

Agenda & Minutes

Innovation Advisory Committee | Meeting #7

Wednesday 7 February 2023

2:30pm – 4:00pm (1.5 hours)

Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Maxime Di Petta, *Clean Energy Council*
 Scott McKenry, *Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action*
 Greg Hannan, *United Energy*
 Dean Lombard, *Energesis*
 Emma Chessell, *Independent*
 Theodora Karastergiou, *Jemena*

AusNet representatives:

Charlotte Eddy, *General Manager Regulation & Policy (Distribution)*
 Ana Erceg, *Future Network Programs Manager*
 Asal Ahmadlou, *Future Network Engineer*
 Sonja Lekovic, *Regulatory Policy Manager*
 Michaela Jackson, *Engagement Specialist*

Apologies:

Heather Smith, *Energy and climate change specialist*
 Nando Ochoa Pizzali, *University of Melbourne*
 Tom Bakker, *Aurecon*
 David Bryant, *BSL*

Item	Time	Topic	For	Presenter
	2:30pm	Welcome , customer moment & actions from meeting #6	Information & discussion	Charlotte Eddy
1	2:35pm	EDPR 2026-31 Future Networks Panel update	Information & discussion	Dean Lombard
2	2:40pm	Innovation pipeline Review and update of pipeline and DMIA allowance	Information & discussion	Reza Razzaghi & Asal Ahmadlou
3	3:10pm	Electri-fair-cation Project update	Information & discussion	Asal Ahmadlou
4	3:40pm	Trial updates EV and Battery Tariff trials, AER network data trial	Information & discussion	Sonja Lekovic & Edwin Chan
5	3:50pm	Other business and close Membership update, Terms of Reference	Information & discussion	Michaela Jackson & Charlotte Eddy

Welcome, customer moment & actions

Charlotte Eddy, AusNet General Manager Regulation (Distribution) welcomed participants to the meeting. Following an update on the activities of the Future Networks Panel (see Item 1 below), Charlotte presented a customer moment on new functionality available via the Outage Tracker. The new functionality is designed to improve customer's experience during an unplanned outage by providing more notifications around the progress of their incident, automatically.

Action items from Meeting #6 were complete, ongoing, or to be discussed in Meeting #7.

Item 1 | EDPR 2026-31 Future Networks Panel update

Dean Lombard, Future Networks Panel Lead provided an update on the work of this panel, as part of the broader engagement program for the Electricity Distribution Price Review 2026-31. Dean explained that discussions within the panel were aligned to the 5 focus questions, and included preparing for and accommodating electrification of gas and transport loads, supporting communities to achieve their energy needs and aspirations, efficient integration of CER and other renewables, unlocking more value to customers through an efficient mix of smart grid technology and new capacity, and how AusNet could support customers in unlocking other CER value streams. Discussions had briefly encompassed an export services incentive scheme as a possibility for the next EDPR. The group also considered differences between control and orchestrations, likening the latter to a partnership with customers. The panel were supportive of innovation spending as part of the EDPR 2026-31 proposal.

Discussion

- An IAC member expressed an interest in further exploring the export incentive scheme. Dean clarified that each meeting went into far more detailed discussion on these topics, as captured in the meeting summaries. AusNet confirmed that they would provide a link to the Future Networks [meeting summaries](#) in the IAC Meeting #7 minutes.

Item 2 | Innovation pipeline – review and update of pipeline and DMA allowance

AusNet's Asal Ahmadlou updated members on the innovation pipeline. Asal advised that her team have worked prudently to review the project list, given the pace of change and principals for innovation set out by the IAC. Successful work on CER integration and DSO strategies has taken place, and has resulted in a refreshed project list, including the *Electri-fair*-cation project for vulnerable households and Grid Guard to improve network reliability during heatwaves. Ongoing projects - the EV tariff trial and LV battery program - emphasize efforts to improve network visibility, prepare for higher EV uptake, and contribute to community resilience.

AusNet's Reza Razzaghi discussed 2 projects - the Virtual Transformer Monitor aims to improve visibility on distribution networks and assets by using algorithmic tools as virtual sensors on low voltage networks. The project shows promising results in estimating voltage with errors mostly below 2.3 volts, making it suitable for various applications. The second project, the Grid Guard Trial, is in the scoping and estimating stage. It focuses on improving reliability in Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiter (REFCL) areas by trialling algorithms to locate faults quickly and accurately in power lines. The project aims to enhance public safety and resilience.

Discussion

- A member asked if the EV pole charging project that Asal mentioned is the same as a project run by the City of Boroondara. Asal responded that the team is aware of other programs but the scope of AusNet's project is yet to be determined and Charlotte Eddy advised that AusNet will ensure its trial brings new insights. Another member confirmed there is a trial proposed by United Energy and another one in Sydney and commented that there is interest in these trials and providing access to charging in urban areas. A member confirmed that it is a challenge for local planners and is on councils' radars.
- A member provided positive feedback on the range of projects that comprise AusNet's innovation pipeline and particularly the different aspects of battery-related projects, which they think will provide plenty of useful information.

Item 3 | Electri-fair-cation project update

AusNet's Ana Erceg updated members on Electri-fair-cation, outlining the delivery model for the project, which involves employing local trades and upscaling local talent, emphasizing support for local businesses and supply chains. Ana also shared that key delivery stakeholders include the Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN), Morwell Neighbourhood House, and scorecard assessors. Ana outlined project roles and highlighted the importance of customer engagement and flexibility in the project scope. Key learnings to date have involved challenges in finding suitable homes, addressing customer concerns, and adapting to the needs of less energy-conscious customers. Next steps include the formation of a project control group, recruitment of a project officer, community engagement. Scorecard assessments were also discussed.

Discussion

- A member expressed excitement about the project but suggested AusNet consider potential limitations in using the scorecard to assess the impact of changes. They briefly referred to their experience where a scorecard's set metrics didn't represent interventions well and offered to provide more detailed information via email. Ana welcomed the member's offer and supports sharing and learning from each other.
- A second member commended the extensive community involvement in the project's delivery. They expressed interest in discussing concerns about the scorecard for the project, particularly in relation to heating considerations and potential modifications. They raised the potential of rent increases due to improvements and suggested working with landlords to address the issue. Ana indicated that through the delivery contract with the GCCN, they are exploring incorporating clauses to protect homeowners for a specified period and options such as using CPI to limit rent increases.
- Another IAC member expressed appreciation for the project's progress and inquired about the scope of upgrades, particularly regarding research by ClimateWorks on the benefits of thermal upgrades to housing stock in reducing peak demand. They asked how this aspect (thermal upgrades) is considered in the cost-benefit analysis of the project and offered to share a link to the relevant information. AusNet acknowledged that they haven't investigated these details, noting the challenges in aligning customer and network requirements. Ana mentioned the development of a scorecard assessment and firming up the scope for each home based on customer and network needs, with a need for flexibility between homes, as more aspects of the project are explored. Another participant supported testing real-world impacts of thermal upgrades, expressing interest in tracking their effects and noting the unique challenge of implementing energy efficiency upgrades in rental properties. They highlighted the potential for valuable research outcomes as well as anticipated challenges.

Item 4 | Trial updates - EV and Battery Tariff trials, AER network data trial

AusNet's Sonja Lekovic provided an update on the Electric Vehicle (EV) dynamic trial, noting that while the initial uptake was slow, there has been increased interest from another retailer, involving approximately 100 customers. The tariff trial features a unique dynamic element, involving event-driven signals for customers to charge or stop charging to manage the network. Deployment is scheduled for March. Plans are also in place for another tariff trial for batteries, which would incentivize charging during the day and exporting in the evening. AusNet is also participating a network data trial with the AER and the Victorian Government, aiming to assess data requirements and availability in collaboration with community groups, with the trial running until May and recommendations expected thereafter.

Discussion

- Two participants expressed appreciation for the information on the tariff trials, noting the potential value of data for other states and networks.
- The importance of including gas data in the discussion due to community interest and planning considerations was also highlighted by one member. Charlotte Eddy acknowledged the importance of data access for both electricity and gas networks and offered to provide an update to the panel member offline.

Item 5 | Other business & close

- AusNet's Michaela Jackson advised that following a call for new members, 5 people submitted expressions of interest, including individuals from organisations suggested by IAC panel members. The selection process is underway and expected to be finalized within the next few weeks.
- Members were invited to provide feedback on the format, length, and effectiveness of IAC meetings, and that a [Padlet](#) was also available for this purpose. Suggestions offered during the meeting by members included post-meeting input options for deeper dives into projects and collaborating or sharing with other networks to avoid duplicating innovation projects.
- Michaela also flagged that members are required to annually review of the terms of reference, and noted the only update was the date. Participants were encouraged to review the terms of reference and email any questions or concerns to engagemetnt@ausnetservices.com.au.

AusNet's Charlotte Eddy thanked members for their time and the meeting was closed.

Action items			
Action	Assigned to	Status	Due date
AusNet to provide a link to the Future Networks meeting summaries in the IAC Meeting #7 minutes.	AusNet	Complete	n/a
Interested panel member to share information and learnings associated with scorecard metrics with Ana Erceg as part of the Electri-fair-cation project	IAC member (EC)	Open	n/a
AusNet to provide update on gas network data to interested panel member	AusNet	Open	31 May
IAC members to review terms of reference and advise AusNet of any concerns	IAC members	Open	29 Feb
IAC members to provide feedback on IAC via the Padlet	IAC members	Open	29 Feb