

# The Energy Charter

## 2021 Disclosure



**EnergyAustralia**  
LIGHT THE WAY

# From the Managing Director

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2020-21 was another challenging year because of COVID-19 but our primary focus remained on supporting our people and our customers.

We have seen tangible improvements in how we provide customers with the service and support that they need, and how they perceive us in return. We are having 'better conversations' with customers enabled by targeted training and coaching for our frontline people and actively integrating this into our processes. This enables us to quickly identify and respond to customer needs with every interaction, whether that be over the phone, web chat, the EnergyAustralia app or our *My Account* web portal.

To help customers manage higher-than-expected bills, we've implemented a proactive SMS system that alerts the customer before the bill arrives and gives them options to reduce their usage or consider payment plans. This has helped reduce direct complaints by 12% and complaints to the Ombudsman by 24%.

We have focussed on proactively identifying customers in vulnerable circumstances to quickly offer targeted support. By combining data analytics with better customer conversations, we are offering support when it's needed. We have set up over 537,000 payment plans or extensions in the past year (an 84% increase on last year) and most importantly, have focussed on what a customer can afford to pay, rather than what they owe. This means 85% of EnergyAssist customers are currently meeting their payment plans. We have also put steps in place to ensure disconnection is an absolute last resort and that we leave no stone unturned to reach our customers to offer support. This includes a trial of Wellbeing Visits which has been successful in helping us assist more customers.

Important steps towards leading the energy transition have occurred during the past year. Bringing forward the closure of the Yallourn power station was a difficult, but necessary, decision to become carbon neutral by 2050. But we will support our people and the community in that transition. We also committed to building a new battery in the Latrobe Valley before Yallourn retires and constructing Australia's first net zero emissions hydrogen and gas capable power plant at our Tallawarra power station in New South Wales. These projects are going to be instrumental as we deliver a cleaner energy system.

The Energy Charter continues to play an important role to provide a collaborative platform for businesses across the supply chain to work together for the benefit of customers. As COVID-19 continues to challenge our communities, what matters most for customers is that the energy industry works together to provide simple and integrated solutions, particularly for vulnerable customers, and collaborates to make sure we get the basics right.

I am very proud of how hard our people have worked over the last year to help keep the lights on for households and businesses across Australia. But we are not standing still - with the ongoing pressures and challenges of COVID-19, and the continued urgency of the clean energy transition, we will continue to explore ways to meet and exceed the expectations of our customers.

**Mark Collette**  
**Managing Director, EnergyAustralia**



# EnergyAustralia at a Glance

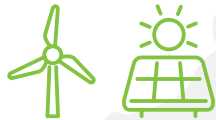
Our Purpose is to lead and accelerate the clean energy transformation for all



We **supply gas and electricity** to around 2.43 million homes, small to medium sized businesses and large-scale businesses.



We **assisted customers over 3 million** times in 2020-21 over the phone or via web chat.

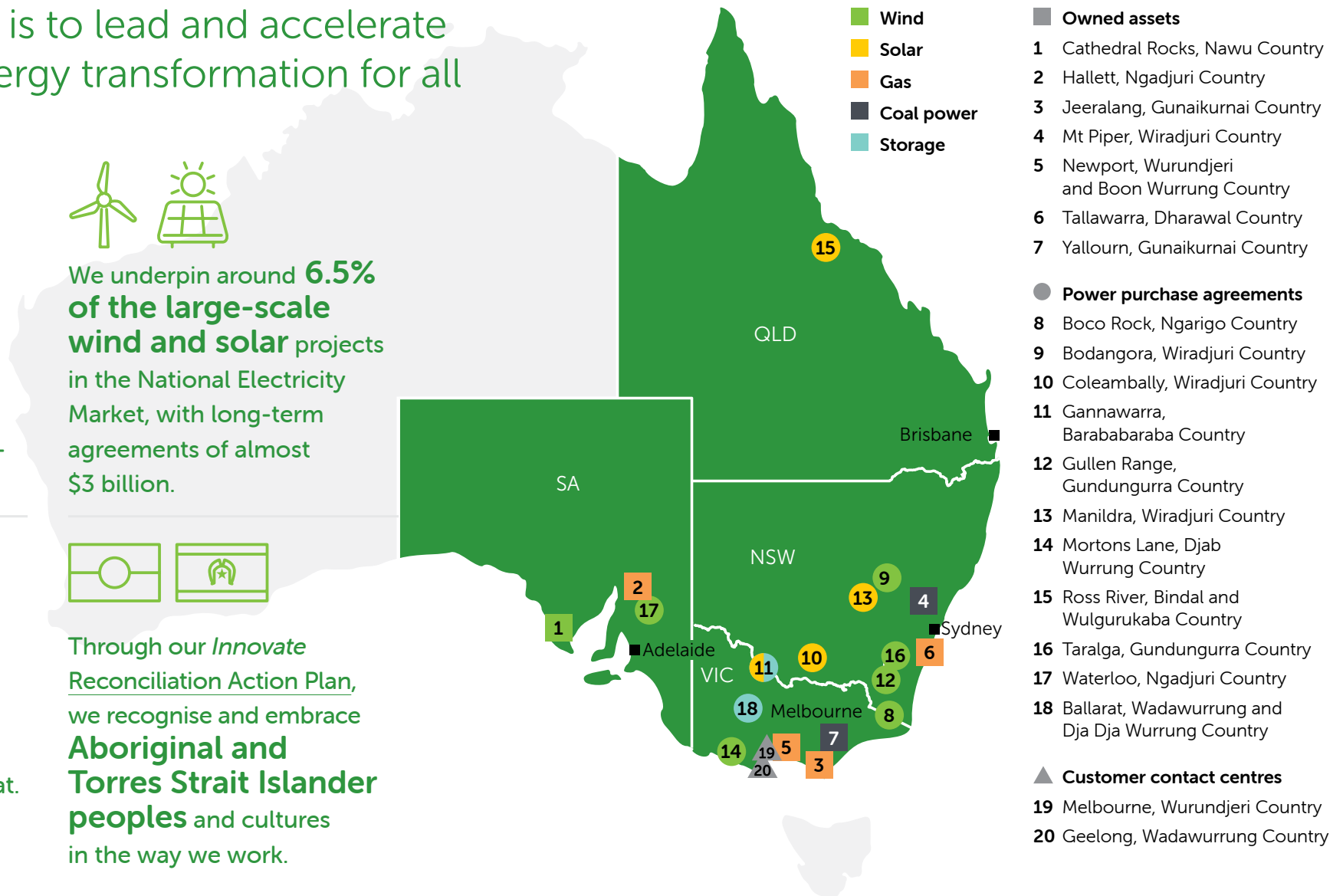


We underpin around **6.5% of the large-scale wind and solar** projects in the National Electricity Market, with long-term agreements of almost \$3 billion.



Through our *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*, we recognise and embrace **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** and cultures in the way we work.

At EnergyAustralia, we recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we operate and the communities we serve. Our goal is to build working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and businesses.



- Wind
- Solar
- Gas
- Coal power
- Storage

- Owned assets**
- 1 Cathedral Rocks, Nawu Country
- 2 Hallett, Ngadjuri Country
- 3 Jeeralang, Gunaikurnai Country
- 4 Mt Piper, Wiradjuri Country
- 5 Newport, Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung Country
- 6 Tallawarra, Dharawal Country
- 7 Yallourn, Gunaikurnai Country
- Power purchase agreements**
- 8 Boco Rock, Ngarigo Country
- 9 Bodangora, Wiradjuri Country
- 10 Coleambally, Wiradjuri Country
- 11 Gannawarra, Barababaraba Country
- 12 Gullen Range, Gundungurra Country
- 13 Manildra, Wiradjuri Country
- 14 Mortons Lane, Djab Wurrung Country
- 15 Ross River, Bindal and Wulgurukaba Country
- 16 Taralga, Gundungurra Country
- 17 Waterloo, Ngadjuri Country
- 18 Ballarat, Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung Country
- Customer contact centres**
- 19 Melbourne, Wurundjeri Country
- 20 Geelong, Wadawurrung Country

# Maturity Assessment

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

### Self assessment



### Evidence

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
RepTrak Score	64.3	68.9	68.3
Employee engagement	61% <sup>1</sup>	54%	71%

### Commentary

Customers are our priority and our disclosure outlines many activities focused on making their lives easier. We continue to see improvement in key metrics like Strategic Net Promoter Score (+79% in past 3 years) and our employee engagement score, consistent with industry averages. Our RepTrak score, whilst improving over the past three years, fell slightly in Q2 2021 from the previous year, which in part, is the return from a 'COVID bump' many businesses received last year. We are pleased to maintain scores above other Tier 1 energy companies as recognition that customers value the products and services we provide.

## Principle 2: We improve energy affordability for customers

### Self assessment



### Evidence

	2019 <sup>2</sup>		2020 <sup>2</sup>		2021 <sup>2</sup>	
	Elec	Gas	Elec	Gas	Elec	Gas
<b>Household Annual Price Changes</b>						
NSW	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 30	\$ -45 to \$68*	-\$ 62	\$ 0
VIC	\$ 0	\$ 66	\$ 164	\$ 27	-\$ 88	\$ 59
QLD	\$ 0	N/A <sup>3</sup>	-\$ 25	N/A <sup>3</sup>	-\$ 60	N/A <sup>3</sup>
SA	\$ 0	\$ 0	-\$ 67	\$ 17	-\$ 114	\$ 0
ACT	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 1	\$ 28	\$ 197	\$ 0
<b>Business Annual Price Changes</b>						
NSW	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 71	\$ -218 to \$123*	-\$ 194	\$ -56 to \$-532*
VIC	\$ 0	\$ 326	\$ 506	\$ 114	-\$ 438	\$ 300
QLD	\$ 0	N/A <sup>3</sup>	-\$ 44	N/A <sup>3</sup>	-\$ 134	N/A <sup>3</sup>
SA	\$ 0	\$ 0	-\$ 145	\$ 194	-\$ 157	-\$ 461
ACT	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 41	\$ 369	\$1,108	-\$ 731

### Commentary

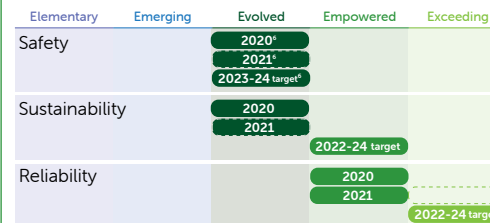
We continue to deliver supply chain savings to customers, including cost savings from our retail operations, and take proactive steps to help customers manage their bills (e.g. high usage alerts, innovative solar plans, real time pricing for large customers). We are also investing in major generation and storage projects to help deliver the energy transition at least cost to customers. We will continue to maintain a focus on affordability and see further opportunities in the coming years to provide more tailored products and services to customers to help them manage their bills.

Key: (.....) 2021 Forecast Rating from 2020 Disclosure

- Methodology and questions different in 2018-19, however scores are still comparable to following years.
- Prices presented are the average annual bill change for the flat market offer in each jurisdiction announced in that year. Price changes will vary between distribution zones.
- EnergyAustralia does not retail gas in this region
- Total lost-time injuries/million hours worked
- Total actual or potential significant injuries or fatalities/million hours worked
- Maximum rating under the maturity model framework.
- Offset reporting done on calendar year
- Information is sourced from respective Ombudsman scheme reports with whom EnergyAustralia is a member and includes all 'Market' complaints. In addition, we also received 1424 enquiries from customers who were directed by the schemes to contact EnergyAustralia directly as first point of contact. Some of these customer enquiries may be included in Direct Complaints data following an escalation by the customer that could not be resolved on their first call.
- Relates to customers in EnergyAssist program with debt which is 3 business days post the due date of the invoice.

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

### Self assessment



### Evidence

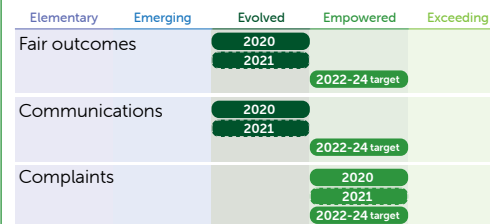
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total Injury Frequency Rate (TIFR) <sup>4</sup>	2.95	2.11	2.3
Significant Injury or Fatality Rate (SIFR) <sup>5</sup>	1.8	1.33	1.57
<b>Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> offset by Go Neutral program<sup>7</sup></b>			
	2018	2019	2020
	546,171	882,229	1,200,246
<b>Demand Response Capability</b>			
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
	N/A	58MW	157MW

### Commentary

Whilst our injury rates are the best across Tier 1 integrated energy companies, they have plateaued in the past year. In response we have developed a behavioural safety tool at our generation sites from the aerospace industry aiming to achieve a step change improvement in safety. We are playing a leading role in the energy transition through the early retirement of the Yallourn power station and advancing major gas/hydrogen, pumped hydro and storage projects. We are also helping customers reduce their carbon footprint by installing solar panels and via our Go Neutral carbon offset program. We have recently extending the program to large customers, so we expect the emission offsets to grow in coming years. We are helping customers play a role keeping the lights on through our demand response programs which have more than doubled in the past year. As these programs continue to grow and our improved disconnection processes are further rolled out, we aim to meet the highest rating for Reliability.

## Principle 4: We improve the customer experience

### Self assessment



### Evidence

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
First call resolution	71%	72.30%	71.40%
Direct complaints (per 10,000 customers)	13,395 (55.88)	13,892 (58.65)	12,221 (50.53)
Ombudsman complaints <sup>8</sup> (per 10,000 customers)	8,334 (33.52)	5,071 (20.97)	3,720 (15.38)

### Commentary

We continue to focus our efforts on improving customer service. Initiatives such as training to support our people have better conversations with customers, improvements to our website and high usage alerts have led to better outcomes for customers and is reflected in improved Transactional NPS (+16% in past 2 years), a 12% reduction in direct complaints and a 26% reduction in Ombudsman complaints. Support such as payment matching and debt waivers to lower the average debt of customers in the EnergyAssist program has been counteracted by the impact of COVID-19. Our next focus is on improving First Call Resolution and providing customers with more tailored and flexible energy solutions, including the introduction of the Consumer Data Right.

## Principle 5: We support customers facing vulnerable circumstances

### Self assessment



### Evidence

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
EnergyAssist participation (as at end June each year)	20,098	21,425	20,566
Average customer debt in EnergyAssist program <sup>9</sup>	N/A	\$1,871	\$2,078
EnergyAssist Transactional Net Promoter Score (NPS)	+56.3	+57.9	+62.6

### Commentary

We have made significant progress in supporting vulnerable customers in another challenging year with the implementation of our hardship early identification process, targeted payment support and Wellbeing Visit trial prior to disconnection. This has been reflected in improvements in Transactional NPS and higher payment plan fulfillment rates (+10 percentage points in past year). As we pursue the Exceeding level, we will explore ways to remove the stigma associated with energy hardship. One way we are doing this is through greater use of tailored digital solutions to assist customers in the best way that suits them.

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

## Self Assessment

Elementary	Emerging	Evolved	Empowered	Exceeding
			2020	
			2021	
			2022-24 target	

## What has improved for our customers?

We have placed greater emphasis on having **better conversations** with our customers to quickly identify and respond to customer needs. We have helped our people do this through increased training and behavioural coaching.<sup>10</sup> This has had positive outcomes such as reducing complaints (Principle 4), helping customers access better energy deals and increasing tailored support to vulnerable customers (Principle 5).

Customers are valuing the extra support we're offering them. We've seen this reflected in our transactional Net Promoter Score (TNPS), which measures the experience of customers who directly engage with us, which has increased 16% in the past two years. This forms part of our Strategic Net Promoter Score (SNPS), which continues to improve.

EnergyAustralia's reputation ranks 36th out of Australia's largest companies and first amongst Tier 1 energy companies, as measured by the Reputation Institute's RepTrak Q2 2021 Survey.

We have been more collaborative with customers in co-designing experiences with products like bundling ([Stack On](#)) and rewards schemes ([Always On Rewards](#)). These products were developed using feedback from customer research groups that told us they valued accessing multiple utilities from a trusted provider and being rewarded for loyalty.

## How did we achieve this?

Customer feedback and performance indicators are regularly reviewed by our Board and linked to remuneration for all our people via a company-wide Balanced Scorecard. The Board receives a monthly report which includes a 'Voice of the Customer' component. This reporting was initially just a customer conversation, however it has now been extended to include trends and themes for how customers are experiencing EnergyAustralia to give Directors a deeper perspective.<sup>8</sup>

As many of our people continue to work from home and manage the ongoing impact of COVID-19, we have invested heavily in employee wellbeing and support. This has seen our employee engagement score increase by 17 percentage points to 71%, which has had a flow-on effect to the customer experience.

We have captured feedback from more than **90,000 customer surveys** which have informed decisions ranging from rewards and incentives to optimising the experience around demand response events. We also engage directly with several community organisations on issues that impact customers. While the IAP has recommended that signatories establish customer reference groups, energy is traditionally a low-engagement industry so we find regular direct engagement with a wide cross-section of customers and community groups is the most effective way to gain feedback.

We led the development of the [Energy Charter National Customer Code for Energy Brokers, Consultants and Retailers](#) which has raised the bar for customer service in the large business retail market.

## Highlights



**79% increase in Strategic NPS** in past 3 years



**90,000+ customer surveys** completed



**#1 ranked Tier 1 Energy Company for reputation**

## What will we focus on next?

We will continue to design and explore products and services based on customer feedback, as well as getting the basics right. As we do that, we aim to see our NPS reach a positive figure over 2021-22 and enhance our reputation with customers and stakeholders.

We're making continued improvements to the information architecture of our website, and the Help and Support pages have been identified as a key priority to help customers find the information they are after and provide a simple alternative to phoning the contact centres.

## Principle 2: We improve energy affordability for customers

### What has improved for our customers?

The majority of our customers continue to see **lower energy prices** as we pass on supply chain savings, including efficiencies in our retail operation. The two exceptions are in the ACT where increases are primarily because of ACT Government policy to source 100% electricity from renewable sources, and increased Victorian gas commodity costs that were passed on in January.

#### Energy Price Changes in 2021<sup>1</sup>

	Residential		Business	
	Electricity	Gas	Electricity	Gas
NSW	-\$62	\$0	-\$194	-\$56-532
VIC	-\$88	\$59	-\$438	\$300
QLD	-\$60	N/A <sup>2</sup>	-\$134	N/A <sup>2</sup>
SA	-\$114	\$0	-\$157	-\$461
ACT	\$197	\$0	\$1,108	-\$731

Over 5,000 NSW **Seniors Card** and **NSW Senior Savers Card** holders benefited from our partnership with the NSW Government by receiving an exclusive discount and sign-up credit towards their first bill. Seniors can also opt into our carbon offset program at no extra cost.

We've made it easier to create payment plans or get a payment extension with customers now able to do it online, over the phone or via the *My Account* app. Over 537,000 **payment extensions and payment plans** were set up last year, which was an 84% increase on 2019-20. Because our conversations are focusing more on what the customer can afford to pay rather than usage, this is setting the customer up for success, with 85% of EnergyAssist customers meeting their agreed payment plans (a 9% increase from 2019-20).

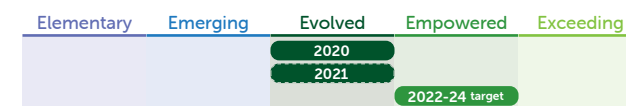
### How did we achieve this?

Beyond passing on supply chain savings, we are always looking for new and innovative ways to help customers manage their usage and costs.

- **Solar Home Bundle** – Between June and December we trialled a new solar+battery offer with over 40 households in New South Wales. Customers get a solar and battery system installed, at no upfront cost and a competitive usage rate for the contract term. The customer owns the solar and battery system outright at the end of the contract. Customer feedback on this trial was positive and we gained valuable information about the customer sales and installation journey to inform a broader product rollout from July 2021.
- **Purchase Pro** is a new, secure online portal that allows commercial and industrial customers to manage and optimise their energy purchasing. These customers typically have high and/or complex energy requirements (mines, factories, multisite arrangements, etc). With Purchase Pro, they can make immediate purchase requests and access pricing information in real time, as well as see their purchase position by state and quarter, and pricing and purchase history.

We continued to **advocate against rising regulatory costs** that impact both prices and the customer's experience, and push for evaluations on rule changes to deliver positive consumer outcomes. With over 165 consultations and 115 written submissions made during 2020-21, we have highlighted to policymakers how the continual rule changes in this space add significant risk and costs to businesses (and therefore customers).<sup>6</sup>

### Self Assessment



### Highlights



**Households to save \$60-114 on electricity in 2021-22**



**Businesses to save \$138-438 on electricity in 2021-22**



**Over 537,000 payment extensions and payment plans to support residential and business customers (+84% increase)**

### What will we focus on next?

We will continue to seek efficiencies in the way we operate our business to deliver affordable and reliable power to our customers. We will also continue to give customers the power to manage their own bills and explore opportunities to provide them with more tailored solutions. This may include proactive usage bill notifications (Principle 4); technology such as **PowerPal** which allows customers to monitor electricity and appliance usage in the home; innovative ways to install solar and batteries through Solar Home Bundle; or, for our large customers, the ability to purchase electricity to match their commercial needs via Purchase Pro.

<sup>1</sup> Prices presented are the average annual bill change for the flat market offer in each jurisdiction announced in the disclosure reporting period.

<sup>2</sup> EnergyAustralia does not retail gas in Queensland.

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

## Providing energy safely

### Self Assessment

Elementary	Emerging	Evolved	Empowered	Exceeding
		2020*		
		2021*		
		2022-24 target*		

### What has improved for our customers?

Last year we committed to considering **family violence best practice support** when designing our customer programs. We continue to train our agents to provide the best possible support and strengthened our processes when handling enquiries from accounts flagged as requiring protection.

All customers benefit when our frontline staff are at their best. **Investment in mental health support** for our people, who also continue to experience COVID-19 restrictions, means they are ready to respond to customer needs when that call, webchat or email comes through.

Many of our people are also EnergyAustralia customers; therefore, the introduction of a **behavioural safety tool** at our energy sites that focusses on reducing the likelihood of making errors will help to protect our people and reduce the risk of significant injury.

### How did we achieve this?

We have **enhanced customer safety in our credit collections systems**, so collections activity is automatically stopped on any account where family or domestic violence has been flagged. The account is then managed manually so appropriate steps are taken to protect the customer. We also partnered with mental health specialists Communicorp to provide support for our staff who are assisting customers impacted by family and domestic violence.

In 2020 we reported we were launching a new system that provides measurable indicators that allow the business to **proactively manage regulatory risk**, including safety obligations like managing life support customers. This system has now been deployed and, across 2021, is being fully configured. Unlike our previous regulatory compliance tool, the new system is proactive, visually identifies areas of weakness and periodically assesses the materiality and performance of the controls. This allows us to focus our efforts on risk control strengthening for our compliance obligations.

Given the ongoing impact of COVID-19 restrictions, all leaders and several key individuals at EnergyAustralia are being trained and provided with tools to **understand mental health issues** – how to spot them and what to do if someone needs help. To complement that training, leaders are being provided with a tool to engage in good mental health conversations. Agents providing support to our most vulnerable customers continue to receive additional support and access to training.

### What will we focus on next?

We will continue to focus on having the highest safety standards and processes at all our sites, beyond regulatory compliance, and continually look for possible improvements. Whilst our key safety metrics Total Injury Frequency Rate (TIFR<sup>3</sup>) and Significant Injury or Fatality Rate (SIFR<sup>4</sup>) are strong by industry standards, the trend in reduction has plateaued in the past 12-18 months. This is not unusual in industrial sectors as marginal gains become more difficult when injury rates are low. To achieve a step-change, we have commenced deployment of a behavioural safety tool - **Advanced Error Reduction in Organisation (AERO)** - to roll out across the electricity generation part of our business (where our risks are highest). The AERO program seeks to reduce the error rate in individuals and teams by helping them to understand the traps and triggers for errors, including personality traits. AERO has been adapted from a program that came out of the aerospace sector, where errors can have catastrophic consequences. In 2019-20, the AERO program was trialled at our Mt Piper power station with positive results informing the broader rollout in 2021 and 2022.

We are also working with identified industry leaders in the broader oil and gas sector to build knowledge and continue to improve our performance.

### Highlights



**Improved processes for managing family or domestic violence**



**Total Injury Frequency Rate (TIFR) reduced by almost 35% in the past three years (3.5 in 2018 to 2.3 in 2020-21)**



**Lowest TIFR amongst Tier 1 integrated energy companies**

<sup>3</sup> TIFR refers to the number of lost-time injuries within a given accounting period, relative to the total number of hours worked in that period. EnergyAustralia's TIFR measures the number of recordable injuries registered per million hours worked.

<sup>4</sup> SIFR refers to the number of incidents, actual or potential, to cause a significant injury or fatality relative to the total number of hours worked in that period. EnergyAustralia's SIFR measures the number of significant recordable injuries or fatalities registered per million hours worked.

\* Maximum rating under the maturity model framework.

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

### Providing energy sustainably

#### Self Assessment

Elementary	Emerging	Evolved	Empowered	Exceeding
		2020		
		2021		
				2022-24 target

#### What has improved for our customers?

We have expanded our leading electricity carbon offsetting program, *Go Neutral*, to residential gas customers, giving them the ability to offset all household energy emissions at no extra cost.

We also extended *Go Neutral* to small and medium-sized businesses who can offset the carbon dioxide associated with their electricity usage for a flat annual fee and, in turn, can boost their climate credentials. In June, we extended *Go Neutral* even further to incorporate our large business customers and included a marketing toolkit to help them promote their sustainability credentials to customers and stakeholders.

Over the last year, the *Go Neutral* program has grown by 39% (opted in customers). EnergyAustralia now has the largest Climate Active certified offset offering in the Australian energy sector, and the second largest in the country.

Our customers continue to benefit from actions we are taking to lead the energy transition. This includes bringing forward the closure of the carbon emissions intensive Yallourn power station and progressing major gas/hydrogen, pumped hydro and batteries projects. These projects contribute to EnergyAustralia's goal to be carbon neutral by 2050.

#### How did we achieve this?


In March, we announced a plan to close our Yallourn coal-fired power station in mid-2028. We will support the energy system by building a four-hour utility-scale battery of 350MW capacity by the end of 2026 - larger than any battery operating in the world today. We will do the right thing by our workers in providing training and career planning services. Yallourn's retirement will lower EnergyAustralia's Scope One carbon dioxide emissions by over 60% relative to today, accelerating our transition to net zero emissions by 2050.

In May, we announced that we would be building Australia's first net zero emissions hydrogen and gas capable power plant alongside our Tallawarra power station in the Illawarra region. Direct carbon emissions from **Tallawarra B** generation activities will be offset over its operational life. In June, construction commenced on 250 MW Kidston Pumped Hydro project, which is utilising an abandoned gold mine to create hydro power. We are underpinning the project via a long-term contract to buy the electricity it produces.

Every day we help our customers reduce their own carbon footprint via our solar and energy efficiency arm, Echo Group, which last year installed over 10 megawatts of renewable generation on homes and businesses. Echo plant 1 tree for every residential solar system and for every 20kW of commercial solar installed. We helped McDonalds power its 1000th Australian store on 100% renewable electricity. We also assisted the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) to improve its sustainability performance with the installation of 220 solar panels to power the stadium's innovative water recycling facility.

#### Highlights

 **Planted 2000 trees** to celebrate 10MW of solar installations

 290,000+ customers have **offset 2.8 million tonnes of carbon** emissions through *Go Neutral* (equivalent to taking 500,000 cars off the road for a year)

 Building Australia's **first net zero emissions** hydrogen and gas capable power plant

#### What will we focus on next?

The aforementioned generation projects will be our main priority in this area as we lead the energy transition for all customers. We will continue to work closely with the communities around project sites, so we understand their views and priorities.

We will also continue to explore other opportunities to move to cleaner forms of energy. For example, we are investigating the potential to build a pumped hydro plant at Lake Lyell, near our Mt Piper power station in Lithgow, NSW. Early estimates suggest a Lake Lyell pumped hydro energy storage facility would be capable of producing 350 MW of electricity with around eight hours of storage, enough to power over 150,000 households during peak demand.



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

### Providing energy reliably

#### What has improved for our customers?

Disconnections reduced by 26% in 2020-21 in large part due to directions from regulators to protect customers experiencing COVID-19 restrictions. Disconnection continues to be a **last resort** and our proactive approach of **providing people with more targeted support** is helping customers engage with us earlier to help them manage their debt, reducing the likelihood of disconnection.

We continue to offer customers a smooth experience when moving house. It takes less than five minutes to complete an online request, and **we offer customers a guarantee that the power is connected the day they move in**, or they receive a \$100 bill credit.

In our 2020 disclosure we discussed the **24/7 Connections Better Together** initiative with Jemena. This functionality, which enables customers to be connected at a new residence within an hour of calling us, has been built into our BAU process, with 99% of requests for remote connections being completed successfully. We are also exploring options to expand the functionality to customers in other Victorian distribution networks.

Grid stability continues to increase through **businesses and residential delivering up to 157 MW of electricity over summer** (Dec 2020) available to the market through our demand response programs. These programs were instrumental to keeping the lights on in Queensland and New South Wales in late May when the Callide Power Station fire caused major reliability and resilience issues.

#### How did we achieve this?

We have taken a cautious approach to recommencing disconnections and debt collection, reflecting the expectations of energy regulators. This includes:

- an **enhanced disconnection checklist** in all jurisdictions which includes a check we had an affordability discussion with the customer, including reviewing any payment plans and whether the customer is potentially entitled to any government assistance.
- trialling **customer Wellbeing Visits** as part of the disconnection process to provide information and determine if there are any obvious signs of hardship. This trial builds on and goes beyond the Energy Charter's 'Knock-Before-You-Disconnect' Better Together initiative. Between February and June 2021, we visited 8017 residences with around 47% of those customers keeping their power on because of the face-to-face engagement. Around 800 people, or 10% of total visits, have joined the EnergyAssist program as the result of being visited at home as part of the disconnection process.<sup>12</sup>
- **not disconnecting or referring outstanding debt to external collection agencies** for customers that are currently not in the EnergyAssist program but have been in the past. We have withheld debt referrals on almost 7000 accounts totalling over \$20 million.

We **invested \$300 million in 2020-21 in our power stations** and completed vital maintenance work at all of generation sites to prepare for the peak periods and to continue to provide power safely and reliably to the communities that depend on them.

#### Self Assessment



#### Highlights



**8,017 Wellbeing Visits** conducted to help people keep the power on and get support



**350,000+ PowerResponse customers** support grid stability and **reduce their usage during peak times** as part of Australia's largest residential behavioural response program



**\$300 million spent** in 2020-21 for power station maintenance, and safety and efficiency **upgrades**

#### What will we focus on next?

We will review the outcomes of the Wellbeing Visit trial so our disconnection policies and processes maximise opportunities for customer engagement to provide support and assistance.

We will continue to support policymakers and market bodies as they consider a market design that is fit for purpose for the transition to cleaner energy. We support a market design that delivers a reliable energy supply at least cost to consumers as the system transitions to more renewable energy.

## Principle 4: We improve the customer experience

### What has improved for our customers?

Our customer experience has seen marked improvement in several areas. For example, we know customers:

- have fewer issues that need resolving, and when they do call us, they are speaking with people trained to have better conversations and offer tailored support (leading to a 16% increase in our TNPS in the past two years)
- have increased their use of our self-service options, with 72% of transactions now being self-serve (up from 51% last year)
- rate our online sign-up process and household move booking process 4.5 out of 5 stars. In 2020 we were awarded the Global Reviews **#1 Digital Customer Experience for Energy Retailing** for the sixth year in a row.

**Direct customer complaints have decreased by 12%.**

The major contributing factor was a 17% reduction in complaints about billing resulting from customer communication improvements implemented in 2020 as part of a bill awareness and management strategy. These improvements, including optimising complaint handling processes, increased coaching and improved performance reporting, have also contributed to a 26% reduction in ombudsman complaints compared to 2019-20.

To reduce bill shock and give large business customers the opportunity to make more sustainable choices we offer **InsightsPro**, a web-based platform that provides insights for customers on past behaviour to optimise their future energy consumption and costs.

### How did we achieve this?

Due to the pandemic, more customers were at home using energy which resulted in higher-than-expected bills for some. Utilising insights from customer interviews, we implemented a pre-emptive SMS for customers with smart meters to alert them of an increase in usage mid-billing cycle. The **SMS alert** allowed customers to take steps to reduce their usage, eliminate bill shock and consider payment plan options before their scheduled bill arrived. We found that customers who received the SMS were 47% less likely to call us and 67% less likely to have complaints.<sup>10</sup>

We've continued to **simplify bills** so that energy usage and costs are easy to understand and to help customers recognise where they can make energy savings at home or in their business. We have also introduced some new features so customers with basic meters can now view historical data and solar generation information, if applicable, via the *My Account* web portal or the EnergyAustralia mobile app.<sup>10</sup>

In response to customer feedback that they found mandatory verbal scripting on sales calls time-consuming and confusing, we have optimised a digital tool (**Digital Explicit Informed Consent**) which allows customers to be sent written details of important terms and conditions via the communication channel they choose so they can review and confirm their acceptance in their own time. This has made sales calls faster and easier for customers.

### Self Assessment

	Elementary	Emerging	Evolved	Empowered	Exceeding
Fair outcomes			2020 2021	2022-24 target	
Communications			2020 2021	2022-24 target	
Complaints			2020 2021	2022-24 target	

### Highlights



**50.53 complaints** per 10,000 customers, a **12% reduction** on 2019-20



**14.9 ombudsman referrals** per 10,000 customers, a **26.5% reduction** on 2019-20



**16% increase in Transactional NPS** in past 2 years

### What will we focus on next?

We are always striving to improve the customer experience and will continue to do so, based on customer feedback. Whilst our first call resolution was around 71% over the past year, we are exploring ways to improve that. Preparations have begun on refinements to our automated call routing and agent call guides with further training to be rolled out in 2021-22 to assist agents to respond to and resolve queries the first time a customer contacts us. By refining these processes, and other service improvements, we aim to reduce call transfers by 30% and increase first call resolution by 15% in the coming years.

## Principle 5: We support customers facing vulnerable circumstances

### What has improved for our customers?

Customers continue to be able to access a range of support services including:

- payments plans and extensions (increased by 84% on previous year) <sup>△</sup>
- payment matching and debt waivers (\$3.95 million in 2020-21; an increase of almost 20% on the previous year)
- 1,116 energy efficiency audits undertaken, and 61 new energy efficient appliances purchased for customers at no cost to them.

Customers have been offered additional support to access government concessions and grants. In Victoria alone, we assisted over 4,000 people to access government assistance by filling out forms with the customer over the phone. This support has resulted in the average monthly grant amount increase by 23% to \$471 per customer and application approval rate increase from 30% to 76%. In addition to assisting customers filling out a form, we provide SMS reminders to eligible customers encouraging them to apply for concessions they are entitled to. <sup>△</sup> We have been able to implement this initiative in Victoria primarily through coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services to access concession forms online. We encourage other jurisdictions to make such capability available to enable more concessions to reach those that need them.

Business customers impacted by COVID-19 restrictions continue to be supported via our Rapid Business Assist program, featuring payment extensions, payment plans and free disconnections and reconnections. 838 business were enrolled as at 30 June 2021.

### How did we achieve this?

In August we completed recruitment of around 100 new staff in Victoria which helped us to double the size of our EnergyAssist team, who specialise in working with customers in financial hardship.

To proactively identify residential customers in vulnerable circumstances we implemented a sophisticated early hardship identification approach. This combines 10 customer behavioural reference points with external credit information to establish a customer score, with high scores triggering contact with the customer to offer assistance. A similar approach is used for small business customers. <sup>△</sup><sup>△</sup><sup>△</sup> This has been complemented by training our people to have better conversations (Principle 1) and improved disconnection processes (Principle 3).

Customers are appreciating these initiatives, with the EnergyAssist Team TNPS double that of other parts of our operations, increasing by 11% in the past two years.

We have also:




- Worked with other retailers, the Australian Energy Council and consumer advocates to develop a best practice guideline for supporting vulnerable customers <sup>△</sup><sup>12</sup>
- Partnered with Uniting to provide energy efficiency support to vulnerable customers <sup>△</sup><sup>11</sup>
- Collaborated with the financial and telecommunications sectors as a founding member of Thriving Communities Partnership. <sup>△</sup><sup>11</sup>

Our care at EnergyAustralia extends beyond our customers. Our award-winning *Power for Good* program includes Workplace Giving, community grants and volunteering. In June, we reached the milestone of \$1 million raised through Workplace Giving, which combines employee donations and company matching.

### Self Assessment



### Highlights

-  EnergyAssist Team took over **96,000 calls** from customers in 2020-21 (62% higher than pre-COVID call volumes)
-  **85%** of EnergyAssist customers are **meeting their agreed payment plans**
-  EnergyAssist **Transactional NPS** +62.6 in 2020-21 (**+11%** in past 2 years)

### What will we focus on next?

With the challenges of COVID-19 continuing across Australia, we anticipate that our customers will need ongoing flexibility and understanding. Therefore, our support programs for residential and business customers will continue to be prioritised.

We'll continue to test the most effective ways to reach vulnerable customers. For example, we're developing a tailored assistance portal that will be available in 70 different languages and provide bespoke advice about government assistance and energy efficiency advice, set up payment plans and request a call-back.

We'll continue to work with policymakers and regulators helping customers manage their finances and improving affordability. For instance, we are participating in the vulnerable customer strategy for the Victorian Essential Services Commission to improve policies and processes to support vulnerable customers.



 The Energy  
Charter

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