

06 October 2020

Consumer Engagement Award finalists announced

Networks putting customers at the centre of their business have been shortlisted for the 2020 Consumer Engagement Award. Shortlisted organisations include Australian Gas Infrastructure Group, AusNet Services, Evoenergy & Jemena Electricity Network.

Energy Consumers Australia Interim CEO Lynne Gallagher said the 2020 entries showed networks were taking steps on a range of engagement activities, demonstrating the maturing of consumer engagement within many businesses.

“We are seeing an uplift and commitment to working directly with customers by many network businesses, exploring new ways to deepen engagement and collaboration with consumers in the face of new challenges such as COVID-19 and extreme weather events,” Ms Gallagher said.

“The award shines a light on best practice engagement activities across the energy network sector and we hope many of these good practices become common practice by sharing knowledge across the sector.”

Energy Networks Australia CEO Andrew Dillon said the consistently high standard of entries to this year’s awards showed continual improvement by networks in their engagement practices.

“It is encouraging to see how every year networks are stepping up with new projects and engagement to deliver improved services and benefits to customers,” he said.

The winner will be announced in October. All nominations will be published in a report to celebrate the consumer engagement work being done by energy networks across the nation. The reports from last years' nominees can be accessed in the [Consumer Engagement report](#).

Australian Gas Infrastructure Group - Customers at the Centre of our planning

We set out to embed a genuine customer focus into all aspects of our future planning for our South Australian gas distribution network. Our program was based on genuine and effective engagement, with a focus on empowering our staff to deliver the best outcomes for customers. We also set a clear objective of developing a Final Plan in SA (2021 – 2025) which delivers for current and future customers, is underpinned by effective stakeholder engagement and is capable of being accepted by our customers and stakeholders.

Australian Gas Infrastructure Group - Partnering with Communities on the Future of Gas

Our customers told us they expect gas infrastructure to play a role in the decarbonised future. We consider it our responsibility to pursue projects such as Hydrogen Park South Australia to deliver lowest cost decarbonisation whilst retaining safe and reliable energy supply. Once online in late Spring-2020, Hydrogen Park South Australia will be the first time renewable hydrogen is blended with natural gas for supply to customers. We recognise community trust is key to the future success of Hydrogen Park South Australia and the industry more generally, and that trust can only be built through genuine, dedicated and responsive engagement that values community interests.

AusNet Services - Customer Forum: A Trial of the 'New Reg' Process

In 2018 AusNet Services had an opportunity to undertake a trial of the NewReg process, developed by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), Energy Consumers Australia and ENA. The NewReg vision is that energy consumers' priorities will drive regulatory outcomes. We established an independent Customer Forum to represent the perspectives of our customers in negotiating and agreeing price and service offerings, supported by the AER. The Forum met with many AusNet staff over the two years, to gain detailed information on the business, our customers and our plans. The Forum also met many of our customers independently. Agreed outcomes were incorporated in our 2022-26 Revenue Proposal.

Evoenergy - Citizens' Jury

Evoenergy owns and operates the gas distribution network in the ACT and surrounding areas. Within its Gas Network 2021–26 (GN21) regulatory review consumer engagement program, Evoenergy sought to understand consumer needs and expectations amid an uncertain future for the distribution of natural gas. Against the backdrop of the ACT Government's globally ambitious 2045 zero net greenhouse gas emission target, Evoenergy braved uncharted territory, building upon previous consumer engagement approaches to undertake one of the most deliberative initiatives in the engagement toolkit—a Citizens' Jury. This process established a new consumer engagement benchmark for Evoenergy, providing meaningful, relevant community feedback.

Jemena Electricity Network - COVID community response

The diversity of Jemena Electricity Network's customer base of 350,000+ households and businesses in Melbourne's north-west presented a unique challenge in how to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only did Jemena need to maintain an essential service but also needed to support people within our culturally diverse communities. COVID-19 redefined vulnerability for energy consumers and against rapidly evolving external circumstances and timeframes, Jemena identified key customer and community challenges using a consultative, evidence-based approach. Understanding these challenges, Jemena led a dynamic program of solutions delivered in collaboration with industry and community known as "COVID-19 Community Response".

Background

Energy Networks Australia, in partnership with Energy Consumers Australia run the 2020 Energy Network Consumer Engagement Award. This award recognises an Australian energy network business that demonstrates outstanding leadership in consumer engagement.

Judging panel:

- Lynne Gallagher, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Energy Consumers Australia (Chair)
- Gavin Dufty, Manager Policy and Research, St Vincent De Paul Society
- Mark Henley, Manager Advocacy and Energy Advocate, Uniting Communities
- Robyn Robinson, Non-Executive Director, Council on the Ageing
- Merryn York, Commissioner, Australian Energy Market Commission
- Jim Cox, Board Member, Australian Energy Regulator

ENDS

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***Energy Consumers Australia** is the national voice for residential and small business energy consumers. Established by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2015, our objective is to promote the long-term interests of consumers with respect to price, quality, reliability, safety and security of supply.*

***Energy Networks Australia** is the national industry body representing Australia's electricity transmission and distribution and gas distribution networks. Our members provide more than 16 million electricity and gas connections to almost every home and business across Australia.*