

Agenda & Minutes

Innovation Advisory Committee | Meeting #9

Thursday 14 November 2024

10:30am – 12:00 noon (1.5 hours)

Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

Scott McKenry, *Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action*

Damian Sullivan, *BSL*

Dean Lombard, *Energesis*

Jo Witters, *Independent*

Emma Chessell, *Independent*

Heather Smith, *Energy and climate change specialist*

Maxime Di Petta, *Clean Energy Council*

AusNet representatives:

Charlotte Eddy, *General Manager Strategy and Regulation (Distribution)*

Sonja Lekovic, *General Manager Compliance*

Ana Erceg, *Manager Grid Evolution*

Lucy Holder, *Manager Customer Engagement*

Kenneth Chew, *Lead CER Integration Engineer*

Nadia Kettle, *Senior Engagement Specialist*

Fin Crantock, *Resilience Project Engineer*

Asal Ahmadlou, *Future Network Engineer*

Apologies:

Lara Kruk, *Independent*

Theodora Karastergiou, *Jemena*

Tom Bakker, *Aurecon*

Nando Ochoa Pizzali, *University of Melbourne*

Item	Time	Topic	For	Presenter
	10:30am	Welcome , customer moment & actions from meeting #9	Information	Charlotte Eddy
1	10:40pm	Innovation pipeline Review and update of pipeline	Information & discussion	Ana Erceg
2	10:45am	EDPR 2026 – 31 and IAC a) Update on Focus questions b) Finalising Purpose and Criteria	Collaborate and discussion	Sonja Lekovic
3	11.15am	Project updates a) LV Batteries b) NBN Back up Solutions c) GridGuard Trial d) Gippsland Water Batteries e) ElectriFAIRcation	Information & discussion	Kenneth Chew Fin Crantock Asal Ahmadlou
	11:55am	Other business and close	Information & discussion	Lucy Holder

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. The customer moment was an update on the community feedback on the Innovation Fund.

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

- A Committee member referenced the EU industrial innovation spend data. The 2023 Scoreboard lists and analyses both the world's top 2 500 companies and the top 1 000 EU-based companies with the highest R&D investment in 2022. Here is a link for more information: <https://iri.jrc.ec.europa.eu/scoreboard/2023-eu-industrial-rd-investment-scoreboard>

Item 2 | EDPR 2026 – 31 and IAC

a) EDPR Focus questions

AusNet's Sonja Lekovic provided an update on Electricity Distribution Price Review (EDPR) and the key outcomes from the Future Networks Panel workstream. This Panel developed focussed questions to assist with developing the proposal. The answers to the focus questions were shared. A key element of the proposal includes a continuation of the Innovation Fund. The EDPR submissions will be open to the public until Sunday 17 November.

Discussion

- A Committee member on the Future Network Panel commented on the deep engagement involved in answering the focus questions.
- It was clarified the Future Networks workstream was broader than innovation, but the Innovation Fund was an important part. The EDPR Innovation Fund will take an approach to highlight potential projects to test and learn as required. All projects will be included except testing dynamic EV charging.

b) Finalising IAC purpose and criteria

AusNet's Sonja Lekovic presented on the updates to the purpose and criteria of the Innovation Fund made with feedback received on the Padlet board, noting one of the key objectives of today's meeting is to finalise the terms of reference. Sonja noted the IAC will continue in the next regulation period and have more flexibility to engage on project selection and prioritisation, as previously discussed. Sonja encouraged feedback and discussion from the committee to ensure the purpose and criteria can be finalised today.

Discussion

A few Committee members provided positive feedback on the updates. Additionally, Committee members agreed on updates to the new purpose and criteria including:

- adding learning, collaboration and knowledge sharing to the criteria
- giving the IAC a role in selecting, designing and prioritising projects
- how AusNet is building on and leveraging its previous trials and trials others have done (in Australia and overseas)
- ensuring sense of urgency due to rapid evolution and emergence of network challenges e.g. how do we get ahead of this

- adding equitable outcomes in the criteria

Other discussion included:

- The importance of planning the transition of innovation projects to business-as-usual activities, to make sure learnings are embedded BAU funding. AusNet will make refinements based on this feedback to the IAC purpose and criteria to include in the EDPR revised proposal.

Item 3 | Project updates

a) Low Voltage (LV) Batteries

AusNet's Kenneth Chew provided an update on the LV battery trial including project summary, schedule, system architecture and community engagement approach.

Discussion

- Two Committee members said they would like to see more information shared with community energy groups on emission reductions, cost and value stack to help them plan projects. AusNet said it can share ranges for some costs, noting agreements are commercial in confidence.
- A Committee member noted that other distributors are working on pole top battery projects AusNet could learn or build on, and that innovation fund shouldn't be used for studies others have done where the learnings are directly applicable. AusNet agreed but noted all networks have different challenges and set-ups, and it is important to build capability within the business.

b) NBN Back up Solutions

AusNet's Fin Crantock provided an update on the NBN Back up Solutions including project overview, benefits and timelines.

Discussion

- A Committee member said they have had challenges effectively engaging with telecommunications providers, but AusNet noted it has not had any issues.
- A Committee member asked how AusNet selects which tower to focus on, and whether it can share what towers will have the greatest impact on customer outcomes with community groups. AusNet said this trial aims to determine the most feasible locations.
- Clarification was provided that this trial involves supplying backup power systems to telecommunication towers so customers can maintain cellular reception during outages and does not involve improving the resilience of the power supply to customers.

c) GridGuard Trial

This item was not discussed in the meeting due to time constraints.

d) Gippsland Water Batteries

AusNet's Fin Crantock provided an update on the Gippsland Water Batteries project including overview, benefits, delivery requirements and timelines.

Discussion

- No questions were asked for this project.

e) ElectriFAIRcation

AusNet's Asal Ahmadlou provided an update on the ElectriFAIRcation project including progress update and project learnings.

Discussion

- A number of Committee members noted the learnings are similar to upgrade projects completed over the last 20 years. There was a discussion on how AusNet embeds what it has learnt across the organisation, and AusNet spoke through things that have already been done including sharing insights across the business and with the Board, and presenting at conferences like All Energy.
- A Committee member called out the fantastic presentation at All Energy and said there was a lot of interest in the room.
- A Committee member suggested AusNet complete upgrades in the local Community House first, and AusNet confirmed this is happening, with an induction cooktop upgrade approved for the Community House last week.
- A Committee member suggested giving customers an opportunity to borrow and trial an induction cooktop before committing.
- A Committee member asked how AusNet is managing cost expenditure considering the staged upgrades in the community. AusNet is taking a tailored approach to consider customer needs.
- Clarified thermal upgrades have been part of the trial including insulation.
- On the number of private rentals involved in the trial, it was confirmed there is one community housing provider involved and one private renter in discussions at this stage.
- Interest from the Committee in the findings of the next stage of the project – understanding the impact of electrification on the electricity network.

Other business & close

AusNet's Lucy Holder closed the meeting and provided the following updates:

- meetings for 2025 will be scheduled soon
- IAC members will receive an email when Expressions of Interest open for AusNet's Community Consultative Committee (CCC)
- submissions for the EDPR draft proposal will close on 17 November.

Action items

Agreed Action	Assigned to	Status	Due date
AusNet to update purpose and criteria based on feedback received today	Reg Team	In progress	End of Jan 2025
AusNet will email when CCC expressions of interest open	Engagement team	On hold	End of Nov
AusNet to set up meetings for 2025	Engagement team	In Progress	End of 2024