



ENERGY CHARTER DISCLOSURE REPORT

2021-22



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Energy Queensland acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work, and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay respect to Elders past and present.

About this report

This report covers the Energy Queensland Group's (the Group's) Energy Charter disclosure from July 2021 to June 2022. It reports the contribution of Energex Limited, Ergon Energy Corporation Limited (Ergon Energy Network), Ergon Energy Queensland Pty Ltd and Yurika Pty Ltd.

This Energy Charter Disclosure Report is on our website at www.energyq.com.au/publications. We welcome feedback to help us improve our reporting. Comments can be directed to customeradvocacy@energyq.com.au

Referencing guide

EQL Energy Queensland Limited. The term Energy Queensland and the acronym EQL is used to refer to work across the Group

EEN-EX Ergon Energy Network (Ergon Network) and Energex

EER Ergon Energy Retail (Ergon Retail)

YKA Yurika

The points relevant to the Independent Accountability Panel Recommendations 2021-22 are referenced with a **R#**. These recommendations are available in **Appendix 1** of this report.

The points relevant to Energy Queensland's Focus Areas for 2021-22 are referenced with a **F#** and are available in **Appendix 2**.

Message from the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer

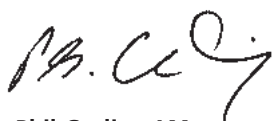
In 2021-22 Energy Queensland continued to improve our business with customer and community input. The year saw a renewed and refreshed Customer and Community Council bring a broad cross section of voices to the table and the introduction of two new corporate measures – Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) and a Net Trust Score (NTS) – to ensure we continue to capture customer insights on our performance and put customers at the centre of our decision-making.

Our network businesses, Energex and Ergon Energy Network, continue to work with industry partners and stakeholders for sustainable solutions that are safe, reliable, improve affordability and enable greater choice for customers, including the connection of more solar, batteries and electric vehicles to the grid, all of which are expected to substantially grow into the future. The roll out of five utility-scale batteries in communities with high penetration of rooftop solar and for some, living on the edge of grid and in isolated communities, allow the network businesses to look at sustainable solutions that deliver for our communities.

Ergon Energy Retail continue to strengthen its community connections through well-established support for vulnerable customers and those experiencing hardship including those impacted by the recent volatility of the wholesale energy market. Ergon Retail is also assisting with energy transition as evidenced by the roll out of digital meters (installed by Yurika) in partnership with a First Nations community to help them better manage electricity accounts.

Yurika has also become a trusted force in the industry with a strong pipeline of energy services work underway to enable customers to a sustainable energy future.

Diverse customer needs are always top of mind for Energy Queensland and we strive to collaborate with customer advocates, stakeholders, fellow Energy Charter signatories and others across the sector to better understand the customer experience and incorporate their feedback to improve business decisions and influence energy policy. We provide an essential service for Queenslanders and we will continue to build an electric future for our customers and communities.



Phil Garling AM
Chairman



Rod Duke
Chief Executive Officer

Message from our Customer and Community Council

The Customer and Community Council appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the work of Energy Queensland. The Council notes the preliminary commitments and the progress articulated in the Energy Charter Disclosure Report and sees its role as holding Energy Queensland accountable to these commitments, as well as ensuring the full range of customers are considered in the decision-making process. The recently refreshed Customer and Community Council is made up of experienced council members and a range of new members bringing their experiences and enthusiasm to the Council. The Council looks forward to working collaboratively with Energy Queensland's Board and senior executives on identifying appropriate performance measures, reviewing performance against those measures, maturity levels and targets from the previous year, and agreeing on areas of focus and targets for the next period.

Customer and Community Council Members

Rebecca Andrews	Australian Industry (AI) Group
Dale Holliss	Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group
Frank Edwards	Capricorn Enterprise
Cherie Josephson	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland
Robyn Robinson	Council on the Ageing Queensland
Caroline Valente	Energy Consumers Australia
Mark Grenning	Energy Users Association of Australia
Mike Furniss	Local Government Association Queensland
Anthony King	Master Electricians Australia
Scott Brown	Queensland Council of Social Service
Sharon McIntosh	Queensland Farmers Federation
Andrew Barger	Queensland Resources Council
Simone Elias	UnitingCare Queensland
Martin Zaltron	Urban Development Institute of Australia

Our customers and our communities

Energy Queensland is Australia's largest, wholly government-owned electricity company.

Our 'poles and wires' businesses, Energex and Ergon Energy Network deliver electricity across Queensland. We energise the lives of more than five million Queenslanders through more than 200,000 kilometres of electricity networks, and 33 stand-alone microgrids. These networks also support over 744,000 solar energy connections, large and small, as well as other distributed renewable energy resources.

Our retailer, Ergon Energy Retail, sells this electricity to its 758,000 customers throughout regional Queensland, with generation, energy trading and retailing capabilities. Our customer numbers make us the fourth largest retailer in the National Electricity Market.

Yurika provides integrated solutions in energy and infrastructure, energy supplies, metering, telecommunications, and digital services to connect its customers to a sustainable energy future.

As a Group, we energise Queensland communities from Tweed River to Torres Strait and from Brisbane across to Birdsville, and through Yurika's services, to a growing national footprint.

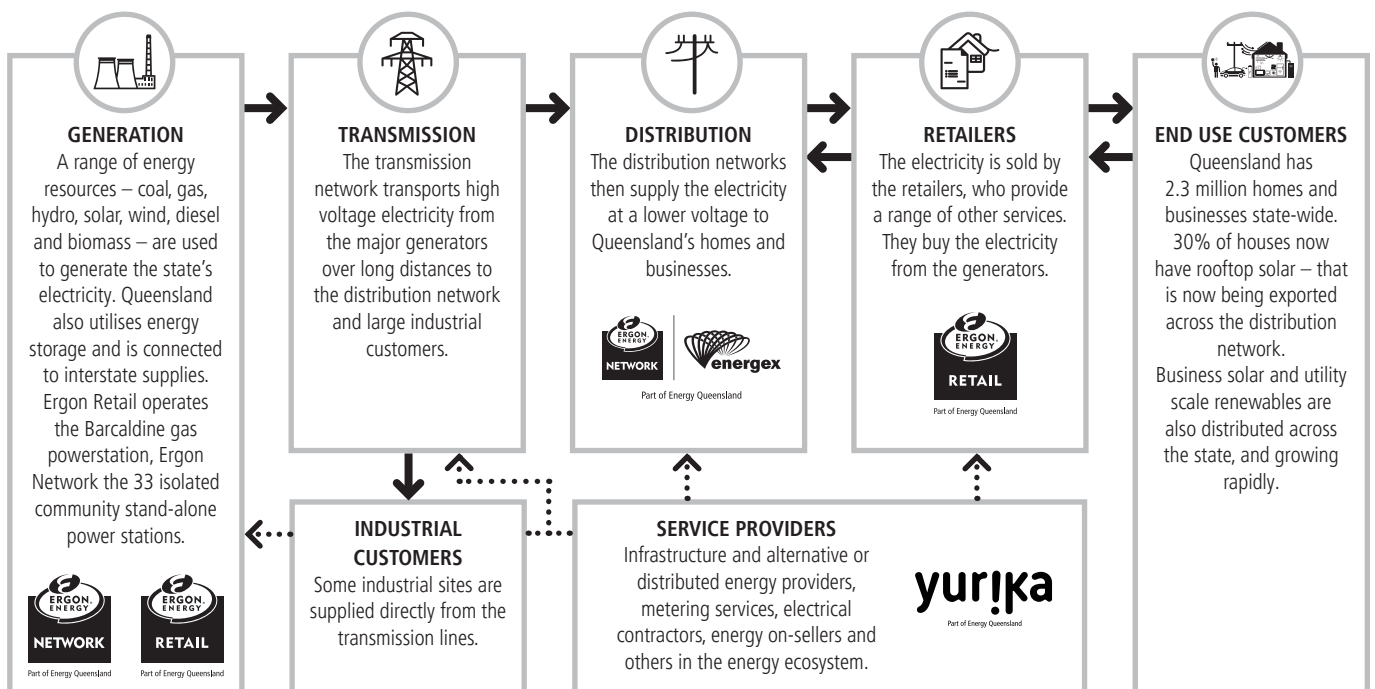
To help us understand our end-user customers, we have a needs-based segmentation framework that maps our residential and

business customers to three macro-needs – connection, control and progression. To meet the needs of our end-user customers (the focus of this report), we work closely with the Queensland Government and industry regulators and invest in building positive relationships with community stakeholders, industry partners and our people (employees).

Our stakeholders



The Electricity Supply Chain



Our scorecard

Our scorecard links our customer and community metrics to the Energy Charter Maturity Assessment Framework. This year our maturity assessment has recognised progress on Principle 1 with the move up to **evolved**. While our overall assessment for each of the other principles has not changed, we are advancing in maturity within the **evolved** assessment band for principles 2, 3 and 4.

Principle	Key Performance Measures			Energy Charter Maturity Assessment					
		Metric and Target	Result	Elementary	Emerging	Evolved	Empowered	Exemplary	
P1: We will put customers at the centre of our business and the energy system	We measure the mindset in our organisational culture, by how enabled employees feel to deliver for our customers.	Energy Queensland Customer Enablement Index ¹ : Target ≥6.0	6.6 ▲			●			
		Net Trust Score Target: 63.0 ² (As a new measure a trend is not available)	63.9						
P2: We will improve energy affordability for customers	We track price and affordability perceptions. We discuss tariff trends in our Annual Report .	Household concern about ability to pay the bill ³ –	41% ▲			●			
		• high concern Ergon Retail price changes July 2022: ⁴	9.2% ▲ 10.2% ▲						
P3: We will provide energy safely, sustainably and reliably	Safety: We have a suite of community and workplace safety measures detailed in our Annual Report . We introduced a new Safety Campaigns effectiveness measure (awareness/behaviours) in 2021-22.	Community safety incidents involving contact with our networks ⁵	244 ▼			●	N/A	N/A	
		Community safety campaigns ⁶ : Target: ≥72.0 (As a new measure a trend is not available)	77.0						
		Sustainability: We're playing an important role in Queensland's transition to a low-carbon energy future. For more see our Annual Report .	New solar connections to our networks ⁷	54,659 ▼			●		
		Energy Queensland's combined direct and indirect emissions (2020-21) ⁸	1,768,438 tCO ₂ -e▲						
P4: We will improve the customer experience	Customer outcomes and communication: We measure and report quarterly on our Customer Satisfaction through our Voice of the Customer program.	Energy Queensland Customer Satisfaction Score ¹¹ : Target ≥69.0 (As we have moved from the previous Customer Index, a trend for this new measure is not available)	72.2			●			
		Complaints: We aim to resolve customer issues and track the number of complaints escalated to the Energy and Water Ombudsman. ¹²	Ergon Network and Ergonex Ergon Retail	244 ▲ 301 ▼			●		
P5: We will support customers facing vulnerable circumstances	Through Ergon Retail, we raise awareness of rebates to eligible customers and support our customers through our hardship program.	Customers accessing rebates ¹³	227,426 ▲				●		
		Customers on hardship program ¹⁴ Customers successfully transitioned from hardship	5,776 ▼ 5,343 ▼						

1 Energy Queensland's annual Employee Engagement Survey result. Number based on responses to four questions about enabling customer outcomes.

2 Net Trust Score is a mean score of 100 to the question "How much do you trust (INSERT BRAND) to do what is right?".

3 Queensland Household Energy Survey 2022. Question: How concerned are you about your ongoing ability to pay your electricity bill? Scale 0-10. Results based on High: 7-10. Results up from 39% in 2020. Note: last year's report included Moderate and High results: 6-10.

4 Electricity prices set by the Queensland Competition Authority.

5 This figure increased by 44% in line with the rate of housing, infrastructure and civil building across the state.

6 Safety Campaign result is a mean score of 100, provided by averaging the scores received between Awareness and Behaviours.

7 New solar connections were down 28%, with the rate of connections slowing for a period, before returning to previous levels towards the end of the financial year.

8 This figure is largely due to the indirect emissions of energy lost while distributing electricity across the network. The year saw a 3% increase, with an increase from generation in isolated communities.

9 Queensland Household Energy Survey 2022. Question: These energy suppliers provide my household with a reliable energy supply. Scale 0-10. Results based on Agree: 7-10. Result up from 72% in 2020, 71% in 2019, and 68% in 2018. Note: last year's report included results for Agree: 8-10.

10 These are 12 outage frequency and duration Minimum Service Standards (MSS) which include both planned and unplanned outages set as part of the networks' Distribution Authorities. The targets include urban, short rural and long rural average interruption duration measures.

11 New approach and methodology for measuring Corporate Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) adopted in 2021-22, replacing the previous Customer Index reported in last year's report. The result is a mean score of 100.

12 Network complaints have increased and Retail complaints decreased since 2020-21.

13 With our promotion of their availability, the number of customers accessing financial rebates has increased to 227,426 from 225,596 in 2020-21.

14 With 5,343 customer successfully transitioning from hardship, the number actively seeking hardship assistance has reduced 13% since the end of 2020-21.

▲ or ▼ This is compared to 2020/21 results.

Principle 1

We will put customers at the centre of our business and the energy system

This year we consider ourselves as having matured from emerging last year to **evolved** against Principle 1.

Improvement Outcomes

- **Enhanced customer participation and building capacity to engage**

We continued to embed our Customer Advocacy Framework which collates customer insights and progresses these through our Customer Experience Network, comprising line managers, through to the Customer Strategy and Insights Council, comprising General Managers and sponsored by our Executive General Manager for Customer. At each sitting, we inform the EQL Risk and Compliance Committee on customer issues, complaints and trends and seek their feedback for prioritisation. Similarly, at our external [Customer and Community Council](#)^{R2, F1} we highlight business initiatives and obtain feedback to inform our strategic and operational decision making. Remuneration of the Council members was also introduced in recognition of the important role they play in providing valuable insights to the business and to support their capacity to engage.^{R4, F3}

- **Enhanced customer experience through employee engagement and recognition**

Through our employee communication tool, Workplace, we provide visibility of our customer experience, including customer verbatims received through our Voice of the Customer program, and encourage conversation around improvement solutions. This year our Customer Enablement Index (CEI), the measure through which we gauge how supported our people feel in delivering for our customers achieved a score of 6.6/10, an improvement on last year's result.

We continue to build customer centricity through our Ignite reward and recognition program, encouraging our people to recognise one-another through 'Customer Experience Champion' e-cards and nomination in the annual CEO and Executive sponsored 'Up in Lights' awards. These have our Customer and Community Strategies and the Energy Charter principles as key criteria.^{R3, F4}

- **Customer co-design and engagement informing business strategy**

Early in the year, the Board and Executive requested a Tariff Reform Working Group (TRWG) of key customer representatives be established for early engagement concerning the reform of our residential network tariffs. The TRWG^{R2, F1} (**Case Study 1**) has since then ensured the customer voice has been actively considered as Energex and Ergon Network moved towards tariff trials planned for late 2022.

As part of our bi-annual in-person Management Forum, which brings together leaders from across the business, we invited a panel of customer representative to attend to directly highlight their experience of interacting with the business, their issues of concern and what they would like to see going forward. Their insights informed the Forum's business planning discussions and other decision-making.

- **Strengthened customer culture focus on the Board**

2021 saw two new [Board Directors](#) appointed, expanding the Board's experience in culture change and customer advocacy, especially relating to customers with disabilities and First Nations peoples.^{R1, F2}

Focus Areas for 2022-23

- Continue to encourage our people to share opinions and ideas on customer improvement initiatives and celebrate improved customer experience and service outcomes.^{EQL}
- Continue Board, CEO, Executive and senior management direct engagement with customers.^{EQL}
- Adopt a co-design approach to the engagement strategy and embed customer and community insights into the network businesses' forthcoming Australian Energy Regulator (AER) revenue determination process for 2025-30.^{EEN-EX}

CASE STUDY 1 – Network tariff reform co-design

As customers pay network tariff charges for their electricity services it is important that they have direct input into network tariff design. The Tariff Reform Working Group (TRWG) was established with the aim of co-designing potential new network tariff/s to be trialled with residential customers in 2022-23. The membership comprises a range of customer representatives to provide customer insights needed to inform our future reforms for Energex and Ergon Network's next Tariff Structure Statements for 2025-30.

Network tariff reform is a complex topic that requires a balance between the needs of customers, the network businesses, the regulators, and electricity retailers, so it is vital that we bring our customers on the network tariff reform journey. As part of the work of the group several potential residential network tariff options were co-designed with different elements considered to recover both the Long Run Marginal Cost (LRMC) and residual costs, including peak charging and options around fixed charges, solar soak and off-peak capacity charging. The co-design and options analysis undertaken has informed a final network tariff to be trialled in 2022-23 with work continuing on the design of the trial in partnership with the TRWG and the retailers involved.

Principle 2

We will improve energy affordability for customers

Affordability continues to be a key focus for the Group, continuing our assessment as **evolved** against Principle 2.

Improvement Outcomes

- **Listened to customers to better understand affordability**

The Queensland Household Energy Survey (QHES), conducted annually on behalf of Energex, Ergon Network and Powerlink tracks customer sentiment on a range of energy-related topics, including electricity affordability. The average quarterly electricity bill size stated by this year's survey participants, increased by \$10 to \$338 which is the first bill increase recorded by the survey since 2016.¹⁰ Additionally, the 2022 survey indicates that electricity bill concern is rising in line with other cost of living pressures with 41% of customers' perceptions indicating high bill concern this year.¹¹ To assist customers, Ergon Network and Energex updated relevant energy usage and demand management webpages with information on how to maximise potential cost savings through a range of energy management practices.^{F9}

Additionally, Ergon Retail undertook work to ensure that it is on track to deliver on the AER Better Bills Guidelines by March 2023 so customers will receive electricity bills that are easier to understand and with essential information to link their electricity behaviours and costs.^{R5, F11}

- **Provided products and services that assist with managing costs**

Energex and Ergon Network continued to undertake home energy management systems trials, working with industry and customers, to investigate the demand management capabilities of future technologies and behavioural demand response. However, delays due to COVID-19 supply impacts on products and trades have meant meaningful test activity was unable to progress in 2021-22, with a refocus on the program to be undertaken in 2022-23.^{F7}

Energex and Ergon Network also engaged with the AER and eligible customers to roll out solar water pump trials as an alternative to grid supply for low load connections, reducing participating customers' energy costs.^{R7, F9, F10} They also connected the Queensland Government's Advancing Clean Energy Schools (ACES) program providing for substantial energy cost savings for participating schools (Case Study 2).

¹⁰ 2022 Queensland Household Energy Survey, p.21. Question: *On average how much is your fortnightly/ monthly/ quarterly electricity bill?* (Average quarterly bill size estimated from question with ranges) Scale 0-10. Results based on Agree: 7-10.

¹¹ 2022 Queensland Household Energy Survey, p.21. Question: *How concerned are you about your ongoing ability to pay your electricity bill? *'Receive a concession/rebate' data only available from 2017 onwards* Scale 0-10. Results based on Agree: 7-10

Yurika has continued to develop micro-grid feasibility products and services and continues to work with customers where this is an affordable option.^{F12}

- **Operated to deliver financial sustainability for our customers**

We continue our focus on efficiencies to deliver affordability for our customers. The AER's current five-year revenue allowance for our regulated distribution businesses, Energex and Ergon Network is lower than at any time during which we have been regulated under the AER.

However, due to recent wholesale energy market volatility, from July 2022 the typical Ergon Retail residential customer in regional Queensland will see a bill increase of 9.2% (\$119 per year), and the typical small business an increase of 10.2% (\$215 per year).

Ergon Retail credited our shareholder's \$50 Queensland Government Asset Ownership Dividend to its residential customer accounts providing some electricity cost relief for customers with a further Queensland Government \$175 Cost of Living Rebate to be credited from August 2022.

Focus Areas for 2022-23

- A second home energy management program for customers in Carseldine, north Brisbane, to determine daily financial benefits.^{EX}
- Continue to work in partnership with customers to improve energy affordability and sustainability through the adoption of cleaner, cheaper energy solutions.^{YKA}
- Continue to roll out improved bill designs for customers to better understand costs.^{EER}

CASE STUDY 2 – Improved affordability through clean energy for schools

Energex and Ergon Network worked with industry to successfully connect the Queensland Government's Advancing Clean Energy Schools (ACES) program improving affordability and reducing energy costs.

The ACES program was created to help reduce energy costs at more than 800 state schools through the installation of solar systems and other energy efficiency measures. The program exceeded its targets to deliver 200,000 panels at 912 schools. The combined investment of \$168.1 million for the ACES program will deliver a contribution of approximately 61.4MW of solar to the Queensland Government's 50% renewable energy goal by 2030 to reduce emissions. As one of the Queensland Government's largest energy consumers, state schools spend more than \$70 million each year on energy. The program delivered approximately 49MW of solar and is set to reduce state school energy costs by up to 20%.

Principle 3

We will provide energy safely, sustainably and reliably

Safety, sustainability and reliability continue to be at the centre of our business, and we continue to assess ourselves as **evolved** against Principle 3.

Improvement Outcomes

- **Safety: increased awareness of electrical safety in the community**

In February-March 2022 the resilience of our communities and customers was tested again with major flooding and severe storm events, with the business responding swiftly. (Case Study 3)

Energex and Ergon Network are enhancing community safety with the roll out of a safety inspection trial to customers with privately-owned property poles. The trial involves a comprehensive safety assessment of these poles with the aim of better understanding the potential electrical safety and bushfire risks and supporting landowners to adopt safety practices in line with their responsibilities.

In addition, the safe clearance program continued to use aerial inspections to monitor clearance of buildings and other structures to our assets. For these works, the network businesses are actively engaging landowners, local councils and the construction industry to help promote the importance of maintaining safe clearances from electricity infrastructure.

Energex and Ergon Network introduced the '[Next thing you touch](#)' campaign to educate the public on how to respond if they experience an electrical shock or tingle from metal components on their property. Campaign evaluation has shown that 88% of customers surveyed chose the correct behaviour. The network businesses continued the [Safety Heroes campaign](#) in Electricity Safety Week to inform primary students of electrical safety and encourage electrical safe behaviours.

The '[Take Care. Stay Line Aware](#)' campaign continued to educate the general public, tradespersons and farmers throughout the year on the clear course of action for people who find themselves in potential danger from a powerline emergency.

- **Sustainability: developed sustainable solutions for our customers**

Energy Queensland's [Low Carbon Future Statement Policy](#) is our commitment to a sustainable network and business operations.^{R8, R9}

The year saw the [Energex and Ergon Network Local Network Battery Plan](#) deployed rapidly to help address the minimum demand challenge and support the Queensland Government's 50% renewable energy target by 2030, with 40MWh of network-connected battery energy storage systems located across five trial sites in Townsville, Yeppoon, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and

Toowoomba. The batteries will allow the solar energy captured locally, during the day, to be stored locally, for use locally during the evening peak in demand.

Progress was made in relation to work around the Dynamic Operating Envelope to assist in sustainable management of the network with technical standards revised following public consultation.^{F14, F15}

Ergon Network commenced feasibility studies and engagement with local communities to advance the decarbonisation of some of our isolated communities.^{F17} (Case Study 4)

Ergon Network trialled three network support stand-alone power systems solutions at the community level – two near Mount Isa and one on the coast near Gladstone, the insights from which are informing further roll out of this solution.^{F13}

Yurika continued to support customer choice in the transition to electric vehicles through expansion of the Queensland Electric Vehicle Super-Highway with new 75kW fast chargers manufactured in Queensland being deployed.^{F16}

- **Reliability: addressing electricity supply reliability with improved satisfaction**

Energex and Ergon Network continued to address reliability for customers by investing in asset inspection, maintenance, refurbishment, and replacement strategies with the performance challenges ranging from our ageing network, the adverse weather to supply chain impacts. This year, the networks achieved 92.9% for their program of work delivery index, above the target of 90%, with for example, Ergon Network replacing over 15,000 poles, 8,500 customer service wires and Energex replacing over 200 kilometres of overhead copper lines.^{F18}

We continue to monitor customer satisfaction with our network reliability. Through the QHES 2022, 74% of survey respondents strongly agreed that they receive a reliable energy supply, up from 2020, with 81% also indicating that they thought the existing balance between cost and reliability is about right.^{12 13 F18}

Focus Areas for 2022-23

- Review landowner and social licence policy and processes.^{EEN-EX}
- Continue the installation of electric vehicle chargers in western Queensland under Stage Three of the Queensland Electric Vehicle Super Highway.^{YKA}
- Progress battery storage projects across Queensland.^{EEN-EX YKA}

¹² 2022 Queensland Household Energy Survey, p.11. Question: *Reliability These energy suppliers provide my household with a reliable energy supply.* Scale 0-10. Results based on Agree: 7-10.

¹³ 2022 Queensland Household Energy Survey, p.16. Question: *When planning the electricity network, there is a need to balance the reliability of electricity supply with the cost of providing that supply. This means that higher costs result in improved supply (i.e., fewer blackouts) and lower costs result in a poorer supply (i.e., more blackouts). Which of the following statements best reflects how you feel about the balance between the cost of electricity and the reliability of the electricity supply?*

CASE STUDY 3 – Keeping the community safe through disaster response

Due to major flooding and associated severe storms that occurred in Brisbane and across southern Queensland in early 2022, more than 180,000 customers lost power. At its peak more than 57,000 customers were without electricity supply at any one time.

The electricity network and customer premises sustained extensive damage with flood water the greatest obstacle to accessing network assets and restoring supply. Only after flood waters had subsided could crews drain affected equipment and clean, and dry it out before repairs could be undertaken.

Community safety was a key focus of public communication activity during the floods. A variety of communication channels was used to convey key safety messages about the dangers of fallen powerlines in floodwaters, boat safety and powerline clearance, solar and generator safety, the dangers of wet and damaged appliances or wiring, and safe flood cleaning.

During the response, more than 21,000 individual jobs were dispatched to field crews and nearly 6,500 Electricity Defect Reports were issued to flood-impacted premises (where electrical safety inspections were needed to be performed by an electrical contractor due to inundation). More than 3,000 of these re-energisations were completed within days of the network being restored.

CASE STUDY 4 – Investigating sustainable energy solutions

As an essential service provider Ergon Network has an obligation to provide safe and reliable power to all of the customers it serves.

The [Isolated Network Strategy 2030](#) supports this obligation with its strong emphasis on customer and community led transition. The goal of this strategy is for majority of the power for these communities to come from renewable energy resources, especially during periods of high solar energy generation, reducing reliance on diesel fuel.

In 2021-22 studies commenced to investigate how modern and sustainable technologies like existing solar connections and battery storage can assist with decarbonising Queensland's isolated networks.

Australian Government funding from the Regional and Remote Communities Reliability Fund was also received to

undertake feasibility studies for community microgrids at two fringe of grid communities, Clairview and Stanage Bay.

These different studies are investigating if and how the reliability and affordability of supply to Ergon Network isolated and fringe-of-grid communities can be improved with new technologies, using renewable energy and battery storage integrated with smart communications devices, and by potentially microgridding the grid -connected communities when an outage occurs upstream.^{R7, F9, F10}

Principle 4

We will improve the customer experience

Monitoring and improving the customer experience continues to be a key focus area for the business, and although we remain as **evolved** against Principle 4, we believe we are making good progress as evidenced in our new CSAT results (Scorecard).

Improvement Outcomes

- **Made it easy for customers to find and understand information**

Energex and Ergon Network updated their websites to include more checklists for business customers to better prepare for emergency and planned power interruptions. A social media campaign complemented these updates.^{F21}

Yurika also made website improvements to provide customers with online account access through the My Account online self-service portal.^{F19}

Ergon Retail sought to onboard more customers to the retail My Account platform. My Account allowed banner advertising to advise customers of the rebates available and in combination with targeted social media and SMS messaging to customers this increased rebate penetration by 5% for My Account customers. My Account engagement features also allow customers to resolve queries themselves through self-service at a time convenient to them.^{R11, F24}

Ergon Retail's website and social media were used to provide customers with checklists and educational videos to understand how to avoid estimated accounts.^{R11, F23}

The transition to advanced meters saw more than 72,000 Ergon Retail customers connected to digital meters across Queensland in 2021-22, with 238,000 or approximately 31% now with digital metering installed, allowing them to utilise tools that can help manage energy use and access the benefits of remote meter reading.^{R13, F23}

Improvement Outcomes

- **Worked with customers and their representatives to 'make it easy'**

Ergon Retail engaged with customers on obsolete retail tariffs to transition to their best alternative tariff option. This included direct engagement with peak bodies, fact sheets and tariff information on the website. These efforts have provided customer with a better understanding of load profiles, an appreciation of switchboard/metering issues that can impact tariff implementation and the technical assistance needed to change to alternative tariffs.^{R11, F20, F24, R12}

Ergon Retail undertook a trial with customers with solar systems to analyse their usage and export trends. The trial allowed solar system alerts to be set, the best tariff to be calculated and overall better management of the solar systems. The trial insights will inform future Ergon Retail communications with solar customers.^{R11, F20, F24}

During the year Ergon Retail re-launched the "Your Energy" campaign to make regional Queensland energy customers choosing a retailer aware of the different fees potentially incorporated into market offers. Deciding on a retailer in regional Queensland has been challenging with high costs in the wholesale energy market and several retailers withdrawing from the market. Ergon Retail's customer call-back functionality enabled affected customers to maintain their place in queue not having to remain on hold. This function coupled with an online application form, ensured that new and returning customers received a positive customer experience and were welcomed back as smoothly as possible.^{F20, F24} In general, the call-back function continued to enhance the customer experience with a total of 143,000 Ergon Retail customers taking advantage of the function.

A research collaboration with the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) helped the network businesses to hear directly from developers and their consultants about land developer experiences during the network connection process.^{R12} (Case Study 5)

- **Customer feedback informed continuous improvement**

A new corporate Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) metric approach was implemented with customers surveyed quarterly, via an independent customer panel asking how satisfied they are with the services received. The CSAT measures customer satisfaction across all our brands with an indexed score provided for Energy Queensland. This year our CSAT score was 72.2/100, above our target (69.0) and stretch target (70.0).

The CSAT builds on our Voice of the Customer program – that continues to measure customer experience following direct interaction with multiple touchpoints across the business and provides customer insights to help inform customer experience

improvement initiatives at the operational level. Over 25,500 customers provided feedback this year through that program.^{F24}

- **Complaints – quality management and first point of contact**

The business continued to address customer complaints and seek improvements in the compliant handling process. Ergon Retail's complaints team achieved an increase in customer satisfaction through the quality management framework implemented last year. Ergon Retail, Ergon Network and Energex have had a renewed focus on resolving complaints at the first point of contact.

- **Complaints – improved complaint management through process audit**

During 2021-22 an independent audit of Energy Queensland's Complaints Management Policy and its application was undertaken across the Group to determine compliance with industry standards, particularly Australia/New Zealand Standard 10002:2014 on Complaints Management. The audit found that while there were opportunities for improvement in terms of optimising efficiency around the complaints management process, Energy Queensland satisfies industry requirements regarding complaints management.^{F22}

Summary of customer enquiries and complaints

	Network	Retail
Enquiries		
Refer Back	1.04	3.43
Refer Higher Level	0.72	2.08
Complaints (Notice of Investigation)		
Level 1	0.18	0.53
Level 2	0.13	0.39
Level 3	0.02	0.04

All figures in table are per 10,000 customers. The total customer figure used for Ergon Retail was 758,000 and for Ergon Network and Energex 2.3 million.

Focus Areas for 2022-23

- Residential network tariff trials with retail partners (Ergon Retail is one) to understand customer experience around customer behaviour and impacts of these trials.^{EEN EGX with EER as Retail trial partner}
- Continue to meet customer needs through website integrations and an improved customer experience My Account functionality.^{YKA}
- Implement in full the recommendations from the 2021-22 Complaints Management Audit.^{EQL}

CASE STUDY 5 – Improving the property developers experience

A three-fold increase in electricity network connection activities in 2021-22 identified operational ‘pain points’ in the customer experience for property developers. Growth driven by COVID-19 related economic stimulus and increased demand for housing projects in regional Queensland required Ergon Network to look at ways to improve the customer experience.

A collaboration with the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) and hearing directly from property developers and their consultants through local branch meeting and roadshow events led to the business investing in a customer journey mapping exercise to pinpoint key areas for improvement.

The mapping highlighted service delivery improvements that could be made concerning scheduling and payment, which allowed the connections process to be more efficient for the property developers. In addition, Ergon Network was able to identify staff resourcing strategies and cross-skilling to enhance the customer experience, and ultimately speed up the connections process where possible, to ensure the construction of new homes for customers is not unnecessarily delayed.

Principle 5

We will support customers facing vulnerable circumstances

We continue to refine our strategies and invest in systems to support our vulnerable customers and therefore remain as **empowered** against Principle 5.

Improvement Outcomes

- **Enhanced support for vulnerable customers**

Ergon Retail partnered with UnitingCare to provide additional support to customers in financial hardship through free energy audits that aim to increase energy literacy and link customers with additional support or grants. The partnership which will run into 2022-23, will also assist in understanding any lag effects of COVID-19 and how to best to support customers.^{R14, R15, R17, F25}

The network businesses also conducted a social media campaign to promote the Queensland Government rebates available around energy.

Through the Queensland Chapter of the Thriving Communities Partnership, we finalised the Disaster Planning and Recovery Project work of the past two years and canvassed the cross-industry membership to undertake new project works to assist vulnerable customers.^{R14, R15, R17, F25}

A Working Group was established with Energex and Ergon Network field staff, contractors, and industry partners to implement a ‘Knock to Stay Connected’ trial that aims to limit customer disconnections for non-payment of debt.^{R16} (Case Study 6)

- **Fostered energy inclusion in our communities**

Ergon Retail continued to provide support to customers in vulnerable circumstances such as our payment extension arrangements and financial support programs including Customer Assist (hardship, which encompassed domestic violence), Life Support, Electricity Rebate administration and the Drought Relief from Electricity Charges Program. Utilising all these programs, specialist credit teams provided customer specific payment assistance to avoid disconnection.

Ergon Retail has worked with the Australian Energy Market Commission to progress its Family Violence Policy, which whilst drafted in 2021-22 will be finalised in 2022-23. Commitments for the Financial Inclusion Action Plan were finalised this year as Ergon Retail channels efforts into more First Nations engagement and other vulnerable groups through direct on the ground support activities.^{R11, R12, R14, R15, R17, F26, F27}

Ergon Retail’s First Nations communities saw a return to face-to-face communications with several activities such as a Yarning Energy Day at Yarrabah in partnership with the Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN) to promote available rebates and payment method options, and to deliver energy awareness messaging.^{R13, R14, R17, F25, F28}

2021-22 saw Queensland’s first community-wide roll out of the digital meters (installed by Yurika) in the First Nations community of Woorabinda. Ergon Retail undertook community engagement and worked closely with Woorabinda Aboriginal Shire Council to bring the benefits to the community.^{R14, R17, F25, F28} (Case Study 7)

Focus Areas for 2022-23

- Develop Customer Code for Knock to Stay Connected in conjunction with other Energy Charter signatories and industry partners.^{EEN-EX}
- Implement policies supporting family violence prevention.^{EER}
- Maximise the insights from the UnitingCare program to inform business advice and support service planning.^{EER}
- Work with local councils to improve energy management in First Nations communities.^{EER}

CASE STUDY 6 – Knock to Stay Connected

The network businesses Knock to Stay Connected Trial arose from knowledge sharing undertaken as part of Energy Charter signatory collaboration on similar initiatives being trialled to better support customers in vulnerable circumstances, particularly those customers being disconnected for non-payment of debt.

As part of the trial, the network businesses worked with several key stakeholders to improve processes when disconnecting affected customer's premises to allow the network businesses to attempt a hand-delivered notice a few days prior to the disconnection. The notice offers an opportunity to encourage customers to get in touch with their retailer to discuss their options and to avoid disconnection.

To date, there has been a 68% cancellation rate for disconnection for non-payment of debt service orders in those suburbs targeted through the trial in South East Queensland and a 56% cancellation rate for disconnection for non-payment of debt service orders in the regional Queensland trial suburbs.

Anecdotally the experience for both customers and our staff and contractors is much improved, with the latter reporting a decrease in the number of antagonistic incidents in the field relating to disconnection for non-debt.

The network businesses will work to embed the trial learnings into business as usual activities.

CASE STUDY 7 – Engaging vulnerable customers to manage electricity costs

Ergon Retail implemented Queensland's first community-wide roll out of digital meters (installed by Yurika) in the Indigenous community of Woorabinda in Central Queensland. This roll out is assisting with reducing estimated accounts for the Woorabinda community, which at times reached 38%.

Extensive engagement with the Woorabinda community and stakeholders was undertaken to ensure the benefits of the digital meters were understood and how it would mean fewer estimates due to lack of access to property often experienced by meter readers.

The new advanced meters give customers the ability to better manage their electricity account with bills monthly rather than quarterly. There is also a self-service portal which can assist customers to better manage household budgets in real-time and become more savvy with the use of electricity and its associated costs.

Ergon Retail will continue to work to undertake engagement activities post roll out to ensure understanding around electricity accounts and also the rebates and concessions that are available.

Appendix 1 - Independent Accountability Panel Recommendations

Principle 1 – We will put customers at the centre of our business and the energy system

- R1 Appoint Directors with a strong consumer and social policy skill set into Board and Governance structures.
- R2 If not already in place, Signatories should establish a customer reference group or customer council. Signatories should then commit to go beyond simply informing this group of what they are doing but seek to involve them in key decisions and empower them to play an active role in shaping key aspects of business practices and investment decisions where appropriate. *(Repeat of 2020 Panel recommendation).*
- R3 Elevate the Energy Charter to the highest possible extent within the organisation, including involving their Board in development of Energy Charter Disclosures and linking performance review standards and leadership remuneration to customer outcomes. *(Repeat of 2020 Panel recommendation).*
- R4 Champion across the industry and implement the Energy Charter Better Practice Consumer Advocacy Support Guide including fully or co-funding of consumer advocacy roles, participation, and processes.

Principle 2 – We will improve energy affordability for customers

- R5 Focus on urgent implementation of long delayed basic measures to improve the affordability of energy for people in vulnerable circumstances. Signatories should ask governments and market bodies to join them in committing that:
- all customers who are struggling to pay their electricity or gas bills are moved to the best retail offer for their current circumstances; and
 - every customer who is entitled to a concession or rebate is placed on it.
- R6 Establish a #BetterTogether initiative with community and consumer groups to develop a joint advocacy approach to affordability issues, including income adequacy and energy efficiency standards, as they have done in relation to net zero emissions, because both are vital to getting energy transition right.
- R7 Collaborate with government and community services to deliver energy efficiency retrofitting on a systemic scale for low-income households.

Principle 3 – We will provide energy safely, sustainably, and reliably

- R8 Call for a clear and responsible 2030 national emissions reduction target aligned with keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees, to guide investment and public education.
- R9 Set business emissions reduction targets and strategies for delivering on these.
- R10 Jointly commit with governments and market bodies to ensuring that energy transition benefits vulnerable consumers, agree a process to deliver on that commitment and make it happen.

Principle 4 – We will improve the customer experience

- R11 Continue to simplify energy bills so that energy usage and costs are easy to comprehend and provide specially trained customer contact staff who can help customers to understand energy usage in the home or small business. This could extend to developing a specialist energy advisor role within the customer service centre. *(Repeat of 2020 Panel recommendation).*
- R12 Work more closely with consumer groups to expand and develop community collaborations with customer groups that are less likely to actively engage through mainstream channels. *(Repeat of 2020 Panel recommendation).*
- R13 Develop plans for the universal rollout of smart meters with clear targets and milestones, including addressing the trend of DER being installed without a smart meter through a #BetterTogether initiative and/or a rule change proposal.

Principle 5 – We will support customers facing vulnerable circumstances

- R14 Immediately and collectively, find ways to utilise payment and usage data to proactively identify and assist customers in vulnerable circumstances, so that the industry and policy makers are taking all steps within their power to support customers in financial difficulty and to reduce payment difficulties in 2022. The process should include engagement with experts and consumer groups. *(Repeat of 2020 Panel recommendation).*
- R15 Work with financial counsellors and other community services to continue to expand training and other support strategies for customers at risk of financial hardship including energy efficiency audits and appliance schemes and energy literacy.
- R16 Adopt the #BetterTogether “Knock Before You Disconnect” as a Business-as-Usual activity, following the successful trial of this practice by some Signatories during COVID-19 and aspire to no disconnections, working with consumer groups to deliver on that outcome.
- R17 Adopt the Victorian Payment Difficulty Framework as the benchmark for supporting customers to deal with the increased debt levels that have built up during the COVID-19 Statement of Expectations period.

Appendix 2 - Energy Queensland 2021-22 Focus Areas

The following items were committed to in the Energy Queensland Energy Charter Disclosure Report.

Principle 1 – We will put customers at the centre of our business and the energy system		
F1	Review our engagement forums to ensure representatives are reflective of the changing energy marketplace and inclusive of those less likely to engage through mainstream channels.	EQL
F2	Improve the Board/Executive engagement with customers.	EQL
F3	Implement a way for consumer advocacy to be better resourced.	EQL
F4	Focus on unlocking our employees’ potential to achieve positive customer outcomes.	EQL
F5	Consider barriers such as home-ownership to meeting customer energy needs.	EQL
F6	Continue the SmartCharge Trial for electric vehicles.	EEN-EX
Principle 2 – We will improve energy affordability for customers		
F7	A second home energy management program for customers in Carseldine, north Brisbane, to determine daily financial benefits.	EX
F8	Continue to drive efficiencies in accordance with our revenue allowance.	EEN-EX
F9	Test and roll out subsidised solar irrigation pumps to replace expensive network connections to interested customers.	EEN-EX
F10	Engage and communicate with customers on managing their energy demand.	EEN-EX
F11	Align new bill redesign with regulatory guidelines.	EER
F12	Develop feasible microgrid models for regional commercial and industrial businesses.	YKA
Principle 3 – We will provide energy safely, sustainably and reliably		
F13	Monitor the Stand-Alone Power Systems for performance.	EEN-EX
F14	Broaden engagement and continue to trial Dynamic Operating Envelopes to include chargeable loads e.g. batteries and electric vehicles.	EEN-EX
F15	Install 40MWh of battery storage across Queensland.	EEN-EX YKA
F16	Continue the installation of 18 new chargers in western Queensland under Stage Three of the Queensland Electric Vehicle Superhighway.	YKA
F17	Conduct feasibility studies into decarbonisation of isolated systems, with the goal of supplying 100% of community power from renewable energy resources during periods of high solar PV generation.	EEN
F18	Further research into the customer reliability experience for regional locations to inform network investment.	EEN
Principle 5 – We will support customers facing vulnerable circumstances		
F25	Action research to better understand the lag effects of COVID-19 and strategies to address these.	EQL
F26	Progress the Financial Inclusion Action Plan Build Phase.	EER
F27	Implement policies supporting domestic violence prevention.	EER
F28	Partner with local councils to improve energy management in First Nations communities.	EER



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