# Minutes

## SA Power Networks' Community Advisory Forum

## Meeting Details

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| **Organiser** | Alex Lewis |
| **Date** | Thursday 26 February |
| **Time** | 9.30am to 12.30pm |
| **Location** | The Highway |

## Members

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| Andrew Nance | Chair |
| Matthew Curnow | RAG rep. |
| Chris Marsden | RAG Rep. |
| Georgie Morris | VCAG Rep |
| Heather Merran | TAG Rep. |
| Kim Syrus | VMAG Rep. |
| Lachlan Newman | Community Rep. |
| Mike Leane | RRAG Rep. |
| Davis Veremu | ACRAG Rep. |
| Troy Smith | CAG Rep. |
| Ed Chan | IAG Rep. |

**SA Power Networks**
Jess Morris, Chief Customer & Strategy Officer
Alex Lewis, Stakeholder Engagement Manager
Megan Grey, Head of Comms & Engagement
Kylie Lush, Minute Secretary
Richard Sibly, Head of Regulation

**Guests/ Observers**
Andrew Bills, CEO SA Power Networks
Fraser Hampton, Network Development Manager
Helen White, Manager Revenue & Pricing

### 1. Recurring Ordinary Items

**Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country**
Andrew welcomed attendees and acknowledged the traditional owners of the land.

**1.2 Apologies –** Jess Morris

**1.3 Previous Minutes -** Minutes from the previous meeting were circulated to the members and accepted as an accurate representation of the meeting.

**1.4 Safety Share** - Andrew reported on the recent focus on safety, with 73 people being injured across the business. A safety perception survey has been rolled out to the business, following the increased number of injuries from the previous year.

- Reinforced the importance of safety culture and transparency.
- Emphasises ongoing diagnostics, field reviews, and efforts to address structural and cultural contributors to safety challenges.
- Highlighted positive safety observations from recent field visits but noted concerns about traffic speeds around work zones.
  The group discussed the 'aggressive customer campaign' noting growing concern about the increasing prevalence of this issue.

**2.1 Chair Update – Andrew Nance**

- Announced he will be stepping down from Chair role due to moving into a new role within the Department for Energy and Mining as Director, Planning and Demand Forecasting.
- Reflected on more than two decades of involvement with SA Power Networks and expressed appreciation for the group's collaboration and commitment.
- Andrew confirmed he will remain involved in related work through his new government position and thanked staff from SA Power Networks.

**2.2 Executive Update – Andrew Bills**

- Reported on community sentiment and operational challenges following significant insulator pollution and associated flashover events causing outages, especially on the Yorke Peninsula, Eyre Peninsula and southern regions.
- Outlined that contributing factors include extended dry periods, higher sea-surface temperatures and coastal atmospheric moisture.
- Discussed the major cost impact of responding to the issue, noting over $11 million in service-event penalties year-to-date.
- Community meetings held in Minlaton and one scheduled in Cowell to manage people's expectations.
- Provided an overview of the operation response including short and long term solutions:
  - Additional supply restoration crews
  - Deploying local mobile generation to provide backup supply for communities experiencing highest impact.
  - Mitigation & Remediation includes:
  - Targeted asset inspections to identify issues and prioritise work
  - Alternative washing methods including the use of helicopters, which is a first for the business.
  - Investigating a trial of silicone coating insulators
  - Long term management plan, informed through expert consultancy.
- The small claims scheme is being looked at as an avenue of support, requiring the eligibility to be expanded.
- Would the cost be worn by the business or customers? A pass through is unlikely so the significant financial impact is likely to fall on SAPN.

Andrew Bills thanked Chair Andrew Nance for his commitment and significant contribution to the CAF and wider business, including SAPNs executive team.

**3.1 Consultative Group Review & Next Steps - Megan Grey & Alex Lewis**

- Megan provided a summary of feedback gathered from internal and external stakeholders about reviewing the Advisory Group structure.
- Consultation inputs included the Reset engagement Post-Implementation Review (PIR), one-on-one interviews with current chairs, and internal and external stakeholder interviews**.**
- Key objectives of the review are to streamline engagement efforts and reduce duplication and facilitate better alignment between advisory groups and SA Power Networks long-term strategic priorities, including reset planning.
- Alex discussed the proposed future structure, with strategic advisory groups elevated to focus on customer outcomes, affordability, customer experience and resilience.

**Discussion:**

- Members raised the importance of ensuring vulnerable customer impacts remain visible.
- Avoiding over-complexity and ensuring transparency of how customer input influences decisions.
- To ensure regional and remote customer perspectives remain strong within a larger group, consider appointing a deputy CAF Chair from a regional community.
- Chris noted he really valued attending regional community meetings, including the recent session in Robe, and highlighted how useful it was to hear directly from customers and local stakeholders.
- Some members suggested innovation should maintain a strong customer-centric lens, ensuring ideas reflect real needs and insights.
- There was discussion that innovation activity intersects both network performance and future energy workstreams with members wanting to ensure the IAG has visibility across both. Innovation also can play a role in shaping the reset narrative.
- Alex noted that Hiroe has joined the team as the stakeholder engagement business partner, overlooking the smoother running of the Innovation Advisory Group.
- What role does SAPN envisage Advisory Group members playing in engaging directly with customers?
- Connections is a big beast which is operational and strategic – propose for two working group chairs to present to CAF once a year.
- Importance of a broad skillset at CAF.
- Ensuring engagement on tariffs to understand customer experience and changes to tariffs.

**3.2 Network Planning – Fraser Hampton**

- 72,000+ batteries have been installed to date, and this is estimated to double next year.
- Fraser outlined the shift towards greater collaboration between distribution, transmission and government planning functions.
- The new State government planning unit is focused on understanding the distribution network's role in maintaining reliability and meeting future economic growth ambitions.
- South Australia now operates with 72% net renewables, with rooftop solar on more than half of homes and rapidly increasing battery adoption, creating new planning challenges.
- Flexibility services and flexible connections were reinforced as essential for managing peak demand and avoiding unnecessary network augmentation.
- Forecasting improvements underway, including scenario modelling to reflect uncertainty around electrification, industrial loads and customer behaviour.
- Data centres and the associated challenges – water, energy, load requirements, location.

**3.3 Electranet CAP / SAPN Meeting** - Not discussed due to time constraints.

**3.4 2026-27 Pricing Update and AEMC Pricing Review – Helen White**

- Local network charges forecast to increase 11% next year, primarily driven by significant transmission cost increases.
- Residential consumption forecasts are declining due to high battery uptake and scheme changes.
- New government "solar sponge" retail requirement (zero-cent tariffs mid-day) may shift demand and influence forecasting assumptions. Distribution revenue requirements increasing due to CPI and regulatory mechanisms; partially offset by prior-year over-recovery.

**Discussion:**

- Georgie highlighted concern about how increased network charges, scheme costs and tariff changes would affect households, especially vulnerable customers.
- A question was raised about how the rising costs, particularly transmission and scheme-related charges, are being distributed and whether residential customers are bearing more than their proportionate share.
- Clarification was sought on whether the new scheme components would appear as a separate line item on customer bills or be blended into general network charges.
- Concern was raised about the potential impact of frequent tariff and scheme changes on customer understanding and bill stability.

**Action:**
AEMC Pricing Review – SAPN to share a copy of their submission with CAF members.

**3.5 Advisory Group Reflections & Customer Outcomes**

- Members noted the advisory process has been valuable, particularly the strong collaboration with SAPN teams and exposure to technical, customer and planning issues.
- Recognition of major achievements in customer outcomes, including local government engagement and improvements in outage communications.
- Improving community understanding of SAPN's asset management decisions.
- SAPN support at the senior level and value of building trust with SAPN.
- More quantitative data in feedback processes (not just qualitative survey insights).
- Clarify expectations for when groups are being informed vs. consulted, noting that informing is sometimes what's required.
- Members discussed the challenges in predicting customer behavioural response to tariff changes, DER uptake and market incentives.
- Chair Andrew Nance expressed his appreciation for all members and acknowledged their valuable contributions.

**4. Other Business**

- Alex thanked Andrew for his contributions to the CAF and his guidance as Chair.
- The Advisory Group model will be finalised and an expressions of interest process will commence mid/late March, with new members being appointed in April 2026.

**Meeting closed at 12.30pm**

**Current action Items:**

| Item | Action Item | Who | Complete |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3.4** | Circulate AEMC pricing submission to the group | Helen/Kylie | |
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