

SA Power Networks

# Energy Charter Feedback Summary Report 2023



Empowering South Australia



# Introduction

SA Power Networks joined the Energy Charter as a signatory in July 2023, demonstrating our commitment to improving outcomes for our customers.

Our first year as a signatory included introducing the Energy Charter to our business, employees, leaders, and to our customer consultation groups. It was important to share why we became a signatory, the five Energy Charter principles, and how industry-wide collaboration, through the Energy Charter, can help deliver benefits for the South Australian community.

We delivered our first Disclosure Report in March 2024 for the 2023 calendar year. This involved an initial maturity self-assessment, supported by an extensive evidence document guided by the Energy

Charter's Maturity Model. This process highlighted where we perform well and where there are opportunities to improve, helping to align our strategic priorities to progress maturity across the five Charter principles.

Our customer group has been instrumental in providing feedback on our assessment and our Disclosure Report. From challenging our evidence and ratings to helping prioritise our future commitments, our customer group has been highly engaged and supportive of our journey to date. The following report provides a summary of our engagement process, our customer feedback and response, and considerations for continuous improvement.



# Our Engagement Approach

Throughout 2022 and 2023 we engaged in extensive consultation in preparation for our Regulatory Proposal. This deep customer engagement consisted of initial research, broad and diverse workshops, followed by focused conversations and then a People's Panel consisting of 51 everyday South Australians. We gained detailed insights on our customers' aspirations and where we should focus our efforts.

Utilising our existing consultative groups, the Customer Advisory Board (CAB) and Customer Reference Group (CRG), we introduced our members to the Energy Charter and shared our proposed maturity assessment process. We sought feedback from these groups to ensure alignment of expectations. CAB meetings are attended by our Chief Executive Officer and our Chief Customer and Strategy Officer and provide a direct communication channel on a range of topics.

We held a Maturity Assessment and Disclosure Report feedback workshop on Monday 5 February 2024. We extended an invitation to all CAB and CRG members and offered the option of attending the session online or in person.

Members were provided pre-reading material to ensure they could engage meaningfully. The pre-reading included our Self-Assessment summary, including an overview of each principle, what we do well, identified opportunities for improvement, along with the Energy Charter Maturity Model with maturity rating descriptions.

The feedback workshop was attended by several of our executives and senior leaders, with specialised knowledge on each of the principle areas. This allowed members to have their detailed and specific enquiries answered. Sabiene Heindl, Chief Executive Officer, Energy Charter, also attended the workshop in person and helped support discussion.

Our CAB and CRG members who attended were:

- › Jessie Byrne, CAB Chair, Independent
- › Davis Veremu, CAB member, Independent
- › Chris Marsden, CAB member, Independent
- › Sue Chase, AM, CAB member, Independent
- › Georgina Morris, CRG Chair, CAB member, South Australian Council of Social Services (SACOSS)
- › Jen Bradley, CRG member, Independent
- › Ron Shanks, CRG member, Consumers SA
- › Silvio Iadorola, CRG member, Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA)
- › Alex Fry, South Australian Financial Counsellors Association (SAFCA)
- › Saira Akhtar, Uniting Communities

A review and realignment of our consultative group structure was undertaken from late 2023 to early 2024, with existing member terms ending in March 2024 and new terms beginning in May 2024. This crossover of advisory group members has meant some new members of the groups were not involved in the previous feedback and workshop sessions.

# Overall Feedback

Our members told us that they were experiencing engagement fatigue from the extensive two-year engagement program on our Regulatory Proposal. Some members were reluctant to attend more engagement sessions for the Accountability Process, believing they had already provided detailed and valuable insights through the Regulatory Proposal engagement.

Some members said they did not feel they had a sufficient knowledge base to accurately provide feedback into each part of the maturity assessment. They advised that there was too much information to absorb in the pre-reading and workshop, and that they were not positioned to accurately understand all the internal workings of the organisation.

Alternatively, some advised the information provided (pre-reading and at workshop) was not enough information and would have liked to see the complete evidence mapping document compiled to inform the self-assessment.

Some questioned the validity of the self-assessment and the ability to be impartial. However, others felt the process was transparent, that we completed a rigorous self-assessment and could support our claims with appropriate evidence.



# You said, we heard, we did

You said	Our response – we will / we did
General Feedback	
It is not clear who is meant by customers in the report.	Our customers are spread across SA and include residential homes, businesses (large and small), metropolitan and regional communities, customers with / without solar PV, and those who are experiencing vulnerable circumstances. We have reviewed our draft report and clarified who our customers are.
Improving energy literacy for all customers is a priority - not just for vulnerable customers.  Customers are not understanding why SA renewables are not translating to affordability. This is such an important topic and much more work needs to be done in community energy education.	During our Regulatory Proposal engagement, while our customers all supported the need for improved energy literacy, they had mixed views on our role in providing community energy education. We believe that we have a role to play in lifting energy capability in the SA community, as improved knowledge will improve customer agency and outcomes.  We will be developing an Energy Literacy – Train the Trainer program in 2024, initially targeting those experiencing financial vulnerability.  We also aim to provide more customer education and awareness on a range of energy topics - including how to save energy and understanding your bill - through multiple channels in the community.

## You said

## Our response – we will / we did

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

One customer raised that this principle and the opportunities for improvement identified were very internally focused, and queried how this is customer focused.

Principle One centres around our business' internal culture, structure, systems, and processes that help drive accountability for delivering positive customer outcomes. This principle purposefully looks internally with the other remaining principles focused externally.

It is important that the leadership and accountability starts at the top, with commitment from the Board, CEO and Executive essential to drive a customer culture within the business.

One customer raised that it would be good for the business to have a lived experience internal policy.

There are several members with lived experience on our Vulnerable Customer Advisory Group (VCAG) to ensure this voice is heard in our decision-making.

We will discuss with our VCAG the possibility of developing a specific lived experience policy.

Our customer group members expressed that we demonstrate a strong commitment to engagement and listening to customers and would like to see this reflected more clearly in the report by including language such as "enhanced customer consultation".

Members want to see and understand the regular measurement reporting.

We reviewed our consultative group structure in late 2023/ early 2024. The renewed structure was developed with input and feedback from our existing consultative group members.

The new structure includes a Customer Advisory Forum (CAF), with the Chair reporting up to our Executive Leadership Team quarterly. This clear line of communication provides the opportunity to have direct dialogue with the executive and discuss any concerns, issues or feedback.

Our advisory groups report into the CAF, providing quarterly briefing papers highlighting key insights, current focus areas and actions for CAF to note or consider.

We currently have regular customer insight reporting for the Board and our Executive team. We are also embarking on a renewed customer insights program which will enable us to better understand our performance and areas where we can improve, through more detailed and mature data insights.

As a new Energy Charter signatory, we are now publicly reporting our customer achievements and measurements in the Disclosure Report. This includes metrics across the five principles and targets for future improvement. These published metrics will ensure transparency and accountability, with tracking reporting being shared with the Customer Advisory Forum (CAF).

SA Power Networks has a long history of extensive customer and stakeholder engagement and is pleased that our members recognise this.

Customer group members felt that there are areas of the business that show great leadership and are committed to customer experience and feedback, and these are generally the areas that have direct interaction with customers. There is a need for the broader business to have more customer focus and embedding of customer focused KPIs.

Our Executive, senior leadership group and some departments and work groups have customer KPIs. We have also established and embedded customer satisfaction scores in employee performance objectives across four key services areas: planned and unplanned work, general enquiries, and new connections. This ensures employee incentives are aligned to delivering better customer outcomes.

As part of our consultative group review, a survey of all existing members was undertaken, and overwhelmingly members felt our engagement was comprehensive and inclusive.

We aim to improve business-wide customer focused culture through our ongoing employee engagement and customer focused initiatives.

Our consultative group structure provides opportunity for customer feedback on a range of topics and issues, as well as providing us with a forum to seek customer feedback on specific initiatives or issues.

## You said

## Our response – we will / we did

### Principle 2 – We will improve energy affordability for customers

Customer group members had mixed views about the export tariff on solar and how it would impact equity for low-income and non-solar households.

Export tariffs are designed to recover the costs of enabling more solar on the network in the next regulatory period. This small tariff is designed to ensure a fair and equitable solution to this issue. It will result in a small cost increase for solar customers who are exporting back to the grid, and a reduction in cost for non-solar customers.

Customer group members queried the impact on customers from large industrial connections and new residential development connections.

Residential customer bills are not impacted by industrial connections as industry customers fund their own infrastructure.

Connecting new residential customers positively affects all customers. It brings down the average cost per customer with costs being spread across a larger customer base.

Customer group members raised the issue of retailers not passing on cost reflective tariffs and want us to do more in this space.

We understand the importance of retailer engagement and will continue to proactively engage with retailers to develop their understanding on SA Power Networks' tariffs. This includes the tariff structures and pricing as well as the principles guiding our network tariff design.

We will also continue to publicly highlight the importance of retailers notifying customers if/when their retail offer changes.

Customer group members raised concerns around electricity affordability for households, and ensuring an equitable energy transition with those who are most vulnerable not being left behind.

We recognise that cost of living pressure is a concern for many in the community and through our recent Regulatory Proposal, we have balanced the need to increase investments to ensure safety and reliability of the network, while holding our charges at current levels.

Customer group members wanted to see better data on customer perceptions on improving affordability, and the impact advocacy work is having.

We will continue to proactively engage with Government and other key customer and industry stakeholders to advocate for improved energy affordability and energy equity, as well as seeking ways to measure impact associated with this work.

Customer group members felt that the proposed maturity rating of evolved / empowered was too positive, and the progression to empowered was too ambitious.

We listened to the member feedback and agreed to a current maturity rating of evolved, with a target of empowered by 2027.



## You said

## Our response – we will / we did

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

Customer group members generally agreed with performance on safety, reliability and sustainability and endorsed the proposed rating of empowered.

A customer group member called out the need for improved reliability in regional areas and was pleased this is being provided in the Regulatory Proposal.

Customer group members wanted more regular visibility of safety and reliability performance, and how we compare across Distribution Network Service Providers (DNSP).

Customer group members asked about how we achieve circular economy and what sustainability metrics we have.

We are proud of our safety and reliability performance and are pleased the group agreed with our maturity rating. We will continue our efforts and focus on employee and community safety and reliability. Our Regional and Remote Advisory Group will be provided with ongoing visibility of our performance throughout the year. This group has a focus on improving outcomes for customers in our worst performing areas and support investment proposed for the 2025-30 period.

We will continue to focus on our sustainability journey and encourage members to read our [2023 Sustainability Report](#). This provides a summary of progress against the goals, commitments and initiatives of our Sustainability Strategy, profiles key achievements, and outlines our vision and approach to sustainability.

Our Sustainability Performance Data is available in the supporting [2023 Sustainability Data and Disclosure Databook](#).



## You said

## Our response – we will / we did

### Principle 4 – We will improve the customer experience

Customer group members queried how the Customer Care team deal with complaints from vulnerable customers and whether there should be specific KPIs to support this area.

Our Customer Care team manages public liability claims for property damage, loss, and injury as a priority for customers who are experiencing vulnerability. The Customer Care team has KPIs for acknowledging and responding to customer claims, which are not specific to a particular group.

We will review the process and investigate the feasibility and benefits for reporting on vulnerable customers claims separately.

Customer group members asked about the accessibility of our communications and website, and what was the plan for improving this.

It was raised that there was lack in focus on customer education in this section, particularly around export tariffs.

We acknowledge this is an area for improvement and are working to ensure that our communications and campaigns are accessible and written in easy language.

We have also included funding in our recent Regulatory Proposal to mature our website and wider digital accessibility.

We are currently delivering community education around many energy topics including safety, energy use / saving costs, flexible exports, and others, through a variety of channels including social media and community events. We will continue to deliver this education and look to expand with our Energy Literacy program. We will ensure this is highlighted for inclusion in the Disclosure Report.

Customer group members were pleased to hear the work done to capture better data on service delivery and look forward to hearing the benefits of the improved Customer Insights program.

We were queried on the visibility our Board has of customer complaints and customer satisfaction levels.

Overall, customer group members supported the maturity rating of evolved.

We will continue to implement the Customer Insights program to learn where our services can improve. In 2025, we will be gaining more insights than ever before, allowing us to better optimise the customer experience across our core service delivery.

Our executive team values the experience of listening to real customer calls, and we will explore the idea of our Board members experiencing customer calls too.

We acknowledge there is value in continued Board engagement on the customer experience. An example of Board involvement is the elevation of a recent customer complaints audit in 2023.

## You said

## Our response – we will / we did

### Principle 5 – We will support customers facing vulnerable circumstances

Customer group members asked how our Board is updated on vulnerable customers.

Customer group members wanted to understand what we defined as vulnerable, how much of our spending is focused on improving outcomes, and more information around the specific partnerships (eg multicultural communities, Council of the Aging).

The group were pleased with the commitments outlined and agreed with the proposed current rating of evolved, progressing to empowered by 2026.

Currently the Board does not receive a specific vulnerable customers update, however a regular Energy Charter update is provided. Our Board is acutely aware of the issues of energy affordability and cost of living. We will review whether the Energy Charter update can include a specific vulnerable customer section for information.

Our Vulnerable Customer Strategy outlines who we define as vulnerable from an electricity perspective and how we can help. We will continue to work with our Advisory Group on the implementation of this strategy. This can be found on our website [Supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances - SA Power Networks](#)

We have many initiatives that support improving outcomes for our customers experiencing vulnerability, including our outlined #BetterTogether initiatives. We will provide regular progress updates to members of the Vulnerable Customer Advisory Group (VCAG) and seek ongoing input and feedback from this group.

# Our Engagement Performance

Collecting feedback after the engagement workshop was challenging as this coincided with our existing consultative group members' two-year terms finishing, and a review and update of our consultative group structure which delayed the recruitment process for incoming members. For the next Disclosure process, we will seek direct feedback on the accountability process, via a survey and / or online session.

We offered both online and in-person options for the workshop, however many members were unable to attend on this day. For future accountability processes, we could look to offer one-on-one sessions outside of the workshop, to allow all members to provide feedback and input.

We will provide more regular updates to our consultative groups, seeking input and feedback throughout the year to ensure it is not a large burden when drafting our Disclosure Report. By keeping our members more informed on topics important to them, we seek to strengthen our collaboration on our progression commitments and our Energy Charter #BetterTogethers initiatives.

We would like to thank our all current and former consultative group members for their time, commitment, and support for our first accountability process.





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