will help ensure the long-term interests of customers are met.

A reference group is generally a group of skilled, experienced and passionate representatives who are willing to provide strategic or technical advice to support the delivery of a particular project.

The Energy Reference Group will be an advisory group appointed by Jemena to advise Jemena on its Pricing Reset 2026 -2031.

We will appoint a group of energy experts across industry, commercial, academic, and government sectors through an external recruitment campaign.

We will ensure that there is independent facilitation of the group and/or an independent Chair.

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

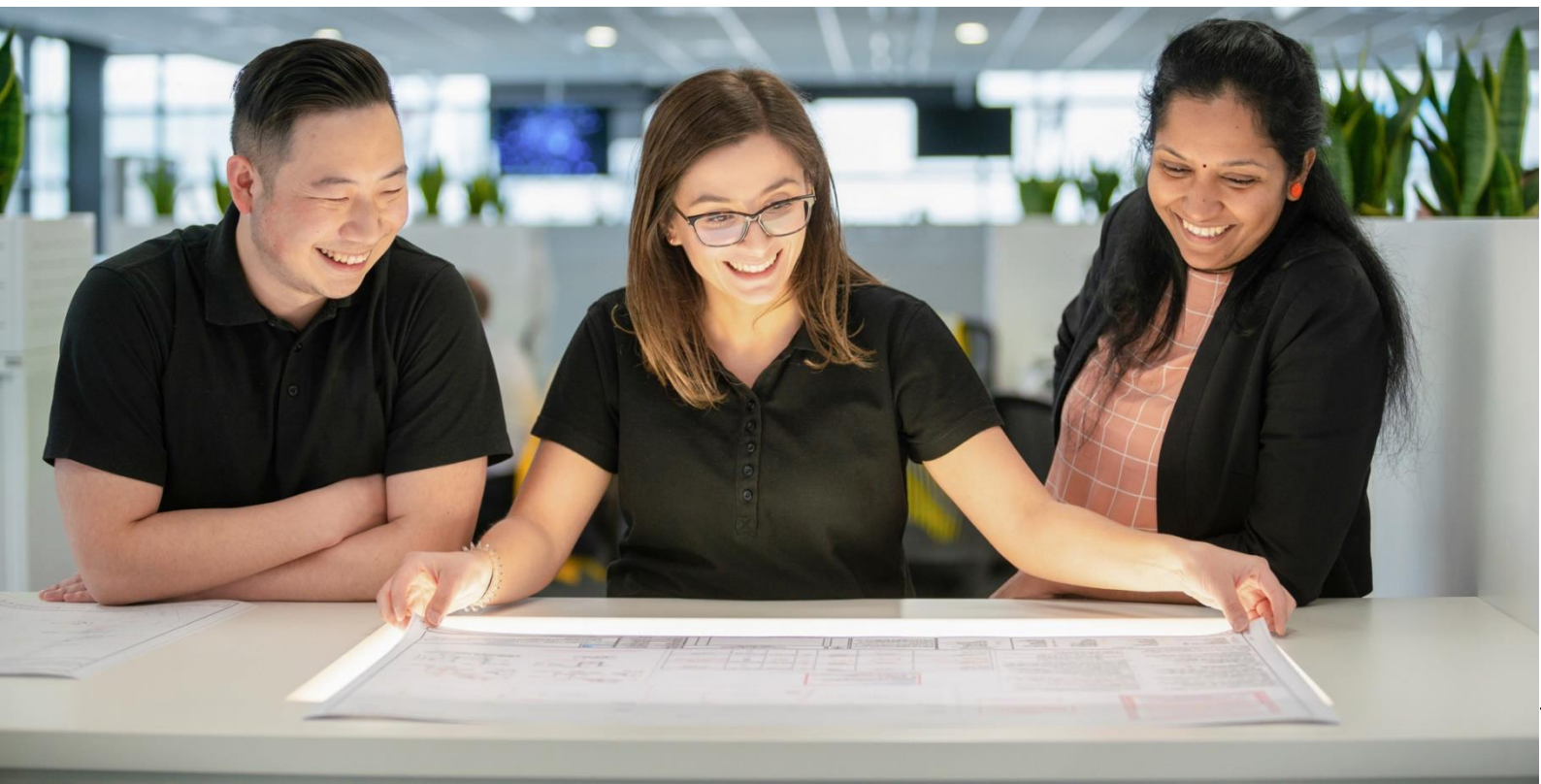
- electricity network stability, network performance and reliability
- digitisation and automation of the network
- cyber security and data access
- bushfire risk and mitigation
- risk mitigation
- electrification and the energy transition

- 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.

We will also give the Energy Reference Group opportunities to connect to customers and ensure they have 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 provide advice throughout the entirety of the price reset process.



9.6 Local Councils

Local Councils play an important role in supporting customers, our communities, and critical infrastructure across our electricity network. They also have a 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 will engage with Local Councils on a range of topics important to them, including:

- Public lighting
- Network resilience
- Customer education and communication

- Tariffs and pricing
- Information and data sharing
- Network reliability and power quality and many more.

We will engage with Local Councils in our network and seek their feedback through:

- dedicated Local Council forum that is independently facilitated
- online survey
- one-on-one sessions.

9.7 Retailers

Electricity retailers in Victoria play an important role in providing electricity services and bills to customers.

Electricity retailers sell electricity to household and business customers and are responsible for billing, customer service and helping arrange network services.

They are the leading touch point to electricity customers and retailers play an important role in the

energy supply chain and a vital role in servicing, supporting and interacting with electricity customers.

We will engage with retailers in our network and seek their feedback through:

- dedicated Retailer forum that is independently facilitated
- online survey
- involvement in all joint Victorian electricity distribution engagement.

9.8 Joint Victorian electricity distribution network service provider engagement

We value working closely with Victorian electricity distribution network providers AusNet, CitiPower, PowerCor and United Energy. In 2022 all five Victorian Electricity Distributions attended a workshop to agree on key synergies across the price reset process and agreed to conduct joint engagement.

Joint engagement allows us to understand the shared challenges we face, but also the broader Victorian community and customer needs as we prepare for the future.

Four top priority topics were identified to conduct joint engagement on to create efficiency consistency in engagement across Victoria.

Joint engagement topics we will engage on include:

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

These topics are of high importance across all electricity network distributors.

9.9 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.

We will involve 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 will also regular updates and oversight of the engagement plan at quarterly meetings throughout the price reset process.

We will also aim to hold dedicated sessions for the Customer Council and opportunities to attend engagement sessions.





CHARLES FERNANDO



Jemena

Hard Yakka

13. Evaluation

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 will:

- build in a feedback loop at the end of each session to identify opportunities for improvement
- provide one-on-one meetings and follow-up with customers that needed more discussion, information or support
- procure an independent evaluator to monitor and evaluate engagement against AER’s Better Resets Handbook.

The table below outlines our commitment to meeting AER’s requirements and how we will measure this.

AER Better Reset requirements	Our commitment to ensure this	Evidence of this
<p>Nature of engagement (sincerity, partnership, equipping customers)</p>	<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.
<p>Breadth and depth (outcomes and inputs, multiple channels, consumer influence)</p>	<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 appropriate ‘empower’ customers (IAP2 spectrum) 	<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.
<p>Evidence of impact (preferences, independent support)</p>	<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 on the draft. — 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.



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