# Minutes

## SA Power Networks' Vulnerable Customer Advisory Group

## Meeting Details

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| **Organiser** | Alex Lewis |
| **Date** | Thursday 19 June, 2025 |
| **Time** | 9.30-12.00pm |
| **Location** | Rex Hotel, Richmond Rd, Marleston |

## Members

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|---|---|
| Georgina Morris | Chair |
| Alex Fry, SAFCA | Deputy Chair |
| Andrew Stock | Community representative |
| Jen Harris | National Council for Women |
| Silvio Iadarola | Multicultural SA |
| Jen Bradley | Community representative |
| Kym Mercer | Community representative |
| Amber Brock-Fabel | Youth representative |
| Lynette Day | DEM |
| Antony Clarke | EWOSA |
| Kitty McLean | Uniting SA |

**SA Power Networks**
Alex Lewis, Reset Engagement Manager
Rebecca Carter, Energy Charter Program Manager
Sophie McRae, Head of Customer Experience
Megan Grey, Head of Comms & Engagement

**Guests/ Presenters**
Sarah Mammone, Customer Services
Sam Craft, Customer Innovation Manager

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

**Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country**
Georgie welcomed all members to the meeting and acknowledged the traditional owners.

Apologies from Lynette Day, Antony Clarke, Jen Harris, Sophie McRae, Megan Grey and Sarah Mammone were noted.

**CAF update**
A quick overview of key discussion items from the May CAF meeting was provided, including Strategic Planning and the Customer Program.

### 2. Customer Outcomes Discussion

A sub-group of VCAG met to discuss the draft customer outcomes, which were presented to the group.

Discussion:

- Export tariffs – how retailers will apply needs to be considered. Revenue recovery and expenditure.
- Alex to email the export comms developed. Perhaps some headline graphics/ images would help with messaging.
- Customer data – concession holders often have low usage vs hardship customers which are 2x 'average annual' usage.
- Factoring in aged care/ NDIS workers using heating, cooling, toilets etc.

## 3. Energy Charter and Better Together Initiative Updates

**Resilience Project**

- Bec provided an overview of the Campaign Don't be in the dark. Know what to do

**Life Support Customers**

- Campaign Overview: Check. Plan. Do. Power Outage Plan
- AEMC rule change – Consultation Paper expected to be released on 19 July 2025, and will be open for 5 weeks
- Propose to run an optional online Q&A session, 7 August, 2:30-3:30pm.

**Customer-Led Tariff**

- As part of Stage 2 of the project:
    - SAPN has proposed two network tariff concepts: Electrify and Retailer Portfolio Tariff
    - Endgame Economics is currently doing a proof of concept modelling
- Jen/Andrew raised concerns that project not going in the right direction (CER focus) and tariff design is complex.
- Theoretical paper trial of tariffs vs real life trials eg. trial using low income, high usage households.
- 70% of households not engaged in bills/ usage/ tariffs.
- Andrew raised his concerns regarding the lack of coordination at the policy and State/ Federal Govt level. SA still has the highest energy costs and undertaking an SA only review while part of the NEM.

**Energy Literacy – Train the Trainer program**

- New SAPN project team with Kylie Lush as project manager following few resourcing issues (Harry).
- Internal kick-off meeting to be held in July.
- Will confirm 2025 and 2026 deliverables and timeline at next meeting.

## 4. Advocacy / Policy Update

**Firm Energy Reliability Mechanism (FERM) consultation**

- SA Gov advancing FERM framework to support sufficient long duration firm capacity to ensure secure, reliable and resilient electricity supply at least cost to customers.
- SAPN will be completing submission, due 14 July 25.

**SAPN/DEM – regular engagement**

- Jess Morris meeting with Rebecca Knights, DEM, 18/6/25
- Topics: Smart Meter site remediation support and REPS

**DCCEEW's Better Energy Customer Experiences (BECE)**

- SAPN provided submission 5/6/25
- Recommended national approach to improve energy efficiency for existing homes.

## 5. Upper North Resilience Workshop – 15 May

Item deferred – update provided below.

- Review of the power outages to households in Quorn, Hawker, Leigh Creek, Beltana, Copley, Nepabunna and Iga Warta.
- Focus on energy resilience and energy supply options moving forward.
- Households and energy providers shared stories and experiences from both during and after the storm.
- Access to telecommunications remains an issue.

- Local leadership, information flow and building community energy resilience.
- Collaboration between SAPN, ElectraNet, SAPOL and Telstra critical.
- Highlighted need for back-up power and options eg. generators, local energy solutions.

**6. Innovation Framework and Innovation Advisory Group**

Sam provided an overview of the Innovation Framework and the role of the Innovation Advisory Group. Andrew Stock represents the VCAG on IAG. Sam is the Customer Innovation Manager and will be the conduit between the VCAG and innovation delivery.

In terms of vulnerable customers, SAPN is trying to go back to basics and define the problem statement and what we are trying to achieve, as well as what our role in supporting vulnerable customers should be. This will involve engagement with other VCAG members and a review of the 2019 Vulnerable Customer Strategy.

Discussion:
- The need for engagement with actual customers, not just customer advocates.
- Different cohorts and different approaches eg. CALD, youth, First Nations.
- Guidance to facilitate discussions.
- Affordability and cost of service through recovery of network costs.
- IAG needs to consider will this bridge the divide and who will benefit?
- Innovation as a standing VCAG agenda item.

**7. SACOSS Submissions**

Georgie provided an overview of key submissions or reviews, including:

**Better Energy Customer Experiences (BECE Review)**
- Review energy consumer protection frameworks, ensuring they are strong and fit for purpose both now and into the future.
- Review has an extremely wide scope and represents a significant opportunity for change, as well as risk.

**Hardship Rule Change**
- The preferred rule change proposes to place an obligation on retailers to ensure 'hardship customers' are paying no more for their energy bill than their deemed better offer.

**Payment Difficulties Review**
- AER review of payment difficult – who should be receiving assistance, what assistance is available, access to assistance, disconnection as a last resort.
- This will involve changes to the Retail Rules.

A number of AER Guideline reviews are also coming up.

**8. Small Claims Scheme**

Item deferred to September meeting.

**9. Kelvin Trimper Scholarship Winner - Video and Debrief from Sustainable Homes Expo**
- Alex Fry provided an overview of the work undertaken at the Brompton rental property to make it an energy efficient home as part of the scholarship funding.
- Showcasing an energy efficient rental, Alex Fry https://youtu.be/lEQVXorsdTc

## 10. Other Business / Roundtable Discussion

**EWOSA update (Antony emailed)**

- In the first five months of 2025, EWOSA received around 3,500 cases, which is down around 11% from the same period in 2024.
- Complaints fell by almost one quarter and enquiries increased by almost one quarter.
- Complaints for electricity fell, gas was flat, and water increased, partly due to a rise in water leaks.
- The rise in enquiries might reflect greater awareness of EWOSA because of the requirements that EWOSA's telephone number be on energy bills and now (from 1 January 2025) SA Water bills as well. We also receive calls from people who were intending to call their provider, and these are recorded as enquiries. This has happened a lot more since the requirement for EWOSA's telephone number to be on energy bills.
- In good news for SAPN, cases in the first five months of 2025 fell by 8.5% compared to the same period last year.

**Amber**

- Does SAPN have a role in the DIT Transport Strategy?

**Jen**

- AEMC Pricing Review

**Alex Fry**

- Funding structures for financial counselling. Current model is resulting is loss of knowledge and staff.

**Silvio**

- Secured $90k for African Youth Week.
- Family violence in the older Italian community and elder abuse – no compulsory reporting.
- Many migrant groups celebrating 50 years – need to focus on emerging groups and issues eg. African.

**Current action Items:**

| Meeting | Action | Who | Due Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| May '24 | Californian tariff and the Oregon Energy Trust initiative examples as case studies. | Cecilia | Nov meeting |
| June '25 | Optional meeting to be scheduled for AEMC Life Support Customer Rule Change | Alex | 7 August 2025 |
| June '25 | | | |
| June '25 | Small claims scheme presentation deferred to September meeting | Sarah | Sept 2025 |
| June '25 | Alex to email link to Alex Fry's Showcasing an energy efficient rental and include in minutes | Alex | June 2025 |
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**Ongoing and procedural action items:**

| Meeting | Action | Who | Due Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nov '23 | Life Support Customers review | Bec C | Ongoing |
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