



GAAR 2028-33

GAAR Development Panel (GDP)

Summary Notes | Meeting #1 – Introduction

Details	Members	AusNet Team
9.15am to 1.30pm Tuesday 17 February 2026 In-person only Chair: Andrew Dillon Secretariat: AusNet prepared draft, finalised by Chair Andrew Dillon	Andrew Dillon, <i>Chair</i> Andrew Richards Damian Sullivan David Prins Kellie Larsen Nicole Wallis Observers: Nil Apologies: Gavin Duffy*	Fran Duiker, <i>EGM Gas & Metering</i> Moyo Tian, <i>GM Strategy & Regulation (Gas)</i> Eliza Cochrane, <i>Price Review Manager</i> Ben Ryan, <i>Manager Policy & Regulation</i> Lucy Holder, <i>Customer Engagement Manager</i> Kyle Olsen, <i>Senior Engagement Specialist</i>

*Shared views in advance with the Chair who represented these in the meeting

Key outcomes

GDP members left with a greater understanding of AusNet's gas network, the GAAR process, AusNet's engagement plan and the GDP's role.

The GDP agreed on the format for future meetings including meeting in person and earlier in the day, confirming interest observing non-GDP engagement activities and doing a site visit/s.

The GDP and AusNet collaborated on a set of focus questions and information requirements to inform and guide future deep dive discussions. AusNet will consolidate the outputs of this session and bring it to the next meeting for the GDP to validate.

Purpose & Agenda

Time	#	Item	Outcome	Facilitator/s
9:15	1	Welcome and morning tea		
9:30	2	Opening remarks		Fran Duiker
9:40	3	Introductions and ice-breaker	Getting to know each other better	Chair
10:00	4	AusNet's network & operating environment	GDP members understand the context for the GAAR	Moyo Tian
10:30	5	The GAAR process and our engagement plan	GDP members understand the GAAR and engagement processes	Ben Ryan & Kyle Olsen
10:45	6	Activity: GDP meeting logistics	Agree the format for GDP meetings	Chair
10:50	7	Activity: Identifying themes and 'focus questions'	Agree deep dive topics and the focus questions to answer	Chair
11:45		Lunch		
12:15	8	Activity: Identifying information to answer 'Focus Questions'	Agree on information to be provided to help answer these questions	Chair
12:50	9	The GDP's role in designing engagement	Agree the GDP's role in shaping design of research and engagement	Chair
13:00	10	References Services Proposal approach	Share an overview of the Reference Services Proposal (first submission)	Moyo Tian
13:15	11	Open floor, next steps & close	GDP members have raised anything else on their mind. Agreement on next steps	Chair

Summary of discussion

Topics	Discussion points
1-3. Welcomes & introductions	Fran Duiker and Andrew Dillon welcomed the group to the first meeting of the GAAR Development Panel and noted the main purposes of today's meeting – a key one being determining where the panel would like to focus its attention through the process. Initial thoughts from GDP members on what success would look like included: • <i>"Respectful conversation and disagreement."</i> • <i>"To see consumer preferences expressed throughout the process documented and included in the proposal, regardless of whether they are accepted or not, to give consumers confidence they've been heard."</i> • <i>"Take all the conflicting forces and walk forward in a non-emotional, unpoliticised way."</i> • <i>"Give the AER the confidence to make the decisions they need to make (with confidence they are in customers' interests)."</i>
4. AusNet's network & operating environment	Moyo Tian spoke about AusNet's network and operating environment and invited questions and comments from the panel, which included: • Clarifying questions on the relatively low age of AusNet's network and how tariff classes are determined. • Confirmation that AusNet does not have any grid-connected gas-fired generation. • AusNet confirmed it has many connections to hospitals, that they are often the largest consumer in regional towns. • The panel noted that the Victorian State election is coming up in late November and AusNet took an action based on panel feedback to speak at a future meeting about associated implications. • A suggestion that AusNet and the panel consider AusNet's gas distribution charges in the context of the total gas bill (i.e. including wholesale and retail costs). • It was noted that federal energy policy could also influence the planning context for the GAAR period. The AusNet team agreed to share timelines of relevant consultations with the panel. • It was noted that there are lessons from the recent and ongoing AER gas distribution reviews in ACT, SA and NSW. • Confirmation that billing data suggested the majority of dormant accounts are paying a standing charge. • AusNet shared gas usage trends and observed that the trends align with the data AusNet is seeing on its electricity distribution network, with changes to peaks and overall usage. People appear to be more reliant on electric appliances but many are still using gas appliances on the coldest days.
5. The GAAR process and our	Ben and Kyle spoke to the key steps in the GAAR process and engagement plan and invited discussion on both.

engagement plan

Discussion:

- Confirmation that the GDP will be writing reports at key stages in the process (noting one at the draft proposal stage is optional).
- Confirmation that AusNet sees a role for the GDP in supporting research and engagement design.
- Acknowledgement that engagement for the revised proposal (over the 2027-28 summer break) will be a difficult time to engage customers.
- AusNet outlined who is on their Customer Consultative Committee and shared how this panel was put together.
- A panel member said the role of the panel and the AER need to be made clear upfront – e.g. the panel should be seeking to understand the numbers presented but shouldn't be endorsing them, as assessing the numbers in detail is the AER's role. AusNet and the Chair took an action to put the GDP defining what types of things they will/won't support and the bar for "support" on the agenda at the next meeting.
- Another panel member referenced [the IAP2 spectrum](#), and said they'd like to discuss what level on the IAP2 spectrum the panel will be working at – what commitments AusNet is making to the panel and what level of ownership the panel is open to taking over the plans. AusNet took an action to add this to the next meeting agenda.
- Another member noted that on accelerated depreciation and potentially other topics, it would be great to test customers' views using multiple methods and "triangulate", e.g. via research and engagement.
- A suggestion that AusNet leverage other organisations' insights to support its own wherever opportunities arise. E.g. insights on hardship customers by region from retailers.

6. Activity: GDP meeting logistics

- Agreement that in-person meetings are preferred. All expressed a willingness to attend in-person.
- Acknowledgment that 5-hour meetings are too long and not preferred.
- Agreement that meeting earlier in the day is the GDP's preference.
- The group agreed some members would benefit from attending other engagement activities (e.g. customer workshops, Stakeholder Roundtable) and hear first-hand what people are thinking.
- The group confirmed they would like to do a site visit/s. AusNet took an action to organise one in the near future.
- The group agreed not to document "who said what" in the meeting minutes to enable free conversation, but that they are generally comfortable with meeting summaries being made public.

7&8. Activity: Identifying GDP themes, focus questions and information required

Moyo introduced the five topics AusNet has in mind for the group to focus on, including those previously raised by stakeholders.

Customer service	Tariffs & pricing	Customer & household gas use (demand forecasting)	Network investments, safety and reliability	Future of the network and decarbonisation
• Current service levels and offerings • Customer communications	• Charging for connections, disconnections & abolishment	• Gas usage trends & customer sentiments	• Operating expenditure efficiency • Step change proposals	• Role of gas & gas infrastructure in the energy transition

Customer support & vulnerability programs	- Tariff structures & variation mechanism - Pricing	- Household economics & electrification (5-year) demand forecast scenarios	Asset management strategies, alternatives, and safety / reliability implications	- Renewable gas & innovation (Long-term) demand scenarios - Accelerated depreciation
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Moyo noted that some key themes overlap many of the topics, these themes were:

- Value-for-money and affordability
- Customer needs and preferences
- Service levels and trade-offs

GDP member thoughts included:

- Competing prices between gas and electricity driven by changes to wholesale costs and total bills (not just the networks component).
- How AusNet might consider alternatives to investment including novel approaches where required (e.g. using regulatory sandboxes).

The panel asked if there are topics that AusNet does not want the GDP to cover.

- AusNet confirmed the panel shouldn't be discussing things they aren't well-placed to influence, e.g. cost of capital.
- The panel requested AusNet be up-front about what is "inform", where the panel can influence and what AusNet is not willing to discuss or have the panel influence. AusNet agreed to make this clear in future discussions, noting it will vary for each topic.
- The group agreed the GDP conversations, while acknowledging the longer-term outlook, should focus on AusNet's plans for the next five years.

The table below provides a summary of the discussion areas identified by the GDP break-out groups through their focus questions for each topic.

Customer service	Tariffs & pricing	Customer & household gas use (demand forecasting)	Network investments, safety and reliability	Future of the network and decarbonisation
- Service levels meeting the needs and expectations of different customer groups (reliability vs cost) - Providing support to customers as affordability pressure and electrification increases - Needs and wants for customer service	- Tariff pricing today (inc. zones) - Maintaining affordability and reliability - Tariff structures, including customer perspective on fair and understandable tariff structures - Price cap vs revenue cap vs hybrid	- Impacts of dormant accounts and the effect on demand forecast scenarios - Regional and locational differences on costs, trends, reliability and safety - Technical and financial barriers to electrification (including for industrial customers)	- Balancing risk and cost distribution across historical and future investments - Safety and reliability implications of different asset management decisions	- Different long-term demand forecast scenarios reflecting different rates of change - Options for cost recovery for renewable gas investments (i.e. proponent vs network) - Balancing price impacts and risk between current and future consumers and equity implications of accelerated depreciation

GDP discussion:

- Acknowledgement that demand forecasting can't be "resolved" in one session, and agreement that the GDP be engaged on demand forecasting methodology (which will be a key workstream). AusNet noted the AER has called out networks for not being clear about how demand forecasts are used throughout the proposal, this will be a focus.
- Members noted a customer preference for AusNet to do everything it can to minimise capex. AusNet noted it there is not always a "do nothing" option which is tolerable from a risk perspective, but that credible options to reduce major expenditure will be considered in the process.
- The group agreed with AusNet's suggestion that there are some good discussions to be had about the role of networks in supporting renewable gas markets and the options for network recovery ("who pays?") in each scenario.
- One member noted that criteria for identifying suitable topics for in-depth discussion had been considered at a previous Stakeholder Panel meeting as part of AusNet's Transmission Revenue Reset process. It was suggested that aspects of these criteria may be relevant for the GDP's consideration for their own topics.

The group split back into their break-out groups and identified the information they require to help guide discussion on the key areas identified by the GDP in the previous activity.

AusNet took an action to consolidate the outputs from the two activities to play back to the GDP at the next meeting for agreement to inform future deep dive discussions.

9. The GDP's role in designing engagement activities

This item was deferred to the next GDP meeting due to time constraints.

10. Reference Services Proposal approach

Moyo spoke through the approach AusNet is planning to take to develop the Reference Services Proposal.

Discussion:

- Agreement that the Stakeholder Roundtable is a suitable forum for this discussion.
- The panel confirmed they had different levels of familiarity with the existing tariff structure and asked for an introduction to current structures, incentives, and rationale as part of the discussion. AusNet took this as an action.
- It was suggested that charges for dormant customers be discussed at the Stakeholder Roundtable.
- It was suggested that price vs revenue cap vs hybrid should be discussed at the Stakeholder Roundtable.

11. Open floor, next steps & close

Andrew D spoke to the draft agenda for the next meeting.

Discussion:

- Confirmation that the final decisions for AGN SA and EvoEnergy are due by May. AusNet took an action to include a debrief on these relevant processes at a future GDP meeting.
- AusNet took an action to invite the AEMC to present its [Gas networks in transition](#) directions paper to the GDP following its release in mid-March.

Action items

Action	Assigned to	Status	Due
Allow time at the next GDP meeting to discuss:			
1	AusNet	Not started	Next GDP meeting
• What the GDP will/won't look at supporting, and how support will be defined • Where on the IAP2 spectrum we will be engaging, noting this will vary by topic.			
2	AusNet & Chair	Not started	Next GDP meeting
Consolidate the outputs from the key topics activities and play back to the GDP for agreement to inform future deep dive discussions.			
3	AusNet	Not started	Next GDP meeting
Carry the agenda item on the GDP's role in designing engagement activities to next GDP meeting			
4	AusNet	Not started	Stakeholder Roundtable (April 2026)
AusNet to include charges for dormant customers, price vs revenue vs hybrid cap and the existing tariff structures and incentives in the Stakeholder Roundtable meeting on the Reference Services Proposal			
5	AusNet	Underway	24 Feb 2026
AusNet to schedule future GDP meetings as soon as possible			
Possible future agenda items:			
6	AusNet & Chair	Not started	Ongoing unless marked otherwise
• A site visit/s • A discussion of the implications of the November 2026 state election • Debrief on the AER's Final Decisions for AGN SA and EvoEnergy • AEMC presenting its <i>Gas networks in transition</i> options paper.			