



AUSGRID REGULATORY RESET 2024 - 2029

VOICE OF THE COMMUNITY PANEL

Process Report

February - June 2022

LIMITATIONS OF USE

This report has been prepared by MosaicLab on behalf of and for the exclusive use of Ausgrid.

The sole purpose of this report is to provide a report of the methodology and process undertaken for the Ausgrid Voice of Community Panel.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services set out by the Voice of Community Panel project. Ausgrid can choose to share and distribute this report as they see fit. MosaicLab accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for or in respect of any use of or reliance upon this report by any third party.

MosaicLab is a team of engagement practitioners and facilitators based in Victoria. We work with government agencies, community groups, industry and commercial organisations and support them to have meaningful conversations that lead to action. Our processes bring diverse people together to solve complex problems and make a positive difference to decision-making.

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REMIT

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community.

The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

INTRODUCTION

Throughout 2021 - 2022, Ausgrid embarked upon a series of engagement activities to support the submission of their 2024 - 2029 Plan to the Australian Energy Regulator. This plan in turn informs Ausgrid's Regulatory Proposal.

The engagement process involved multiple phases, including the Voice of the Community Panel phase which began in February and concluded in June 2022. This report details this deliberative phase, where a panel of customers considered the following remit:

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

The project was initially activated in September 2021 by the Ausgrid team and bd infrastructure (with support from Gauge Consulting). bd infrastructure then brought in MosaicLab and Gauge Consulting to design and deliver the Voice of the Community Panel deliberative process.

The Voice of the Community Panel consisted of a randomly selected, diverse group of customers across three of Ausgrid's regions; greater Sydney, Central Coast and the Hunter Valley. The panel included people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and a range of ages. They came together to respond to the remit and consider a range of information on topics including energy distribution (Ausgrid's role in the supply chain), how Ausgrid operates, future planning and costs, and service levels that customers can expect. The panel met online and in person and were provided opportunities to listen to different customer perspectives and ideas, and hear from internal and external experts.

The panel agreed on 10 final recommendations that will be used to inform Ausgrid's 2024 - 2029 Plan and Regulatory Proposal. Ausgrid have committed to use the recommendations to the maximum extent possible and will clearly articulate where the panel's decisions have influenced the development of their final proposal. Where a decision or recommendation of the panel is not incorporated, Ausgrid will clearly explain why.

In total, the panel had 45 active participants. 60 people were originally randomly selected for the panel; however throughout the course of the panel a number of people were unable to participate (this is normal and expected, and generally due to changes in circumstance such as job or family arrangements), leaving a total of 45 participants.

Participants came together over eight sessions, commencing with the meet and greet via Zoom on 22 February 2022, and participated in seven panel days in the following four months. An additional short briefing was added after day one to support new panel members from the Central Coast region. Three of the panel days were run as separate regional sessions, and three full days were in person. At the conclusion of their final session on Saturday 4 June 2022, the panel handed over their report to the Ausgrid CEO Richard Gross and Chair of the Board Helen Nugent.

The report, authored by the panel, contained:

- a brief introduction
- a definition of fairness
- 10 recommendations that captured the title, description and rationale
- one minority report that outlined some further commentary that select members of the panel felt should be noted.

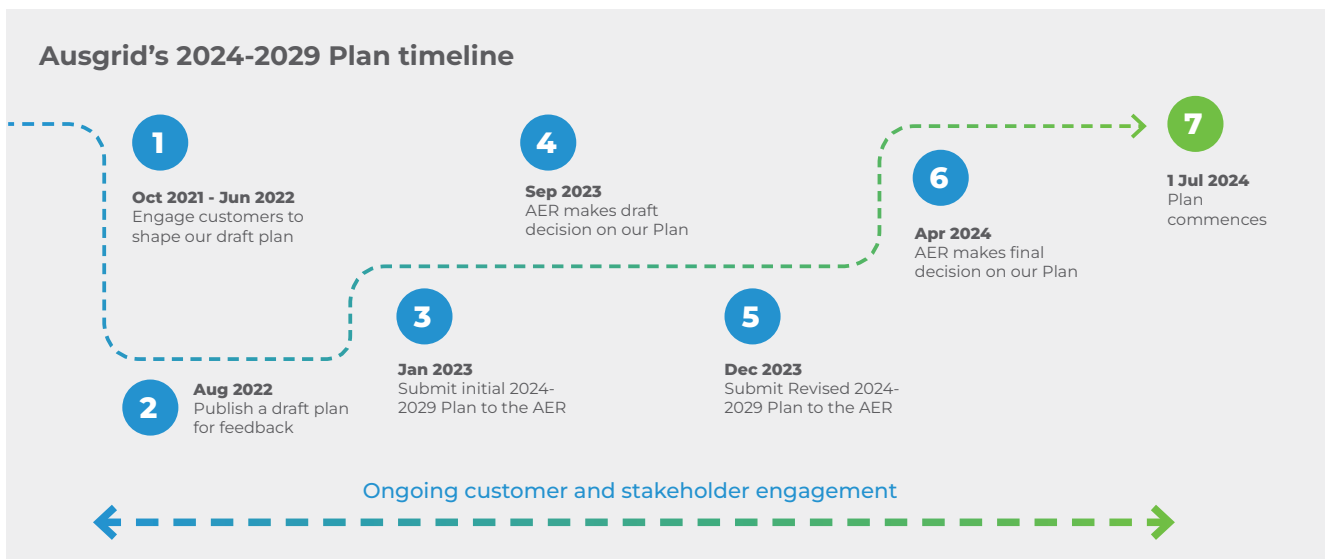
This report outlines the Voice of the Community Panel process. It summarises the design and implementation of the deliberative engagement process and includes the results of pre and post-deliberation surveys undertaken to collate feedback from panel members.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

CONTEXT

Every five years, Ausgrid (NSW's largest energy distributor) is required to submit a five-year plan to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). AER is the independent regulator of the wholesale electricity and gas markets in Australia. The purpose of this submission is to set out the services Ausgrid will provide for customers and the funding required to deliver those services. This in turn determines the cost of Ausgrid's services to customers (or the price Ausgrid charges retailers).

The AER is interested in how Ausgrid's 2024 – 2029 plan reflects the views of customers and how it meets customers long-term interests. The plan includes capital expenditure, operational expenditure, incentive schemes and tariffs.



Prior to commencing the Voice of Community Panel process, Ausgrid worked with bd infrastructure to engage small business customers and residential customers in vulnerable circumstances. Ausgrid also held discussions with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) businesses and households, and communities impacted by disruptive events. In total these conversations included 33 organisations, 30 small business customers and 47 residential customers. The types and number of discussions held are listed below.

DISCUSSIONS WITH

- People who have experienced vulnerable circumstances
- Small businesses
- Culturally and linguistically diverse people and communities
- People and communities who have experienced natural disasters or disruptive events
- **LIVED EXPERIENCE:** 18 organisations and 11 residential customers.
- **SMALL BUSINESS:** nine organisations and six small business owners.
- **CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE:** 10 business owners and 18 CALD residential customers.
- **NATURAL DISASTERS:** Six organisations, three small business owners and 12 residential customers.

Summaries of what these customers told Ausgrid were provided to the Voice of Community Panel in the early stages of the deliberative process, and are included as Appendix 1: bd infrastructure prepared 'letter' to the panel.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY PANEL?

A community panel is a name for a deliberative forum. These processes work on the premise that people can deliver smart, long-term decisions which earn public trust if they are given enough information and time to weigh up the pros and cons and consider the trade-offs associated with an issue.

Deliberation is built around several core principles which are listed below.

INFLUENTIAL

Deliberation requires decision makers to give weight to and implement the outcomes to the greatest extent possible. This forms a foundation for building trust with your community.

Deliberation isn't about asking people their opinion and then disregarding their views, which significantly reduces trust and results in poorly supported outcomes.



DELIBERATIVE

Deliberation goes beyond conversation and dialogue. It requires those deliberating to weigh up options and come to judgement on a problem.

Deliberation isn't about people giving you a wish list or a list of ideas. It results in clear direction for organisation decision makers.



INFORMATIVE

Deliberation requires that people have detailed, in-depth, and balanced information before they come to judgement. This includes hearing different perspectives, including the views of experts and interest groups.

Deliberation isn't about asking people for uninformed views. It allows you as organisation decision makers to know that the recommendations being provided to you are based on evidence and have considered all sides of the issue.





REPRESENTATIVE

Deliberation requires that the deliberating group is representative of the whole community. The group is usually selected using an independently conducted, random, stratified process.

Deliberation isn't about allowing anyone to turn up and people to 'self-select', like the participants at a public meeting. It allows you as decision makers to have a high level of comfort, because you know what everyday people who are broadly representative of your customers or community think is reasonable (once they are informed). This is more valuable than knowing only what interest groups and highly articulate and invested people are lobbying for.

TIME

Deliberation requires that the deliberating group is given sufficient time to become informed about the issues, weigh up options and come to judgement. Long form processes are usually 4-6 full days. An online (equivalent) process or a short process can be held over 2-3 days, if you are scaling down.

Deliberation isn't about holding a short workshop or evening meeting.



BLANK PAGE REPORT

Deliberation requires that participants respond to the remit by writing their own report. Starting with a blank page, they refine and agree on their final recommendations, then present their report directly to decision makers for consideration.

Deliberation isn't about providing options or a draft report. The organisation doesn't gather feedback on their own ideas. Instead, the organisation hears directly from their customers or community without any interpretation from consultants or staff.

CLEAR REMIT

Deliberation is about the deliberating group responding to a remit - or primary question - that goes to the core of the issue, shares the dilemma, and promotes open discussion. The remit question is clear and written in plain English.

Deliberation isn't about responding to easy issues. It allows the organisation to receive solutions to complex problems.



TRANSPARENT

Deliberation is a public process that seeks to build trust in democratic decision making and as such all aspects should be made public, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Members of the public should be able to observe the deliberating group in action and the report of the group should be made public immediately after it is handed to the key decision maker. All information considered by the group should be considered public and be on the project website. Communication activities such as sharing videos of the process and interviews with participants can also help to increase transparency.

Deliberation isn't about working behind closed doors. It allows the public to see that it has been a fair process.



INDEPENDENT FACILITATION

Deliberation is designed and facilitated by independent, professional facilitators with experience in deliberation. Facilitation enables individuals to work through a designed set of activities (conversations) to collectively and productively produce an outcome (recommendations). Facilitators ensure that all group members are given equal opportunity to participate.

Deliberation isn't about the group being led to a pre-determined result.



INCLUSIVE

Deliberation requires that barriers to participation are removed so that anyone feels they could participate in a deliberation. Some barriers are easily managed, for example, paying people an honorarium to cover the costs of their participation (travel, childcare etc). Also, support can be provided to people living with disabilities and meetings can be held in accessible venues. Other barriers, such as people not having the time or considering that this is, (ie. 'not for them') are harder to remove.

Deliberation isn't about excluding people and it ensures that the organisation hears from a true cross-section of its community.



Expert facilitation is a vital element to foster vibrant deliberative dialogue and a supportive, open environment. The table below summarises some of the key roles of facilitators in a deliberative process.



Design a process that is participatory and engaging, enables the group to meet their remit, and builds in key elements. These elements include relationship building, critical thinking, information sharing and group agreement.



Encourage participants to express themselves freely.



Encourage active participation from all group members.



Protect process integrity, transparency and independence.



Ensure no one individual dominates.



Keep the group moving through the process at an adequate pace in order to deliver a report during the time allocated.

AUSGRID VOICE OF COMMUNITY PANEL

OVERVIEW

This deliberative engagement process saw 45 randomly selected participants from Ausgrids customer base in Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter Valley come together to consider the question:

Ausgrid manages the poles and wires in your community.

The energy industry is at a critical point, with a growing focus on a low carbon future and more extreme weather impacting the grid. Alongside that, customer needs and aspirations are rapidly changing. How we understand and respond to these issues has important implications for electricity bills and the reliability of electricity supply.

How should Ausgrid look to the future while being fair to customers today?

The panel met via Zoom initially and then came together in person for three full Saturday sessions. Panellists shared their own stories and experiences, discussed different ideas and perspectives, and worked collaboratively using information from a range of sources including speakers, a background report and Ausgrid response documents (which responded to the panel's outputs and questions). The panel was asked to consider the information and work with each other to write a report that responded to their remit.

The panel focussed on developing a set of recommendations for Ausgrid's 2024 - 2029 Plan and regulatory reset. Each of these recommendations included:

- a title heading
- a description
- the rationale/reasoning behind the recommendation.

The recommendations were worked on across four of the panel days through a series of conversations and activities. All panel members had the opportunity to write and/or review and refine each recommendation. In the final decision making process on Day seven, 41 panel members agreed by supermajority (80% of the panellists or more) that they would accept all 10 of the recommendations.

One minority report was submitted by a small group of panel members encouraging Ausgrid to take further action on cyber security protection.

The process involved:



45 **randomly selected** participants that descriptively matched the Ausgrid customer base



a **clear question (remit)** to focus the deliberations



access to a broad range of **information** from a variety of sources relevant to the remit



conversations and Q&A with Ausgrid and panel identified **key speakers** (see information inputs section)



44 hours per person of **discussion and deliberations** across nine panel sessions (five evening sessions including the briefings, four full days)



support from facilitators experienced in delivering deliberative processes



an online portal that provided a central place for participants to access relevant information inputs as well as a discussion forum



group agreement, where a super majority (80% or more of the panel said they could live with it or better) was needed for a recommendation to be included in the final report



the development of **10 final recommendations** and **1 minority report**.

ROLES

Several groups were involved in this project, as outlined in the table below.

Panel members	<i>Randomly selected community members</i>	To work together to respond to a remit and provide recommendations to Ausgrid's plan.
Ausgrid	<i>Host</i>	To support the process, provide expertise and knowledge as requested by the panel, observe the process, answer specific questions directed to them, and respond to the panel's final report.
MosaicLab facilitators	<i>Independent facilitators</i>	To provide a supportive, inclusive and productive space that enabled panel members to deliberate, respond to their remit and make recommendations within the time available. To provide support as needed, to ensure panel members could participate in sessions.
Gauge Consulting	<i>Independent facilitator</i>	To provide a supportive, inclusive and productive space that enabled panel members to deliberate, respond to their remit and make recommendations within the time available. To provide support as needed, to ensure panel members could participate in sessions.
Sortition Foundation	<i>Independent recruiters</i>	To manage the recruitment process (including random selection and stratification) and to ensure it was fair and unbiased.
Expert speakers	<i>Content experts</i>	To provide expert knowledge into the process and answer questions from the panel members.
Observers	<i>Stakeholders and representatives of the host organisation</i>	To observe the panel deliberations, increase transparency of the process and follow the observer 'code of conduct'.
bd infrastructure	<i>Consultants overseeing the engagement process</i>	To oversee the entire engagement process and undertake the wider engagement process.



RECRUITMENT

Sortition Foundation managed the recruitment process for the panel via a random, stratified selection process. This ensured the selection of panellists was conducted independently of Ausgrid and the facilitation team.

An expressions of interest (EOI) period was conducted in November 2021 – January 2022 and respondents were asked to nominate their interest in the panel.

Sortition Foundation sent 24,000 invitations to randomly selected addresses across the Ausgrid network areas in the Hunter Valley, Newcastle, Central Coast and Greater Sydney. Everyone aged 16 years or over living or working at an address that received an invitation was invited to register interest, except for:

- current Ausgrid staff
- current Ausgrid board members.

The people who registered their interest were placed in a 'pool' which was randomly stratified by Sortition Foundation to select the final panel. This included randomly selecting 20 from the Hunter region, 20 from Central Coast and 20 from Greater Sydney to fulfill stratification goals.

Stratified selection against stratification goals ensured that the final panel selected was descriptively representative of the demographics of the overall service area population (i.e. forming a 'mini-public' of citizens). Stratification goals were based on demographic statistics for people aged 18 years and over in the municipality, using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data.

The stratification goals for this process were based on:

- location (address)
- home-owner / renters
- solar or no solar
- age range
- gender.

Sortition Foundation used a digital stratification tool for the random stratification step, which limited human intervention in the selection process, adding further independence to the process.

Due to a need to ensure a good sample from the Central Coast region, a secondary selection process was undertaken. This regional area proved difficult in terms of getting adequate representation. Residents from this region were randomly selected from the EOI pool to match the demographics of, and replace, participants from that area who had been selected but withdrawn from the process.

60 people were initially recruited by Sortition Foundation to the Voice of the Community Panel. It is normal to over-recruit for a deliberation panel, as it is usual for numbers to reduce during the process for a range of reasons. Some of the 60 people selected were unable to commit to the process or dates as planned as their circumstances had changed since registering their interest, hence why the active panel members reduced to 45 people during the process. No-one left the panel process due to misgivings with the process, but instead due to other time commitments or life changes.



Ausgrid

About our
Community
Panel
participants

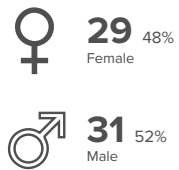
TARGET

60
attendees

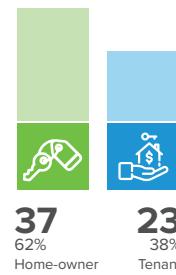
FINAL

45
attendees

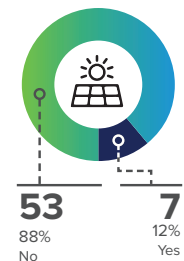
GENDER



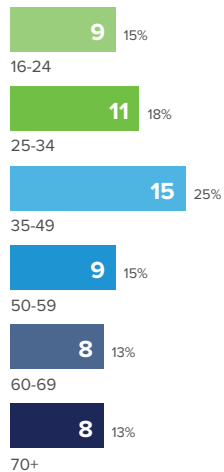
OWN/RENT



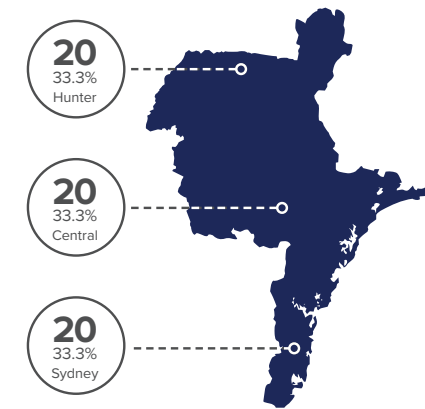
SOLAR POWER



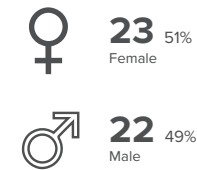
AGE



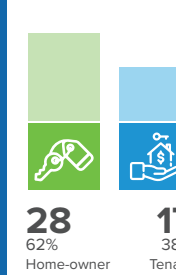
GEOGRAPHY



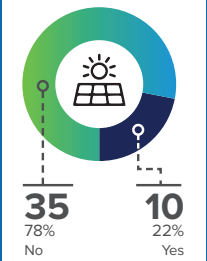
GENDER



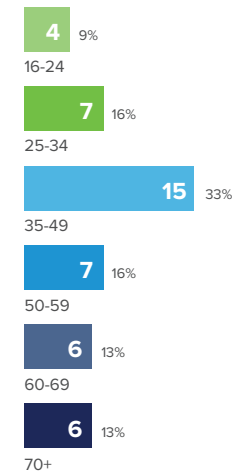
OWN/RENT



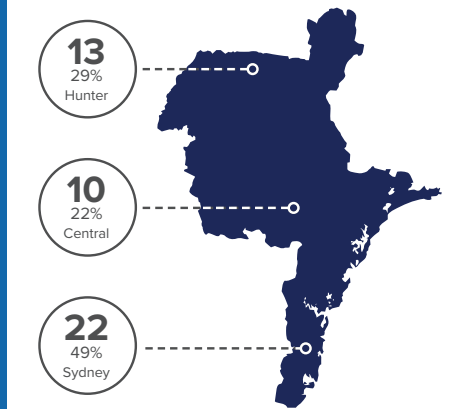
SOLAR POWER



AGE



GEOGRAPHY



PROCESS ROADMAP

The roadmap below provides an overview of the Voice of Community Panel process.

Meet and Greet 6-9pm	Day 1 9am-5pm	Additional Briefing - Central Coast		Day 2 6-9pm	Day 3 6-9pm	Day 4 9am-5pm	Day 5 9am-5pm	Day 6 6-9pm	Day 7 9am-5pm
Tues, Feb 22	Sat, Feb 27			March 15,16,17	March 22,23,24	Sat, April 30	Sat, May 14	May 24, 25, 26	Sat, June 4
An opportunity to connect, share concerns and clarify role, process and journey. Establish working together agreements.	To hear from Ausgrid's speakers and unpack the wider engagement report and request regional speakers.			To hear from regional speakers.	To unpack insights further from a regional perspective, deliberate around the themed issues.	To share insights together, further deliberation and dialogue around the themes and drafting initial ideas.	To receive a light touch Ausgrid and consumer response to drafted ideas, redrafting of ideas into stronger draft recommendations.	To sense-check the draft recommendations at a regional level and review.	Final Ausgrid response to drafted recommendations, finalise recommendations via a walkthrough of the final report, and handover to Ausgrid.
Full panel online	Full panel online			Regional online	Regional online	Full panel in-person	Full panel in-person	Regional online	Full panel in-person

DETAILED PROCESS TIMELINE



MEET AND GREET

22 February 2022 | 6pm – 9pm | 45 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Formal welcome and introduction from Helen Nugent, Ausgrid Board Chair.
- Learning about how the panel will operate (make decisions).
- Introduction to the context of this project and challenges for the panel to consider when looking at energy distribution – Rob Amphlett Lewis, Chief Customer Officer, Ausgrid.
- Overview of information inputs (inc. background report, panel handbook and online portal).
- Safety moment: Indoor electrical safety from Ausgrid.
- Understanding how to access the panel's online portal.
- Opportunity to become acquainted with fellow panel members.
- Opportunity to ask questions of Ausgrid.
- Setting agreements about how the panel work together.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to register on the online portal, say hello and introduce themselves. They read background information provided and completed a photo consent form and pre-deliberation survey.



PANEL DAY 1

Sunday 27 February | 9am – 5pm | 46 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Welcome to Country, Uncle Allan Murray.
- Learning about critical thinking.
- Overview of the electricity system and its context.
- Hearing from and questions for Ausgrid.
- Safety moment: video from Ausgrid safety reps.
- Delving into the background information.
- Speed dialogue with 12 guest speakers (curated by Ausgrid to bring a diverse set of views).
- Panel identifies their information gaps and speakers they want to hear from in regional groupings.

Online task between sessions:

Read answers to questions from Meet & Greet session and Panel Day 1.



EXTRA BRIEFING – CENTRAL COAST

Wednesday 9 March | 6 – 8.30pm | 6 participants | Online

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Formal welcome and introduction from Helen Nugent, Ausgrid Board Chair (video).
- Refining agreements about how the panel work together.
- Learning about how the panel will operate (make decisions).
- Introduction to the context of this project and challenges for the panel to consider when looking at energy distribution – Rob Amphlett Lewis, Chief Customer Officer, Ausgrid.
- Overview of information inputs (inc. background report, panel handbook and online portal).
- Opportunity to become acquainted with fellow panel members.



PANEL DAY 2

Tuesday 15, Wednesday 16 & Thursday 17 March | 6 – 9pm | Online

Participants: Hunter 13, Central Coast 11, Sydney 22

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Opportunity to get to know fellow regional panel members.
- Safety moment: Rap about zap.
- Speed dialogue with panel selected regional speakers.
- Discussion about insights and remaining information gaps.

Online task between sessions:

Read insights from Day 2 and consider “What is important for your regional context?”



PANEL DAY 3

Tuesday 22, Wednesday 23, Thursday 24 March | 6 – 9pm | Online

Participants: Hunter 12, Central Coast 9, Sydney 25

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: spot the hazard.
- Panel-led conversations on the topics and issues that are standing out to them.
- Continuing to create connections and understanding of the task through discussions on the remit and specific challenges.
- Panel-led matching of insights to the big challenges to be addressed in the remit.

Online task between sessions:

Read information gaps answered by Ausgrid.



PANEL DAY 4

Saturday 30 April | 9am – 5pm | 42 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Panel consideration and discussion of insights from all regional areas.
- Safety moment: safety equipment table in the room.
- Continuing to discuss the remit identifying and interrogating specifically what is hard in addressing it.
- Brainstorm of initial ideas to address remit.
- Drafting of initial recommendations and definition of fairness.
- Access to Ausgrid representatives who can speak to the costs and bill impacts of ideas.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to complete a 'levels of comfort' survey on initial draft recommendations and definition of fairness.

The initial, draft recommendations were shared with Ausgrid and stakeholder cohorts previously engaged with Ausgrid's process. Ausgrid prepared a response to the recommendations summarising what they understood the Panel to mean and things Ausgrid was wondering about. These were shared with the panel prior to Day 5.



PANEL DAY 5

Saturday 14 May | 9 – 5pm | 38 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: quiz.
- Presentation by Ausgrid of light response to draft recommendations.
- Panel consideration of 'levels of comfort' survey response, Ausgrid response and stakeholder reflections.
- Brainstorm around additions to recommendations and definition of fairness.
- Re-drafting definition and recommendations.
- 'Levels of comfort' survey conducted.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members were asked to complete a 'levels of comfort' survey on draft recommendations and definition of fairness. Results were shared with the panel prior to Day 6. Draft recommendations and definition were shared with Ausgrid for response prior to Day 7.



DAY 6

Tuesday 24, Wednesday 25, Thursday 26 May | Online

Participants: Hunter 11, Central Coast 9, Sydney 19 participants

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: Can't get no traction video.
- Discussion of unique, regional insights in relation to energy distribution.
- Reflection and discussion of the panel 'levels of comfort' survey.
- Deep-dive into specific trade-offs and discussion around clarity for recommendations where Ausgrid was unclear on meaning/intent.
- Capturing changes to recommendations from a regional perspective.

Online task between sessions:

Panel members provided Ausgrid response document for review prior to Day 7.



DAY 7

Saturday 4 June | 9 – 5pm | 41 participants | Face-to-face

Ausgrid, MosaicLab & Gauge Consulting

- Safety moment: panellist top safety advice.
- Presentation by Ausgrid on response to draft recommendations.
- Questions and answers with Ausgrid.
- In small groups panel members worked through feedback and regional insights and raised any clarifications needed with the panel.
- Ausgrid staff were available to support the panel to understand the impact of their recommendation on the customer bill as they reviewed and refined their recommendations.
- The panel made their final decision on their recommendations, definition of fairness and introduction.
- The panel finished their report and presented it to Ausgrid.
- Final reflections and closing circle.

INFORMATION INPUTS

The panel considered a wide variety of information inputs from a variety of different sources.

KEY INPUT	DESCRIPTION		
BACKGROUND REPORT	Prepared by Ausgrid to outline core information in relation to the challenges being discussed and the panel's remit. The document aimed to overview key contextual information and challenges, dilemmas and opportunities for the future of Ausgrid.		
Q&AS WITH AUSGRID REPRESENTATIVES	Ausgrid project representatives spoke to the panel about their remit, the process and the core issues being considered. The panel could also request that an Ausgrid staff member answer questions during panel sessions if needed.		
LETTER TO THE PANEL FROM BD INFRASTRUCTURE	bd infrastructure prepared a summary of prior customer engagement and customer recommendations passed on to Ausgrid.		
PRESENTATIONS	<p>Presentations were made to the panel by the following Ausgrid staff:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> <p><i>Day 1 – Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation</p> <p><i>Extra Briefing- Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Kate Hawke Customer Engagement Manager</p> <p><i>Day 4 – fact checker and number crunchers available</i> Fiona McAnally Regulatory Analytics Manager Mark Ragusa Head of Asset Risk and Performance</p> </td> <td> <p><i>Day 5 – Ausgrid light response</i> Shannon Moffitt Regulatory Strategy Manager Jess Hui Director Strategic Projects</p> <p><i>Day 7 – Ausgrid response</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation</p> <p><i>Day 7 – number crunchers available</i> Junayd Hollis Executive General Manager – Asset Management</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><i>Day 1 – Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation</p> <p><i>Extra Briefing- Ausgrid's role and the electricity network</i> Kate Hawke Customer Engagement Manager</p> <p><i>Day 4 – fact checker and number crunchers available</i> Fiona McAnally Regulatory Analytics Manager Mark Ragusa Head of Asset Risk and Performance</p>	<p><i>Day 5 – Ausgrid light response</i> Shannon Moffitt Regulatory Strategy Manager Jess Hui Director Strategic Projects</p> <p><i>Day 7 – Ausgrid response</i> Alex Mcpherson Head of Regulation</p> <p><i>Day 7 – number crunchers available</i> Junayd Hollis Executive General Manager – Asset Management</p>
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PANEL HANDBOOK	A handbook was prepared by Ausgrid with information about the panel task and logistics.		
AUSGRID ONLINE PORTAL	Panel members were able to access an online portal hosted by Ausgrid 'yoursay' engagement platform in between sessions to stay in touch with one another, access information, and ask questions.		
BILL READY RECKONER	The bill ready reckoner was designed to help panel members understand a range of revenue requirements and impact on an average bill of different customer types for Ausgrid. It was provided as an editable excel sheet as well as a static document.		
PARTICIPANT PACKS	<p>Ahead of the jury, participants received an online pack containing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom cheat sheet. • Guide to working online. <p>They were also provided an opportunity to participate in a technical support session before the Meet and Greet.</p>		

SPEAKERS

Across the nine sessions there were two opportunities for speakers to discuss ideas with the panel members.

DAY 1 – EXPERT SPEAKERS

PERSPECTIVE	SPEAKER NAME	ORGANISATION AND ROLE
Ausgrid network	Fatima Bazzi	Ausgrid, Head of Portfolio Planning & Insights
Ausgrid business	Fiona McAnally	Ausgrid, Regulatory Analytics Manager
Regulator – Reset process	Adam Young	Australian Energy Regulator (AER), Assistant Director Distribution
Advocates - the role of the RCP - recommendations for focus areas for the panel	Mike Swanston	Reset Customer Panel (RCP), The Customer Advocate
Government policy - the Net Zero Roadmap	Sophia Vincent	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), Director of Energy Consumer Policy
Retailer relationship and interactions with networks	Travis Worstelling	Energy Australia, Regulatory Affairs Lead
Net zero and the impacts for networks	Dr John Gardner	CSIRO, Senior Research Scientist
Resilience, the impacts of climate change and implications for networks	Dor Son Tan	Energy Networks Australia (ENA), General Manager Networks (Acting)
Electric vehicles and considerations for networks	Ross De Rango	Electric Vehicle Council, Head of Energy and Infrastructure
Incentive schemes - the work AusNet did to design a customer service incentive scheme	Tony Robinson	RCP, Independent Chair of the RCP
Vulnerable customers and the experiences and perspectives the panel should consider	Gavin Dufty	RCP, GM Policy and Research St Vincent de Paul
Small business perspectives the panel should consider	Angela Vithoukas	Small Business Association, Creative Director & Executive Producer

DAY 2 – PANEL NOMINATED SPEAKERS

SYDNEY SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
Adam Young from AER who can talk about AusGrid getting funds from Government	Adam Young	Adam Young Assistant Director Australian Energy Regulator
Specialist on community batteries in metro (not from AusGrid) from overseas where this has been done - pro's, con's, practicalities, challenges, costs for implementation (e.g. rate of return)	We reached out to ANU, who have recently done interesting work in this space with Yarra Valley and Citipower / Powercor. When ANU hadn't responded we followed up directly with Citipower, who recommended Matthew, as a front runner in this space. Whilst Matthew isn't Metro or overseas, he is independent of Ausgrid and from a different region.	Matthew Charles Jones Founder Totally Renewable Yackandandah.
DER best practice from overseas - Dr Sara Fuller (panellist's contact)	Dr Sara Fuller	Dr Sara Fuller Associate Professor at Macquarie University
State/Federal Government members regarding planned policy and legislative effects on the future of the grid and individual tax	Gabrielle Upton: Parliamentary Secretary for the NSW Premier	Gabrielle Upton: could not attend at last minute.
Local council Yvette Andrews (e.g. Strata or rental representative) - are they looking at community DER initiatives etc.?	Yvette Andrews	Yvette Andrews Manager, Strategic Community Consultation at City of Sydney.

CENTRAL COAST SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
An expert with practical experience setting up this technology re: trials on northern beaches and Liverpool (understands the technical and cost viability)	Jonathan Dore	Jonathan Dore Distribution system operator services lead at AusGrid
CSIRO for impact of environmental conditions on Ausgrid assets	Dr John Gardner	Dr John Gardner Senior research scientist at CSIRO
Central Coast Council staff member re: central coast specific perspective around the energy issues and planning for the region (CEO or person heading development area)	Lynda Hurst (Central Coast Council) who recommended Jared Philips	Jared Philips Section manager, Centres planning & urban design, Central Coast Council
Not for profit organisation representatives	Rhiannon Cook	Rhiannon Cook Manager, policy and advocacy at St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW)
A speaker from another country with similar population spread and who had successfully and recently implemented new technology to improve their grid.	Reached out to contacts in Germany and at SSEN in the UK, but unable to secure an International speaker. Sara was recommended by a fellow panellist.	Dr Sarah Fuller Associate professor at Macquarie University

HUNTER SESSION

PANEL ASKED FOR	AUSGRID WENT TO	SPEAKER WAS
<p>Researcher from University of Newcastle (environmental scientist or engineer for example). Also could be from Tighsville TAFE</p>	<p>Newcastle University's Dr In-Young Yeo (on leave) recommended Dr Allen who we have not been able to get a response from. Newcastle TAFE co-ordinator didn't respond. Stuart, while not based in an educational institution is an experienced climate scientist.</p>	<p>Stuart Browning Risk Frontiers' atmospheric scientist and climate risk specialist.</p>
<p>Project manager from the Community Battery at Lake Macquarie</p>	<p>Alida Jansen van Vuuren</p>	<p>Alida Jansen van Vuuren Distribution System Operator Manager at AusGrid. Alida is responsible for the delivery of Community Battery trials at AGD.</p>
<p>Battery Science specialist on the various types of options we have. not just Tesla, but tesla could work.</p>	<p>Approached Dr Marnie Shaw from ANU has worked with Citipower in this area but was not able to get a response. Citipower recommended Matt as an advocate of these systems with a real community perspective.</p>	<p>Matthew Charles Jones Founder Totally Renewable Yackandandah.</p>
<p>Salvos/Vinnies to talk about the socio/economic disadvantages</p>	<p>Gavin Dufty, recommended Rhiannon Cook from St Vinnie's NSW, she is not available on the day - but will attend tomorrow's session and you will be able to see notes from that session. Rhiannon recommended Helen as the Deputy Ombudsman.</p>	<p>Helen Ford Deputy Ombudsman Energy & Water</p>
<p>Engineer - remote management Matthew Jolliffe (Wallsend) Ausgrid Senior Distribution Planner</p>	<p>Matthew Jolliffe</p>	<p>Matthew Jolliffe Senior Distribution Planner at AusGrid</p>

WHAT THE PANEL ACHIEVED

Responding to the remit, the panel delivered or achieved the following:

- One definition of fairness.
- 10 recommendations.
- Each recommendation received 80% or above approval from the panel.
- One minority report.

Ausgrid has promised to use the Voice of Community Panel's recommendations to the greatest extent possible when preparing their 2024 – 2029 Plan and Regulatory Proposal (according to the collaborate level of engagement in the International Association of Public Participation engagement spectrum).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following 10 recommendations were written and decided by the Ausgrid Voice of the Community Panel:

1. Advocate and lobby for reform to energy regulations to improve service to customers.
2. Incentivise the adoption of cost-effective renewable energy, balancing the speed and uptake of technologies, while leading by example.
3. Enhanced community engagement and communication.
4. Visibility of Ausgrid costs to customers.
5. Maintain and improve current emergency procedures.
6. Ausgrid to collaborate on research & innovation on emerging technologies and best practices.
7. Executing collaborative innovation and research.
8. Investing in capital expenditure (Capex) to reduce future operational expenditure (Opex).
9. Influence customer behaviour with a flexible two-way pricing mechanism in order to optimise electricity supply and demand, balancing time of use, time of feed-in, and reliability.
10. Review minimum level of reliability of supply.

To read the panel's final report, including a full description of each recommendation, go to the Ausgrid website

<https://ausgrid.engagementhub.com.au/ausgridengagementhubcomauhouseholds>

PANEL MEMBER FEEDBACK

Panel members were invited to complete a survey at two points in the process:

- After the meet and greet session (52 of the participants responded to the pre-deliberation survey).
- After panel completion (43 of the participants responded to the post-deliberation survey).

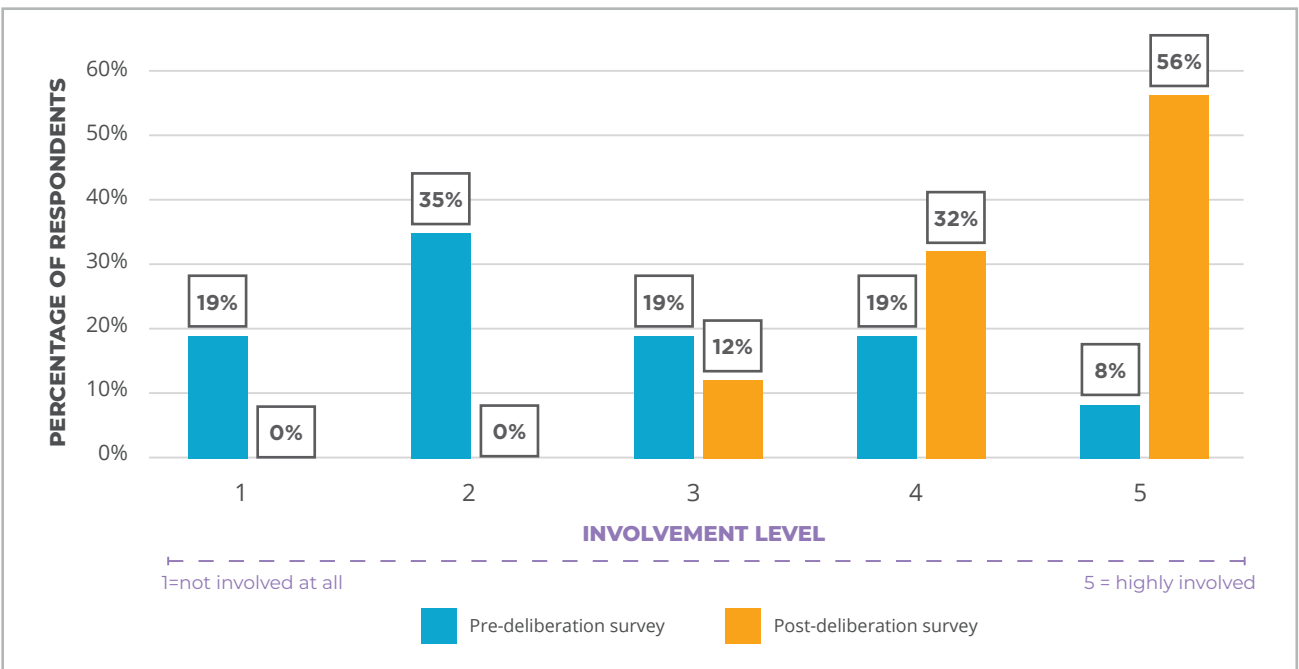
Feedback received has been summarised in the sections below.

INVOLVEMENT IN CIVIC AFFAIRS

The panel members that responded said they were much more likely to participate in civic activities (i.e. get involved in government decisions that affect them) after being involved in the panel process.

At the beginning of the process, 54% of the group either were not involved in civic activities in the past or had had very little involvement and 27% said they had been involved or very involved in the past. By the end of the process, 88% said they thought they would be involved or highly involved in government decisions that affected them in future. This is a **61-percentage point increase** or a **225% growth** in the number of participants who said they would be involved or highly involved in civic affairs.

PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How involved are you currently when it comes to government/authority decisions that affect you?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	Now you have had this experience, how involved might you be in the future when it comes to government/authority decisions that affect you?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not involved at all and 5=highly involved



INFLUENCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Two pre-deliberation questions were asked to understand the level of confidence the panel members had in influencing decision making before commencing the process.

Pre-deliberation question A: Panel members were asked how confident they had been in the past that community input would influence Ausgrid's decisions. At the start of the process, 48% said they were very doubtful and doubtful that community input would influence Ausgrid's decisions in the past. 12% said they were confident or very confident.

PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION A	In the past, how confident have you been that community input will influence this organisation's decisions?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident

Pre-deliberation question B: The panel members were then asked to rate their level of confidence in Ausgrid implementing the work of the panel. 35% responded that they were confident or very confident, and 10% were doubtful or very doubtful.

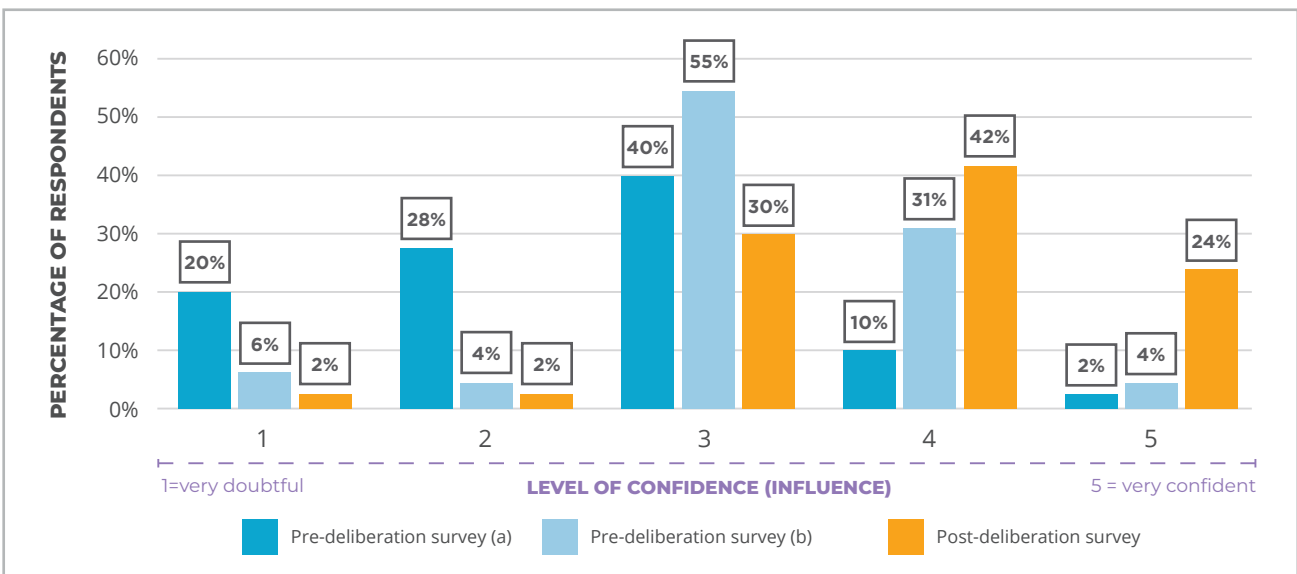
PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION B	How confident are you that your recommendations on this current issue will be implemented by Ausgrid?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident

Post-deliberation question: Following the panel process, 66% of panellists were very confident or confident that the work of the panel would be implemented and only 4% were very doubtful or very doubtful.

This represents a **53-percentage point increase** or **442% growth** in the number of participants who were confident or very confident when compared to pre-deliberation question A (past confidence in community influence over Ausgrid's decisions).

It also represents a **30-percentage point increase** or **86% growth** when compared with the response to pre-deliberation question B (confidence in Ausgrid implementing the panel's recommendations).

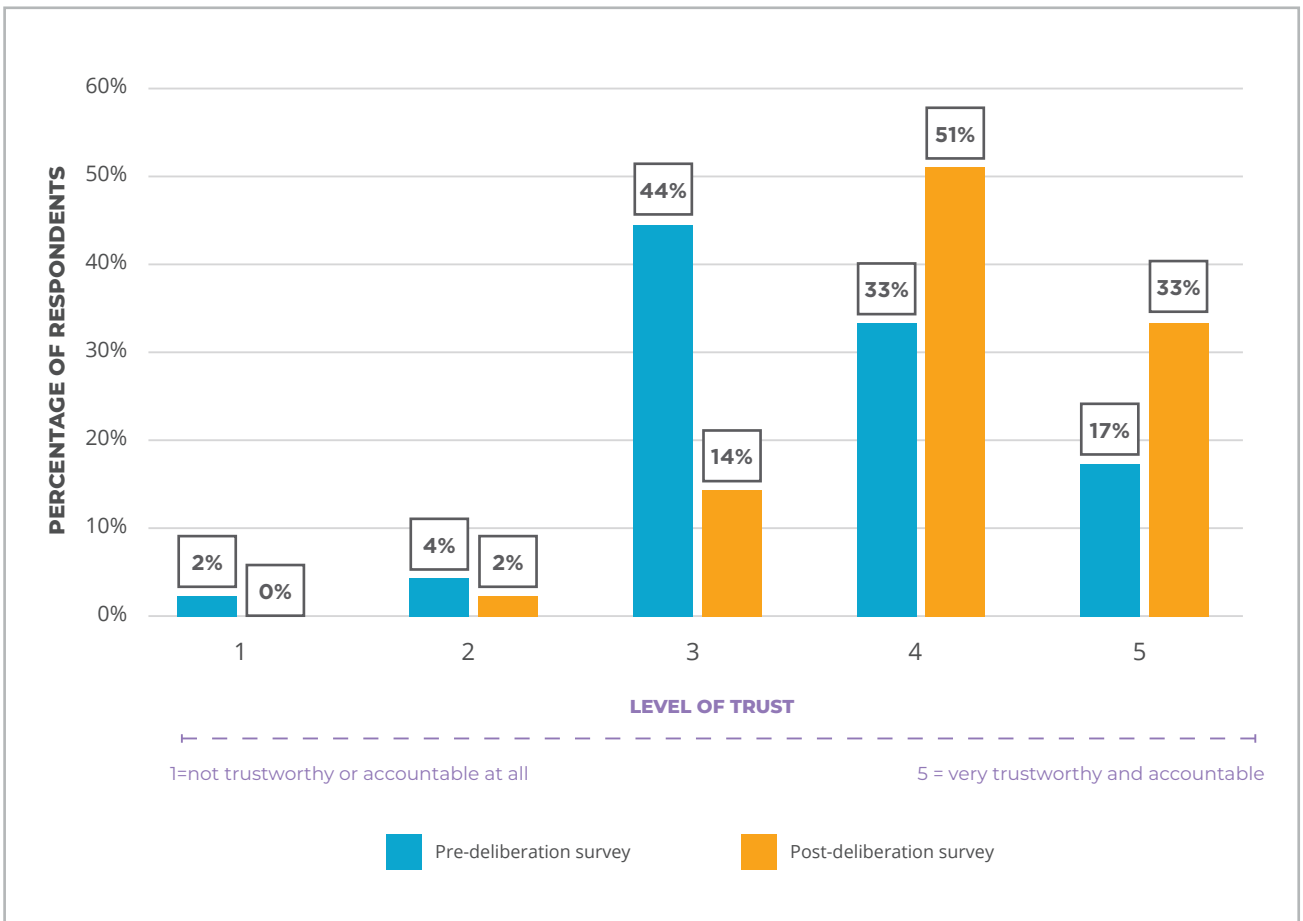
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	Now that you have been through the process, how confident are you that your recommendations will be implemented by Ausgrid?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=very doubtful at all and 5=very confident



TRUST

Overall, the panel’s level of trust in Ausgrid improved by the end of the deliberative process. 83% of panel members felt that Ausgrid was very trustworthy and accountable or trustworthy and accountable by the completion of the process, compared with 50% at the commencement of deliberations. This is a **33-percentage point increase** or **66% growth** in the number of participants who said they they trusted Ausgrid.

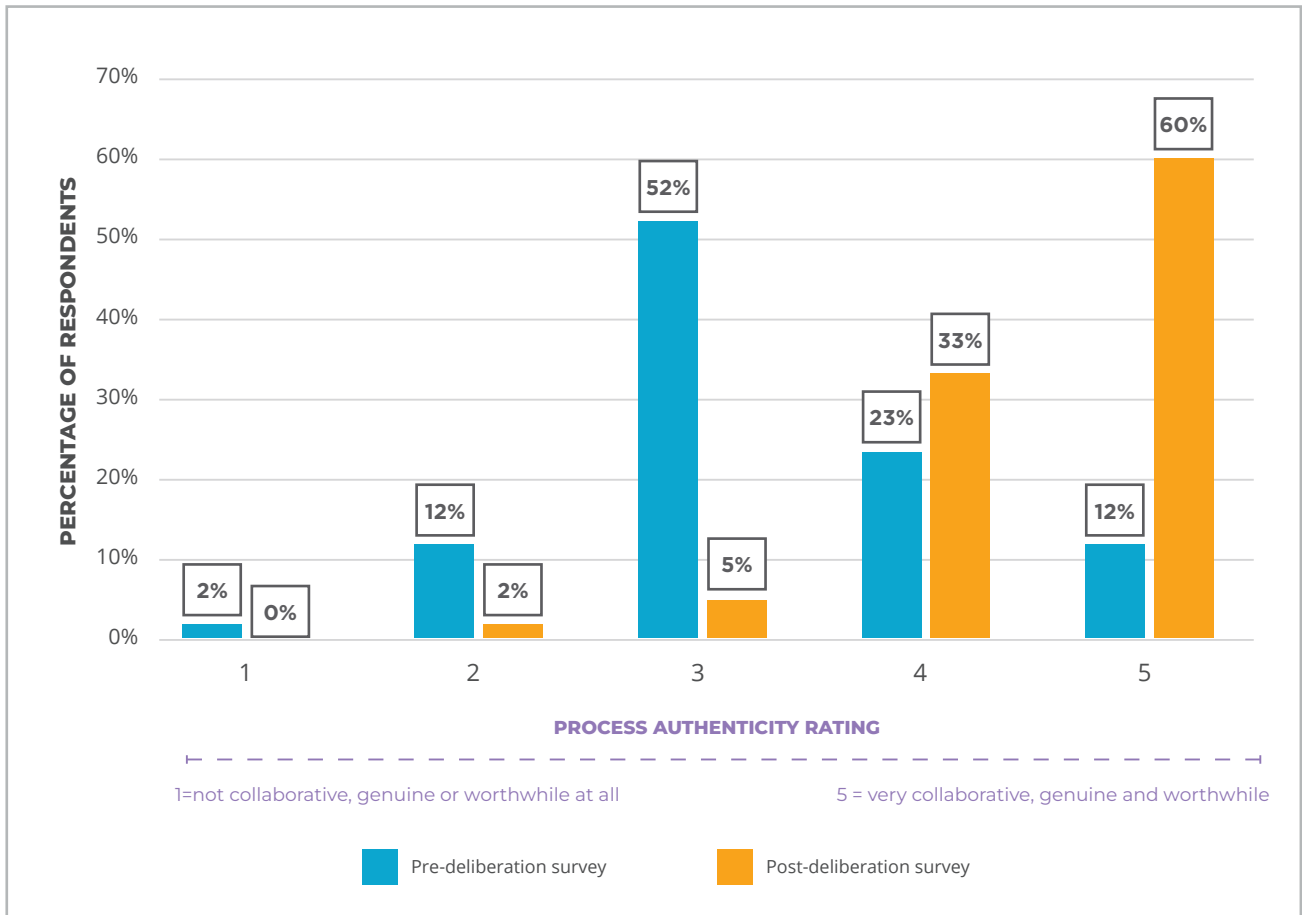
PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	In your view, how accountable or trustworthy do you think Ausgrid is?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How accountable or trustworthy do you think Ausgrid is now that you have been through this experience?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not trustworthy or accountable at all and 5=very trustworthy and accountable



COLLABORATION & OVERALL PROCESS AUTHENTICITY

Before deliberations commenced, panel members were asked to indicate how collaborative, genuine and worthwhile they thought Ausgrid had been in the past with their community engagement activities. 35% felt that Ausgrid had been 'collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' or 'very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' in the past. 93% of panellists felt that this process was 'collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' or 'very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile' by the end of the panel sessions. This is a **58-percentage point increase** or a **166% growth** in the number of participants who said they felt this process was collaborative, genuine and worthwhile (compared to views of past engagement).

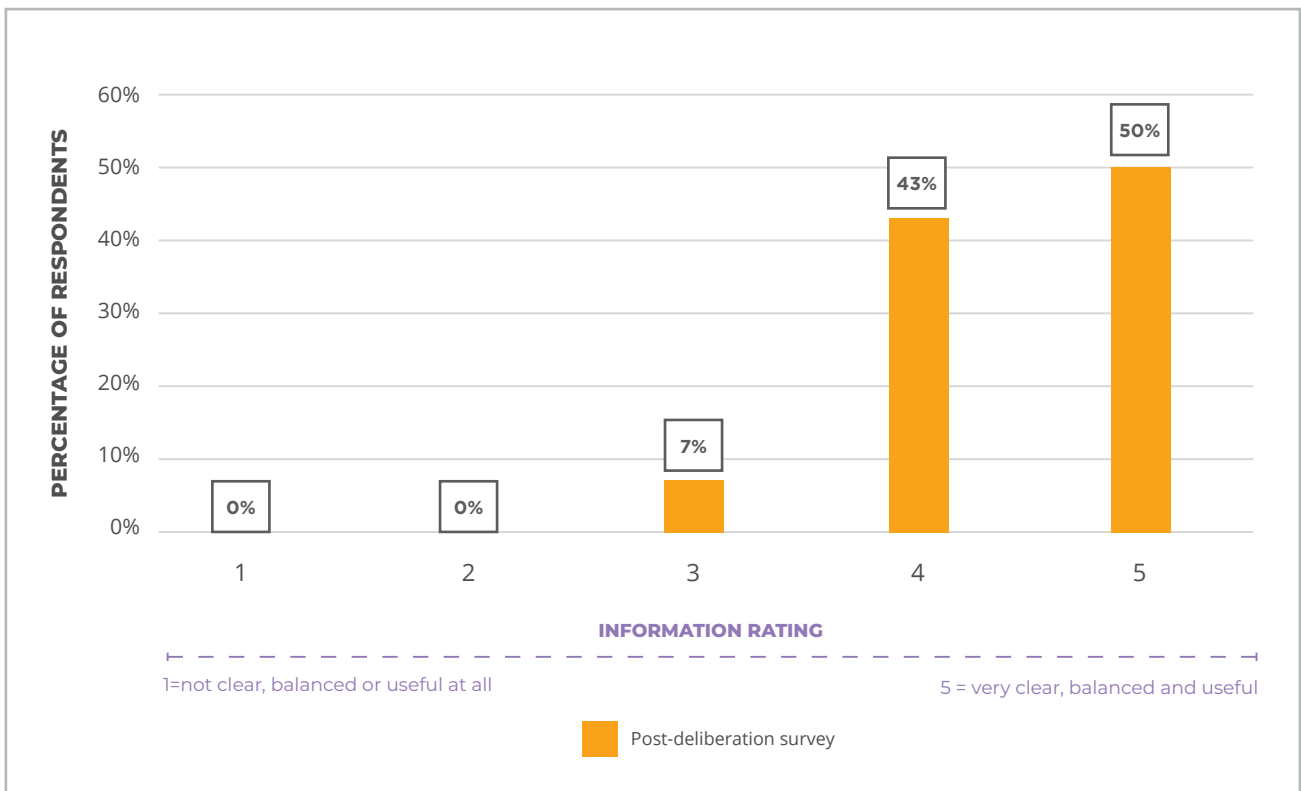
PRE-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How collaborative, genuine and worthwhile do you think Ausgrid's community engagement activities have been in the past?
POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How collaborative, genuine and worthwhile do you think Ausgrid's engagement activities have been through this experience?
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not collaborative, genuine or worthwhile at all and 5=very collaborative, genuine and worthwhile



CLEAR, USEFUL AND BALANCED INFORMATION

Throughout the deliberations, panel members raised their level of knowledge of Ausgrid and the services that they provide to their customers. It is important to hear post the panel process how this information helped them with their task. **93% of panellists** felt that the information was ‘very clear, useful and balanced’ or ‘clear, useful and balanced’. This question was only asked at the end of the process and hence there is no comparison.

POST-DELIBERATION QUESTION	How clear, useful and balanced was the information provided to you during this process? (i.e. to what extent was it helpful in supporting you to respond to your remit).
SCALE/MEASURE	1=not clear, useful or balanced and 5=very clear, useful and balanced



UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE

Three questions were asked at the completion of the Ausgrid Voice of the Community Panel to better understand the overall experience of the process. All questions were asked in the post-deliberation survey.

Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



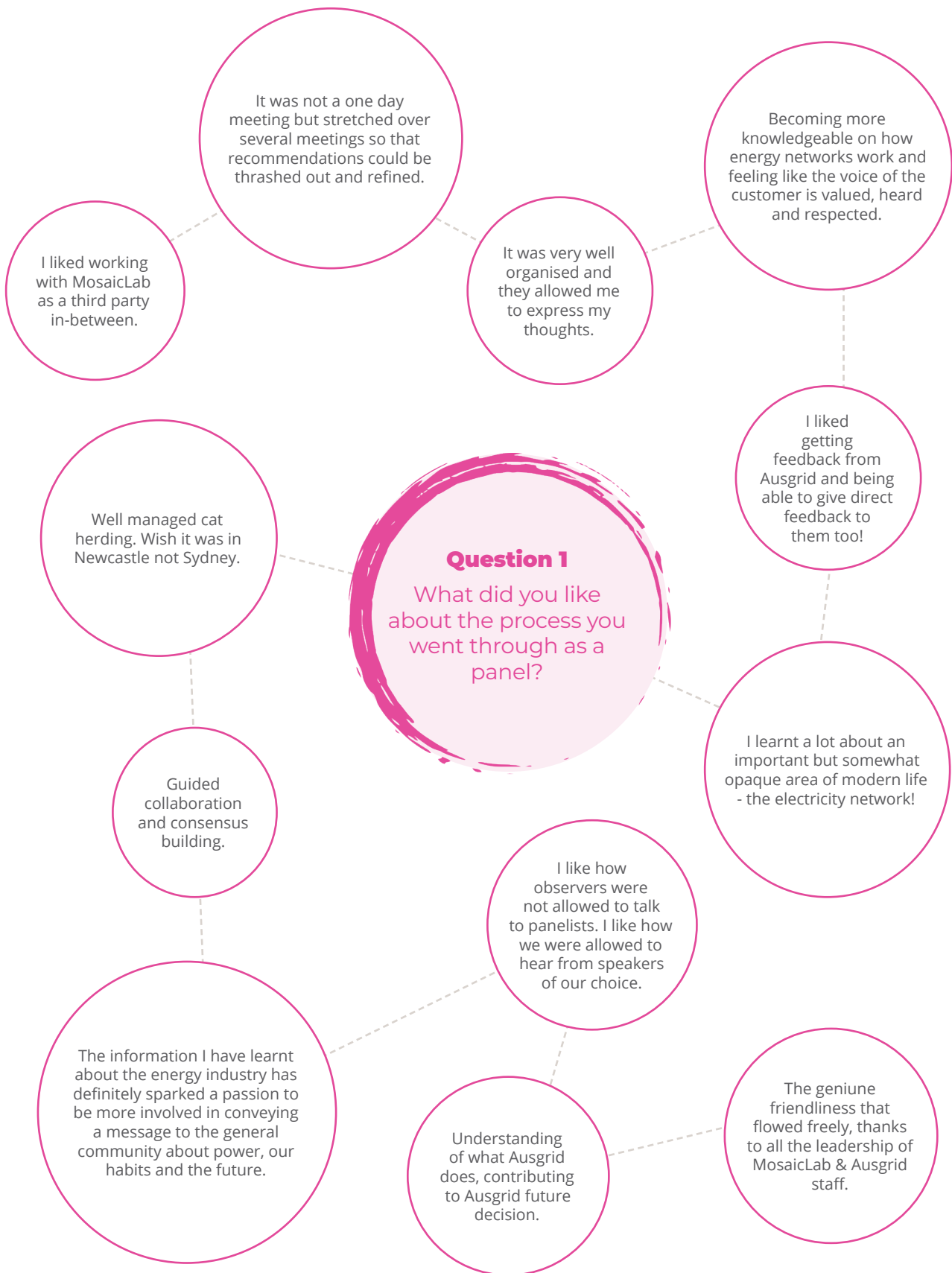
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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



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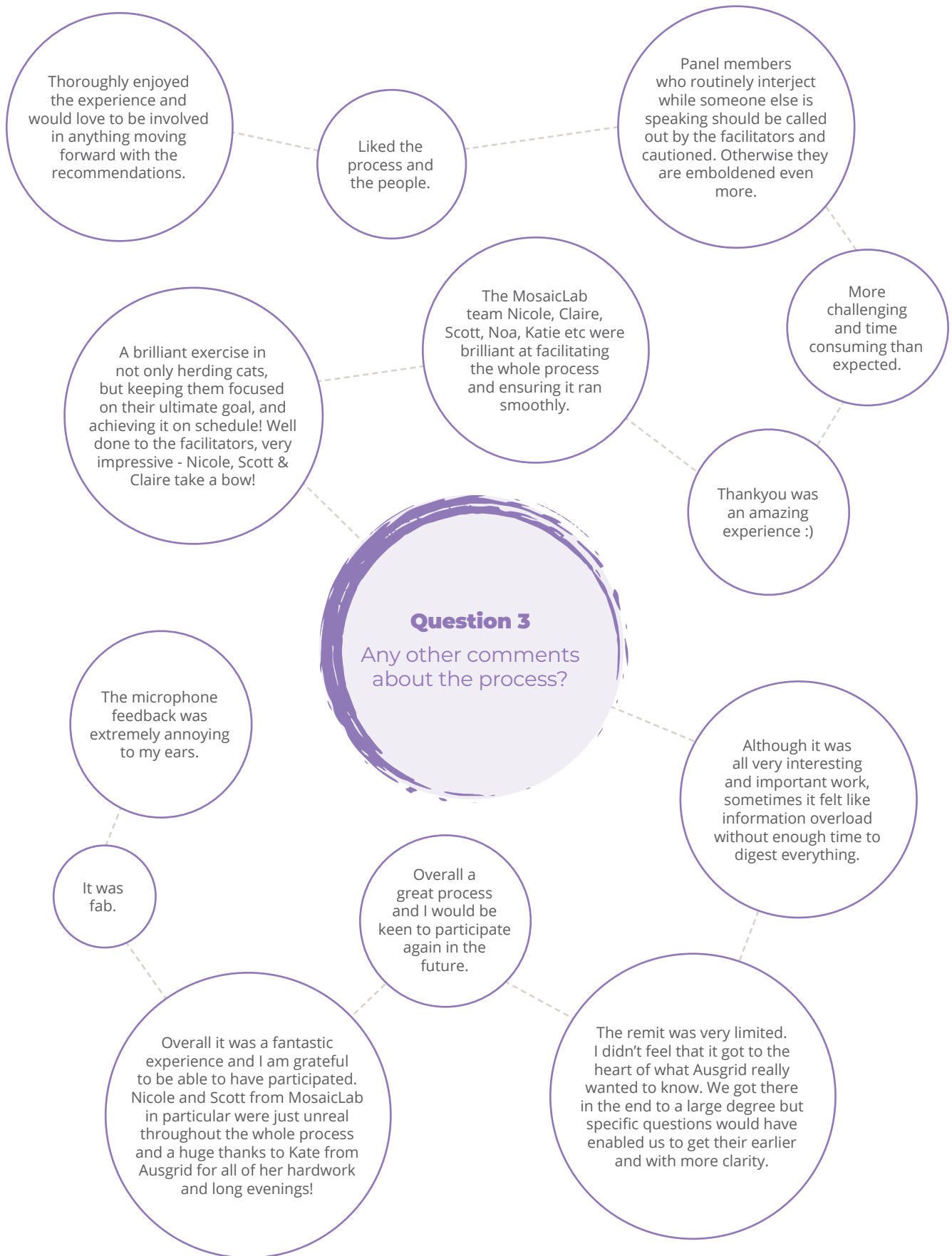


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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



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Each bubble is the feedback provided by a participant.



NEXT STEPS

The panel's recommendations were presented by the panel to Richard Gross, CEO of Ausgrid and Helen Nugent Chair of the Board.

Recall sessions have been planned for the evening of September 21 and October 8. These sessions will provide an opportunity for the panel to hear how Ausgrid have incorporated their recommendations into the draft plan and to test and provide feedback on the plan.



Letter to the Panel

Dear Panel member,

We are bd infrastructure - a small, independently owned consultancy firm.

Since September last year, we have been working with Ausgrid to engage small business customers and residential customers in vulnerable circumstances as part of the preparation of the Reset Proposal. We are writing to share some insights from these conversations.

We are also sharing the outcomes of discussions that Ausgrid has held a with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) businesses and households, and communities impacted by disruptive events.

In total, these conversations have involved 33 organisations, 30 small business customers and 47 residential customers.

- **Lived Experience:** 18 organisations and 11 residential customers.
- **Small business:** 9 organisations and six small business owners.
- **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse:** 10 business owners and 18 CALD residential customers.
- **Natural Disasters:** Six organisations, three small business owners and 12 residential customers.

The conversations in the first three streams focussed on the topics of:

price and affordability

network resilience and outages

transition to net zero

customer service

The natural disasters stream touched on the network resilience topic, but also customer service.

Through this engagement, Ausgrid has invested in strong relationships and partnerships with organisations that advocate for customers and communities, and has reached a rich and representative group of people. Everyone was generous with their time and ideas for how to improve the electricity network, now and into the future.

The tables below summarise what customers told Ausgrid through this engagement. Based on this summary, we've created three descriptions that reflect what customers in each stream might say about Ausgrid in five years time if all their feedback was taken on board. This might help you with your deliberations.

However, this letter does not represent how Ausgrid can or will respond. That is for you to shape.

Our best wishes to you as you work through this exciting future network planning process. We can't wait to see and share what you come up with!

To make sure we, and the VoC Panel, could consider the full range of perspectives from across our customers, we worked with our partners bd Infrastructure to talk with a broad range of people. Here's bd's report, summarising what we heard. Thx Ausgrid



Yours faithfully,
Rachel, Laura, Jaime and Alex



What should Ausgrid look like in five years?



Lived experience customers:

Ausgrid takes responsibility for the wider electricity system even though their role is confined to distribution. They have every customer at their heart. They seek to support and care for their customers and reach out to us with empathy.

Every facet of Ausgrid's customer service is accessible to the broad customer base. They take a leadership stance on social issues like housing tenure and a fair transition to net zero.

They partner with community organisations to help people access the benefits of solar and renewables.

They help to strengthen community resilience, by sharing intelligence and advice with local services about preparing and responding to outages and disruptive events.

Ausgrid helps people transition to net zero solutions that best suit their individual circumstances, even if this is outside the conforming view of good business for a distribution network.



Small and medium business owners:

Ausgrid values us for the role we play in our communities and economy, and for our significance to its customer base.

Ausgrid respects our entrepreneurial spirit and helps us to build our business cases for distributed energy resources and the transition to net zero.

Ausgrid is known within the electricity sector for the tailored approach to dealing with small business – they provide dedicated business advice and customer service channels and work alongside peak bodies to assist in future business planning.

They acknowledge the diversity of business types and priorities, knowing that some of us plan for a week ahead while others have sophisticated management systems. We really appreciate that Ausgrid never underestimates the impact outages have on business operations and they always provide us with information tips to manage outages.

Ausgrid respects the foresight and practicality of business owners and our suggestions – we like that they don't wait for a regulatory submission period to implement our ideas as business improvement actions.



Culturally and linguistically diverse customers:

Ausgrid embraces the cultural diversity of its customers. Ausgrid knows our communities have different interests, needs and abilities to transition to the future network.

Some communities need information and will take their own next steps. Others need deeper partnership and support.

Ausgrid is intentional about helping us share the benefits of solar and other renewable energy sources.

Ausgrid recognises our communities share information in different ways and always provides the information we need to our first languages.

Information about DER and network outages is provided in an accessible way and Ausgrid's customer-focussed approach is the envy of other networks.

Engagement highlights



	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Purpose	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to hear from low-income households, people with disabilities, young and older people, and renters. People in the Upper Hunter and southwest Sydney where targeted, because several types of vulnerabilities overlap in these areas.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand small business' experiences of the electricity network. We focussed our conversations on the Upper Hunter, Pittwater and Sydney's Inner West, and worked through small businesses associations, chambers of commerce and councils in each area.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand CALD communities' experiences of the electricity network. Ausgrid worked with the Ethnic Communities' Council to hold discussions in Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese.	Through this stream, Ausgrid set out to understand the impact of disruptive events on communities and identify opportunities for Ausgrid to support building resilience in the future. Ausgrid worked with Nous Group to hold these discussions in four areas.
Price and affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-income households face multiple pressures. Electricity consumption is increasing, and the pressures of prices continue to be felt by low-income households. • Housing tenure is a major barrier to a just energy system. People on low incomes are more likely to rent or live in low quality stock. This limits options to keep bills low through energy efficiency measures, solar panels and batteries. More affordable homes sometimes lie at the end of the network where supply can be less reliable. • The current system is complex and is becoming more complex. Focusing on individual choice or action to meet net zero targets (switch suppliers, install solar, be energy efficient) adds burden to already stressed households. Equal access to affordable electricity is a human right, not a consumer choice. • A health and wellbeing lens should be applied to energy concessions and rebates to address a broader array of vulnerabilities. • The current system is complex and is becoming more complex. This disadvantages people who can't engage with billing or customer service systems for reasons of accessibility, crisis, language or literacy. • New technology and customer information can be inaccessible. Billing systems, smart meters, and websites often can't be accessed by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of energy is a top priority for small business. This was further compounded by the pandemic. Ausgrid's reduced prices are not being felt by some small businesses or passed on by retailers and businesses want help finding the best offers. • Small businesses are concerned about fixed costs in their bills. Even when energy efficiency reduces use, customers perceive that retailers are increasing the fixed costs which can push electricity bills higher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of energy is a low or medium concern for CALD businesses. For some, affordability is an incentive to invest in solar but for others it is a barrier to individual action. 	





Network resilience and outages:

The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impacts of outages are much greater on people in vulnerable circumstances, particularly those in regional areas where outages can be more frequent and longer, and which are further away from services. The impact of a lost freezer of food on a low-income or rural household, or lost communications channels for people with sensory disabilities, can be profound. • Young people want to see organisations to take action to address climate change and see the concept of a 'resilient network' as a Band-Aid solution to a major issue. • Communities need power urgently after an outage. They need to connect with loved ones, manage their lives and plan their next steps. • Many organisations are helping communities respond to extreme events. A combined effort could deliver safe spaces and refuge hubs at swimming pools, libraries and other community facilities. • Outage and emergency information is inconsistent and doesn't go far enough. People don't just need to know 'where' and 'how long' but also 'what to do' and 'where to go'. • People with a disability are highly impacted during outages as it affects their ability to connect through tech-enabled communications channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small business owners are highly invested in their enterprise and are highly sensitive to loss of income, revenue, bookings or reputation. • Some businesses have plans and bookings months in advance and feel planned outages should provide for more notice than just 14 days', to allow businesses to better plan. • Small businesses need more direction and advice to help during an outage. Not just information on when and how long, but what to do and where to go. • Outages have indirect impacts for businesses: interrupted supply affects product quality, supplies can be ruined, servers take time to reboot; equipment needs to be recalibrated, electricians need to be called out, cancelled bookings ruin reputation. • Small businesses want simple and practical advice from Ausgrid as detailed below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CALD businesses want Ausgrid to plan with their needs in mind – no planned outages during working hours; SMS, email and Social Media outage alerts; a dedicated business hotline to report outages; timely notifications that include the expected duration 	<p>What happens during disruptive events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fallen powerlines increase the risk to residents' safety. They can also delay efforts by emergency services to evacuate residents during disruptive events. • Prolonged power outages affect access to emergency services. Residents rely heavily on electronic devices to receive updates from emergency services and, where necessary, request assistance. • Prolonged power outages can increase the hardship experienced by the community, preventing residents from accessing basic amenities. • Prolonged power outages delay a community's recovery from a disruptive event by preventing residents from accessing social and online networks.





	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
Transition to net zero:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in vulnerable circumstances care about a low carbon future but their options to take action (time, housing type and tenure, priorities, money) are limited. Social and private renters can't invest in Distributed Energy Resources (DER) and landlords have little incentives to invest. • Not everyone can have solar but all can share the benefits of renewables. Youth representatives viewed decisions about DER as complex, requiring time and resource to get across the technical details. Customers have an appetite for DER resources that can be shared such as solar gardens and virtual power plants • Electric vehicles may not be right for rural communities. They are not suitable for country life even if charge points are provided. Their introduction could increase the cost of grid power and petrol, regional communities rely on. • Housing is key to low carbon future. Greater energy efficiency in social housing, and embedded networks in housing developments, could make inroads to net zero targets. • Accessibility of information and technology is a barrier – solar panels and smart metres are not accessible to people with sensory disabilities, is seen as unobjective and sales-based, information does not address consumer rights and is not in plain English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small businesses need information and resources to make the transition to net zero or see how they can play a part. This needs to include objective and impartial information on options (batteries, solar) and help to analyse the costs and benefits options. • Property tenure creates barriers for small businesses adopt energy efficacy and DER because many don't own their premises. There is a desire for opportunities to build co-investment in rooftop solar into leasing agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses owners are taking steps to become more energy efficient, but they look to Ausgrid and the government for support tailored to their needs. Businesses that rent premises support incentives for their landlords to invest in solar. • CALD customers are enthusiastic about reaching net zero and support DER technologies. Some communities need time to establish their roots in the local community first while others are ready to make the transition. Customers look to Ausgrid to support investment in DER technologies including subsidized batteries and solar. 	





Customer service: needs to be streamlined and accessible	The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances	The experiences of small businesses	The experience of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities	Communities that have experienced disruptive events
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined processes and simple, accessible information would help a wide variety of customers. The deaf and blind communities are large and diverse and face a variety of accessibility challenges. Blind people can't access bills or smart metres, English is a second language for many Auslan users and information isn't available in in that format. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small businesses want to feel as valued to Ausgrid as large customers and assisted to find the best approach for their retail plans, customer service and move to net zero. Small business owners want a tailored approach – such as customised information and a dedicated hotline they can use to get advice when an outage or maintenance occurs. They feel Ausgrid's providers doesn't always prioritise their customer service needs. Small business owners want an empathetic response from customer service representatives who can understand what may be going through. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CALD customers expect supportive customer service and interpreting services. CALD customers have a very strong desire for education and information across a variety of topics: what to do during an unplanned outage, how to manage electricity consumption and cost, information about 'green' and DER technologies. 	



<p>The Lived Experience of customers in vulnerable circumstances</p>	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be active in initiatives to end energy poverty. • be part of developing energy solutions for the rental housing sector. • be part of addressing the structural problems in the energy network. • consider rebates to people with health conditions, or a single affordable scheme or tiered tariff structure for vulnerable customers. • work with other utilities and community organisations to simplify systems and create training packages to help customer access services and payment schemes. • ensure its digital systems comply with accessibility guidelines and interface with smart phone applications. • have different responses for different communities. • take action to address the root causes of climate change that lead to outages. • provide stand-alone power sources during outages, such community generators, and should co-design these solutions with communities. • partner with others to provide responses to outages • work with other organisations during outages to provide 'joined up' information and advice and share it with the local services that communities look to for advice • make sure outage communication is accessible and varied and provide longer lead times for planned outages. • address the issue at a systematic level, focusing on the impact of, not access to, DER. Tariff designs, community batteries and solar gardens are part of this. • consider those 'left behind' in the transition to Electric Vehicles. • help give renters more choice in embedded networks, and partner and advocate for greater housing and energy choice. • provide real people for customers to talk to, who is empathetic and empowered to help. • provide disability awareness training for call centre staff. • provide voice-based information for visually impaired customers • ensure its website works with screen readers and has a responsive live chat functionality • use captioned telephone technology and SMS alerts with Auslan videos
<p>The experiences of small businesses</p>	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support businesses to understand their energy bills, including Ausgrid's contribution, and how they can find the best energy offers. • work with local council small business teams to build capacity on how to respond to outages • provide better notice of planned outages and more useful information on what do to lower the impact (for example turning off the air conditioning to prevent tripping when the power is restored). • provide more information to small businesses on options for taking up Distributed Energy Resources. • improve responsiveness to small business needs (for example by reducing the long windows provided for meter reading and responding to simple requests for support). • Pprovide customer service training to maintenance contractors.
<p>Communities that have experienced disruptive events</p>	<p>Ausgrid should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the community in building resilience through: • resilient network infrastructure – residential customers expect Ausgrid to consider all options for cost-effective investment in resilient network assets. • backup power sources Residential customers would value greater access to backup power sources during disruptive events. • improved and personalised communication – customers desire personalised communication about the expected duration of unplanned power outages. • first responders expect greater strategic engagement with Ausgrid around planning for disruptive events.





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PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to transcribe participants comments accurately a small number may not have been included in this summary due to the legibility of the content. Please email Claire Connell at claire@mosaiclab.com.au for any suggested additions.

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MosaicLab is a Victorian-based consultancy that specialises in community & stakeholder engagement, facilitation, negotiation, strategic planning and coaching.