

# 2021 Energy Charter Disclosure Report



## Chairman of the Board message



Ausgrid is proud to be an Energy Charter signatory. After three years since our initial signing of the Energy Charter, we remain committed to building a better business for our customers and communities.

Our clear priority through FY21 was keeping our people and the community safe and connected as we lived through a year dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ausgrid faced new and unique challenges

operating and maintaining the network during the pandemic. We learned to quickly adjust business processes to meet new restrictions and the changing needs of customers, wherever possible minimising disruptions for customers working from home.

Customers told us that quality information makes it easier for them to manage disruption when outages occur. So, we introduced a new SMS service to inform customers of an outage, together with information on restoration.

The Board continues to improve its visibility of customer outcomes through Voice of the Community reporting. We have encouraged a greater focus on customer outcomes, with reporting of key customer metrics across compliance, service delivery and reputation, including a specific focus on outlier experiences and improving support for 'life support customers' reliant on medical equipment.

We are pleased with our trajectory of improvement and remain focused on ensuring this continues.

Helen Nugent, Chairman, Ausgrid

## Ausgrid Customer Consultative Committee message

We have continued to collaborate with Ausgrid on customer insights, service improvements and innovation programs, advancing actions in line with Energy Charter principles. We have been and remain involved in the improvement of Ausgrid's approach to customer engagement. In the last 12 months we have observed this directly translating into service delivery improvements. The Network Innovation Advisory Committee has overseen the implementation of the leading-edge community battery program and we continue to guide the execution of remaining innovation programs to seek alternatives to traditional network investment.

Recently the CCC co-designed Ausgrid's Regulatory Reset Customer Engagement program with senior Ausgrid executives, which has resulted in the establishment of a new dedicated panel with an independent Chair. A key aim of the independent Panel is to challenge Ausgrid to design and deliver a Regulatory Proposal that will benefit from robust customer engagement and will reflect the preferences and needs of Ausgrid's customers and communities.

Together, we hope to achieve balanced outcomes for Ausgrid's customers, communities, staff and shareholders.

## CEO message



Our corporate strategy is built on three pillars: be safer, be smarter and be sustainable, and drives many of the initiatives which align to the principles and intent of the Energy Charter.

Being a safer business means keeping our employees safe, but also keeping the communities we serve safe from the dangers of electricity. Pleasingly, despite the additional challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic we achieved

a 17% reduction in the injury rate for our people, making FY21 the lowest on record. We also delivered Electricity Safety Week to over 800 schools, reaching 94% of public schools in our network, adapting to ensure we could do this in a COVID safe way.

Being a smarter business means focusing on what matters to our communities whilst taking action to improve affordability. We continued to reduce our costs, whilst maintaining or improving key service outcomes to our customers.

We've done that through our systematic Voice of the Community customer engagement program, which is capturing more feedback and insights, across more channels, services and customer segments than ever before. Ausgrid is now converting these insights into a continuous pipeline of business improvements such as resolving customer complaints more quickly and making it easier for customers to make claims.

Being a sustainable business means many things including taking action to support decarbonisation. We did this work with customers, for example, by commencing work on a community battery trial, one of our customers' top three prioritised projects. This trial aims to demonstrate the value community batteries provide to customers and the energy system.

We were pleased to announce our partnership with JOLT to bring free electric vehicle charging to our communities and support the uptake of EVs, and proud to have surpassed our emission reduction targets, achieving a 13% reduction in FY21 from our FY17 baseline. Ausgrid recognises that we must all contribute to reducing carbon emissions and develop a pathway to net zero emissions. We will be reviewing our targets this year to align them further to net zero emissions ambitions.

We continue to learn from participating in the Energy Charter and know that our membership is supporting our efforts to become a better business.

Richard Gross, Chief Executive Officer, Ausgrid

## Highlighted actions against Independent Accountability Panel themes

Last year, the Independent Accountability Panel set Energy Charter signatories three challenges in their recommendations. The challenges were: to be proactive and collaborate for the potential post-pandemic debt tsunami; make contributions in the near term to support a stable, fair and least cost transition to net zero emissions; and commit to going beyond simply informing customer advocates of what they are doing but seek to empower them to play an active role. This section highlights key actions Ausgrid delivered under these themes.

### Theme 1: Collaborating for the potential post-pandemic debt tsunami (Supporting customers in vulnerable circumstances)

- Created a Customer Assistance strategy to enhance the agency role of Ausgrid in supporting residential customers who are experiencing financial stress through simpler and flexible arrangements for direct debts and easy accessibility to outside support services.
- Contributed to the Australian Energy Foundation's (AEF) Life Support Customer Research, which is providing an improved understanding of Life Support Customers' (LSC) personas, needs and other vital information for the sector in refining service delivery.
- Refreshed Ausgrid's LSC outage preparedness factsheet using a customer-codesign approach and, with the help of Multicultural NSW and Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW, translated it into 10 languages for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.
- Continued digitisation of the customer claims process is enabling a quicker resolution of cases and quicker access to cash payments.
- Implemented a renewed bushfire compliance customer engagement program that included additional earlier communications, as well as early identification of financial capacity concerns, managed through a tailored customer assistance process. This resulted in over 95% of private electrical asset defects rectified by customers within the compliance timeframe without needing Ausgrid's emergency intervention.

### Theme 2: Net Zero

- Achieved 13% emissions reductions in FY21, from our FY17 baseline. This exceeds our FY24 emissions reduction target of 8% (including line losses) and we are on track to reach our FY24 total emissions reduction target of 44% (excluding line losses). In total, we have reduced our emissions by over 16,000 tonnes compared to FY20.
- Commenced a new Community Battery (CB) trial, with no cost to customers, at two Sydney locations.
- Installed 36,712 LEDs across the network in FY21, bringing the total to over 130,000 completed since the start of the program. This represents more than 50% of streetlights on the network and has delivered a carbon emissions reduction of 8,029 tonnes.

### Theme 3: Support for Customer Advocates

- Delivered on the commitment to increase customers' views in decision making by amending investment governance framework with the implementation of a new Net Present Value (NPV) methodology where qualitative metrics (e.g., safety, reliability, customer time) are now explicitly considered in investment decisions.
- Regular sharing with Customer Advocates of key customer pain points, insights and proposed management responses drawing on over 16,000 verbatim responses and 28,000 surveys as part of the Voice of the Community (VOC) 'always on' customer engagement initiative covering 25 different services, channels and market segments.
- Commenced co-design of customer engagement framework for 2024-29 Regulatory Reset; this resulted in the establishment of the Reset Customer Panel with an independent chair.

## About Ausgrid

Ausgrid's network of substations, powerlines, underground cables and power poles across Sydney, the Central Coast and the Hunter Valley is a shared asset that connects our customers and their communities.

 **20%**  
of Australia's GDP

 **1,200**  
Schools

 **2,750**  
Employees

 **16%**  
of Australia's jobs

 **105**  
Hospitals

 **1.57m**  
Households

 **86,000**  
Businesses

 **5,600**  
Large Enterprises





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

Ausgrid's Board and management support practices and policies that incentivise and guide our staff to improve service delivery. Our strategy is central to the way we do this; each of the three pillars (be safer, be smarter and be more sustainable) are a response to customer needs. The Board reviews Ausgrid's Customer Report regularly, with outlier customer experiences lifted for visibility and challenge. In FY21 there was a significant growth in the number of customer metrics that influence the corporate scorecard performance and employee incentives.

While our annual RepTrak® reputation survey and Voice of Community (VOC) results show there is still a need for continued improvement in our Products & Services, Ausgrid doubled our score on 'trusted to put the needs of customers first' in FY21. This was despite the challenging backdrop of COVID-19. We have worked closely with our customer advocates to advance collaborative decision making, with the commencement of co-design of the 2024-29 Regulatory Reset Engagement Framework. We would like to thank customer advocates for their time and contribution to the development of our advocate engagement model, which has led to the establishment of the independently chaired Reset Customer Panel (RCP).

### Delivery of our commitments and outcomes

Maturity ●●●●○  
Empowered

FY21 Commitment	Why	What	Impact
Living Our Values cultural change program	<p>Living Our Values is a key pillar of our corporate strategy and drives our focus on the customer.</p> <p>Ensure the diversity of our staff reflects the diversity of our communities.</p>	<p>Based on VOC findings, we initiated transformation programs to drive better customer outcomes.</p> <p>Implemented measures to keep our employees and customers supported during COVID-19. Examples include daily COVID-19 updates, the introduction of the Critical Incident Response Tool (CIRT) for employees and a focus on customer notifications for critical works as well as changes to our vulnerable customer program.</p> <p>Increased the involvement of our Inclusion and Diversity Council with the creation of five employee led sub-committees targeting LGBTQI, gender diversity, indigenous employees, disability and cultural diversity.</p>	<p>Improvements to outage notifications, the website digital experience and complaints handling are key evidence that we are listening and acting on customer feedback. Other actions included removing upfront billing for tiger tails and digitising the claims settlement process.</p> <p>Ausgrid staff are engaged and aligned with a common vision that places the community and its customers at the centre of our service delivery.</p> <p>Improved diversity means we can better reflect the communities we serve and has led to improved customer outcomes.</p>
Improve executive customer-focused metrics	Using customer-focused metrics as measures of success will increase accountability and transparency, as well as drive cultural change for the ultimate benefit of our customers.	<p>Increased number of customer outcome metrics in the corporate scorecard and introduced sentiment metrics solely based on customer views (e.g., Service Ease and Service Resolution scores were expanded to cover more of Ausgrid's services).</p> <p>Ausgrid's performance development framework for FY21 shows 10% increase in staff exceeding expectations against the customer focused performance standard.</p>	<p>Expansion of the customer scorecard gives us a better understanding of customer improvement opportunities and greater depth of data.</p> <p>Improvements in staff performance for the value of 'customer focused' translates into improved customer service.</p>
Share performance scorecard with customers	Provide visibility of customer service improvements.	Customer Report and updates on transformation programs shared at each CCC meeting. The report provides a granular service and market segment breakdown of service delivery performance.	Show areas of improvements and contribute to goal of becoming more transparent and a better service provider.

FY21 Metrics	Details	FY22 Targets
RepTrak®	<p>Community result remained at Strong/Robust with a score of 71.4, on par with 71.5 in 2019.</p> <p>Stakeholder score improved significantly with a 10-point increase from Weak/Vulnerable at 63.4 to Average/Moderate at 73.4.</p>	<p>Community: Improve within Strong/Robust range</p> <p>Stakeholder: Improve within Average/Moderate range</p>

FY21 Metrics	Details	FY22 Targets
Average Days to Resolve (ADR)	ADR complaints of 17.1 against the Australian and New Zealand ISO industry standards of 28 days. A historical low of less than 6% of total complaints escalated via ombudsman/government.	Resolve 80% of all complaints in less than 20 business days (improving from 77.4% in FY21)
Customer reputation score	Between June 2020 and June 2021, our overall customer reputation score rose by +21 points. All customer segments saw an increase in reputation scores, with the most notable improvement coming from large businesses (+38) and life support customers (+16). In the same period, our partner reputation score also saw improvement (+20) with a +36 increase from retailers and +19 increase from ASP3s.	Customer reputation score: +10 increase on FY21  Partner reputation score: +20 increase on FY21
FY22 Goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institute a reward and recognition program to highlight and encourage customer focused actions across the business.</li> <li>Work collaboratively with Ausgrid Customer Advocates to develop a Regulatory Proposal that reflects customer preferences and needs.</li> </ul>		



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

Ausgrid saw many customers continue to be impacted by COVID-19 in FY21, making the issue of affordability more important than ever. One way we deliver affordability for our customers is effectively managing our operational expenses. Transformation projects are continuing to improve our practices, costs and deliver improvements to customers. Our innovation programs are providing options for customers to reduce the cost of electricity bills.

Reducing demand through our Virtual Power Plant (VPP), Behavioural Demand Response (BDR) and the Power2U (P2U) programs<sup>1</sup> have all delivered cost savings. Demand reduction with VPP and BDR can help to avoid network upgrade costs, eventually leading to lower costs for everyone on the network. Additionally, the use of financial incentives in the P2U trial to encourage energy efficient technologies such as solar power systems and LED lighting has led to the installation of 3.2 MW of solar power and 200kW of efficient lighting upgrades at schools, homes and commercial businesses. We also installed two community batteries, achieving our target for customer registrations in Beacon Hill, and work is continuing to attract more customers to the Bankstown trial.

### Delivery of our commitments and outcomes

Maturity ●●●○○  
Evolved

FY21 Commitment	Why	What	Impact
Implement the new investment governance framework to better reflect customer benefits within investment decisions	Improved quantification of customer impacts in investment decisions.	Ausgrid's Investment Governance Framework adopted a new Net Present Value (NPV) methodology that incorporates customer and shareholder costs and benefits across qualitative metrics (e.g., safety, reliability, customer time).  Network Innovation Advisory Committee (NIAC) continued to guide the implementation of the Network Innovation Program, progressing the CB, Stand Alone Power Systems (SAPS) and Distribution System Operator programs.	Greater transparency of customer benefits from investment decisions.  Over the last 10 months, all new business cases across Ausgrid have been developed using the new methodology, including BAU and transformative investments.
Undertake community battery trial	To provide a more affordable energy storage solution and cost-effectively increase the use of renewable energy.	A CB trial was successfully initiated in Bankstown and Beacon Hill in NSW and will run for two years.	The trial allows customers to get more value out of their solar investment by receiving cost savings on their bills without needing to own or maintain a household battery system. Community batteries will help reduce peak demand and encourage solar power uptake in the community.
Expand demand management programs	To provide more choice to customers about the way they use their energy, maximising grid efficiency benefits and reducing costs.	VPP participation grew from 350 to about 750 customers during FY21 with a combined power of over 3 MW (about 10-15% of all customer batteries in Ausgrid's network area). A total of 60 MWh of energy was supplied from customer batteries over 66 trial event days.	The success of the VPP and P2U trials have demonstrated that they are viable demand management alternatives to network investment in managing peak demand.

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the Ausgrid website for more information on the Virtual Power Plant, Behavioural Demand Response and Power2U programs.

FY21 Commitment	Why	What	Impact
Expand demand management programs (continued)	Implement demand management solutions that offer credible alternatives to investment in network assets.	<p>The P2U trial concluded successfully after 2 years. About 3.2 MW of solar power and 200 kW of efficient lighting upgrades were installed in 3 Local Government Areas (LGAs).</p> <p>Almost 2,500 customers have participated in the BDR trial which encouraged customers to reduce energy usage during high demand.</p>	<p>The BDR trial will continue in FY22 to find cost-effective ways to reduce peak demand on the network.</p> <p>We will continue to trial new non-network technologies and strategies for reducing or deferring network investment under the Demand Management Innovation Allowance (DMIA), leading to lower costs for our customers and better utilisation of the network.</p>

FY21 Metrics	Details	FY22 Target
OPEX Performance	5.5% reduction in underlying operating expenditure (excluding one off reform costs).	\$361m
<b>FY22 Goals</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install Community Battery in Cameron Park, Lake Macquarie City Council and expand trial participation at Beacon Hill and Bankstown.</li> <li>Continue Demand Management Innovation Allowance programs including the Behavioural Demand Response Trial and the Virtual Power Plant Trial, and introduce the new hot water load control program.</li> <li>Enhance Post Implementation Review process to standardise the reviews across Ausgrid and improve visibility of outcomes into future investment governance.</li> </ul>		



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

### Safety

When it comes to protecting public and staff safety, we can never stand still. Findings from incident investigations informed our risk management programs and resulted in enhanced risk controls. Our lowest ever Total Recordable Injury Frequency Rate (TRIFR) score with a 17% decrease and no serious employee or contractor issues shows that our Health & Safety measures are contributing to the reduction of incident rates. Public safety is addressed through our asset management strategy (keeping our network safe) and public electrical safety awareness program, including the delivery of the Storm Safety campaign to remind the community of the risk of fallen power lines, to stay 8m or 2 car lengths away and call Ausgrid immediately.

In FY21, we continued our pole and line inspection programs and network upgrades to manage public safety risks; Ausgrid's bushfire mitigation and private pole defect inspection program was expanded to cover three newly categorised bushfire prone council areas. Our actions in the asset management strategy and public safety communication program all contribute to improvements in employee and community safety.

### Sustainability

The progress of our LED replacement program rollout has been slower than expected however, by the end of June 2021 we had completed 75% of planned upgrades. In FY21, 36,712 LEDs were installed across the network to bring the total to over 130,000 completed since the beginning of the program. This represents more than 50% of streetlights on the network and has delivered a carbon emissions reduction of 8,029 tonnes. The program has resulted in improved safety of the community, lower costs and lower emissions.

Our Community Battery (CB) trial and Electric Vehicle (EV) partnership with JOLT, alongside our actions to protect against modern slavery, demonstrate our continued commitment to improving sustainability. Ausgrid recognises that we must all contribute to reducing carbon emissions and develop a pathway to net zero emissions.

### Reliability

Ausgrid has worked hard to achieve an improved network performance result for FY21 on the back of a challenging FY20. Having successfully recovered from the significant impact of storms and bushfires, we continued with efficiency and process improvement initiatives to increase the network's resilience and improve performance. These have contributed to the FY21 result being ahead of the trailing five-year average for our System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI) and System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI).



FY21 Commitment	Why	What	Impact
<p><b>Safety</b></p> <p>Improve targeting and measurement of the effectiveness of our Public Electrical Safety Awareness Plan (PESAP)</p>	<p>We are committed to delivering energy safely to our customers.</p> <p>To adapt as new challenges arise and implement new measures that will prevent serious and life changing incidents for our workers and the public.</p>	<p>805 schools (94% of primary schools in our network) participated in Electricity Safety Week during September 2020.</p> <p>Developed targets and measures for our PESAP. This work is ongoing; measures and indicators have been identified.</p> <p>Worked with eSafety Commissioner to remove a video showing dangerous behaviour around live assets from circulation on social media.</p>	<p>The ESW and Storm Safety programs were delivered as part of PESAP, bringing awareness and education of key electrical safety risks associated with the network.</p> <p>Prevented the circulation of materials which encouraged unsafe behaviours.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p>Invest in innovation programs guided by investment principles, e.g. community batteries and community EV charging</p>	<p>Support the alignment of UN Sustainable Development Goals with our business model.</p> <p>Meet our carbon emissions goals of 8% reduction by end FY24 (44% for all emissions excluding line losses) and 17% reduction by 2030.</p>	<p>Free EV charging partnership with JOLT launched in May 2021.</p> <p>Released FY20 Sustainability Report. We installed 36,712 LEDs across the network. Further reduction in environmental impact through 4.5 and above NABERS ratings for new buildings, and inclusion of 30 Toyota hybrid passenger vehicles in our fleet.</p> <p>Implemented a strategy to reduce our use of SF6 and improve management of this gas.</p>	<p>Helping to address barriers to uptake of electric vehicle ownership.</p> <p>The LED streetlight replacement program, installation of solar panels, increases to property efficiencies, fleet reductions and transition into a more energy-efficient fleet were key to our reductions.</p> <p>We surpassed our FY21 emissions target and are on track to achieve the emissions reduction target of 44% for FY24.</p>
<p><b>Reliability</b></p> <p>Lead discussion on network and community resilience</p> <p>Deploy technologies such as Intellirupters, Stand Alone Power Systems (SAPS) and microgrids to provide better resilience</p>	<p>Help to prioritise critical work during COVID-19 to avoid longer or unexpected power outages for customers restricted to their homes.</p> <p>Continuation of improvements to supply and restoration issues for customers by exploring and deploying specialised technologies across the network.</p> <p>To improve network resilience for customers facing supply and restoration issues due to weather-based events. This is important in the face of climate change and increasing prevalence of major weather events.</p>	<p>Identified and bundled smaller jobs around core planned outages to maximise work done per day, reduce outages experienced by customers and traffic control impacts.</p> <p>Completed a review of reclosing policies and undertook an audit of high voltage (HV) and subtransmission feeder auto-reclosing status and commenced a project to improve this functionality.</p> <p>Completed SAPS customer research and commenced work to identify potential participants for our trial.</p> <p>Participated in the Energy Sector Climate Information (ESCI) program with CSIRO. ESCI delivered tailored climate and weather information to support the electricity sector in more confidently including climate risks in planning and risk modelling in the future.</p>	<p>Reduced outage length and frequencies.</p> <p>Improved network reliability.</p> <p>SAPS will help improve supply for some remote and regional customers as well as deliver cost savings for all customers. Also reduced bushfire and safety risk when remote poles and wires are removed and support the potential for expansion into a microgrid for more populated areas.</p> <p>Provide us with better understanding of network and community resilience needs in the face of climate change and COVID-19 through establishing networks with customer advocates, governments and regulators.</p>

FY21 Metrics	Details	FY22 Targets
Safety	<p>Zero fatalities</p> <p>5.4 TRIFR (from 6.5 in FY20)</p> <p>1 immediately reportable NECF breach</p>	<p>Zero fatalities</p> <p>5.4 TRIFR</p> <p>Zero immediately reportable NECF breaches</p>

FY21 Metrics	Details	FY22 Targets
Sustainability	8.8% carbon emissions reduction (13% including line losses) in FY21, from 13.3% in FY20 (from FY17 baseline) LED replacement program rollout has resulted in a 9.3% reduction (9597 tonnes) in carbon emissions vs. FY20	44% reduction in carbon emissions by end FY24, excluding line losses LED Replacement – Achieve 90% roll out on Category P roads, targeting 30k lights for FY22
Reliability	Availability – Improved availability from 99.982 in FY20 to 99.987% SAIDI – FY20 result 0.68 improved by 17.6% in FY21 to 0.56 SAIFI – FY20 result 92.18 improved by 23.3% in FY21 to 70.68	Maintain reliability results
FY22 Goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review our emission reduction targets to align them further to net zero emissions ambitions.</li> <li>Carry out the first SAPS trial with up to 10 participants in the Central Coast and Hunter regions.</li> <li>Develop and implement Project Edith to test cost-effective management of network capacity that enables more benefits from customer investments in distributed energy resources.</li> </ul>		



## Principle 4: We will improve the customer experience

The key initiatives implemented in FY21 were changes to our planned and unplanned outage notifications, website and service delivery communications. Notably, we have introduced near real-time measurement of customer ease across almost our entire suite of services to enable a direct link between business improvement and customer experience. This made it easier for customers to interact with us, with improvements seen in customer measures of ease of interactions (the largest being a 53% improvement in the Connections service type). Through VOC and forums (including working groups with the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA), Accredited Service Provider (ASP) seminars and the Telco Energy Working Group), we developed a deeper understanding of the needs and aspirations of customers, partners and stakeholders. The 2021 RepTrak® results show the proportion of those surveyed who agree that Ausgrid is trusted to put the needs of customers first has doubled since 2019, and customer perception of Ausgrid's communication has shown significant improvement. Results show that there is still room for improvement when it comes to the areas of product & service and innovation.

In the next year, we will continue to review the aspirations and needs of our customers and refresh our business strategy with input from the CCC. We will do more to put the needs of our customers first through transformation programs, including roll out of planned outage SMS notifications for all customer segments, improved digitisation of customer delivery, increased customer engagement and simplifying our contact centre outage/emergency Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system.

### Delivery of our commitments and outcomes

Maturity ●●●●○  
Empowered

FY21 Commitment	Why	What	Impact
Continue service design improvements based on segmentation for unplanned outages, planned outages, new connections and services to local government and implementing new or enhanced services for customers	To provide additional information to Life Support Customers (LSCs) and improve the development of backup plans for outages.	To continue to improve communication on outages and during outages, Ausgrid introduced SMS notifications for unplanned outages and established planned outage SMS notification service for business and LSCs.	Improved communication with customers is reducing uncertainty around outages and informing the customer that we are aware of the outage while providing restoration time updates.
	Improved digital notifications lead to higher open and read rates than physical notifications and provide up-to-date information in a timely manner.	Ensured that all residential customers receive SMS notifications of outage cancellations during COVID restrictions.	Business and LSCs now receive up to 4 outage notifications providing up-to-date information to help them better prepare around planned outages.
	To expand successful ASP1X accreditation trial for councils to complete works within the No Go Zone near overhead powerlines.	Four companies have achieved ASP1X accreditation from the DPIE and Ausgrid authorisation. Some delays to training were experienced due to COVID restrictions, but we are expecting the trial to accelerate when restrictions are lifted.	Notification of primary electricity account holders via SMS resulted in an immediate decrease in notification-related complaints and inquiries.  The contestable vegetation management trial has allowed Councils to engage their own contractors for tree trimming, leading to reduced timeframes, risk and costs for our customers.



FY21 Commitment	Why	What	Impact
Further website improvements to reflect customer needs, e.g. power outage map and our service request forms	<p>A need for the Ausgrid website to show more information on outages and address customers calls for improved updates on outage restoration.</p> <p>To reduce information siloing within internal systems which caused delays in updates for customers.</p> <p>To improve the ability for customers to plan by providing enhanced information during unplanned outages.</p>	<p>Introduced new power outage map with improvements to postcode search. Outage reporting form streamlined with clear safety messaging and outage information.</p> <p>Delivered storm safety central web resource to provide faster information and incident news during storms.</p> <p>Simplified claims portal navigation and introducing a step-by-step process to identify claim eligibility before submission.</p> <p>Digitised claims settlement process so customers are paid faster with less processing and manual data entry.</p> <p>Developed training material for the pilot Voices for Power 'Train the Trainer Program' working closely with community leaders from across CALD communities.</p>	<p>The power outage map and reporting form upgrade launched in tandem with our customer power outage SMS initiative, has helped to improve customer communication of power outages.</p> <p>Simplification of claims portal navigation has resulted in shortened resolution times as customers are now submitting the correct claim form more frequently.</p> <p>Introduction of an automated eligibility assessment assisted customers with the Customer Service Standard Claims process.</p> <p>Collaboration with other DNSPs through the Voices for Power 'Train the Trainer Program' has provided valuable insights and promoted better understanding between participating community leaders and electricity/gas companies.</p>
Evolve complaints management process to create a more consistent experience for customers	<p>To enhance the customer experience by minimising obstacles during the lodgement process, and to assist our officers in reducing resolution times.</p> <p>To address feedback received on our complaints process through surveys, conversations with customers through the contact centre, and in conversations with retailers and DNSPs.</p>	<p>Introduced the Closing the Loop initiative allowing customers to request follow-up from the contact centre for unresolved issues and gave Partners the choice to receive a call-back from an Ausgrid executive.</p> <p>Achieved improvements in customer ease scores. This resulted from our actions to empower customers and reduce pain points.</p> <p>Centralised complaints governance was introduced to improve handling and resolution times.</p>	<p>Closing the Loop allowed Ausgrid's executive team to directly hear and solve the real challenges faced by our partners at the centre of service delivery for our customers.</p> <p>Our improving customer ease scores, as well as improved reputation scores, show that customer trust in Ausgrid putting their needs first is growing.</p> <p>Complex complaints are more effectively managed and resolved more quickly.</p>

## Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW metrics

For the FY21 report, the Energy charter members agreed to present case numbers out of 10,000. This will provide a measure to assess performance across the sector. The following table shows Ausgrid's case numbers, while the metrics below show reductions in monthly volumes.

Enquiries (cases per 10,000 customers)	FY21	FY20
Enquiry / General Enquiry	0.02	0.03
Complaint Enquiry / Refer to Member / Refer to Customer Service / Unassisted Referral / Referral / Refer Back	1.3	1.71
Refer Higher Level / Assisted Referral	0.62	0.81
<b>Complaints</b>		
Level 1 / Conciliation / Stage 1	0.16	0.25
Level 2 / Consultation / Stage 2	0.13	0.11
Level 3 / Investigation / Stage 3	0.10	0.04

FY21 Metrics	Details
Grade of Service (GOS)	Result for FY21 was 88% of all calls answered by the Contact Centre within 30 seconds, against a target of 81.25% GOS as set by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER).
Energy and Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON)	Average EWON complaints volume per month fell from 15.9 in FY20 to 14.7 in FY21 (decrease of 7.8%).
First Time Resolution	The Contact Centre saw a 16.3% improvement in Phone First Time Response rates (from 75% to 92% respectively).
Connections	Reduced over 30 days of Customer time in the new connections design certification process through improvements to environmental assessments and earthing approvals.
FY22 Goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planned SMS/email notification rolled out to all customers.</li> <li>Resolve 80% of claims in an average of under 30 days.</li> <li>Resolve 80% of complaints in an average of under 20 days.</li> <li>Improve digitisation of customer delivery and communications, including bushfire, safety defects, outages, connections and customer care communications.</li> <li>Increase awareness and participation in the contestable vegetation management trial and monitor safety, performance and efficiency.</li> <li>Review all customer communications for clarity, empathy and consistency in messaging.</li> </ul>	



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

Ausgrid has strengthened a number of initiatives to provide support for customers experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, vulnerability. This is especially relevant for customers experiencing difficulties during COVID-19. Our focus for FY21 has been to refresh our hardship policy to better capture the needs and make support as accessible as possible, within the Customer Assistance Framework. Key elements are the expansion of the definition of vulnerable customers and expanding the scope of support offered, including new payment options such as payment plans, upfront discounts and price reductions.

Ausgrid also contributed to the Australian Energy Foundation's (AEF) Life Support Customer (LSC) research. This research has informed new initiatives such as a dedicated LSC webpage, review of materials and interruption notices and phone line for improved access to resources. We deployed planned and unplanned SMS notifications to LSCs to help them prepare for outages, in addition to the direct contact for planned outages. We have also embedded the practice of calling LSCs who were expecting extended delays (over 24hrs) to undertake a welfare check into our LSC policy. Additionally, we undertook a survey of LSCs to understand device usage; this will help us to better meet customer needs during outages.

In FY21, we implemented proactive customer communications to support customers in bushfire risk areas. This included early identification of customers who may have faced insufficient financial capacity and identifying those who needed to undertake mandatory private electricity rectification works; these actions resulted in over 95% of customers with private electricity asset defects who were able to take actions themselves within the compliance period to rectify the situation.

### Delivery of our commitments and outcomes

Maturity ●●●○○  
Evolved

FY21 Commitment	Why	What	Impact
Complete vulnerable customer strategy	Learnings from 2019-20 storms showed we needed to improve how we support our customers during outages.	Improvement in understanding the needs of vulnerable customers and LSCs has informed the development and introduction of the Customer Assistance Framework (to be operationalised throughout FY22).	Improved support for vulnerable customers including new payment options such as payment plans, upfront discounts and price reductions.
Provide translated materials for customers on life support into their preferred language	To address a recognised gap in provision of information for CALD Life Support customers on how to manage during outages.	Translated the LSC fact sheets into 10 languages for our CALD communities with help from Multicultural NSW and Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW.	CALD communities have traditionally had limited access to critical information due to language barriers. The translated materials will improve information access for our most vulnerable customers.

FY21 Commitment	Why	What	Impact
Provide Australian Energy Foundation energy advisory service to vulnerable customers	Improve support for customers in vulnerable circumstances.	We decided not to proceed with the AEF energy advisory; instead, we were a partner in the AEF Life Support Customer research. Ausgrid is now working on advocacy measures to improve services to vulnerable customers.	Understanding our LSCs' demographics, needs and other vital information has directly guided our Vulnerable Customer Policy.

FY21 Metrics	Details	FY22 Targets
NECF	One immediately reportable NECF breach (decrease of 4 from FY20).	Zero immediately reportable NECF breaches.
Customer Reputation Score	Life support customer reputation score saw a +16 improvement.	Sustain positive range reputation score for Life Support Customers

FY22 Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a digital customer assistance strategy to better inform customers in vulnerable circumstances on existing broader support channels.</li> <li>Work with the AEF and energy sector on progressing recommendations from the report regarding 'Better outcomes for energy consumers using life support equipment at home'.</li> <li>Trial Knock Before You Disconnect to test program outcomes and long-term benefits.</li> </ul>