

Agenda & Minutes

Innovation Advisory Committee | Meeting #10

Tuesday 11 February 2025
2.00pm – 3.30pm (1.5 hours)
Microsoft Teams
Chair: Charlotte Eddy, AusNet

Attendees:

Scott McKenry, *Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action*
 Dean Lombard, *Energesis*
 David Bryant, *BSL*
 Jo Witters, *Independent*
 Emma Chessell, *Independent*
 Heather Smith, *Energy and climate change specialist*
 Maxime Di Petta, *Clean Energy Council*
 Nando Ochoa Pizzali, *University of Melbourne*
 Theodora Karastergiou, *Jemena*

Apologies:

Damian Sullivan, *BSL*
 Lara Kruk, *Independent*
 Tom Bakker, *Aurecon*

AusNet representatives:

Charlotte Eddy, *General Manager Strategy and Regulation (Distribution)*
 Ana Erceg, *Manager Grid Evolution*
 Lucy Holder, *Manager Customer Engagement*
 Kenneth Chew, *Lead CER Integration Engineer*
 Asal Ahmadlou, *Future Network Engineer*
 Fin Crantock, *Resilience Project Engineer*
 Luke Ireland, *Graduate Future Network Engineer*

Item	Time	Topic	For	Presenter
	2:00pm (5 mins)	Welcome Incl. responding to actions from meeting #9	Information and endorsement	Charlotte Eddy
1	2:10pm (10 mins)	1. Innovation pipeline Review and update of pipeline	Information & discussion	Ana Erceg
2	2:15pm (30 mins)	2. Electrification Early findings	Collaborate and discussion	Ana Erceg
3	2:45pm (20 mins)	3. LV BESS & Trial Connection Agreement Updates	Information & discussion	Kenneth Chew
4	3:05pm (20 mins)	4. Data-Driven Strategic LV Planning New Project	Information & discussion	Luke Ireland
	3:25pm (5 mins)	Other business and close	Discussion	Charlotte Eddy

Welcome, customer moment & actions

AusNet's Charlotte Eddy opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country, welcomed participants then outlined the meeting purpose and agenda.

Charlotte spoke Members confirmed they were comfortable with the updated purpose and criteria for the IAC, based on the discussion in Meeting #9.

Item 1 | Innovation pipeline – review and update of pipeline

AusNet's Ana Erceg updated members on the innovation pipeline and projects funded by the Demand Management Innovation Allowance. Two areas were called out including Data-Driven Strategic LV Planning and EV Pole Top Charger.

Discussion included:

- The scope of the data-driven strategic LV planning project, and whether it should be broadened to include voltage issues that have been detected proactively by AusNet (and not reported by customers). AusNet clarified that it does not wait for complaints to address voltage issues, but this program of work is specifically looking at sites where interventions were made following a complaint (as opposed to where voltage issues were proactively detected and addressed). Two IAC members expressed support for the project as designed, noting how difficult it is to do this work and that it is a valuable innovation project.

Item 2 | ElectrifiAIRcation

AusNet's Ana Erceg gave the group an update on the ElectrifiAIRcation project, highlighting that work is underway with the delivery this month.

Ana noted scorecard assessments have been completed on several Homes Victoria sites, and AusNet has been working collaboratively with the Department on knowledge sharing noting the Department is planning their own electrification program but that it is several years away and not as far-reaching. The IAC was asked for their thoughts on a co-funding model, such as AusNet funding the appliances and the Department funding upgrades to the fabric of the home e.g. insulation.

Discussion included:

- A member noting the delivery and scheduling of trades can be really difficult. A holistic plan is important first, then divvying up the steps.
- The alternatives to co-funding – AusNet doing all vs the Department doing all. Fairness is a really important consideration.
- The learnings from social housing are really important. Members noted AusNet's program will be very helpful intelligence for government's policy and project planning, given they are planning and undertaking their own electrification work.

Ana spoke through the actual time and costs of delivering the electrification program. She noted it is 2-3 weeks of disruption for many households and although they are being very accommodating, it is significantly more challenging than many expected.

Discussion included:

- AusNet's experience finding quality contractors. One-stop-shop approach is significantly more expensive (~30%), as it includes a project management role. AusNet's performing the project management role to keep costs down on the ElectrifiAIRcation project but Committee members noted that AusNet should make this clear when talking publicly and with government about the costs of electrification, as these costs need to be factored in.

- The scale of the disruption – what are households finding most inconvenient? AusNet said households needing to be around to let tradespeople in/out and to monitor them is generally the biggest inconvenience, and some appliances being taken offline for periods.
- How to make sure we are leveraging insights from other projects and not duplicating. It was acknowledged the quantitative insights are unique – most electrification trials have been qualitative – but it is important to keep looking at and making sure we are extending work that has already been done.
- How the time and cost of electrifying varies by house type. AusNet said all in the trial are freestanding homes or units, but the electrical upgrades (switchboard and wiring) and asbestos are the things that add most to the timeline, especially because they are usually not detected during the scorecard assessment and are detected by tradespeople when attending to do work. Clear access to and within homes to complete the scorecard assessment (so the assessors don't need to do multiple visits) is another one.

Ana noted AusNet's looking to do video interviews, using a partner such as a university, to understand customers' experiences with and perspectives on the electrification. She asked Committee members what they would like to understand:

Suggestions included:

- How do they feel about the value they are getting from the upgrades?
- Would they have paid to do this themselves?
- Do they feel like they're sacrificing much to have an all-electric home?
- How does this project impact their perspectives of electrification / energy more broadly?
- Relationship to cost-of-living
- Insights on specific appliances e.g. split systems. How do they feel about them?
- How was their experience with the tradespeople?
- Were they given adequate education on how to use their new appliances, and what changes were being made?
- Other "hidden" costs/benefits, for example the impact on their health.

Item 3 | LV BESS & trial connection agreement

AusNet's Kenneth Chew provided an update on the LV Bess & Trial Connection Agreement project.

- A) **On pole-top batteries:** He noted challenges engaging with Fire Rescue Victoria on fire safety assessments. Kenneth noted that new requirements and standards coming in are a big challenge in general for these types of projects. For example, the tender process was already completed before the requirements were changed.

He also spoke to the challenges introducing more smarts onto the network, including cybersecurity and integrating new technology with legacy systems.

- B) **On community batteries and a trial connection agreement:** Round 2 of DEECA's Neighbourhood Battery project (NB100) is underway, with AusNet providing letters of support for many projects, and are currently being assessed.

Discussion included:

- Confirming that export and import limits will be dynamic rather than fixed
- Confirming AusNet intends to lease the batteries to retailers, to make the most of value-stacking opportunities.
- How AusNet will define when AusNet and when retailers can "use" the battery. AusNet explained that if the retailer is using it based on the normal pricing signals, they should be behaving in a way that is beneficial to the network (i.e. charging when there is excess solar and discharging when it is helpful for the grid) so the network and retailers' interests will be aligned. AusNet expects intervene will only be needed in abnormal conditions, but these conversations are currently being had with the retailer. AusNet's looking at a more

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flexible model that reduces risk to retailers while delivering benefits to the grid (and customers) to optimise the value.

Item 4 | Data-driven strategic LV planning

AusNet’s Luke Ireland spoke to the rationale and benefits to customers of the new data-driven strategic LV planning project. Luke prompted the IAC for ideas to maximise the value of the project.

Discussion included:

- Whether AusNet is treating the customer like a black box that starts at the meter or a participant in the market, and what role will AusNet (and other DNSPs) be playing in dispatching at the LV sub-station level. AusNet clarified its role is to define the limits and for retailers and aggregators to do the optimising. A member suggested communities might like to do the optimising and dispatch themselves.
- Archetypes and load profiles, and what insights could be gathered by going another layer down. AusNet noted households are out of scope for this work, but that it could be an extension piece.

Other business & close

In other business, it was confirmed that:

- Members are happy moving to 4 meetings per year, allowing for more discussion time particularly as more projects enter the insights collection and analysis phase, and meeting in person in May
- The IAC are keen to make a submission to the AER on AusNet’s EDPR proposal. It was agreed that Dean will coordinate this and contact the IAC members next week. AusNet took an action to circulate the proposal (and relevant sections) to IAC members once published by the AER
- Heather Smith shared with the group that she intends to step down from the IAC, and
- AusNet will re-send calendar invites in an attempt to fix issues with the chat feature.

Action items			
Agreed Action	Assigned to	Status	Due date
IAC to prepare a submission to the AER on innovation in AusNet’s EDPR proposal. Dean to coordinate.	IAC	In progress	May 2025
AusNet to share the relevant sections of the EDPR proposal with the IAC when the documents are published by the AER.	Engagement team	Complete	Circulated with minutes
AusNet to re-send calendar invites in an attempt to fix the issues members are experiencing with the chat.	Engagement team	In Progress	March 2025