



2021-22 Energy Charter disclosure statement accountability assessment



Our fourth annual disclosure statement was developed with input from subject matter experts across the business. Our performance against the Energy Charter Maturity Framework was informed and rated by our senior leaders.

Covering the period 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, this year's disclosure highlights leading initiatives that demonstrate our progress in embedding a customer-centric culture, involving our customers in decision making, generating increased utilisation of our existing network, facilitating new generation connections and sustainably evolving our operations towards net zero emissions.

It also highlights critical issues, including external pressures on affordability and the need to drive affordable transition to a decarbonised future through integrated, progressive implementation that supports business operation through every stage of change and responds to shifting market and customer demands and regulatory complexities.

Accountability assessment

In line with the Energy Charter's new accountability process, we asked members of our Customer Advocacy Group to formally review our disclosure. We also asked members how they wanted to review our disclosure, including whether or not they saw value in using an independent consultant to gather and collate feedback. Members confirmed their preference was for us to gather and collate feedback.

We offered each member opportunities to gauge our customer-centricity performance and maturity self-assessment, and help identify gaps and areas for future customer experience improvements. A short survey helped ensure that the views of customers they represent could be heard, understood and acted on. A Zoom session held on 18 October invited verbal comment.

Our customers and partners, other stakeholders and members of the general public were also encouraged to have their say via a public survey.

Submissions were open from Friday, 30 September to Monday, 31 October 2022.

Response

Customer Advocacy Group

Feedback during the formal consultation period was limited. We understand that this was due to timing difficulties and associated competing priorities. These included:

- > members' concurrent consultation on our and other NSW DNSPs' Regulatory Proposals
- > a difficult environment due to multiple flooding events, cost of living pressures and supply chain issues, resulting in significant workload pressures demanding members' primary focus
- > quarterly Customer Advocacy Group meetings occurring outside the consultation period
- > some changes to membership of the Customer Advocacy Group, which largely occurred between August and October.

However, members have engaged on several initiatives noted in our disclosure, as well as on development of our 2024-29 Regulatory Proposal.

We are now working to capture members' feedback during their quarterly meetings for inclusion in our end of year reporting for this financial year.

General public

Essential Energy's Energy Charter web page received 208 visits. However, no specific feedback was submitted by individual customers, customer or partner groups, stakeholders or the general public.

We will implement additional social media strategies to obtain feedback around our next disclosure.

Feedback summary

Overall, the feedback we received was positive:

Disclosure content

'This year's disclosure authentically reflects business achievements and progress.'

'It calls out customer understanding and efforts to improve affordability.'

'It engenders trust that Essential Energy is doing the right thing – keep on this trajectory.'

Performance ratings

Survey results placed Essential Energy's performance within the top or second top rating when measured against the Energy Charter Principles. Customer-centricity was noted as Essential Energy's greatest strength.

| Rating | Principle |
|-------------|--------------------------|
| Outstanding | Principles 1 and 3 |
| Great | Principles 2, 4, 5 and 6 |

Respondents agreed that Essential Energy:

- > listens to customers and their voice is crucial to informing our business decisions
- > is easy to do business with for customers and stakeholders
- > is working collaboratively across the energy sector to improve outcomes for customers.

Areas for improvement:

Respondents noted that:

- > while Essential Energy is providing energy, safely, reliably, there are opportunities to do more in this category
- > Essential Energy is a good first responder in natural disaster events, but needs stronger focus on network resilience
- > in future disclosures, the number of initiatives that diverge from BAU and go beyond regulatory requirements should be clarified.

Accountability process evaluation

Following review, in future we propose augmenting the current process as follows:

- > highlighting key initiatives that relate to the five Energy Charter Principles during quarterly Customer Advocacy Group meetings and internally capturing members' feedback
- > circulating the disclosure to Customer Advocacy Group members for review during October and capturing feedback via a simple, web-based survey and Zoom meeting
- > pro-actively engaging with other customer and partner groups, stakeholders and members of the general public through social media channels to encourage feedback via a web-based public survey
- > seeking additional disclosure review by a new customer council which we will establish in 2023 to complement our existing Customer Advocacy Group. This new council will comprise connected residential and small business Essential Energy customers, providing another direct customer voice channel. Our Customer Advocacy Group members will continue to advocate on behalf of the customers which their organisations represent
- > publishing combined feedback on our website in November.

For further information, please contact:

Mike Cole, Head of Customer | **E:** mike.cole@essentialenergy.com.au | **M:** 0408 094 719