



Customer Consultative and Specialist Committees Terms of Reference

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Contents

1.	Overview	4
1.1.	Structure	4
2.	CCC and specialist committee arrangements	6
2.1.	Ausgrid responsibilities	6
2.2.	Member responsibilities	6
2.3.	CCC Sitting fees and additional allowances	7
3.	Customer Consultative Committee	8
4.	Specialist committees	9
4.1.	Pricing Working Group.....	9
4.2.	Network Innovation Advisory Committee	10
4.3.	Customer Communications Working Group.....	11
4.4.	Climate Adaptation and Resilience Expert panel.....	12

1. Overview

Ausgrid's vision is for our communities to have the power in a resilient, affordable and sustainable future. Customers are at the centre of Ausgrid's strategy. Our success will involve customers in both delivering on this strategy and driving the future direction of our network.

Ausgrid is committed to incorporating customers in its business operations by:

- Building investment decision and outcome metrics that are customer focused.
- Giving customers a meaningful and key advisory role in decision making across our projects and programs.
- Developing key policy and regulatory framework submissions with customers and customer representatives.
- Considering customers and communities in creating long term social value and mitigating social impacts in the delivery of products and services.
- Presenting a transparent performance scorecard to customers and being held to our promises.

1.1. Structure

Ausgrid's Customer Consultative Committee structure, as represented in Figure 1 below, is designed to build trust with internal and external stakeholders and provide independent views to Ausgrid. It consists of:

- Customer Consultative Committee (**CCC**) – Ausgrid's overarching body for engaging with customer advocates.

Specialist committees of the CCC will include:

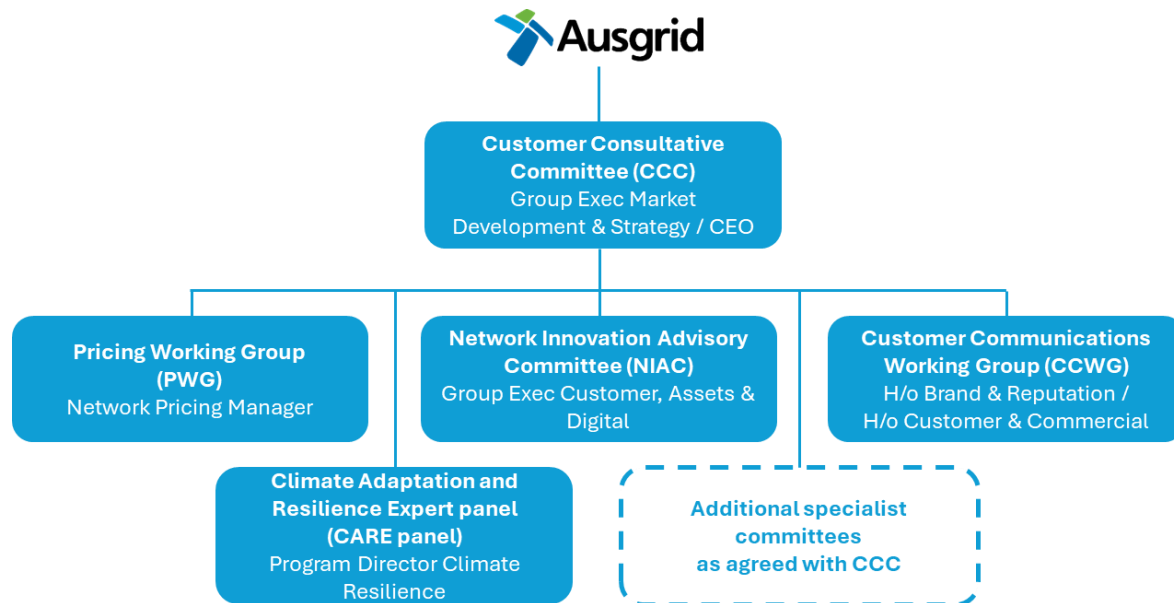
- Pricing Working Group (**PWG**) – focused on the technical aspects of tariff reform, Ausgrid's tariff structures and general pricing issues.
- Network Innovation Advisory Committee (**NIAC**) – provides advice on prioritisation and evaluation of projects funded by Ausgrid's Network Innovation Program.
- Customer Communications Working Group (**CCWG**) – provides advice on and identifies need for communication materials and strategies for all customer groups.
- Climate Adaptation and Resilience Expert panel (**CARE panel**) provides advice on delivery of Ausgrid's Climate Resilience Program and future climate resilience planning opportunities.
- Other specialist committees as agreed with the CCC.

Each specialist committee will have a minimum of one CCC member who will facilitate provision of updates and recommendations of the specialist committee to the CCC.

Members will be appointed to a committee for a term of two years.

Membership appointment and term of engagement will apply to either an individual or an organisation who nominates an individual.

Fig 1. Ausgrid Customer Consultative Committee governance structure including specialist committees.



2. CCC and specialist committee arrangements

2.1. Ausgrid responsibilities

Ausgrid will:

- Work within the Terms of Reference.
- Provide a draft agenda for formal meetings three weeks before CCC meetings and provide the opportunity for CCC members to propose agenda items
- Distribute final meeting papers at least 5 business days prior to formal meetings.
- Provide a meeting Chair and other resources as required e.g. SharePoint site.
- Be responsive and provide requested information in a timely way to allow the committees to perform their roles effectively.
- Encourage all committee members to present their views, alternatives, ideas and solutions to customer challenges and respect alternative perspectives, input and advice.
- Ensure CCC and specialist committees' advice and recommendations are communicated internally.
- Invite external and internal Subject Matter Experts (**SMEs**) to attend specialist committees as relevant.
- Where appropriate, give written feedback on suggestions and ideas made by committees, explaining how each contributed to the decision-making process or reasons they did not.
- Publish committee outcomes and presentations on the Ausgrid website, subject to confidentiality.
- Facilitate observers as attendees, such as staff from regulatory, government or policy bodies. Observers may be invited either on an ongoing basis or to attend meetings that discuss certain topics as relevant.
- Provide clarity on the level of influence CCC members can have on any agenda item, utilising the IAP2 framework to do so.
- Adhere to expectations on consumer engagement in the [AER's Better Reset Handbook](#).

Each committee Chair is responsible for:

- Managing the conduct of meetings in a way that encourages respectful collaboration, challenge and a diversity of viewpoints to be presented and heard, including meeting pace.
- Ensuring communication and documentation relating to the committee is timely, transparent and promotes effective participation of committee members.
- Ensuring key committee activities are incorporated into CCC quarterly reporting.
- Facilitating proper information flow between committees as required.

2.2. Member responsibilities

Each committee member will:

- Actively participate at each meeting or forum including, but not limited to, providing relevant insights from the industry or their respective organisation (if applicable).

- Inform Ausgrid in advance if they wish to delegate their meeting attendance or invite additional representatives to committee meetings and / or forums. Any variation to committee attendees, including delegation and inclusion of observers will be approved at Ausgrid's sole discretion.
- Share specialist committee updates with the CCC on an as-needs-basis.
- Declare any conflicts of interest that may impact on their ability to engage with Ausgrid impartially under these Terms of Reference.
- Provide reasonable notice of withdrawal from CCC so Ausgrid can make alternative arrangements.
- Sign an Ausgrid confidentiality agreement to enable confidential material to be presented to CCC members.

2.3. CCC Sitting fees and additional allowances

Ausgrid offers remuneration for Customer Consultative Committee members' reasonable time and costs per the below schedule of payments.

- **Flat rate:** \$250/hour (+GST) for CCC meeting attendance and where additional hourly compensation is offered below¹.
- **Meeting preparation:** two hours for each formal CCC meeting at flat rate.
- **Reasonable travel costs** where Ausgrid requests face to face meeting attendance:
 - Reimbursement of reasonable travel costs².
 - Travel allowance of up to two hours per meeting.
- **Additional allowance for CCC:**
 - One-hour additional compensation is available for CCC members who wish to meet independently ahead of formal CCC meetings at flat rate.
 - Report writing as required to document independent views as part of policy and/or regulatory submissions at flat rate.

We note that not all committee members wish or are able to be paid for their attendance.

Ausgrid will remunerate additional specialist committee members in their capacity as technical experts at a pre-agreed rate and in line with Ausgrid procurement policies. Specialist committee fee arrangements will be agreed with relevant committee members outside of this Terms of Reference.

¹ Flat rate will be adjusted annually to reflect Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase at 30 June.

² Out of pocket expenses will be approved by Ausgrid upon submission of relevant receipts. Where possible, Ausgrid will arrange and prepay flights and accommodation (if required) on behalf of committee members.

3. Customer Consultative Committee

Purpose

The Customer Consultative Committee (**CCC**) provides a forum for committee members to advocate for all Ausgrid customers by:

- Contributing to tangible improvements for customers, long-term customer impact and sustainable customer benefits.
- Identifying customer opportunities as part of the energy transition and Ausgrid's utilisation of existing assets, strategic priorities and future regulatory process.
- Holding Ausgrid to account for delivery on customer regulatory commitments³.
- Developing key policy and regulatory framework submissions with Ausgrid or independently.
- Documenting the independent views of customer advocates to submit to broader industry consultation as required.

Engagement principles and behaviours:

- Respect each member's role equally to create an open dialogue between the CCC and Ausgrid.
- Support Ausgrid's [engagement principles](#) and [engagement and regulatory frameworks](#).

Ausgrid will:

- Engage early to identify customer impact, considerations, preferences and with time to genuinely participate in a meaningful way.
- Establish additional specialist committees as required with agreement from CCC.
- Provide regular and transparent reporting on customer outcomes and regulatory commitments.

Meetings

The CCC will convene a minimum of four meetings per annum:

- Two of these will be held in person at an Ausgrid office.
- Two will be held primarily or exclusively online⁴.

Ausgrid's Group Executive Market Development & Strategy will serve as Chair for the formal CCC meetings. A CEO update will be included in each formal meeting.

From time to time, the CCC Chair may delegate to an alternate Ausgrid Executive to execute the Chair's responsibilities.

Additional attendees, such as staff from regulatory, government or policy bodies may be invited as observers, either on an ongoing basis or to attend meetings that discuss certain topics as relevant.

³ Customer commitments include, but are not limited to, those outlined in the *RCP – Submission on Ausgrid's revised proposal and draft decision 2024-29 – January 2024*.

⁴ Can be amended with agreement from the CCC.

4. Specialist committees

4.1. Pricing Working Group

Purpose

The purpose of the Pricing Working Group (**PWG**) is to provide a forum for Ausgrid and CCC members and external SMEs to collaborate on pricing principles, tariff structures, policies and strategies that will support the long-term interests of all Ausgrid's customers.

The PWG will:

- Discuss the role of network tariffs in delivering positive customer outcomes and supporting the industry's transition to a renewable energy future.
- Assist in the development of future Tariff Structure Statements and input into ongoing tariff design and pricing policy.
- Identify tariff reform and tariff structures that promote an efficient, flexible and fair use of the network.
- Engage customer and stakeholders on tariff options, impacts and preferences.
- Support complementary measures to tariff reform.
- Identify tariffs that support trial projects and programs.
- Discuss the components of Ausgrid's network prices including transmission charges and jurisdictional schemes.
- Discuss apportionment of jurisdictional schemes across tariff charging components.

Meetings

The PWG will meet as needed at Ausgrid's offices or online. Meetings will be chaired by the Ausgrid Pricing Manager.

4.2. Network Innovation Advisory Committee

Purpose

The Network Advisory Committee (**NIAC**) provides a forum for customer advocates to collaborate with Ausgrid on innovation investment and the transformation of our network.

The NIAC will have a key role in the management of the Network Innovation Program for the 2024-29 Regulatory Period including:

- Reviewing and engaging on scenarios to anticipate future network requirements and approaches to managing uncertainty and associated risks.
- Continuing the oversight of Network innovation expenditure as outlined in the 2024-29 Regulatory Proposal including:
 - Network innovation program funding (forecast at approx. \$20 million).
 - Network innovation research direction and engagements.
- Providing advice on prioritisation of innovation projects.
- Proposing additional projects for Ausgrid and the committee's consideration.
- Collaborating with other networks where appropriate opportunities are identified.
- Making recommendations in accordance with the below guiding principles for innovation.

Ausgrid will share information with the NIAC on DMIA and DMIS projects that complement programs in the Network Innovation program as well as other Ausgrid commercial innovation projects for their information.

Guiding principles for innovation

All innovation projects must be in the long-term interests of consumers with respect to price, quality, safety, reliability, sustainability and security of supply. The NIAC will consider projects in accordance with the following principles which may be updated from time to time:

Prioritisation principles

- Accelerates decarbonisation
- Improves resilience
- Lowers costs for customers
- Improves fairness
- Improves safety for employees & the community

Meetings

The NIAC will meet at least three times per year at Ausgrid's offices or online. Meetings will be chaired by Executive General Manager, Customer, Assets & Digital.

4.3. Customer Communications Working Group

Purpose

The Customer Communications Working Group (**CCWG**) provides a forum for Ausgrid and customer advocates to collaborate on communication strategies and material that will support the long-term interests of all customers.

The CCWG will:

- Provide advice on communication materials to be inclusive of all customers including CALD and vulnerable customers.
- Provide advice on communication materials and strategies in identifying customer benefits.
- Collaborate with Ausgrid on the development of potential future customer metrics.
- Improve customer communications as part of the energy transition recognising different customer personas.
- Hold Ausgrid to account for delivery on regulatory commitments⁵ relating to customer communications.
- Be involved in the development of BAU communication strategies and materials.
- Collaborate with other DNSPs on developing communications that support the policy positions of distributors in a meaningful way for customers.
- Identify opportunities to improve customer communications including amplification of messaging and stakeholder engagement.

Meetings

The CCWG will meet as needed at Ausgrid's offices or online. Meetings will be chaired by the Ausgrid Head of Brand and Reputation or Head of Customer and Commercial.

⁵ Customer commitments include, but are not limited to, those outlined in the *RCP – Submission on Ausgrid's revised proposal and draft decision 2024-29 – January 2024*.

4.4. Climate Adaptation and Resilience Expert panel

Purpose

The Climate Adaptation and Resilience Expert panel (**CARE panel**) provides a forum for Ausgrid, resilience subject matter experts and customer advocates to provide expertise, technical advice and customer advocacy advice on the delivery of the Ausgrid Climate Resilience Program and future climate resilience planning opportunities that will support the long-term interests of customers.

The CARE panel will have a key role in:

- Advising on delivery of the 2024-29 Climate Resilience Program including:
 - supporting the development of metrics to measure Program success and demonstrate return on investment
 - evaluating prioritisation and delivery of resilience projects against agreed Program and customer objectives to ensure intended benefits are realised
 - ensuring community engagement feedback is considered in the assessment of investment effectiveness
 - drawing out key insights in a multi-disciplinary context to review and assess investment effectiveness and suggest adaptive planning responses if required
 - responsibility for accountability measures under the Resilience Framework
- Enabling Ausgrid to realise opportunities in planning for future regulatory periods by:
 - leveraging expertise, industry insights and collaborations to identify and promote opportunities for influencing resilience policy and regulatory reform
 - integrating innovative and up to date resilience insights and science in planning discussions to ensure they are informed by a credible knowledge and evidence base
 - Reviewing and engaging on scenarios to anticipate future network requirements and approaches to managing uncertainty and associated risks.

Meetings

The CARE panel will meet at least three times a year at Ausgrid's offices or online. Members will be appointed to the CARE panel for a term of two years. Meetings will be chaired by the Program Director Climate Resilience.

Remuneration

Members will be remunerated with a sitting fee for formal CARE panel meetings at an agreed rate.

It is also intended that CARE Panel members be available periodically for advice on ad hoc resilience matters as they arise (to be remunerated as appropriate according to agreed terms).

4.5. Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (HCC REZ) Regulatory Panel

Purpose

The Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone Regulatory panel (HCC REZ Reg panel) provides a forum for Ausgrid to obtain a customer's perspective in the development of Ausgrid's HCC REZ regulatory proposal. The panel will focus on specific aspects of Ausgrid's regulatory submission, with the understanding that the scope of this panel is constrained by the HCC REZ proposal process (including the Infrastructure Planner and Consumer Trustee performing their functions and responsibilities under the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act (EII Act) and related legislation).

The HCC REZ Reg panel will have a role in:

- pre-lodgement engagement with the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) and advising on key areas of interest for consumers in accordance with the [AER's Better Resets Handbook](#) to the extent possible given the time constraints.
- reviewing and providing feedback on certain elements of Ausgrid's HCC REZ regulatory proposal to the AER.
- considering the allocation of risk between Ausgrid and customers, including contingency and Adjustment Events which are appropriate for a substantial construction project and required to enable the HCC REZ to be delivered.
- demonstrating that the perspectives of consumers have been considered in Ausgrid's approach to the HCC REZ.

In addition, the HCC REZ reg panel will:

- • provide a short (around 5 pages) independent report to the AER identifying key issues that the AER should consider when reviewing Ausgrid's regulatory proposal.

Meetings

The HCC REZ Reg panel will meet monthly or as required at Ausgrid's offices or online. Meetings will be chaired by Ausgrid's Head of Regulation.

Remuneration

Members will be remunerated for HCC REZ Reg panel meetings at an agreed rate.

Membership on this panel will be for the duration of the period until the regulatory proposal is submitted, anticipated to occur by June 2025 or earlier