

Agenda & Minutes

Innovation Advisory Committee | Meeting #15

18 May 2026

Attendees:

Blake Edwards, *Totally Renewable Yackandandah*
 David Bryant, *Brotherhood of St Laurence*
 Dean Lombard, *Energesis*
 Emma Chessell, *Independent*
 Genevieve Hart, *CitiPower/Powercor/UE*
 Jo Witters, *Independent*
 Megan Fisher, *EnergyLab*
 Sharon MacDonnell, *Eastern Alliance for Greenhouse Action*
 Simon Helps, *Totally Renewable Phillip Island*

Apologies:

Isabella Powell, *Jemena*
 Lara Kruk, *Independent*
 Lauren Fetherston, *CitiPower/Powercor/UE*
 Nando Ochoa Pizzali, *University of Melbourne*

AusNet representatives:

Charlotte Eddy, *General Manager Strategy and Regulation (Distribution)*
 Ana Erceg, *Manager, Grid Evolution*
 Asal Ahmadi, *Future Network Engineer*
 Vince Frandina, *Lead Electrification Engineer*
 Shuyi Li, *Lead Engineer Future Networks*
 Kenneth Chew, *Lead CER Integration Engineer*
 Kyle Olsen, *Senior Engagement Specialist*
 Fin Crantock, *Resilience Project Engineer*
 Nanditha Sirigiri, *Network Planning Engineer*
 Rafi Muneer, *CER Integration Engineer*
 George Elliot, *Grid Flexibility Engineer*

Item	Time	Topic	Presenter
	9:30am (10 mins)	Welcome Incl. responding to actions from meeting #14 and introduction of new members	Kyle Olsen
1	9:40am (10 mins)	Innovation and DMIA pipeline Overview and update for each project	Ana Erceg
2	9:50am (40 mins)	ElectriFAIRcation project update	Asal Ahmadi
3	10:30am (10 mins)	Using flexible limits to manage EV load impact	Fin Crantock
4	10:40am (10 mins)	Low-Voltage strategic planning	Nanditha Sirigiri
	10:55am (5 mins)	Other business and close	Kyle Olsen

Welcome & open

AusNet's Kyle Olsen opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country, welcomed participants then outlined the meeting purpose and agenda. Kyle also welcomed new members Blake, Sharon, Megan and Simon and asked each to briefly introduce themselves.

Item 1 | Innovation and DMA pipeline – Overview and update of pipeline

AusNet's Ana Erceg updated members on the innovation pipeline, and projects funded by the Demand Management Innovation Allowance (DMA). Ana noted that we are now coming to the end of the EDPR 2021-26 period and most projects have been completed or soon to be completed. Formal learnings and recommendations are being consolidated to inform future projects, and these learnings will be shared with the IAC over the coming months after they have been refined and finalised. Ana also noted that a future IAC workshop is being planned to focus on new innovation projects and initiatives for the 2026-31 EDPR period.

Discussion included:

- A member asked about battery performance under cold conditions, and the cause for the failure of the battery. It was noted that the battery was unable to charge due to cold conditions. A software update was initially tested as a solution before a replacement was required. AusNet noted this as an example of how product and project performance is not fully understood until tested in real-world network conditions.
- Ana noted that over the next six months, completed innovation projects are being transitioned into BAU operations, as they are no longer classified as innovation. As a result, AusNet will not continue delivering the same types of projects in the new regulatory period.

Item 2 | ElectriFAIRcation project update

AusNet's Asal Ahmadlou provided an update on the ElectriFAIRcation project, outlining key learnings from both the project and independent research conducted by the University of Melbourne, learnings shared included:

- Customers considering electrification want to see it in practice and feel confident in the outcome before committing to the process. To improve visibility and customer confidence, AusNet has introduced signage at participating homes to capture attention and prompt local interest and conversation.
- Community-based engagement approaches, such as coffee vans and free vouchers, were successful in bringing local interest and participation to the project.
- A significant barrier for residents was recognising that electrification involves more than simply replacing appliances, with many unsure where to even begin.
- The transition to electrification requires a deep focus on the customer experience, not just the technical change of switching appliances.
- If people don't trust the program they won't engage, trust and local relationships is a big part of starting the conversation.
- Building trust and utilising local relationships were critical to encouraging engagement with the program.
- Guidance and hands-on support were important, as households face a complex process involving paperwork, bookings, and timelines, which was often overwhelming for residents. Access to support to manage this process was often a deciding factor in participation.
- Cost and perceived complexity were identified as the main barriers to participation.
- Following completion, residents reported positive experiences, including improved comfort, warmth, and a greater sense of safety in their homes.

Discussion included:

- An IAC member involved in the University of Melbourne research team emphasised the importance of community engagement, noting that being in the community and talking to the people was critical to building trust in the program. The breadth of organisations involved in supporting and delivering the project also contributed to its credibility.
- The IAC noted there were new learnings that emerged during the project that had not initially been considered, such as assessing whether a roof could support the weight of solar panels. These learnings are useful to understand that every household is different and has different needs that must be considered for any future large-scale programs.
- An IAC member asked about behaviour change outcomes as a result of this process. AusNet noted that there were changes in behaviour after electrification including how residents cook and heat or cool their homes. Prior to electrification, project managers reviewed energy bills with residents to build understanding of usage and bills. This was accompanied with tips on best energy use practices to help reduce usage. A key insight was that relatively simple actions can also help households better understand and reduce their energy consumption.
- It was noted that residents are required to notify AusNet of any significant changes that may affect their energy usage or bills, including changes to their energy retailer.

Item 3 | Using flexible limits to manage EV load impacts

AusNet's Fin Crantock provided an overview of a research project done in collaboration with Monash University and RACE2030. The main objective of this research project was to assess flexible import limits to manage EV load on the network and assess how other DNSP's are managing this issue.

Discussion included:

- General discussion on the technical and social considerations of implementing flexible limits.
- The IAC noted that this is a complex issue and there are interesting and important discussions to be had with regulators and customers. They felt it's appropriate to start this conversation now due to the expected growth of EV uptake across the network compounding this issue.
- The IAC noted that DNSPs have historically seen little impact on customer behaviour from price signals and suggested that a more technical approach may be required to help address this emerging issue. One member also suggested the potential role of broader engagement and communication to help explain the issue to customers and influence behaviour change.
- It was noted that building a social licence will be important for implementing flexible limits, with clear communication of the customer benefits and associated trade-offs.

Item 4 | Low voltage strategic planning

AusNet's Nanditha Sirigiri provided an overview of the low voltage strategic planning project being delivered in collaboration with the University of Melbourne. The project focuses on using real-time data to model the low voltage network, and improve visibility on how customers are using energy on the network. This enhances AusNet's ability to plan for increasing uptake of solar PV, electric vehicles, and electrification, enabling earlier identification of emerging voltage constraints and more proactive network planning.

Discussion included:

- An IAC member asked about the impact of household and community batteries on the network. AusNet confirmed that it currently doesn't have the real-time data of household batteries and these aren't included in the modelling, however community batteries are currently being included in the modelling.

- It was noted that increasing solar PV uptake is contributing to over-voltage issues, while growing EV demand is contributing to under-voltage issues on the low voltage network, with both constraints occurring in the same locations.

Other business & close

Kyle Olsen gave a brief outline of the plan for the remaining IAC meetings for 2026. Kyle then closed the meeting.