

# TOGETHER, WE CAN ACHIEVE MORE

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ActewAGL Energy Charter  
Accountability Disclosure

January – June 2019

**ActewAGL**

## MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

ActewAGL has been an active part of the Canberra region for more than 100 years. As a provider of essential services, our aim is to continue to ensure we provide safe, sustainable and affordable energy to our community.

We are proud to be one of the 23 signatories in the world-first, whole-of-industry Energy Charter. We are excited to work shoulder-to-shoulder with other industry leaders to help cultivate cultures and solutions that will deliver energy in line with community expectations.

Together, we'll find new ways to support our customers manage their bills, empower them to use energy more efficiently, provide more clean energy options and improve our services.

In committing to the five principles, we've already seen a positive impact across our business, inspiring initiatives like our ActewAGL Vulnerability Action Plan and an increased focus on engaging customer feedback into our product development process. This feedback loop gives us a laser sharp focus on what customers are saying matters most. It's also shown us how much more can be done.

As our first disclosure report, this document establishes a baseline against which we can assess our performance into the future. It highlights the areas in which we can make improvements and where we need to focus next. ActewAGL will continue to look forward – to collaborate across the supply chain and to help drive the changes that will lead to better outcomes for all.

We look forward to the next stage of the Energy Charter process and its continued role in guiding our ongoing improvements and, ultimately, better outcomes for the customers we serve.



**Sam Sachse**

Acting Chief Executive Officer, ActewAGL

## SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

### Why we are an energy charter signatory

ActewAGL Retail (ActewAGL) has provided energy to the people of Canberra and the region for more than 100 years. We are a local energy retailer and we live in the community we serve. This gives us a unique ability to stay connected to our customers and community. Our history and position also means we have a responsibility to our community and this responsibility is something we take very seriously.

### How is being a signatory contributing to positive change

Our commitment to the Energy Charter has provided us with a focused opportunity to ensure changes implemented are in line with this nationally consistent set of principles, to ultimately drive improved customer outcomes. Through engagement with our customers and by training our staff, we are well positioned to deliver an ongoing transformation program, optimising services to meet and exceed the expectations of our customers and community.

Our work over the initial reporting period has demonstrated the opportunity to build on our capacity for data-led insights, to more thoroughly anticipate and understand our customer needs and gauge satisfaction.

Improvements we've made so far:

- Introduced automated post-call surveys.
- Increased our investment in Customer Service Benchmarking Australia (CSBA) measurement and reporting.
- Conducted regular quality assurance monitoring calls.
- Shifted to a more contemporary quantitative research platform.

We've increased our visibility across a range of important customer experience outcomes:

- Our Customer Experience and Training Officer is focusing on the results of our satisfaction surveys, ensuring we make the changes required to deliver improved outcomes for customers.
- Rolling out more regular and intensive training for our people, including removing barriers that impact our average handling time.
- Introduced an enhanced self-service phone IVR (Interactive Voice Response) and holding monthly customer feedback meetings.
- Established a new team to increase our capability in product development, ensuring products are designed with the customer in mind. By the end of this year, we will have introduced two new products to the market which have been designed to respond to what customers are saying matters most.

## KEY PRINCIPLE HIGHLIGHTS

### Principle One

ActewAGL recognises that company culture is at the heart of delivering a better customer experience. ActewAGL is utilising CultureAmp, an independent company culture survey, to understand the current culture and where improvements can be made. We are also taking significant steps to build upon our capabilities to strengthen transparency and communication across the company.

To further support our work to put customers at the centre of our business, we're also currently transforming from transactional reporting to a deeper level of customer understanding and exploring the introduction of a Customer Reference Group. This Group will provide engagement across a representative group of residential and business customers in order to gain insights, test ideas and develop new, customer-led responses to everything we do.

### Principle Two

Significant changes are happening in the area of digital engagement. We've identified additional opportunities to meet customer expectations with insights into our digital services, and the range of services available through the ActewAGL online platforms. Both our website and online 'Self-Service Platform' are being completely redesigned, based on customer feedback. The new platforms are due to be launched December 2019. This will result in:

- Delivering a better customer experience
- Customers will have the tools to look further into their energy usage and bills
- Improve cost transparency, comparison and introduce other additional functionality.

### Principle Three

Safety to our customers and employees is of the highest importance and to ensure this focus remains, we've made improvements to our safety management system (Guardian), to increase visibility around safety compliance for contractors.

### Principle Four

We've also taken action to open The ActewAGL Energy Bar, to be located in the Canberra CBD. A walk-in customer service desk, this service will support customers who prefer face-to-face contact, or require extra personable, focused help with their bills or complex questions. It will allow our customers to have direct and immediate access to personalised energy assistance.

### Principle Five

Staying Connected, our financial hardship program, is currently being reviewed. This program is strong and benefiting many customers in need, however we have recognised an opportunity to look deeper into customer vulnerability. This has inspired the development and implementation of our ActewAGL Vulnerability Action Plan. Working with community groups, including Care Financial Services and the Salvation Army, we are pivotal in providing pathways and additional support to some of our most vulnerable customers. Our customer service training has expanded to include training from Lifeline, to assist employees in identifying customers that need additional support.

Our approach to sponsorships and strategic partnerships is changing. We're shifting our focus from traditional sponsorships commitments to a Community Partnerships model, to ensure our customers remain at the centre of what we do.

We're confident that many of the decisions taken in the reporting period will result in real and measurable positive customer outcomes over the near-term, and we look forward to continuing to report on our progress.

## PRINCIPLE ONE:

### We will put our customers at the centre of everything we do and the energy system

ActewAGL has provided energy to the people of Canberra and the broader region for more than 100 years. As a local energy retailer, we have always had a unique ability to stay connected to our customers and community.

Our commitment to the Energy Charter has provided us with a focused opportunity to assess how our business is performing with regard to putting our customers at the centre of what we do. It has reinforced the importance of the right culture and the impact of this on our customers, as well as our business. We understand that the 'cultural climate' will guide the decisions we make, the way we behave and the outcomes we deliver. Our focus on getting culture right will ensure that we deliver on our customer commitments as well as on the long-term success of our business.

Over the period covered in this disclosure, we have commenced work on a new strategic direction with outcomes aligned to our Energy Charter commitments. We have commenced a process of customer journey mapping and are investing in the collection of more sophisticated insights from customers and our people.

Our new strategic direction is already showing positive results. Customer complaints have reduced and our customer satisfaction research has found that more of our customers' issues are being resolved faster and more efficiently.

However, there is so much more we can do. Our Energy Charter commitments have highlighted areas that need improving, particularly in our ability to understand customer needs in a deep, qualitative sense. We have identified an opportunity to improve ActewAGL's data and analytics capabilities—which underpins a more personalised service driven by genuine consumer insights.

## PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

### 1.1 Have a Board that actively oversees the business' culture in order to be aligned with Energy Charter Principles.

The ActewAGL Joint Venture Board is actively engaged in overseeing and measuring organisational culture and continually remains well connected to the business culture. However, we identified an opportunity to strengthen formal reporting and measurement arrangements and have taken steps to ensure this is addressed as part of our suite of initial Energy Charter actions.

<b>Strategic direction</b>	Over the period covered by this disclosure statement, the ActewAGL Board has driven the development of a new strategic direction which aligns with our Energy Charter commitments. This strategy has been approved at board level and underpins the new set of company values that will drive decisions and operations.
<b>Board updates</b>	The Board endorses ActewAGL's approach to putting the Energy Charter Principles in action. Board papers have been updated to reflect our participation in the Energy Charter, with a new section dedicated to updates on specific actions related to our Energy Charter commitments.
<b>Culture survey and measurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A culture survey was conducted across all employees, with results benchmarked and formally reported to the Board. CultureAmp was used for this research—a contemporary solution that allows us to move from annual culture surveys to regular 'pulse' research.</li><li>• This approach increases visibility around the cultural climate and allows us to respond rapidly to any emerging issues. Although our engagement score has increased slightly from last year, there is still room for improvement. We understand the factors that positively impact employee engagement and in order to improve in this area, an organisational culture program will commence during the next reporting period. The effects and outcomes will be disclosed as a part of our Maturity Statement.</li><li>• Our new strategic direction, which has been shared with employees, will give them a better sense of our shared vision and purpose, encouraging renewed engagement.</li></ul>

## 1.2 Have management operationally accountable for embedding a 'customer at the centre' culture.

As part of our commitment to the Energy Charter, we have realigned our strategic direction to ensure the customer is at the heart of everything we do. We have introduced new Key Performance Indicators (KPI) at all levels to drive accountability and we expanded our team to include a dedicated role focused on customer experience.

<p><b>Strategic direction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over the period covered by this disclosure statement, ActewAGL Retail has developed a new, board-endorsed, strategic direction that aligns with our Energy Charter commitments.</li> <li>The central pillar of the new direction is to reorient our positioning around what customers say matters most.</li> <li>This strategic direction underpins our plan to make 'ActewAGL your trusted provider, delivering fair value/competitive pricing, reliability and putting you in control of your energy through simple solutions.' This will be the guiding principle against which all decisions are made.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shift from 'customer service' to 'customer experience'</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We've shifted from 'Improved Customer Service,' to 'Improved Customer Experience,' to create a climate of putting the customer at the centre, throughout their journey with ActewAGL. To achieve this, we've reshaped our most senior Customer Service role. We also have a dedicated Customer Experience and Training Officer, to drive projects and improvements that support this principle.</li> <li>We're also in the process of completing in-depth customer journey mapping, on everything from connections to billing and we've introduced automated customer satisfaction surveys after every call and on My.ActewAGL (our self-service platform). These initiatives will inform the opportunities and gaps that require process improvements and additional training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contact Centre changes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of our endeavour to put the customer at the centre, we've made some changes to the contact centre.</li> <li>The first was to remove the 'average handling time' barrier so that our contact centre team can spend as much time with customers as they require to resolve their issues.</li> <li>We've introduced automated post-call surveys in order to get immediate feedback on customer satisfaction.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Performance Indicators</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have introduced Key Performance Indicators at all levels (including reporting to the Board) that are aligned to this strategy.</li> <li>Management has also set KPI's regarding customer experience in our contact centres and through the online self-service portal.</li> </ul>

## 1.3 Ensure their workforce is engaged and incentives are aligned to drive positive customer outcomes.

We have a dedicated Customer Experience Committee which has recommended a series of policy improvements to enhance customer outcomes.

<p><b>Formal recognition program</b></p>	<p>ActewAGL's formal recognition program, Shooting Stars, has a strong focus on rewarding excellence in customer service. Categories of recognition include community focus, innovation, safety, superior customer service, environmental sustainability and outstanding team performance.</p>
<p><b>Customer Experience Committee</b></p>	<p>We've established a Customer Experience Committee. This employee-led committee meets monthly, to gauge our levels of customer service and recommend employee-led initiatives, specifically designed to positively impact on customer experience.</p>
<p><b>Formal customer service training and development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have increased our investment in formal customer service training and development, to optimise and drive peak performance. This year, the focus of training was 'Voice of the Customer'. The online and email training program involved all contact centre employees and encouraged them to listen intently to a customer's needs and address their issue at the first point of contact.</li> <li>• Subsequently, based on our internal post-call feedback surveys, our customer satisfaction score has improved from 75% in July 2018, to 90% in May 2019.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improved Contact Centre resources and procedures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We've commenced a project to improve resources, such as the contact centre scripts and online materials, to enhance the user experience for both our contact centre team and our customers.</li> <li>• We've removed the average handling time barrier. Contact centre team members no longer have to 'clock-watch' call times but are instead encouraged to spend as much time as necessary with customers, to ensure they resolve the customer's issues satisfactorily.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Clear set of guiding principles</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We've created a clear set of guiding principles, to help our contact centre team to 'know the customer, hear the customer, and help the customer'.</li> <li>• These principles encourage the team to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understand the customers and their needs</li> <li>– Encourage feedback to improve service</li> <li>– Support customers to find relevant information easily</li> <li>– Equip customers with multiple chances to achieve their goals</li> <li>– Innovate and adapt to industry and technological changes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### CUSTOMER OUTCOMES:

#### Customer Service Benchmarking Australia (CSBA) reporting

The range of initiatives undertaken, around customer experience, has led to a significant improvement across a range of measures, including CSBA outcomes:

The CSBA SenceCX assessment provides insights as to the success, ease and sentiment of problem-solving interactions with customer service employees.

Since 2018, we have moved from number 119 overall to fourth overall in the independent ranking.

ActewAGL is also now ranked number one in the utilities sector.

## FEEDBACK BASED OUTCOME

The direct feedback we've been receiving, through our automated 'post-contact' surveys, has led to actionable changes and improved customer outcomes.

### CUSTOMER FEEDBACK:

"Customer service girl tried to sort out my problem. During the phone call, she was yawning, and I can hear her drinking something as well. Not professional at all".

### ACTION:

After reviewing the recording of the call, the customer statements were found to be true. The agent was coached in this matter.

### CUSTOMER FEEDBACK:

"Allow employee to accept account payments over the phone".

### ACTION/RESPONSE:

We've introduced an automated IVR, to accept credit card payments, 24/7.

## 1.4 Processes to determine customer and community needs and be accountable on how feedback has been considered and incorporated into decision making.

Our customer research (qualitative and quantitative) has been constant in the business, over many years. As we move towards our goal of best-practice through continuous improvement, we've identified that our existing measures lack depth, relevancy and currency. Innovation has been slow in this area and we've not adequately leveraged innovation in technology and data.

### Internal quality controls

- Regular silent monitoring, where senior and experienced team members listen in on calls. All contact centre team members are assessed this way at least twice a month.
- Introduction of automated post-call surveys, as well as monthly feedback sessions, based on these surveys. One of the outcomes from these changes was the management of negative customer feedback.
- Where we previously collected this information and considered input in an aggregate sense, we now contact customers who provided negative feedback directly, in an attempt to resolve or better understand their issue.

### CEO discussions with various interest groups

- Our CEO hosted a series of personal discussions with various interest groups, regarding the consumer impact of pricing changes. Participants included community sector organisations and government. The two-way dialogue was intended to improve our understanding of the most effective strategies for easing the impact of price increases, while ensuring that those on the frontline of service delivery were fully briefed on a new suite of measures, introduced by ActewAGL, under our Vulnerability Action Plan (also launched in June and discussed in more detail at Principle 5.4). Those consulted included:
  - Canberra Business Chamber
  - ACT Council of Social Services
  - Council of the Aging (ACT)
  - Care Financial Services
  - Salvation Army Moneycare Queanbeyan
  - Salvation Army Moneycare Canberra
  - St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn
  - ACT Chief Minister.



**Product Development Team**

- We've increased our capability in product development, to broaden our suite of products, to increase choice and better respond to customer needs.
- The team, established in early 2019, ran a series of product development workshops across the business—generating many new product and new service delivery improvement ideas, which have been subsequently tested with customers. The ideas are being refined for development, with the intention of launching a minimum of two new products by the end of 2019.

**OUTCOMES**

Reviewing our monthly Customer Feedback Survey Report, we can see that the focused actions we've been taking to improve customer satisfaction have had a significant impact on the overall percentage of satisfied customers. We're encouraged that over the past 12 months, this report shows that customer satisfaction has increased by nearly 20%.

**1.5 Demonstrate a culture of innovation and collaboration for positive customer outcomes, including through the sharing of insights with government, research institutions and across the supply chain, as well as joint advocacy on regulatory, policy and operational issues.**

ActewAGL has continued an active leadership role on energy issues in the ACT and leveraged our significant presence to drive collaboration across the sector, and across the community. We have a rich history of collaboration with government, research institutions, the tertiary sector and industry and have pioneered unique and innovative outcomes. We continue to drive leadership, continuous improvement and new thinking in this space, as evidenced by our activities in the current reporting period.

**Canberra Innovation Network**

- Leveraging our position as a leader within the community, we are sponsoring initiatives that lead to positive community and consumer outcomes. With this in mind, we've signed a new agreement with the Canberra Innovation Network (CBRIN).
- CBRIN is the region's leading innovation incubator and our partnership will support their ongoing operations, as well as directly fund investment in innovation concepts, in the area of future energy technology.

**CEO discussions with various interest groups**

Please refer to principle 1.3

**Endowment Fund**

- In collaboration with Icon Water, ActewAGL provides an endowment fund, which the ANU utilises for ground-breaking research, in the area of renewable energy and water sustainability.
- One of the most recent projects involves investigating new technologies or energy storage that will help take the pressure off Australia's electricity network and provide greater and cleaner energy security.

**ACTSmart program**

- We work with the ACT Government on the ACTSmart program, which supports customers to save energy and water, reduce waste and cut greenhouse gas emissions.
- We've partnered with the ACT Government, to upgrade 450 heating and cooling appliances in ACT Housing properties.

## Clean Energy Council

- As a member of the Clean Energy Council, we're involved in industry discussions and updates with other members and stakeholders, supporting the development of renewable energy and energy storage.

## Partnership with ACT Government and Neoen

- We're partnering with the ACT Government and renewable energy generator Neoen, to make Canberra the first Australian city to pilot a publicly available hydrogen vehicle refuelling station.
- This is part of the ACT Government's mission to deliver 100% renewable electricity by 2020 and to achieve zero net emissions by 2045.

### **Focus areas for July 2019 - June 2020**

- Significantly enhance our multi-channel service offering, by developing a new, user friendly website, with integrated account management that increases usability and intuitiveness.
- Improve our ability to gain deep qualitative insights from consumers and move beyond transactional reporting, through the development and implementation of a Customer Reference Group.
- Improve our data and analytics capability, to help us provide a more personalised service to our customers.
- Introduce common reporting measures across all customer contact points, led by a move to standardised Net Promoter Scores for phone, online and in-person touch-points.
- Implement a new organisational culture program.

### **Customer feedback driving future focus:**

*"I wouldn't have had to contact the customer service officer if the self-service platform was better."*

*"Make your website easier to navigate."*

*"Website could be more user friendly, especially for oldies!"*

*"Your systems are a bit antiquated."*

*"I tried doing this via the website but could not. Bad website design."*

## PRINCIPLE 2

### We will improve energy affordability for customers

At ActewAGL, we recognise that energy is an essential service for Australian households and businesses. We will do what we can to make energy more affordable, by driving business efficiencies to reduce our cost to serve, by offering customers energy deals that best meet their needs and helping them to manage their energy use.

Our successful 'Winter Winner' plan (30% off gas usage and 15% off electricity usage) is an example of a unique energy plan designed to meet the localised needs of our community. With Canberra's cold winters and the resulting increase in gas usage, this plan benefited a significant number of our existing customers, who made the switch from a standing offer to this discounted plan over the last six months.

We are particularly proud of our ActewAGL Energy Savings Solutions program (AESS). AESS is a suite of programs dedicated to promoting heating/cooling appliance upgrades and rebates. We actively encourage and incentivise customers to upgrade inefficient heating/cooling appliances.

Prior to the AESS, ActewAGL undertook approved energy saving initiatives under the ACT Government's Energy Efficiency Improvement Scheme. From 2013, ActewAGL not only met the scheme's required targets, we exceeded them. The scheme has seen close to 19 000 lower income households benefit.

Over the reporting period, our AESS program has delivered more than \$1.2m in rebates on the upfront cost of a new efficient heating/cooling system. Customers with a concession card are incentivised to invest in a more efficient heating/cooling appliance through access to a higher rebate which ensures they can receive the ongoing energy saving benefits from heating/cooling appliances with a higher efficiency rating.

We recognise that we still have significant room for improvement. Smart meters can benefit customers, by providing them with the power to become more aware of their energy usage. The uptake of smart meters in our region has been below expectations and apart from new connections, take-up has decreased.

Our most significant investment in this area, as a result of our Energy Charter commitment, is the investment in capability and capacity. Our focus on product development recognises that we have a responsibility to design innovative energy products that respond to a broader range of consumer preferences and needs. This is an area we identified early on as an opportunity and we are excited by the potential this offers our customers. We look forward to reporting on our progress in future updates.

## PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

### 2.1 Ensure that investment, commercial and operational decisions are cost efficient, and explain how customers benefit from these decisions.

We want to reduce the cost to serve our customers. This will allow us to offer more value and to develop new products to benefit our customers. To achieve this, we are working on achieving efficiencies across the business through optimisation strategies.

#### Project Hub

- Our customer experience is being hampered by our systems. For this reason, we have established Project Hub—a new large-scale project, aimed at redesigning, promoting and further enhancing My.ActewAGL (our self-service platform). This will simplify engagement, empower our customers and ultimately reduce operational costs.
- Improving our internal data and analytics reporting and integrating this into executive decision making.
- New Business Intelligence (BI) package puts current, live data at the fingertips of everyone at ActewAGL, allowing us to spot trends and act as they occur.

<b>Increased transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of our initial response to the Energy Charter, we have commenced a project to review and improve customer communication around our regulatory processes (AER regulatory proposals and Tariff Structure Statement.)</li> <li>We identified a need to provide increased transparency on our pricing and 'pass through' costs/margins for customers. In order to achieve this, we have created a series of simple, but informative, videos that assist customers in understanding how their energy cost has been determined. The aim of this is to instil greater trust in the sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Revised sponsorship focus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over the reporting period, we have reformed our sponsorship program. Now known as a 'community partnerships program', we are actively targeting and investing in partnerships that matter, as well as those that have the potential to deliver both short and long term benefits to the community and our customers.</li> <li>For example, we have extended our support of Care Financial Services (a community partner that delivers financial coaching and advice to 'at-risk' sections of the community). We have also launched a range of new partnerships focused on innovation and research.</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Offer customers energy deals that best meet their needs, supported by effective tools and incentives for customers to manage their energy use and cost.

<b>Relevant discount offers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognising Canberra's infamously cold winters and the associated heating bills, we introduced a discounted plan that provides 30% off gas usage and 15% off electricity usage.</li> <li>There has been a high uptake of this plan with a significant number of our existing customers switching to the plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Roll-over market contracts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There's been a marked increase in the number of customers switching to better plans, year on year. To ensure we always offer our customers peace of mind, we've introduced roll-over market contracts, so they will never be without a discount, even when their current plan expires.</li> <li>Customers are able to switch to a better or different plan to meet their energy needs at any time.</li> </ul>
<b>Smart meters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the key areas on which we need to focus is the uptake of smart meters. A smart meter will give customers greater visibility around their energy usage and will lead to better bill accuracy.</li> <li>ActewAGL is planning to improve its smart meter adoption through the integration of smart meter upgrades into a range of new offers during the next reporting period.</li> </ul>
<b>Energy Savings Solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ActewAGL has a suite of programs called 'Energy Saving Solutions' dedicated to actively encouraging and incentivising customers to upgrade inefficient heating/cooling appliances. Over the reporting period, these programs have positively impacted over 2,500 customers and delivered a significant sum in rebates.</li> <li>Instead of just an upfront discount, these rebates are spread across the customers' bill, to increase long term energy affordability, both in terms of efficiency and 'on-bill' savings.</li> </ul>
<b>Bring your bill day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Bring Your Bill' day is an event that was introduced to assist customers in understanding their electricity consumption in order to help them lower their future costs. During the reporting period, four 'Bring Your Bill Day' events were hosted in different locations.</li> <li>138 people attended these events.</li> </ul>

## Project Hub

- We are focused on meeting customer expectations on digital experience, with 'personalised' self-service and web platforms that are mobile responsive.
- We're investing in capabilities and technology to provide even better personalisation, curation, and improved usability and design. To ensure the digital experience meets expectations (with the aim to exceed expectations), we involved customers through interviews and quantitative studies, to better understand their needs and wants and ensure our planning was fuelled by genuine consumer insights.
- We've also engaged 'human experience' designers in the process, to ensure the best customer experience. And, throughout development, we've conducted dip in/dip out testing, as well as deep-dive usability tests. Our new digital 'face' is due to launch in December 2019.

## 2.3 Work cooperatively across the supply chain and with other stakeholders to improve affordability over the short and long term.

### ACT Housing

- ActewAGL recognises that customers on low incomes, like those in public housing, can sometimes pay the highest proportion of their incomes on energy bills. In order to ensure public housing tenants are able to receive the benefits of investment in energy efficiency appliance upgrades, we have worked with the ACT Government to install energy efficient reverse cycle appliances in ACT Housing properties, improving the energy costs and health outcomes of ACT Housing residents.

## 2.4 Innovate to deliver competitive energy solutions for business and residential customers.

### Fridge Buyback

- As part of our Energy Saving Solutions suite of programs (for residential customers), old, inefficient fridges have been bought back from customers.
- This saves them in disposal costs and ongoing energy costs, as well as providing a credit on their next bill.

### Big Business Light Switch

- As part of our Energy Saving Solutions suite of program (for business customers), during the reporting period, a significant number of businesses in the ACT took up the offer to change their lighting to energy efficient LED alternatives, for free.

### Partnership with ACT Government and Neoen

- We're partnering with the ACT Government and renewable energy generator Neoen, to make Canberra the first Australian city to pilot a publicly available hydrogen vehicle refuelling station.

### Canberra Innovation Network

- As part of the Canberra Innovation Network, ActewAGL works with the likes of the ANU, University of Canberra, CSIRO, Canberra Institute of Technology and UNSW.
- This will accelerate innovation and diversify the economy in the region. As an energy partner, our involvement and interest is focused on energy innovation.

## 2.5 Advocate on behalf of customers to improve energy affordability through engagement in regulatory and policy processes.

<b>Work with regulatory bodies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We participated in the AER's Draft Hardship Guideline Workshop. This looked at various aspects of putting the 'customer at the centre', including; customer rights, assessing whether a customer is facing hardship, retailer responsibilities, training requirements and communication with customers.</li> <li>ActewAGL regularly participates in workshops and attends forums hosted by the AER, AEMC and AEMO.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulatory and policy processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have submitted to and engaged with relevant regulatory and policy processes, including formal engagement with Ministers, reinforcing our commitment to actions that will put our customers first.</li> </ul>
<b>CEO Interactions</b>	Please refer to principle 1.3

### OUTCOMES

A series of in-depth, one-on-one discussions with our CEO and various interest groups has led to a range of initiatives that aim to boost affordability and the capacity of vulnerable customers to manage their energy costs. These include:

- Launch of the 'Bring your bill day' initiative.
- Development of our first ever Vulnerability Action Plan.
- Improved collaboration with organisations like Care Financial Services and the Salvation Army.
- Extended funding commitment with Care Financial Services.
- Refocusing our sponsorship program to address real and relevant customer and community needs.

### Focus areas for July 2019 - June 2020

- As part of the investment in a customer centred design to our website and increasing the number of genuinely useful digital tools we provide for customers, we have identified an opportunity to further develop, simplify and launch a new online tariff calculator.
- Increased uptake of smart meters. This will help our customers keep tabs on their energy costs, in order to save and feel more in control.
- Develop and launch a broader range of offers, to improve access to market offers that are reflective of a range of customer needs and lifestyles.

## PRINCIPLE 3

### We will provide energy safely, sustainably and reliably

ActewAGL has been an active part of the ACT community for over 100 years and in that time reliability and safety have been hallmarks of our service provision. We recognise our responsibility to respond to the shift to a cleaner energy system that is already underway. We understand the value energy brings to the community and the potential consequences and impacts for customers when reliability and quality of energy supply is compromised.

While our unwavering commitment to safety has led to a strong culture in this area, we're also acutely aware that continuous focus and improvement is paramount to maintaining excellence in this area. We continue to work with distributors to ensure that we can provide energy safely, sustainably and reliably. We will listen to our customers' preferences and demonstrate how they inform decisions and outcomes, as well as communicate community benefits.

## PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

### 3.1 Maintain the highest standards of safety for their people, the community and the environment.

Over the reporting period, ActewAGL has continued to focus on safety as a core principle. Our efforts in this area have not merely centred on maintaining existing programs and policies, but instead, have led to a series of new initiatives, designed to respond to emerging issues.

<b>Comprehensive suite of solar safety and maintenance material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We reviewed and developed a comprehensive new suite of solar safety and maintenance material, to improve customer awareness and behavioural change in this area.</li> <li>• This project has resulted in new printed and online solar safety and maintenance guides, along with a solar maintenance video.</li> </ul>
<b>Safety culture survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In May 2019, we participated in a Safety Culture Survey. This survey is based on the Hudson Maturity Safety model and completed through the Global Safety Index.</li> <li>• Our overall results saw us achieve 'Proactive' status. While positive, the results are trending down since the last survey, which signifies that more work still needs to be done.</li> </ul>
<b>Dedicated safety team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have restructured our safety branch to create three specialised teams, one with a dedicated focus on ActewAGL.</li> <li>• At a Joint Venture level, the Head of Strategic Safety and Risks is responsible for leading strategic and operational safety across the business and further improving reporting and visibility through to Board level.</li> </ul>
<b>Safety review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We've undergone a comprehensive Safety Review (conducted by EY), introduced a Safety Roadmap and installed a network of 'High Vis TVs' to communicate and affirm our safety standards and important daily reminders.</li> </ul>
<b>Mental health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our employees' mental health is also part of our health and safety focus and we've completed a mental health road show as part of our strategy in this area.</li> <li>• Our customers' mental health has also been a focus area, especially for our Contact Centre employees. Our Contact Centre employees received specialised training, from Lifeline, which recognises their increasing role as the 'accidental counsellor' and equips them with skills to identify signs of stress, as well as strategies for effectively managing those situations.</li> <li>• We have put processes in place, like our red folder initiative, to allow our employee to readily access support from an experienced supervisor while in-call.</li> </ul>

## Gold Accreditation with ACT Healthier Work

- Through our Safety Ninja program, we've achieved Gold Accreditation with ACT Healthier @ Work (an ACT Government program) in recognition of our ongoing commitment to a safe and healthy workplace.
- In order to achieve this, we focused on a different health and safety message every month through competitions, posters, events and expert talks.

## Guardian Workplace Health and Safety Management System

- We've upgraded our Guardian workplace health and safety management system. As a retailer, many of the safety related considerations are present in our supply chain.
- As a result, we've commenced work to add a specialist contractor module, to give us greater visibility of the safety performance and compliance of contractors across the board.

### 3.2 Engage with customers and the community on investments, and manage operations in line with their expectations, demonstrating how communities benefit.

This is an area where we have identified that additional focus is needed, in order for ActewAGL to meet its Energy Charter obligations. We've already taken a range of decisions that will see us increase engagement with the community and we're refocusing our significant community support program.

## Sponsorship Shift

- ActewAGL maintains a significant community support and sponsorship program. We recognise our role as an essential service provider and significant employer in our region, along with the corporate responsibility we have to support the region that supports us.
- Over the reporting period, we completed a full review of this program and refocused our community partnerships towards increasing the capacity of our customers and our community to use and manage energy more efficiently.

## Future Customer Reference Group

- Our Energy Charter commitment has led us to review our qualitative engagement with customers and as a result we have taken a decision to establish a Customer Reference Group.
- This decision will provide us with direct engagement across a representative group of residential and business customers, allowing us to gain insights, test ideas and develop new, customer-led thinking.

## More sophisticated quantitative inputs

- We've engaged a new quantitative research provider (Kantar) to achieve more dynamic and contemporary measurements around quantitative customer research.
- From these results, it's clear that competitive prices and enhanced access to billing data are the greatest challenges that we face if we want to continue to improve customer satisfaction. Enhancements to My.ActewAGL (our self-service platform) will deliver more sophisticated data and account management features.

### 3.3 Develop business strategy and manage operations to respond to the shift to a cleaner energy system that is already underway.

Our strategic plan has been developed to support the ACT Government's policy of achieving net zero emissions in the Capital Region by 2045. The decisions we make now will help our region achieve this goal and we are well aware of the significant role we have to play.

## ActewAGL New Energy

- Quantitative research, conducted by Kantar, showed that perceptions around 'innovation' were an area requiring some focus. We are looking to establish 'ActewAGL New Energy' — a purpose-built organisation, to lead our efforts in this area.
- The team is responsible for leading the development and commercialisation of innovative new energy solutions and utility-related services for the Capital Region.



### 3.4 Work with government, other energy businesses, the community and industry bodies to develop a planned transition to a cleaner energy system.

ActewAGL is heavily engaged with government and the energy sector around plans for transitioning into a cleaner energy system. While we've always been active and supportive of the transition plans, we are now reshaping our role as a leader in our region.

<b>Solar for low income households</b>	<p>During the reporting period, ActewAGL worked with the ACT Government, to deliver their Solar for low-income households program. Over the January-July 2019 period, around 200 low-income customers received subsidised solar installation. In addition to the ACT Government subsidy, ActewAGL also offers customers an interest free repayment plan for the balance.</p> <p>At the time of writing this disclosure, ActewAGL's involvement with the program has now been completed.</p>
<b>Energy Savings Solutions</b>	<p>ActewAGL encourages energy efficiency, through rebates on upgrades to energy efficient appliances, our Big Business Light Switch and Fridge Buyback schemes.</p>
<b>Clean Energy Council</b>	<p>As a member of the Clean Energy Council, we're actively engaged in industry discussions and updates across the sector, supporting the development of renewable energy and energy storage.</p>

### 3.5 Facilitate new services and technologies that support sustainable energy solutions that meet the changing needs of the market.

Through our new strategic direction, ActewAGL has recognised that it needs to play a more active leadership role in this space. This was also highlighted through our recent brand research—having a strong heritage and being caring and trustworthy, we're not perceived as innovative or environmentally friendly. That changes now, with significant new investments in capabilities and resources.

<b>Hydrogen Vehicle Refuelling Station</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the reporting period, we announced a new partnership with the ACT Government and renewable energy generator Neoen, to make Canberra the first Australian city to pilot a publicly available hydrogen vehicle refuelling station.</li> </ul>
<b>Virtual Power Plants (VPP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ActewAGL has developed a VPP capability providing grid support services. VPP's can trade in ancillary service markets.</li> <li>• Revenue from these markets are shared with the customer as well as optimising battery operation for the greatest economic return through maximising self-consumption or optimising charge/discharge periods in relation to price signals.</li> </ul>
<b>Solar and battery system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have formalised our partnership with SolarHub, one of the largest solar and battery providers in the Canberra region, to encourage and support customers to switch to solar and battery systems.</li> </ul>

### 3.6 Implement solutions across the supply chain:

- a. that support energy connection, service and reliability that meets customers' needs.
- b. to resolve service issues that impact customers and the community.

As a result of our Energy Charter commitment, we have commenced significant reforms in this area including a customer experience review, customer journey mapping to better understand the customer experience

and needs across the supply chain and the appointment of a specialist to guide the implementation of recommendations.

<b>Customer Journey Mapping</b>	We have commenced customer journey mapping across the energy system, with detailed journey mapping completed for connections and moving.
<b>Customer Experience Specialist</b>	A new Customer Experience Specialist will implement recommendations resulting from the customer journey mapping.

**Focus areas for July 2019 – June 2020**

- The establishment of the Customer Reference Group is a priority as it will inform the decisions and changes we implement to fulfil our Energy Charter commitments.
- Expand our product range with a minimum of two new products based on demonstrated customer insights.
- Re-focus our community partnership program and introduce measurements to track the impact of these investments, in terms of customer and community benefit.

**CUSTOMER OUTCOMES**

The introduction of feedback surveys, following every customer interaction, and the actions taken based on these insights, has led to an increase in customer satisfaction, month on month. Complaints across each category are reducing, following the introduction of immediate feedback to call operators. An example of this in action:

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK	INTERNAL RESPONSE AND ACTIONS
<p>I asked about my 25% discount not showing on my bill. The first answer your staff gave me was not logical so I explained that I am a qualified Accountant and I could not understand his explanation. So he went and checked and then apologised for his first response being wrong and gave another reply. I asked that he note that I did not start using my gas heating until after I arranged the 25% discount so almost all the bill should be discounted rather than by date proportion. He said he understood and that would happen and he had noted my account but I have no confidence.</p> <p>Have your staff better trained and understand how your billing works.</p>	<p>The customer is receiving a 25% Pay On Time (POT) discount. I believe there was initially some confusion on when the customer will see the discount. As it's a POT discount, I believe the Agent likely did not relay that the customer will see the discount on the next invoice.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> I will review the resource material and training content to ensure the information is clear and available to all staff.</p>
<p>N/A - My meter was read incorrectly. The assistant on the phone was kind, courteous, empathic and very helpful with the path to resolution. I have been reissued another bill with ample time to pay. I do not have any suggestions for improvement.</p>	<p><b>ACTION:</b> Feedback will be provided to (name deleted for privacy)</p>

## PRINCIPLE 4

### We will improve customer service

ActewAGL has been recognised in the past for its outstanding customer service. We've also maintained a commitment to employing local people for our local Contact Centre.

This said, there are things we have learned over time and we're continuing to learn more.

ActewAGL recognises that customer service from energy businesses should be respectful, efficient and seamless. We are determined to make it easy for everyone to get the best product or service for them, regardless of their ability to engage, or interest in, the energy market. We will continually improve our processes and communication and will work together to provide better services across the supply chain to meet customer needs. These improvements evidence our commitment to improving the service to our customers into the future.

#### 4.1 Enable customers to get fair outcomes regardless of their ability or desire to participate in the energy market.

We recognise that it should be easy for customers to make informed decisions about their energy usage and services, that outcomes should be transparent and that all customers should benefit from the transformation of the energy system.

<b>Assistance in various languages</b>	Customers who communicate using a language other than English, or require an alternate method of communication, such as relay services, are supported in better managing their energy costs through the provision of an interpreter service contact option, as well as TTY, for the hearing impaired.
<b>Collaboration with community support organisations</b>	We continue to work with community organisations, including Care Financial Services, the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Society, to help refugees, migrants, indigenous and other culturally and linguistically diverse customers to access financial inclusion initiatives
<b>New Vulnerability Action Plan</b>	As part of our commitment to the Energy Charter, we launched our Vulnerability Action Plan, which aims to proactively identify and support customers who could potentially experience financial hardship.
<b>Tailored payment arrangements</b>	We offer tailored payment arrangements to assist customers in accessing affordable energy solutions. All customers on the ActewAGL hardship program (Staying Connected) have a tailored payment arrangement and receive incentives for making consistent, consecutive payments.
<b>Consistent messaging across all channels</b>	We have introduced 'equality of opportunity' into our retail communications, to ensure that we communicate the same message through multiple channels (TV, radio, outdoor, digital mediums, printed mailers and email letters). So, whichever medium a customer prefers, we take steps to ensure they can access the same information and opportunities as others.
<b>Easy to switch</b>	ActewAGL has implemented changes and will continue to monitor switching behaviours to ensure customers are provided with the information and support they need to switch between offers/retailers.  We are also proactively contacting customer's on the ActewAGL hardship program to ensure they are accessing our best available market offer.

## CUSTOMER OUTCOMES

### INCREASE OVER THE REPORTING PERIOD

ACT Electricity hardship customers receiving concessions they weren't otherwise receiving. Increase of 20 %

New reporting metrics have been introduced, as a result of changes to AER Performance Reporting. This will enable us to provide more in-depth measurements in this area moving forward.

#### 4.2 Empower customers by:

- a. making sure all communication is clear, in plain terms, accessible and understandable;
- b. providing insightful and useful information and accessible tools; and
- c. streamlining access to, and portability of, customer energy data.

Over the reporting period, we have commenced several significant projects, with the intention of significantly improving our multi-channel service capability.

<b>New customer help desk</b>	Customers have indicated a desire to speak face-to-face to an ActewAGL employee about their energy needs or bills. During the reporting period, we commenced construction and fit-out of a new customer help desk in Canberra's CBD. Dubbed the 'Energy Bar', this initiative will significantly increase accessibility and will be launched in September 2019.
<b>Online tariff calculator</b>	We are building an online tariff calculator to empower customers and help them to more easily understand how tariffs are structured and what this means for them.
<b>Content reviews</b>	We have introduced more in-depth reviews of all content to ensure that it's clear, accessible and understandable. When our Customer Reference Group is up and running, we will utilise it to review our communications, in order to underpin customer and experience-led decision making.
<b>Redesigned Self-Service Platform</b>	Following consumer engagement and research, we are in the process of redesigning our Self-Service Platform, in order to provide the best possible user experience. Please refer to principle 2.2.
<b>Customer letters</b>	All customer letters were reviewed to improve ease of understanding and simplified based on feedback. 72 customer letters were reviewed and re-written.
<b>Assistance in various languages</b>	Customers who communicate using a language other than English, or who require an alternate method of communication, are acknowledged, recognised and supported. Please refer to principle 4.1 for details.

## 4.3 Ensure that innovation and design in products and services, as well as communication platforms and tools, are driven by customers' needs and preferences.

Our approach to the design of new products and communication platforms has been improved through an increase in customer insights. To do this, we invested in a specialist resource and commenced a process of reengineering key consumer touchpoints so they are driven by customer feedback. In addition, customer engagement is now being embedded across all key business areas, including product development.

<b>Self-Service Platform</b>	We've employed a User Experience Specialist and have a dedicated team working on improving our self-service platform (My.ActewAGL). The system has undergone a restructure to ensure a customer-centric focus and is due to be launched during December 2019. We've also implemented a Self-Serve IVR, enabling customers to make card payments, get extensions or billing info, 24/7.
<b>Automated Surveys</b>	The automated post-call surveys gives us instant feedback on customer experience and insights into where we can improve.

## 4.4 Have effective and accessible dispute resolution processes, co-ordinated across the supply chain, to resolve customer issues and implement process improvements in response.

We recognise that the manner in which complaints are handled forms a critical component of customer service. While we have generally performed well, when it comes to dispute resolution, there have been areas for improvement identified across the supply chain (for example, where a dispute crosses distribution and retail businesses).

<b>Detailed journey mapping</b>	We have embarked on a process of undertaking customer journey mapping, to better understand the gaps in service provision across channels. We are taking steps to close these gaps and improve our ability to resolve complex complaints faster.
<b>Dedicated Customer Liaison team</b>	ActewAGL has a Customer Liaison team that manage dispute investigation and resolution, under the guidance of the Group Manager Customer Engagement. The Customer Liaison Team Leader analyses all complaints and runs weekly issues and process improvement meetings, to identify and implement ongoing process improvements.
<b>Complaints and dispute resolution</b>	Our complaint and dispute resolution processes are readily available on our website. If we fail to respond to a customer's complaint within 20 days, or the customer is dissatisfied with our decision about a complaint, it will be escalated to management for review.
<b>Policies and procedures</b>	We also have documented policies and procedures in place and provide training to our team regarding customer complaints and dispute resolution.

## **CUSTOMER OUTCOMES (Over the reporting period)**

### **Billing complaints**

Electricity (ACT) – reduced by 67%

Gas (ACT) – reduced by 63.3%

### **Contact Centre**

#### **Percentage calls answered within 30 seconds**

1 January 2019 – 39.3%

30 June 2019 - 71.5%

#### **Calls abandoned**

1 January 2019 – 30.6%

30 June 2019 - 3.2% calls abandoned

### **Focus areas for July 2019 - June 2020**

- A new Customer Reference Group will help us to provide insight-led customer experiences. The establishment of this group is a key priority over the coming year.
- The opening of our 'Energy Bar' will directly address a need, expressed by customers, for face-to-face contact.
- The redevelopment of the ActewAGL digital Self-Service Platform will ensure that we are providing intuitive and simple services when and how customers prefer.
- The launch of the new ActewAGL website, including a tariff calculator, will significantly improve the accessibility of information for customers.

## **CUSTOMER OUTCOME**

The Customer Liaison team has introduced fortnightly Process Improvement Meetings. This forum is used to share issues and trends that are identified through the complaint handling process. These meetings have led to many changes in our business processes. These include improving the explanation of the 'demand tariff' on our website, following feedback by customers to Contact Centre operatives

## PRINCIPLE 5:

### We will support customers facing vulnerable circumstances

ActewAGL is experienced in supporting customers who have difficulty paying their bills during times of financial hardship. Our Staying Connected program has provided personalised support to help customers get back on track, since 2010. We also actively collaborate with government and community service organisations, to help customers in need of additional support.

While our Staying Connected program has had a significant impact on those facing financial hardship, as part of our response to the Energy Charter we identified that a focus on hardship alone is too narrow. Not all experiences of vulnerability will be the same and providing support requires solutions tailored for a wider range of circumstances.

We have been working to establish processes for early recognition of, and engagement with, customers facing vulnerable circumstances, to support these customers and collaborate with the community and government to assist those who need it most. As a result of these learnings, over the reporting period, we developed and launched our first Vulnerability Action Plan.

## PRINCIPLE IN ACTION

### 5.1 Have processes to enable early identification of and engagement with customers at risk of vulnerability, coupled with intervention measures that can prevent customers falling into hardship.

<b>Staying Connected Program</b>	Customers at risk of hardship are identified in a number of ways, both externally and internally, including through ongoing engagement with our customer service representatives.
<b>Enduring Support Scheme</b>	We launched the Enduring Support Scheme, supporting customers who have unique requirements as a result of domestic or family violence. Given the sensitive nature of this area, ActewAGL will report on incremental increase in uptake, in percentage terms, in future reports.
<b>Bring your Bill Day</b>	Through our 'Bring Your Bill' days, customers have had the opportunity to bring their bill along and ask employee any questions they have, about their energy service or usage. This has become a key touchpoint for identifying customers facing hardship and enables employee to proactively offer solutions or referrals to our Staying Connected program, as well as other relevant services.

### 5.2 Provide products and services that are tailored to customers facing vulnerable circumstances and support them to get back on track

<b>Vulnerability Action Plan</b>	ActewAGL developed and launched its Vulnerability Action Plan, outlining our activities and commitment to increasing financial inclusion and resilience amongst our customers.
<b>Flexible payment arrangements</b>	Customers experiencing hardship are offered flexible payment arrangements, as well as exceptions to criteria which may otherwise restrict access to market offers, such as e-billing and payment via direct debit. Accounts are also assessed to ensure customers are receiving all available concessions and discounts.

**Energy Support Fund.**

In 2017/18 and 2018/19, ActewAGL and the ACT Government committed to spend up to \$500,000 in each year (\$1m in total) to support the community via energy vouchers, financial education and other programs. This Energy Support Fund is continuing in 2019/20, with ActewAGL and the ACT Government committing once again to spend up to \$500k supporting the community.

**CUSTOMER OUTCOMES:**

As at 30 June 2019, hardship electricity customers in the ACT, on a market offer, increased by 38.8% from the previous quarter.

We continue to encourage customers on a SRC to benefit from a discount offer and regularly reach out to encourage they contact us.

Through our collaboration with Care Financial Services 1,044 customers received \$100 energy vouchers from the Energy Support Fund and 27 were offered one-on-one financial capability appointments. These appointments are basic financial literacy and budgeting sessions by the Energy Support Employee at Care Financial Services. A number of these transitioned into formal financial counselling appointments.

**5.3 Provide flexible solutions that are easy to access and are provided by specially trained frontline employee with expertise in supporting those customers who face additional barriers to engaging with the energy market.**

<b>Training and professional development</b>	Our ongoing training and professional development programs were updated, to better equip our customer service employee to identify signs of financial vulnerability, as well as to proactively and effectively offer referrals and solutions. Some of this training is now presented by Lifeline. To test our employees' ability to sense and react appropriately to these signs, we include vulnerability and hardship scenarios in some of our 'mystery shopper' calls.
<b>Customer Experience and Training Officer</b>	We've employed a dedicated training officer to design and deliver contemporary customer service training that responds to employee and customer feedback and emerging trends.
<b>Enduring Support Scheme</b>	We launched our Enduring Support Scheme, supporting customers who have unique requirements as a result of domestic or family violence.
<b>Staying Connected program</b>	Customers on the Staying Connected Program receive incentive payments, after making an agreed number of consecutive payments. This encourages customers to make regular and achievable contributions towards their energy costs.  Between 1 January and 30 June 2019, 2,725 incentive payments were made.
<b>Improved online contact</b>	The contact rate (measured on completions and page visitation), for our website's customer assistance page, has been performing below expectations. Following consultation, this contact option is being redesigned, with a focus on increased accessibility and usability.
<b>Increased face-to-face capacity</b>	We are increasing our outreach capacity through the involvement of specially-trained hardship employees in shopping centre kiosks and at Bring your Bill days.



## 5.4 Take a collaborative approach, partnering across the energy supply chain and with government and community service organisations to implement innovative solutions that improve outcomes (affordability or experience) for customers facing vulnerable circumstances.

<p><b>Energy Efficiency Program</b></p>	<p>We are working with the ACT Government, to ensure that households with concession cards are considered first for Energy Efficiency program support, as well as working closely with ACT Housing.</p> <p>We offer higher rebates for households with concession cards, for energy efficient heating and hot water appliances through our Energy Savings Solutions.</p>
<p><b>Vulnerability Action Plan</b></p>	<p>Our focus has remained on working directly with community organisations. Our Vulnerability Action Plan was a direct result of feedback received from these organisations and customers.</p>
<p><b>Debt Reduction Heating Upgrade</b></p>	<p>During the reporting period, we've completed a debt reduction heating upgrade trial and updated two gas heating systems to 6-star ducted gas heating systems. This Debt Reduction Heating Upgrade Program (DRHUP) is run in collaboration with the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) and Care Financial Services. The sensitive financial position of these customers meant that they were unable to make a capital contribution to the costs of the installations. As such, ActewAGL worked in partnership with the ACAT and Care Financial Services to deliver free heating upgrades (ducted gas heating and reverse cycle air conditioning).</p>
<p><b>Collaboration with community support organisations</b></p>	<p>ActewAGL works closely with Care Financial Services, Salvation Army Moneycare, St Vincent De Paul, the ACTsmart program, Lifeline Canberra, LegalAid, DVCS, COTA and our partners in business, to provide ongoing training and feedback to our employee. All our customer-facing and Contact Centre employees undertake mental health awareness training, including training for managing difficult conversations.</p>
<p><b>Collaboration for our Enduring Support Scheme</b></p>	<p>Our Enduring Support Scheme assists customers who have engaged financial counsellors to manage debts incurred through domestic or family violence. We are currently developing processes and policies for a possible alignment with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service 'Staying@Home' program, Care Financial Services 'Assistance Beyond Crisis' program and the ACAT 'Debt Horizon' Program.</p>
<p><b>CEO discussions with community support groups</b></p>	<p>Our CEO held a series of one-on-one discussions with representatives from community sector organisations who provide services to financially vulnerable members of the community.</p>
<p><b>Community run workshops</b></p>	<p>Participation in various community-run workshops has led to a number of Bring Your Bill days, as well as the decision to open the 'Energy Bar' shopfront in Canberra's CBD.</p>
<p><b>Solar for low income</b></p>	<p>We work with the ACT Government and have installed around 200 new solar systems for low income households. This is partly funded by government grants and an interest free repayment plan from ActewAGL. This assists customers with energy savings over the longer term.</p>

## Focus areas for July 2019 - June 2020

- Improved data and analytics will help us to proactively identify customers at risk of hardship. We see a key opportunity to leverage deep data and analytics capabilities to help us with the earlier identification of customers experiencing hardship.
- We have identified an opportunity for expanded outreach, through the use of shopping centre kiosks and the "Energy Bar" concept.

### CUSTOMER OUTCOMES

Energy Support Vouchers provide hardship customers with an annual \$100 credit, which can be applied to gas or electricity in times of need. These are distributed by Care Financial, St Vincent de Paul Society, Salvation Army and ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

**4,000 Energy Support Vouchers have been issued**

**86% of voucher recipients had since made four or more payments**

**1 in 4 recipients have subsequently paid their debt in full**

**41% have reduced their debt following receipt of the voucher**

*"I thought I was getting the concession rebate for my pension concession card but when we spoke to the consultant from the Staying Connected program at ActewAGL, it turned out that I wasn't. I was very pleased to get a very notable credit to my account as it was back-dated. I also got a discount on my bill. Because of the changes we made in the budget coaching session, I could comfortably use the air conditioning unit during the very hot period in the summer. Previously I used fans, but it was so nice to use the air conditioning without having to worry about the impact on my bill."*

Budget Coaching Client

***ActewAGL***