

# JEMENA CUSTOMER VOICE GROUPS

*JEMENA ELECTRICITY NETWORKS*

Process report

July 2024

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

As part of Jemena Electricity Network's preparation for their regulatory Price Reset for 2026-2031, Customer Voice Groups (CVGs) were established to amplify the voices of customers.

Six Customer Voice Groups were established to help Jemena better understand the lived experience of the following cohorts:

- Disability
- First Nations
- Mental Health
- Multicultural
- Seniors
- Youth

In a series of conversations held from October 2023 to March 2024, Jemena sought to gain insight into customer perspectives on electricity usage, cost of living, sustainability, electric vehicles, those with medical or health needs, business owners, and young and older community members.

In total, the CVG engagement involved:

- 24 sessions
- 104 total participants
- 72 engagement hours

The sessions were held both face-to-face and online, with the Disability and First Nations CVGs meeting wholly online.

This report is a summary of the process of engaging with the customers, including an overview of each workshop and a summary of the key insights from each group.

# 2 CUSTOMER VOICE GROUP PROCESS

## 2.1 ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

In total, 104 people from Jemena's network area participated in the CVGs, which included attendees from the following suburbs:

• Alphington	• Harkaway	• Riddells Creek
• Ascot Vale	• Heidelberg	• Roxburgh Park
• Avondale Heights	• Kensington	• Seddon
• Coburg	• Macleod	• South Kingsville
• Craigieburn	• Maribyrnong	• Sunbury
• Essendon	• Meadow Heights	• Travencore
• Footscray	• Moonee Ponds	• Tullamarine
• Glenroy	• Oak Park	• Viewbank
• Ivanhoe	• Preston	• West Footscray
• Hadfield	• Reservoir	• Williamstown

## 2.2 JEMENA CVG CHAMPIONS

As a key role in this engagement, Jemena invited members of its senior leadership to be a champion for each Customer Voice Group.

The Champion's role was to:

- Act as a champion for the group by actively listening and participating in meetings as the senior leader representing Jemena

- Build an understanding of the group, their energy preferences, ideas and specific needs, and be able to share this more broadly across the organisation.

### Customer Voice Group Champions

CVG	NAME	ROLE
<b>Disability</b>	Sharyn County	GM Procurement, Property & Fleet
<b>First Nations</b>	Craig Ypinazar	Executive GM, People, Safety and Resilience
<b>Mental Health</b>	Ana Dijanosic	GM Regulation
<b>Multicultural</b>	Johan Ng	Commercial Manager
<b>Seniors</b>	Sandra Centofanti	GM Customer & Commercial
<b>Young People</b>	Julien Capraro	Chief Digital Officer

## 2.3 KEY ROLES AND FACILITATION

MosaicLab was engaged by Jemena to facilitate the Customer Voice Groups. Over the journey of the CVG engagement, MosaicLab's role was to:

- enable participants to contribute to discussions and share diverse viewpoints, to have a chance to participate and contribute
- respond and adapt to the group's needs
- organise the logistics for all sessions

During the engagement process, Karen Milward, joined as co-facilitator of the First Nations CVG.

The key roles for the Customer Voice Groups included:

GROUP	DESCRIPTION	ROLE
<b>Customer Voice Group members</b>	<i>Randomly selected community members</i>	To work together to provide feedback from a lived experience perspective to Jemena to inform planning for their regulatory price submission.

GROUP	DESCRIPTION	ROLE
<b>Jemena Electricity Network</b>	<i>Host</i>	To support the process, provide expertise and knowledge, observe the process, answer specific questions directed to them.
<b>MosaicLab facilitators</b>	<i>Independent facilitators</i>	To provide a supportive, inclusive, and productive space that enabled participants to share their ideas and contribute their experiences.  To provide support as needed, to ensure CVG members could participate in sessions.
<b>First Nations facilitator – Karen Milward</b>	<i>Independent facilitator</i>	To provide a supportive, culturally sensitive space for First Nations participants to interact and share ideas and experiences.
<b>Sortition Foundation</b>	<i>Independent recruiters</i>	To manage the recruitment process, including random selection of participants.

## 2.4 INTERSECTION WITH THE JEMENA PEOPLE'S PANEL

Over the course of the Customer Voice journey, members of the CVGs had opportunities to share insights with the People's Panel and hear directly from them in conversations about how customers

The intersections with the People's Panel included:

### CVG Workshop 2 – November 2024

The CVG groups generated 'key messages' for Jemena and the People's Panel to consider.

### CVG Workshop 4 – March 2024

Jemena Panel member/s were in attendance and observed the discussions. The final activity included 'One Thing' for Jemena's People's Panel to consider when making their recommendations about that same remit question.

### March 2024 - Jemena People's Panel Day 4

CVG members attended Day 4 of the Jemena People's Panel and participated in a speed dialogue with the panel members. This gave the CVG members a chance to directly reflect what was important to them when thinking about a sustainable energy future.

## 2.5 INFORMATION INPUTS

Across the four sessions, each CVG considered a wide variety of information inputs from a variety of different sources. These included:

### Welcome pack

A handbook was prepared by Jemena with information about the CVG process and logistics.

### Presentations

Each session focused on a key aspect of Jemena’s role in electricity distribution and information was presented to the groups by senior Jemena staff, as outlined in the table below:

Session	Topic	Presented by
CVG 1	Welcome Jemena’s Electricity Network	Ana Dijanosic (Seniors, Mental Health) Sharyn County (Disability) Matt Serpell (Multicultural, First Nations) Julien Capraro (Youth)
CVG 2	Energy Distribution Process and Equity	Sandra Centofanti (Seniors, Luisa Hall (Disability, Mental Health, Multicultural, Youth) Craig Ypinazar (First Nations)
CVG 3	Customer Service and Experience	Lisa Mannix (Seniors, Youth) Lawrence Henry (Disability) Jesse Mills (Mental Health) Claire Couchman (Multicultural) Matt Serpell (First Nations)
CVG 4	Investing in the Network	Matt Serpell (Seniors, Multicultural, First Nations, Disability, Youth) Ana Dijanosic (Mental Health)

## 2.6 WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### WORKSHOP 1

The focus of the first CVG workshop was to connect as a group, understand the journey ahead, and hear from Jemena about their role in the transmission of electricity and how this impacts customer bills.

During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to:

- meet and connect with fellow CVG members
- gain clarity on roles, processes, and the overall journey
- establish collaborative working agreements
- receive information from Jemena's team regarding the supply chain and pricing structure process, with a specific focus on the "Understanding Your Bill" component
- draw from personal experiences to enrich the discussion
- pose questions and voice concerns related to the task at hand.

### WORKSHOP 2

The second round allowed participants to consider fairness and equity for customers. During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to:

- reconnect with fellow CVG members
- hear from Jemena's team about the electricity distribution process and pricing principles with a focus on fairness and equity
- draw from their personal experiences to enrich the discussion
- raise questions for Jemena to aid their understanding of the topics being discussed
- share their 'key messages' for Jemena and the People's Panel to consider.

### WORKSHOP 3

For the third CVG round, participants were asked to focus on customer service, including general experiences and their specific expectations of Jemena as their electricity distributor. During the workshops, participants had the opportunity to:

- recap the CVG journey so far (CVG 1 and 2)
- hear from Jemena representatives from the Contact Centre and Recoverable Works and CX Innovations
- draw from their personal experiences to enrich the discussion
- consider their expectations for customer service levels and standards
- explore perspectives about measuring customer service performance
- consider what else Jemena could do to support customers experiencing vulnerability.



## WORKSHOP 4

The focus of the final CVG workshop was to explore potential trade-offs in relation to Jemena's future investment in the network. During the workshops, participants had the opportunity to:

- hear more from Jemena about where it spends its money investing in and running the electricity network
- consider what trade-off might need to be made by Jemena when making decisions about future investment in the network.
- providing feedback to Jemena about specific priorities for Jemena to focus on in relation to the remit question of *'How should Jemena prepare for a sustainable energy future while meeting customer and community needs today?'*
- providing feedback via an attending People's Panel representative about the 'One Thing' for Jemena's People's Panel to consider when making their recommendations about that same remit question
- draw from their personal experiences to enrich the discussion.

# 3 KEY INSIGHTS

Over the four sessions, each Customer Voice Group had the opportunity to share insights with Jemena about how they use electricity, what they value in good customer service, and what fairness and equity means to them.

In the final session, participants were invited to consider the Jemena's remit (below) and provide their final thoughts and insights from a lived experience perspective.

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

The sections below summarise the feedback from each cohort, in response to questions about 3 key areas:

- Priorities for Jemena to consider regarding energy transition, network reliability and digitisation
- Suggestions for the People's Panel to consider
- Reflections on the journey of the CVG

## 3.1 DISABILITY CVG

At the final session, participants were invited to provide suggestions and top priorities for Jemena to consider for its customers living with disability.

The participants suggestions included the following key themes and ideas:

### **Affordability and balancing costs:**

- Keeping costs as low as possible, especially for low-income consumers, is the number one priority. Balancing cost with reliability is crucial to meet the high energy needs of people with disabilities without imposing additional financial burdens.
- Ensuring the energy service remains reliable and affordable is crucial, particularly for people with disabilities who are financially vulnerable.

### **Network capacity and reliability:**

- Managing the network's capacity to handle increased load and maintaining regular and effective maintenance to ensure high reliability.

### **Awareness and regular engagement with customers with disabilities:**

- Recognise and accommodate the varying needs of individuals with different disabilities, especially those requiring life support, by providing tailored support and ensuring uninterrupted power supply.

- Regular consumer voice groups are essential to gather direct input from consumers about desired changes and appreciated services, ensuring their voices are heard and considered.

### **Data-driven decision making**

- Utilising good data for making informed decisions, forecasting demand, understanding network pressure points, and addressing problems efficiently. Learning from others' experiences to build a reliable and affordable system is also important.

### **Accessible information:**

- Providing clearer and more accessible information and raise awareness about available support and resources for people who may struggle to articulate their needs.
- Maintain regular check-ins and proactive communication with consumers to address their needs and gather feedback, especially during outages.

## **FEEDBACK ON THE SESSIONS**

At the close of the final session, the participants had the opportunity to reflect on the journey and offered the following summary of what they liked most about participating in the CVG process:

- **Engaging and informative presentations:** participants appreciated the thorough and engaging presentations, particularly those explaining how the electricity network and market work, including maintenance costs.
- **Diverse perspectives and a sense of community:** the mixture of people and perspectives, and the community feeling created during the workshop, were highly valued. Participants enjoyed hearing different views and being part of a diverse discussion group.
- **Opportunity to be heard:** many participants valued the opportunity to have their voices heard and appreciated the inclusive environment that allowed for open sharing and connection.

## 3.2 FIRST NATIONS CVG

During the online sessions, participants shared a range of insights, perspectives and key messages for Jemena, as summarised below:

### **Caring for country and vulnerable customers:**

- Prioritise caring for the country and supporting vulnerable customers, including considering hardship programs and a Disaster Fund for those affected by natural events like storms and homelessness.

### **Community grants and relationships:**

- Strengthen connections with Aboriginal community organisations through community grants and dedicated indigenous grants. Foster relationships and build connections with local government and indigenous groups.

### **Support and education:**

- Provide education on setting up generators, especially for those without insurance, to mitigate losses during power outages. Ensure clear communication and support for elders to empower them to voice their needs.

### **Dedicated liaison and advocacy:**

- Consider establishing a dedicated liaison officer to advocate for the Aboriginal community and explore collaborations with billing companies to support and advocate for vulnerable customers.

During the final session, participants had an opportunity to share their insights about the energy transition and the potential impacts on First Nations communities. The key themes and a summary of their comments include:

### **Impact on industries and consumers:**

- Changes in energy sources will impact customers or businesses differently, such as chefs preferring gas for cooking and long wait times for electric car charging.
- Ensure digital upgrades do not exclude those less tech-savvy and consider the impact on employment, especially among indigenous tradespeople.

### **Affordability and reliability concerns:**

- Worries about the financial burden of network upgrades on taxpayers and consumers, and the need to balance shareholder profits against consumer costs.
- Delay investments until the economy improves and explore alternative funding sources like government grants to offset costs for lower-income earners.

### **Equity, fairness and support**

- Address the unequal impact of power outages, especially on those working from home, and raise awareness about preparedness, such as providing torches and candles.
- Ensure that investments and initiatives support the community and those with additional needs without imposing undue costs on vulnerable groups.
- Encourage corporate sponsorship and investment in community-support initiatives and create funds to mitigate unintended costs of subsidised items.

### **Cyber security and data protection:**

- Invest in cyber security to protect customer data, ensuring transparency about what data is held and how it is used.

## **FEEDBACK ON THE SESSIONS**

At the end of the final session, participants had the chance to reflect on their journey and shared the following summary of what they liked most about the CVG process:

- **Engaging Aboriginal voices:** participants appreciated the involvement of an Aboriginal facilitator and emphasised the importance of ongoing engagement with Aboriginal people beyond just a few sessions.
- **Commitment and adaptability:** Jemena's willingness to learn, take feedback, and adapt the sessions was acknowledged. Participants noted the importance of Jemena not only talking the talk but also walking the walk, demonstrating commitment through action.
- **Future improvements and accountability:** there was a desire to see Jemena go beyond their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and implement meaningful changes. The RAP should be seen as a living document, and include Jemena's drive and ambition to follow through on their commitments.
- **Community safety and local collaboration:** linking up with local councils and safety programmes to identify and support those at risk of power outages was suggested as a positive step.
- **Continued engagement and progress review:** participants were keen to continue being part of the process and suggested reviewing progress in the future to see how well the suggested improvements have been implemented.

## 3.3 MENTAL HEALTH CVG

Participants were invited to share suggestions about how Jemena can best support customers who have a lived or living experience of mental health challenges.

The group's suggestions included the following key themes and ideas:

### **Customer experience and diverse needs**

- Recognising that customers interact differently, valuing various methods (e.g., text communication) will better address their actual needs and preferences.
- Providing equitable access and diverse communication methods to enhance the customer experience and ensure no one is left behind.

### **Balancing costs and reliability:**

- Ensuring prices are balanced with network reliability is crucial. Customers want affordable power without sacrificing service quality or reliability.

### **Equitable cost distribution:**

- Preventing the burden of network upgrades and solar initiatives from falling disproportionately on customers who cannot benefit, such as renters compared to homeowners.
- Ensuring no group is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged, such as renters not bearing the costs of homeowners' solar investments. Transparency and fairness in pricing and service delivery are essential.

### **Flexibility and open-mindedness:**

- Emphasising the need for flexibility and open-mindedness in decision-making, considering the fluid nature of personal, communal, and societal changes. Making choices that are safe, sustainable, and adaptable to changing customer needs is essential.

### **Addressing anxiety and uncertainty:**

- Acknowledging the anxiety caused by power price uncertainties. The fear and stress from unpredictable costs can directly impact customers' well-being, highlighting the need for clear and stable pricing strategies.

### **Balancing costs and new technologies:**

- Finding the right balance between the costs and benefits of new technologies like solar power, especially considering low solar tariffs and limited access for renters. Promoting investment incentives that lower power demands or feed back to the grid is crucial.

### **Grid reliability and maintenance:**

- Focusing on preventative maintenance, ensuring the longevity and sustainability of the grid. Preparing for future growth and maintaining high availability and reliability, avoiding scenarios like load shedding.

## FEEDBACK ON THE SESSIONS

At the end of the final session, the participants highlighted the following things they liked most about engaging with the CVG process:

- **Engagement and interaction:** participants valued the hands-on activities, in-person discussions, and the opportunity to capture customer opinions. The activities had clear objectives and facilitated meaningful engagement.
- 
- **Convenient and accessible locations:** the convenience of session locations, being close to train stations and offering both physical and online options, was appreciated.
- **In-person sessions:** the importance of face-to-face interactions was highlighted as crucial for effective communication for this group.

## 3.4 MULTICULTURAL CVG

At the final session, participants were invited to share their suggestions and top priorities for Jemena to consider for its customers from multicultural backgrounds.

Their suggestions included the following key themes and ideas:

### **Investment in technology and optimisation:**

- Emphasise resourcing risks through cyber security, optimising assets for efficiency, and reducing environmental impact. Utilising AI to make energy efficient, reliable, and safe.

### **Reliability and fairer costs:**

- Ensuring uninterrupted service and preparing for a sustainable future with reliable and fair costs. Rewarding good users to enhance grid sustainability and linking supply charges to usage.

### **Renewable energy and storage:**

- Supporting diverse energy sources and infrastructure, including solar optimisation and storage options like batteries. Preparing the network to accommodate renewable energy sources effectively.

### **Safety and preparedness:**

- Investing in long-term infrastructure plans to withstand natural disasters and enhance safety, informed by recent incidents like the Maribyrnong floods and the 2024 storm.

### **Communication and inclusivity:**

- Adjusting communication strategies to cater to different cultural and language groups. Ensuring authentic communication with all customers, listening to their needs, and maintaining service affordability and quality.

## FEEDBACK ON THE SESSIONS

At the close of the final session, participants had the opportunity to reflect on their journey and provided the following summary of what they liked most about the CVG process:

- **Engagement and interaction:** the structured sessions, interactive panel members, and Jemena's willingness to answer questions were highly appreciated. Participants valued the opportunity for engagement and collaboration.
- **Diversity and inclusivity:** the diversity of the group and the eagerness to involve and listen to different perspectives were important. The process was seen as inclusive and welcoming.



- **Transparency and information sharing:** transparency of information and the usefulness of the shared knowledge were key positives. Participants appreciated the open sharing of information and feedback on ideas.
- **Responsibility and care:** Jemena's genuine care to hear from the community and take responsibility for incorporating feedback was valued. The efforts by MosaicLab in setting up the process were also recognised.

## 3.5 SENIORS CVG

Participants in the Seniors CVG offered the following key insights about their priorities for Jemena to consider. A summary of the key themes and ideas includes:

### **Affordability and equity:**

- Ensuring electricity costs remain affordable for all, particularly for senior customers, pensioners, and low-income earners. Addressing the cost burden of future maintenance and avoiding excessive discounts for large industries. Equity in pricing is crucial to prevent vulnerable groups from falling through the cracks.

### **Clear communication and education:**

- Prioritising transparent communication with customers about planned outages, updates, and Jemena's role as a distributor.
- Educating the public on the electricity model and infrastructure plans to enhance understanding.
- Providing clear, accessible communication in multiple languages and reassuring support for vulnerable and unconfident customers.

### **Infrastructure and grid security:**

- Investing in and maintaining a reliable, efficient, and cost-effective supply network. Planning for future infrastructure improvements and adopting new technologies to address future energy issues. Ensuring the grid's security and reliability while keeping costs down for consumers.

### **Digitalisation and technology investment:**

- Meeting digital requirements to deliver efficiency and improve service. Investing in IT and technology for security and operational efficiency. Ensuring that technological advancements provide economical and reliable energy supply to customers.

### **Support for sustainable energy:**

- Providing financial support for solar rebates, battery backups, and alternate energy supplies like wind, nuclear, and geothermal.
- Promoting sustainable housing initiatives to reduce electricity costs and carbon emissions.

### **Transparency and trust:**

- Ensuring transparency in planning and execution, given Jemena's regulated monopoly status. Building trust by demonstrating efficient and effective execution of their mission.
- Providing clarity on future costs, affordability, and availability of energy supply.

## FEEDBACK ON THE SESSIONS

At the end of the session, participants provided positive feedback about the process, highlighting the following key aspects they appreciated most about engaging across the four CVG sessions:

- **Interaction and engagement:** participants appreciated being face-to-face, enjoying discussions with like-minded individuals. Hearing diverse opinions and the opportunity to voice their thoughts were highly valued. The individual input and diversity of the groups were appreciated.
- **Structured and progressive sessions:** the way sessions were structured, building upon each other to provide a comprehensive view, was well-received. The facilitators effectively kept the sessions moving.
- **Learning and information sharing:** participants enjoyed learning about Jemena and valued the comprehensive process and opportunities to share diverse ideas.

# YOUTH CVG

Participants in the Youth CVG provided the following key insights and concerns with Jemena about the future of the network and energy transition. A summary of the key themes and ideas includes:

## **Education and transparency:**

- Providing education about how the electricity system works to enable informed choices and better outcomes. Transparency in communication, particularly regarding Jemena's progress towards sustainability goals, to enhance customer engagement and awareness.

## **Renewable energy transition:**

- Ensuring the grid can handle and encourage the shift to renewable energy sources, including electric vehicles, solar power, and batteries. Emphasising the inevitability of this change and the need for infrastructure adaptation.

## **Pricing and affordability:**

- Considering how Jemena can balance profits with the need to shift to renewables or maintain prices. Ensuring electricity is affordable and accessible for all, recognising its role as essential social infrastructure, especially for disadvantaged groups.

## **Infrastructure and sustainability:**

- Investing in and fixing the grid to support decentralisation and scalability of renewable energy. Focusing on sustainability, service quality, and affordability by building a grid capable of storing and harnessing renewable energies.

## **Equity in energy access:**

- Promoting equitable access to electricity by considering the needs of disadvantaged groups and ensuring that those with a larger presence in the network contribute fairly. Addressing social equity in energy distribution and pricing to meet basic needs for everyone.

# FEEDBACK ON THE SESSIONS

At the end of the final session, the participants shared their thoughts and reflections about participating in the CVG process and what they enjoyed most:

- **Inclusivity:** the inclusive nature of the sessions, allowing participation both in person and via Zoom, and the open, informative environment were highly appreciated.

- **Engaging and informative sessions:** the professionalism and friendliness of the Jemena staff and facilitators, as well as the insightful contributions from Matt Serpell, were highly valued.

## 4 NEXT STEPS

Participants from the Customer Voice Groups have been invited to a Recall Day on Saturday 31 August 2024 to hear an update from Jemena about its draft regulatory proposal.



**PLEASE NOTE:**

This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of Jemena Electricity Networks. The sole purpose of this report is to provide Jemena with materials produced at the Customer Voice Group (CVG) sessions from Oct 2023 to Mar 2024.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by Jemena. In preparing this report, MosaicLab has relied upon the information provided by the participants at the forum. Jemena can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

*MosaicLab is a Victorian-based consultancy that specialises in community and stakeholder engagement, facilitation, negotiation, strategic planning and coaching.*



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