

Minutes



SA Power Networks' Regional and Remote Advisory Group

Meeting Details

Organiser Alex Lewis

Date Tuesday 24 June 2025

Time 1.30-4.00pm

Location Online via Teams

Members

Mike Leane	Chair
Susan Chase AM	Regional Representative
Chris Marsden	Community representative
Jason Huang	C&J Accountants
Penny Williams	Regional Representative

SA Power Networks

Kim Williams, Network Reliability Manager
Matthew Napolitano, Head of Asset Operations
Vlora Dzeladini, Network Emergency Manager
Greg Eyers, Regional Ops Manager – Eyre
Ben Trewartha, Customer Solutions Manager
Alex Lewis, Stakeholder Engagement Manager

Guests/ Presenters

Brian Massey, Emergency Manager, DEM
Paul Topping, Innovation Mgr, Asset Mgmt & Ops
Alex Ward, Network investment Manager
Travis Bury, Network Operations Engineer
Deshan Govender, Graduate Engineer (itesm 5)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

Mike welcomed all members to the meeting and acknowledged the traditional owners.

CAF update

Mike provided an overview of the key discussion from the May CAF meeting including:

- Safety share - recent surge in safety incidents within the business.
- Strategic vision and values that are being embedded across the business.
- SAPN's simplified strategic framework which focuses on customer, network and people outcomes.
- Customer Programs Update - replacing legacy systems to improve efficiency and customer experience.
- Cyber Security Strategy launched.
- ElectraNet discussion post Yorke Peninsula outage.

Mike also attended the Executive Leadership Team Meeting on 6 May with Andrew Nance and discussed the Upper North Energy Resilience workshop, the need for improved collaboration between SAPN and Electranet, as well as SES/ ZEMCs, and the proposed attendance of RRAG members at Field Days and events during the year.

Business arising from last meeting

- Field Days/ Country Shows – RRAG attendance during 2025 with good coverage across events.

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- Update on ITP microgrid study and where to from here (agenda item 3).
- Powerline clearances – RRAG feedback on our approach (agenda item 5).
- Review of River Murray response and lessons learnt (agenda item deferred to September meeting to be held in Riverland).
- Collaboration and engagement – opportunities for partnerships and further collaboration eg. Telstra (ongoing).
- Accountability for expenditure and expected improvement in SAIDI/SAIFI numbers. Kym W to provide numbers on expected improvements in SAIDI/SAIFI and present 2025 statistics at September meeting.
- Innovation framework and IAG (agenda item 4).
- Outcome of further discussion with Telstra re priority areas for both parties following presentation.
- Possible increased collaboration with SES/ ZEMCs. Waiting on date for re-scheduled meeting with SES Project Officers.
- Split of responsibilities between ElectraNet/SAPN/DEM for restoration of supply after major outages and long-term planning (DEM agenda item 2 re role in emergency management). Senior Execs from SAPN and ElectraNet met in May. Agreed on split of responsibilities during major outages.

Customer Outcomes

Mike noted that we are keen to finalise and seek endorsement of the customer outcomes from the group.

- Reliable, safe and resilient network – farm safety not the only focus. Needs to expand to include reliability and resilience.
- Affordable and equitable supply – need to include SAIDI/SAIFI measures as part of Regulatory Proposal expenditure.

Action:

Alex/ Mike to email copy of the draft customer outcomes to RRAG for feedback and review (ran out of time at meeting to discuss in detail).

2. Zone Emergency Management committees and how the different committees are called upon during emergencies

Brain Massey provided an overview of:

- DEM's role and responsibilities
- The critical role of electricity
- Current arrangements
- Electricity Emergency Procedures.

There have been several recent incidents where DEM has had to act as the control manager. The following three incidents all had significant impacts on downstream customers.

- 17 October 2024 - Far North Severe Storm and Power Outage Event
- 13 February 2025 - Oodnadatta Power Station Fire and Extreme Heat Event (part of the off-grid RAES scheme so not part of SAPN's distribution network)
- 14 March 2025 - Yorke Peninsula Transmission Outage Event

Discussion included:

- Who does DEM report to? (Minister and Agency senior management).
- When does DEM engage with SAPN? (Minimum demand events/ extreme weather).
- What sort of instruments and directions are provided to SAPN/ ElectraNet? (permit/ approval requirements to speed up restoration).
- Downstream impacts of power outages eg. communications.
- Does DEM have a role to play in the level of interaction between SAPN and ElectraNet?
 - Roles/ responsibilities identified by DEM but no involvement in SAPN ⇔ ElectraNet relationships
 - DEM is keen to ensure consumers are kept well informed



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- Praise for SAPN comms during major outages
 - DEM recommended SAPN/ Electranet establish a comms process following the October event.
 - What is the ESCoSA cross over with DEM? This question remained unanswered.

The River Murray review and lessons learnt was deferred to the September meeting in the Riverland. It was suggested to invite the local councils to attend.

3. Microgrid and SAPS opportunities and our thinking

Alex Ward provided an overview of the new Strategic Network Investment Team developed as part of the operating model. Their initial focus will be:

- Reliability
- Resilience and bushfire
- Non-network solutions
- Community batteries

Alex provided a recap of the Fringe-of-Grid Futures Research project.

- Intermittent microgrids may help make the existing network more resilient
- Challenging economics for both intermittent microgrids and decommissioning network
- Screening study identified
 - 204 connection points have the potential for implementation of SAPS
 - Bushfire risk is the primary value stream, followed by operations and maintenance.

In terms of next steps:

- SAPS
 - Establishing an internal innovation squad
 - Engage consultant to establish decision making framework, clarify regulatory requirements and align technical solutions to business strategy.
- Intermittent microgrids
 - Develop list of candidate sites
 - Assess feasibility
 - Consider external funding sources (if required)

The RRAG would like to provide feedback into the decision-making framework for SAPS as it is developed.

4. Innovation framework

Paul Topping provided an overview of the Innovation Framework and the role of the Innovation Advisory Group. Chris Marsden represents the RRAG on IAG. Paul is the Customer Innovation Manager for Asset Management & Operations and will be the conduit between the RRAG and innovation delivery.

Discussion:

- SAPS development requires whole of business thinking eg. diesel and CO₂ emissions.
- What is innovation vs business process improvement?
- Clarification around the digital twin concept.
- Hawker resilience workshop and the options of removing the HV lines. Matt outlined the RIT-T process that Electranet would need to initiate, calling for non-network solutions. SAPN will consider offering non-network solutions.
- Innovation as a standing agenda items for future RRAG meetings.

5. Powerline clearance requirements

Matt outlined the current regulatory requirements around powerline clearances and the issue around lines constructed pre 1997 (4.9m vs 6m for bare or covered conductor = 1.1m difference). SAPN are seeking RRAG feedback on our approach and investment linked to risk.

Discussion:

- As part of upgrade works, are lines done to the new standard? (yes)
- No evidence that increasing height reduces risk and improves farm safety. Majority incidents are tractors hitting poles. Biggest issue with accidents is fatigue and distraction.
- Not economically feasible to upgrade all lines due to costs.
- Extent of conductor on arable land? (Manual process to determine this so unsure. The 'digital twin' concept could be an option in future but more for defects than clearances).
- Size of machinery - the average height of a modern-day combine harvester is approximately 4 to 5.5m so some are unsafe to pass under 6m power lines
- While safety and clearance regulations are actively maintained and updated, there is no current indication of regulatory submissions or funding requests aimed specifically at increasing the height of powerlines.
- SAPN could consider tailored conversations as part of next reset to develop a modest program looking at high risk areas/ hot spots.
- Might be more appropriate to discuss with farmers moving SWER lines than increasing clearances. Are there other solutions such as raising short sections to be used as crossing points for large machinery?
- Importance of education around farm safety and access.

Feedback on the following two questions from RRAG was being sought:

- *Q1. Is there support to seek funding for network augmentation to achieve modern day clearance standards?*
- RRAG generally didn't support increased expenditure on increasing clearances and would prefer funding to focus on reliability for rural customers. Need great education with farmers at Field Days and engagement with organisations such as Grain Producers. More work needed to define the issues and consider alternative solutions.
- *Q2. Is there any feedback on our approach to defective line clearances? (Question and discussion deferred to next meeting).*

6. Other business and Around the Table

6.1 Community response vehicle

Jay provided an update on the vehicle progress, including the main design features and proposed timeframes for vehicle fit out.

Following an internal naming competition, that show over 90 names submitted, the following names have been short-listed to take to the community for voting:

- Cyril - after James Stobie (checking with the Stobie family)
- The EMU - EMergency response Unit
- OSCAR - Outage Support Community Assistance and Response
- MARC - Mobile Assistance and Response Centre

6.2 Around the Table

- Chris asked if the recent rain had alleviated the **insulator washing**/ dust issue. A month ago, most areas had been alleviated as rain occurred apart from Port Augusta which only got enough rain 2 weeks ago. It has significantly impacted our rural reliability performance with \$11m of reliability



penalties. SAPN is undertaking a post event review. Sue noted Cowell has had little rain and a few dust storms so wondered if it was still an issue in some areas.

- **Bat outages** have decreased by 40% in 2025 but unsure of reasons.
- **Hawker energy resilience workshop** and outcomes.

7. Next meeting

The next meeting is 11/12 September to align with the Riverland Field Day

- Team Dinner @ Mallee Fowl 11 Sept
- Meeting 9-11am @ Berri Hotel 12 Sept
- Attend Field Day 12 Sept@ approx. 5 km NW of Barmera

Current action Items:

Meeting	Action	Who	Due Date
Aug '23	Outcomes and actions from review of River Murray flood response – lessons learnt and what may have changed.	Travis	Deferred to September meeting
Nov '24	Updates re split of responsibilities between ElectraNet-SAPN-DEM for restoration of supply after major outages and long-term planning – form part of Upper north review	Vlora	2025
March '25	Expenditure over 2020-25 Regulatory Period on regional reliability programs and benefits for customers. Provide expected improvement in SAIDI/SAFI numbers	Kym	September 2025
March '25	Outcome of further discussion with Telstra re priority areas for both parties	Kym	June 2025
June '25	Alex/ Mike to email copy of the draft customer outcomes to RRAG for feedback and review	Alex	July 2025
June '25	RRAG to provide feedback into the decision-making framework for SAPS	Alex W	TBC
June '25	Matt present on defects and seek feedback on our approach to defective line clearances.	Matt N	September 2025

Ongoing and procedural action items:

Meeting	Action	Who	Due Date
	Resilience of telecommunications during electricity outages. Update to meeting.	Vlora	Nov meeting
Aug 2024	Track actual spending and resultant improvements in reliability for worst served customers	Kym W	2025
Aug 2024	Monitor Talking Power for comments/concerns expressed by regional and remote customers	Alex	Ongoing

