

2021 The Energy Charter

Disclosure Report to the IAP

Gaining Momentum



Message from our Chair

Gaining Momentum

We are now in the third year of the Energy Charter. We continue to build momentum both for driving better outcomes for customers, communities and culture change across the sector. We have collaborated with hundreds of people from 18 Energy Charter signatories and many more customers and end-user representatives bringing to life our values “Be invested, make a difference”, “Be open, learn and improve”, “Think big, be bold”.

On the back of this work, it is encouraging to see that the most recent [Energy Consumers Australia sentiment survey](#) in June 2021 found that:

- Over 80 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the provision of their gas and electricity
- Over 70 per cent of respondents found that energy billing and usage information was clear and simple to understand
- Over 70 per cent of respondents were satisfied that energy is value for money

This positive sentiment reflects a very different picture to when the Energy Charter first started three years’ ago – with an almost a doubling of the number of satisfied energy consumers. While this jump in satisfaction is due to many factors, the presence of the Energy Charter signals the clear commitment from our signatories to the significant culture shift that is afoot.

Our 2020-1 Energy Charter Disclosure focuses on how signatories have stepped beyond business-as-usual and regulatory requirements to deliver better outcomes for customers through their collective action. It is framed to respond to the recommendations of the Independent Accountability Panel (IAP) in December 2020.

Supporting our customers and communities

The last 12 months have continued to be “a year without precedent” for many of our customers, communities and signatories. However, as the IAP stated in their last Report, “a tough year can set us up for the future if we learn the right lessons.” Through our 12-month [COVID-19 Customer Vulnerability Research](#) with Deloitte, we have learnt a lot. We know that while optimism in the general population is improving, there are ongoing negative impacts on the emotional and financial wellbeing of our customers. The June 2021 survey found:

- 45 per cent of people agree that COVID-19 had increased their stress levels
- 56 per cent of people on JobSeeker have reported a decrease in household income
- 31 per cent of people indicated that they spent more on energy bills over the last 3 months
- The proportion of people needing hardship support has persisted
- The gap is widening for JobSeekers, renters and young people (between 18-25 years)

The focus of Energy Charter signatories over the last 12 months has been to provide additional support for customers in vulnerability. We have leveraged the Deloitte Research to help shape our responses to the impact of COVID-19, both individually and collectively. Energy Charter #BetterTogether responses span initiatives such as “Train the Trainer” programs in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, knocking on customers’ doors to avoid energy disconnections and collaborating on across industry communication campaigns “We’ve got you” to let customers know what support is available to them. On the back of the final piece of Deloitte Research in September 2021, the CEO Council will be reviewing proposals for additional support for those in need.



Bias towards action

The Energy Charter, as a collaboration across [18 CEOs in the energy sector](#), works to put customers at the centre of our businesses and the sector. We are focused on the “highest common denominator” – that is, pushing each other to deliver for customers by promoting examples of better practice for signatories to adopt and collaborating to deliver specific projects through our #BetterTogether initiatives. Our bias is on action.

What have we done that has made an actual difference for the customer this year? Our top four:

1. Customers in vulnerable circumstances impacted by COVID-19 were supported individually and collectively by Energy Charter signatories, informed and guided by an evidence based drawn from the 12-month COVID-19 Customer Vulnerability Research by Deloitte
2. Commercial and industrial customers, including small businesses, benefitted from increased transparency, accountability and fit-for-purpose products and services through the National Customer Code for Energy Brokers, Consultants and Retailers with 40+ signatories
3. Directors and Boards have better practice options to ensure the customer voice is appropriately influencing their strategic decision-making and the direction of energy businesses through the Customer Voice @ Board Level Resource (responding to IAP Report 2019)
4. Collaboration with the water sector in a first-ever WE (water + energy) Collaborate Memorandum of Understanding to drive tangible customer outcomes and insights sharing between the sectors. We have hosted over 300+ participants learning from 12 speakers on topics ranging from consumer engagement, innovative approaches to customer co-design and indigenous engagement

Last year the IAP referred to the growing cultural gap between Energy Charter signatories and non-signatories. To extend our reach and ensure inclusivity, we announced a [new signatory strategy](#) welcoming #BetterTogether Collaborators and Energy Supporters to create opportunities for all organisations in the energy sector to become more customer-centric. We’re excited to have the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and Simply Energy join us in 2021.

Driving culture change

Culture change is a critical part of the Energy Charter. Our unique architecture helps to drive customer-centricity from the very top. In his interview with the IAP, Mark Algie, Board Director of Energy Queensland noted:

“What the Energy Charter does is sharpen that focus and hold us accountable and provide a mechanism for us to actually explain what initiatives we are putting in place and what successes we are seeing as a consequence of being focused taking a customer centric approach to the way that we run our business.”

In addition to the culture change within individual signatories, the Energy Charter CEO Council creates a rare opportunity for CEOs from across the energy supply chain to come together and discuss important customer issues. Over the last year, the CEO Council has had conversations on how best to support customers negatively impacted by COVID-19 across the supply chain. As a result, we endorsed a first-of-its-kind Framework for Vulnerable Customer Support across the Supply Chain, a valuable strategic tool for co-ordinated assistance for customers now and into the future.

Gaining momentum

There’s always more to do, but the Energy Charter’s culture change is gaining momentum. Transparency around measurable outcomes for customers has helped accelerate continuous improvement activities across Energy Charter signatories.

On behalf of the CEO Council, the Industry Working Group (IWG) and everyone else who has contributed, I am proud of the work of the Energy Charter over the last year.

I also wish to specifically thank Energy Consumers Australia who have supported the Energy Charter from its inception and only recently stepped down as the Chair of the End-User Consultative Group. I also extend appreciation to the end-user representatives who collaborate and provide their robust and invaluable feedback through the EUCG and other forums during the year.

We welcome the input of the IAP and all stakeholders in 2021 to propel us further in the right direction.

Frank Tudor,
Chair of the CEO Council, MD Jemena

Independent Accountability Panel recommendations



In its 2020 Report, the Independent Accountability Panel (IAP) made 13 key recommendations which we have grouped in four key themes in Appendix A:

1. Collaborating for the potential post-pandemic debt tsunami
2. Net zero emissions
3. Better support for consumer advocacy
4. Genuine Board involvement

Our disclosure this year responds directly to those themes, highlighting individual and collaborative signatory responses generated through our [#BetterTogether initiatives](#) (#BTs).

Collaborative action

#BTs are collaborative initiatives across the energy supply chain that:

1. Focus on customer pain points and co-design opportunities through an innovation framework (ideate – incubate – accelerate) to deliver better outcomes in alignment with Energy Charter Principles
2. Drive customer-centric culture change deeper within signatories, creating a #BT community that connects change champions across the energy sector. It allows them to share experiences and learn from others, while contributing to better customer outcomes. Individuals and organisations are showcased for the inspiring work they are doing.

Energy Charter #BTs represent a significant cultural shift in the way we approach customers and collaborate. Using human centred design techniques, we seek to understand the challenges from different perspectives, including importantly from the customer’s perspective. Using the innovation framework, we co-opt into agile teams across the supply chain to make improvements based on a “fail-fast”, learn and improve model. Some of our #BTs have been archived (#BT Bushfire Response, #BT Future Energy Skills) as a reflection that we need to be focused on the things that matter to our customers and communities.

As foreshadowed in our disclosure last year, we have strengthened the #BT outcomes for customers, stretching them beyond a group of innovation “projects” to a narrative that influences signatory’s strategy, structure and culture. This has been achieved through senior sponsorship of initiatives (often CEOs), alignment with individual KPIs and strategic business objectives, engagement with customers and their representatives as part of the #BT initiatives, tighter project management and regular reporting to the CEO Council and EUCG.

We also continue to be guided by our membership in [The Ethics Alliance](#) on how we approach the processes and customer outcomes through #BTs, particularly on issues such as “fairness” (Principle 4.1) and balancing short- and long-term customer outcomes. We participate in a number of regular Ethics Alliance “Gatherings” with Chairs, CEOs and functional areas including people and culture.



1. Collaborating for the potential post-pandemic debt tsunami

Sharing insights

It was appropriate for most of these recommendations in Theme 1 to be addressed individually by signatories, with insights sharing as appropriate across Energy Charter signatories. Some examples of ideas shared across Energy Charter signatories to support customers in financial difficulty and to reduce payment difficulties include:

- ActewAGL’s approval from the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) to move hardship customers onto better deals ([ActewAGL Disclosure 2020¹](#)) and its [Energy Support Voucher Program](#) with CARE Financial
- AGIG’s first-of-a-kind [Vulnerable Customer Assistance Program](#) was approved by the AER on the basis that it aligned with Energy Charter commitments. AGIG has recently advertised for a dedicated Manager Customer Service to bring this program to life, designing and operationalising a fit-for-purpose program in order to deliver the required services in partnership with others
- Aurora Energy’s [Your Energy Support \(YES\) hardship program](#)
- EnergyAustralia’s early hardship identification approach to proactively identify residential and businesses customers in vulnerable circumstances and [dedicated hardship support programs](#)

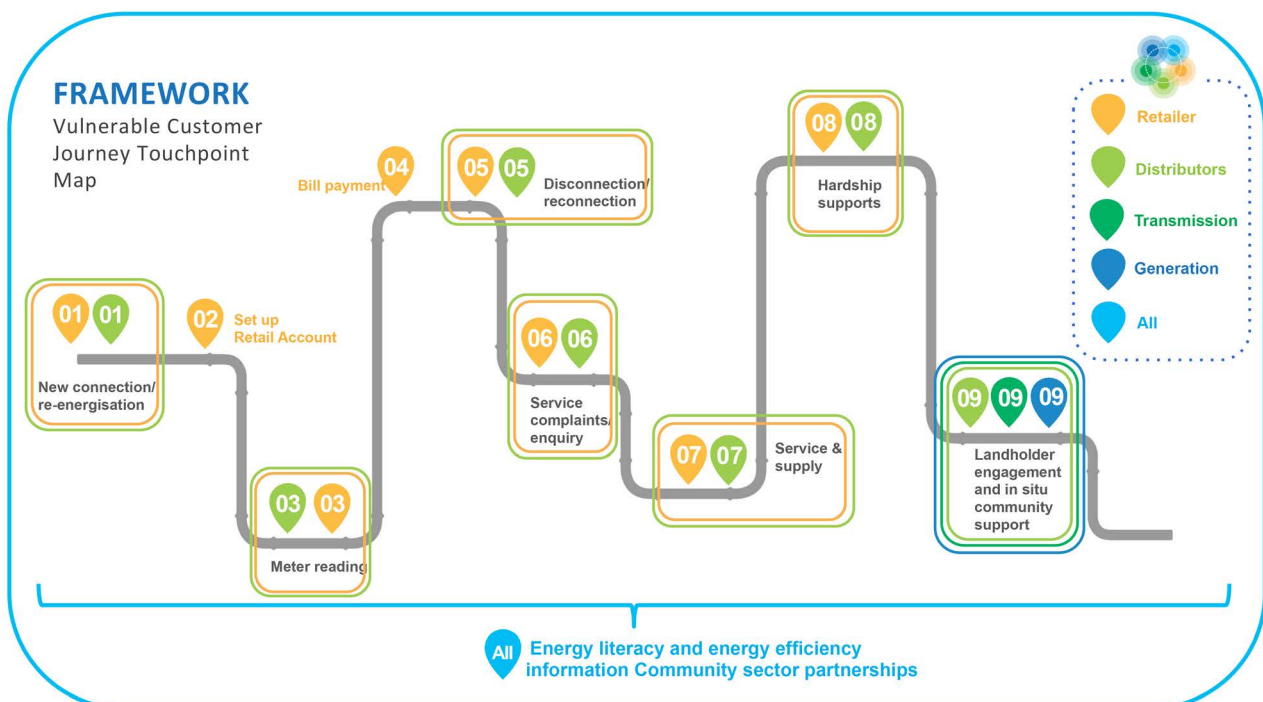
- Powershop’s [Power it Forward initiative](#) for small business as a way for customers to support other customers in bushfire impacted communities simply by purchasing power

The Energy Charter held discussions with the End User Consultative Group (EUCG) about better practice for retailers with respect to those that cannot pay their energy bills. These discussions ultimately led to unique collaboration between the Australian Energy Council, energy companies and a broad range of [consumer advocates](#) to develop [Best Practice for Energy Retailers Assistance](#), an initiative supported by Energy Charter signatories.

Collaborative work

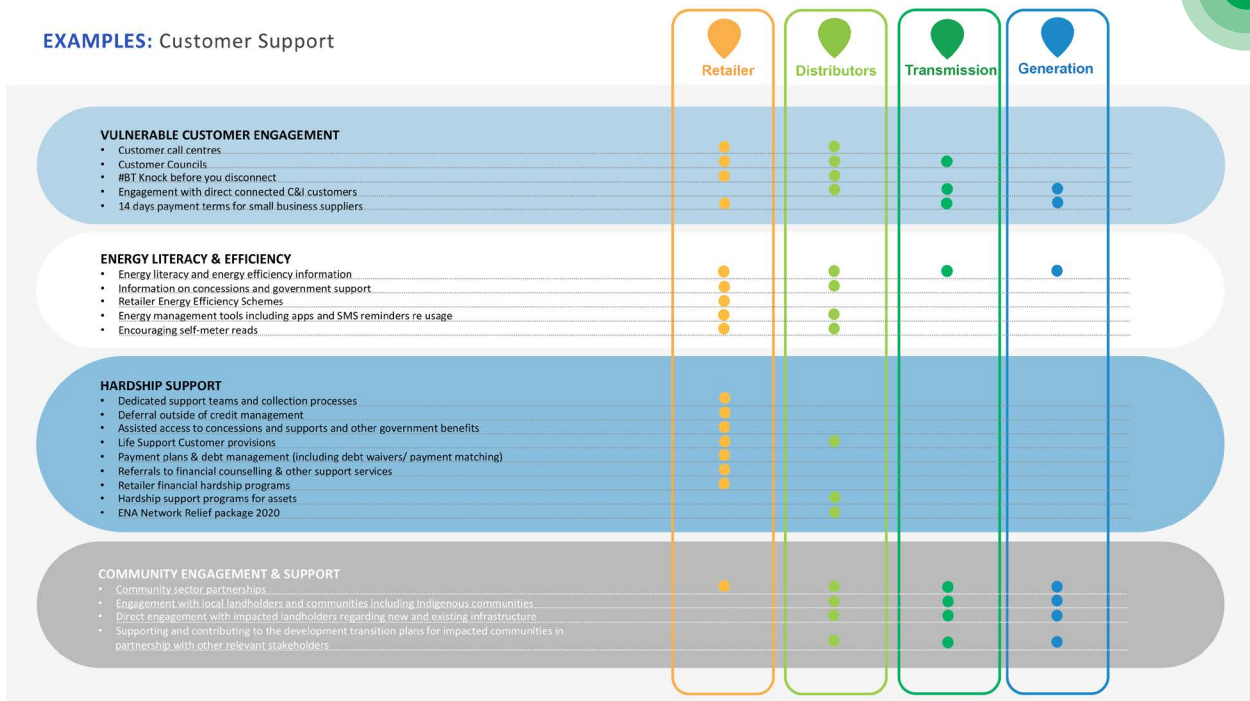
During 2021, Energy Charter signatories have mapped touchpoints and support for vulnerable customers across the supply chain under the direction of the CEO Council. This creates an important tool for greater support for vulnerable customers in a way that is coordinated across the supply chain, potentially avoiding gaps and overlaps.

This [Framework](#) will form the basis of recommendations to the CEO Council in September 2021 for opportunities for greater coordination and impact through #BTs focused on support for customers facing vulnerable circumstances.



1. ActewAGL sought approval from the AER to transition any Staying Connected customers who had remained on a standing offer, to a lower, discounted price; without obtaining explicit informed consent.

EXAMPLES: Customer Support



“As a network business there are opportunities for us to do more for those customers who are in need. Through our customer engagement, we understand our customers expect us to be there for those in the community that need us more, be it when we’re in the field, or taking a call. This program of activities positions us to identify and engage with customers at risk and provides tailored services to prevent them falling into hardship so they can get back on track.”

- [Kristen Pellew, Head of Stakeholder Engagement at AGIG](#)

Collaborative work through the #BetterTogether initiatives to support customers in vulnerable circumstances included:

- [#BetterTogether COVID-19 Customer Vulnerability Research \(Principle 5\)](#) - based on initial research by [Jemena in 2020](#), and led by Jemena, ActewAGL, Energy Queensland, Essential Energy and Powershop, together with Simply Energy, are collaborating with Deloitte to conduct research nationally in four quarterly rounds over 2020-2021 (Dec 2020, March, June and Sept 2021). The research has been launched at CEO Insight Panel events with leaders from across the sector. Insights have been leveraged to better understand customers impacted by COVID-19 and how the energy sector can help them. We have worked closely with a Customer Outcomes Group to help strategically guide the research and outcomes, with consumer advocates being given access to the raw data to assist their work. Two CEO Insights Panels were held in March (Frank Tudor Chair, Energy Charter, Janine Young, NSW Ombudsman, Aimee McVeigh QCOSS and Shannon Hyde, Simply Energy) and June (Simon Cordon, ESC, Cassandra Goldie, ACOSS, Lawrence Jones, Edison Electric Institute and Michael Dart, Energy Queensland) to share the research more broadly across the sector. The final CEO Insights Panel will be held in September.
- [#BetterTogether Knock before you disconnect trials \(Principle 4\)](#) - led by Multinet Gas Networks (MGN) with EnergyAustralia, Powershop and Alinta we have built on the work of Essential Energy in December 2019 where field crews delivered letters advising customers to contact their retailer in regard to outstanding payments. As a result, 80% of disconnections were cancelled and customers stayed connected to their energy.
- [WE \(water + energy\) Collaborate MoU](#) - high-level commitment to collaborate for #BetterTogether customer outcomes between the Energy Charter and Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA). The MoU is aimed at delivering better outcomes to our shared customers through collaboration and organisational efficiencies, with a focus on improving trust in both sectors and was signed off at a Board/ CEO Council level in May 2021.
- [#BetterTogether Energy Literacy for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities \(Principle 5\)](#) - led by Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy and Jemena, together with AGL and Origin Energy, we are creating a platform for conversations around energy to increase energy literacy in CALD communities by supporting an innovative energy literacy online ‘train the trainer’ program run by the Voices for Power project of the Sydney Alliance. The Sydney Alliance is a collaboration of community leaders and institutions from seven CALD communities in Sydney.



- [#BetterTogether “We’ve got you” communications \(Principle 5\)](#) – led collectively across Energy Charter signatories, we continued with six phases of the communications in over 10 culturally and linguistically diverse languages aimed to encourage customers to reach out to their energy retailers if they need support. For example, Phase 4 uniquely focused on front line staff, showcasing the real people within our businesses that are passionate about delivering for customers, including essential service workers and field staff. Phase 6 targeted at overseas students, young people, women and renters in line with Consumer Policy Research Centre research into COVID-19 impacts.
- [#BetterTogether Communal Content Hub \(Principle 4\)](#) - led by Jemena, Powershop, ActewAGL and Essential Energy collaborating with Energy WA, the Hub aims to improve the standard and consistency of customer communications and deliver efficiencies in the production of content across the supply chain for all customers. Through 2021 it continued to grow as a resource library featuring customer and community facing communications and links to useful information on a range of topics about energy on a regular basis.
- [#BetterTogether Getting Concessions to the right people \(Principle 5\)](#) - led by ActewAGL, we worked with the water sector during COVID-19 on reciprocal call centre scripts for energy and water businesses to encourage hardship customers to access concessions. We are also supporting the work of the Australian and South Australian Councils of Social Service in research about concessions across all States and Territories (due late 2021).
- [Australian Energy Foundation \(AEF\) Life Support Customer \(Principle 5\)](#) – we have been supporting the AEF on their ECA funded research initiative for life support customers. This involved Energy Charter signatories attending a roundtable in August 2020 and facilitating workshops for the AEF in 2021 to provide industry insights. The focus for 2021-22 is providing guidance on AEF recommendations and encouraging industry-led solutions on the ground.

2. Net zero emissions

In response to the IAP recommendations, the Energy Charter CEO Council discussed the various pieces of work being done through the Energy Security Board, the Integrated Systems Plan and various regulators and industry bodies in this space. It was decided that it was best to collectively support ongoing initiatives regarding net zero emissions rather than create new ones through the Energy Charter, particularly in light of AGL and Origin Energy departing from the Energy Charter in 2020.

During 2021, Energy Charter signatories APA and Jemena proudly announced their commitment to Net Zero by 2050.

Collaborative work

Collaborative work through the #BetterTogether initiatives included:

- [#BetterTogether Better Practice Landholder and Community Engagement Guide \(Principle 3\)](#) - collaboration between landholder representatives and other community stakeholders (including the National Farmers Federation, Queensland Farmers’ Federation, NSW Farmers Federation, Victorian Farmers Federation, AgForce Queensland and Cotton Australia), Powerlink Queensland and TransGrid to co-design a Better Practice Landholder and Community Engagement Guide. The Guide, to be released in September 2021:

- Shares the high-level principles that help guide our engagement with communities
- Assists in the management of our impacts on them
- Guides any mutual value opportunities which may exist

“Collaboration through the Energy Charter has enabled the NFF the opportunity to directly engage with the energy industry as whole, work effectively to overcoming challenges and create shared outcomes”

- [Ash Salardini, Chief Economist at National Farmers Federation](#)



- **#BetterTogether Transitioning Communities (Principle 3)** – CS Energy, CleanCo, APA, EnergyAustralia, Essential Energy, Jemena and Powerlink Queensland regularly share insights on better practice on engagement with transitioning communities, case studies from other industries and overseas, ways to create opportunities and choice for impacted people including employees and contractors and discussing opportunities for empowering communities. The group regularly engage with leading thinkers in this area to help guide better practice.
- **#BetterTogether Future Energy Skills (Principle 3)** - Energy Queensland and Powerlink, with support from CS Energy, APA and TransGrid undertook a Future Energy Skills review to:
 - Clearly identify and articulate the anticipated skills and capabilities required in the future across all parts of the energy supply chain
 - Identify and bolster existing pathways into the industry, cultivate new pathways, and uplift the branding and value proposition of energy sector careers to ensure a continuous supply of skilled and motivated workforce participants. This initiative was transferred to wider industry work regarding Future Energy Skills including through the Australian Power Institute in mid-2021.

3. Better support for consumer advocacy

Most Energy Charter signatories have customer councils in place. If they do not, they have used other means to test their actions, disclosures and maturity assessments with end-users and stakeholders in line with the IAP recommendations..

Collaborative work

Collaborative work through the #BetterTogether initiatives included:

- **#BetterTogether Know your customers and communities (Principle 1)** – led by APA and Essential Energy together with Endeavour Energy, Energy Queensland, Jemena, Horizon Power, Powerlink Queensland and TransGrid created a [Better Practice Engagement Toolkit](#) and [Shared Learning Customer Engagement Platform](#). The latter picks up the IAP’s recommendations that signatories provide a tighter focus on end-user customers and communities directly impacted by their activities rather than stakeholders in general. Signatories also worked specifically on IAP Recommendation 13 to map out better practice supports offered to customer advocates and opportunities to do better. A workshop with advocates in early July co-designed with advocates a Better Practice Guide for Customer Advocacy Support to be implemented within businesses. The Better Practice Guide will be released in August 2021
- **#BetterTogether Communal Content Hub (Principle 4)** – information on: support available to customers, energy literacy, energy efficiency, indigenous communities, new energy tech, seasonal safety and practical customer notes that can leveraged by consumer advocates and industry (discussed above) to support customers and communities.

“To set a future customer-centric agenda, it is essential to truly listen to customers, understand not just what they are saying but also why they are saying it, and to work with them to co-design a shared future.”

- Robyn Robinson, Director at COTA Queensland (Energy Charter Update September 2020)

4. Genuine Board involvement

The **#BT Customer Voice @ Board Level (Principle 1)** was led by the Chair of Powerlink Queensland and supported by CleanCo, Horizon Power and Stanwell Corporation. In June 2021 we released a Customer Voice @ Board Resource. The resource is for boards and directors to assist them in a discussion about how customer voice can be authentically considered at a Board level. It is not a prescriptive list of actions, rather it provides a range of options and better practice insights for consideration. It aims to augment the resource of options already available to directors. It also builds upon the recent work of the AICD in its Elevating stakeholder voices to the board: A guide to effective governance.

Driving better outcomes for customers



“It’s a work in progress, changing behaviours takes time, but we’re getting there.” - [Nadia Janevski, Manager, Customer & Support Services at APA Group](#)

In addition to the #BTs outlined in response to the 2020 IAP recommendations above, other #BTs contributed to better outcomes for customers. For some, their genesis was the #BetterTogether workshop with the EUCG in August 2019 and ongoing identification of other customer pain points and opportunities to address them. These are detailed below.

Principle 2: Affordability

The [#BT National Customer Code for Energy Brokers, Consultants and Retailers](#) was launched in early 2021. It aims to give large customers confidence that its 40+ signatories are working together in their best interests and delivering value to them. The Customer Code also addresses some of the concerns about third party intermediaries’ selling practices raised in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) Retail Electricity Pricing Inquiry Report 2018.

“When we joined the Customer Code for Energy Brokers, Consultants and Retailers, we met with all our retailer partners to seek and give feedback. Whilst we have always appreciated our partnerships, our communication with them has never been so fluid. This has allowed us to resolve customer challenges faster. Putting the customer at the centre of everything we strive to achieve at the Code has been our consistent focus, so this efficiency gain certainly aligns to our objectives.”

- Alan Gill, COO at Choice Energy

With a National Code Council made up of representatives across industry and independent administrator, Anne Whitehouse of Sales Assured Limited, the Customer Code is a huge step forward for customers. Regular activities include Customer Code News Updates, Customer Code Council Meetings, National Customer Code Bi-Annual Roundtables and Lunch + Learn sessions with external speakers.

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

The [#BetterTogether Gas Pipeline Information Disclosure](#) led by the Australian Pipelines and Gas Association, supported by APA, AGIG and Jemena created a central repository of information for customers of gas transmission pipelines in Australia.

The [#BetterTogether DEIP Access and Pricing Package](#) led by ARENA, Australian Council of Social Services, Australian Energy Market Commission, Australian Energy Regulator, Energy Consumers Australia, Total Environment Centre and supported by AGL, Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy, Energy Queensland, Essential Energy, Horizon Power, Origin Energy and TransGrid explored how the economic regulatory framework for electricity networks could evolve to meet changing community expectations. In July 2020, members of the Working Group, Total Environment Centre and ACROSS submitted a rule change request to the AEMC. In addition, two other rule changes were submitted to AEMC, one from St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria and the other from South Australian Power Networks (SAPN), that also reflect discussions and findings of the DEIP Access and Pricing Package. In April 2021, the AEMC released a [draft Rule Change](#) aiming to make room on grid for more home solar and batteries.



Principle 4: We will improve the customer experience

The **#BetterTogether 24/7 Connections** led by EnergyAustralia and Jemena, with rollout to AGL, Origin and Powershop. Offering customers quicker electricity connection processes, the initiative was expanded to live testing between Jemena to AGL customers in Phase 2, with more than 90 percent of customers connected within 1 hour of their preferred time. Phase 3 has expanded the trial to Powershop and Alinta Energy. The initiative is currently expanding to a range of Energy Charter retailers and distributors across Victoria. Learnings and insights are being shared to generate better customer outcomes.

The **#BetterTogether Victorian Gas New Connections** led by AGIG, AGN, APA, AusNet and current running a trial with Origin Energy, AGL and EnergyAustralia is focused on making it easier for customers to connect to gas in Victoria irrespective of their postcode area. Working across distributors they have published the Victorian New Connection 10 step process with a communications strategy for education with builders/ customers and stakeholders. An example is provided at the [Australian Gas Networks](#) website.

Energy Charter Red Cross Blood Challenge

In the first three months of 2021, the Energy Charter signatories leant into the Red Cross Blood Challenge, achieving 1,299 donations. This is a 34% increase in donations from signatory organisations when compared to the last two years.

Congratulations to award winners from the Energy Charter Blood Challenge:

- Most Total Donations - Essential Energy
- Most New Donations - Horizon Power
- Largest Staff Participation - Powershop Australia
- Most Plasma Donations - Energy Queensland

Metrics and measures

The Metrics, Measures and Maturity Working Group continued their conversations on aligning metrics and measures across the supply chain for the benefit of customers through the disclosures. This year, in addition to customer satisfaction metrics, signatories responded to feedback of the Ombudsman to agree on a consistent way to present Ombudsman complaints' data. As businesses improve in their maturity, it is anticipated future areas for consistency will be identified.

Gaining momentum



“A culture gap has begun to open up between Energy Charter Signatories and other energy companies. This could be viewed as a sign that the Energy Charter is succeeding. But allowing that gap to grow would not be acceptable to the community.” IAP Report 2020

In line with the Energy Charter values **“Be invested, make a difference”, “Be open, learn and improve”, “Think big, be bold”** we believe that we can always do better, both individually and collectively, for our customers and communities. While we have a bias for action, we also importantly recognise that it’s how we do things that will ultimately impact the culture of the sector over the longer term.

Our key areas for collective momentum over the next 12 months:

- 1. Improve coordinated response to COVID impacted vulnerable customers** – More can be done to generate a strategic across-the-supply chain response to assist customers impacted by COVID, particularly the most vulnerable in our communities. While some individual signatories are taking decisive action, the opportunity remains for an across the supply chain coordinated response driven by our CEO Council. Options for collaborative support across Energy Charter signatories will be discussed at the CEO Council meeting in September 2021.
- 2. #BetterTogether ambitions for change** – While the IAP laid down two clear imperatives for Energy Charter signatories around proactive and collaborative approach to the potential post-pandemic debt tsunami and the transition to net zero emissions, these issues remained collectively challenging in 2020-21. Several signatories are taking individual action in each area, and there is the potential to better leverage #BetterTogether innovation framework to have larger impact.
- 3. WE Collaborate MoU** – Our MoU with the WSAA has highlighted areas of opportunity for customer improvement across the water and energy sectors. We expect to accelerate the collaboration between the sectors and drive B2B innovation for the benefit of customers in 2022 and beyond.

- 4. New signatory strategy** – While we remain deeply disappointed by the departure of Origin Energy and AGL from the Energy Charter, their feedback provided the impetus for a new signatory strategy. Announced in April 2021, in addition to Full Signatories there are now two new tiers of membership: #BetterTogether Collaborators and Supporters. This expands opportunities for all organisations across the supply chain to collaborate towards customer-centricity through the unique architecture of the Energy Charter. As a result, we invite energy businesses with a focus on better customer outcomes to join Simply Energy and AEMO in signing up so we can collaborate for the benefit of more customers.
- 5. EUCG refresh** - ECA stepped down as the EUCG Chair of the EUCG after three years. We have worked with the EUCG to appoint an Independent Chair, Cath Smith. The review of the EUCG’s terms of reference will ensure that there is shared value for end-user representatives and signatories in its design for the future.

“Organisations don’t change. People do.”

- June Gameau, CulturAlchemy (Leading the Energy Charter Champions for Change Series)

We thank the growing collective of Energy Charter Champions across signatories, stakeholders and end-user groups that have embraced the transformative culture change needed to put customers at the centre of the energy system. There’s always more to do, however, together we are gathering momentum.

Appendix:

IAP Recommendations 2020



Theme 1 - Collaborating for the potential post-pandemic debt tsunami

R1. 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 2021. The process should include engagement with experts and consumer groups.

R2. Audit all customers on payment or hardship plans, and immediately and retrospectively switch them to the cheapest plan available and adjust the debt accordingly. We strongly recommend this becomes BAU for all energy retailers.

R3. Work with governments to establish a practically failsafe system to ensure each and every customer who is entitled to a concession receives it.

R6. Expand their management of the growing risk that more customers cannot pay their energy bills to include becoming more active on policy questions that feed into energy affordability (e.g. low-income households' access to energy efficiency and income adequacy).

R7. Ensure the highest standards of customer care are implemented in responding to the growing debt tsunami, using the Victorian Payment Difficulty Framework as the benchmark.

R10. 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.

R12. Pursue active personal engagement with all customers faced with potential disconnections and aspire to no disconnections, working with consumer groups to deliver on that outcome.

Theme 2 - Net zero emissions

R4. Adopt and each publicly articulate a clear, collective approach that builds on recent energy industry acknowledgements of the inevitability of change, effectively communicates how the "north star" of net zero emissions feeds into better consumer outcomes and drives a whole of sector focus on making energy transition work for consumers.

R5. Under the Better Together initiative, consider establishing a 'Whole of Industry Energy Transition Working Group' to coordinate a long-term response for the industry and a 'just transition' for customers. This working group should include customer representatives and be approached as something of a 'blank canvas'. This has the potential to elevate the industry above the politics of the day and provide a more stable platform for future investments and joint industry-customer advocacy.



Theme 3 - Better support for consumer advocacy

R9. 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.

R11. 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.

R13. Work with policy makers and market bodies to implement a way for consumer advocacy to be better resourced.

Theme 4 – Genuine Board involvement

R8. 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.