

Advisory Council on Social Licence

Notes and actions

Forum:	AEMO Advisory Council on Social Licence (ACSL) Meeting 6
Date:	29 April 2024, 9:00-10:30 am
Location:	Online (Microsoft Teams)

Attendees:

Name	Position	Location
Andrew Bray	ACSL member	Online
Andrew Richards	ACSL member	Online
Amanda Cahill	ACSL member	Online
Darren Edwards	ACSL member	Online
Gavin Dufty	ACSL member	Online
Jonathan Kneebone	ACSL member (for Karrina Nolan)	Online
Joy Thomas	ACSL member	Online
Lucy Graham	ACSL member	Online
Peta Ashworth	ACSL member	Online
Russell Dunn	ACSL member	Online
Merryn York	EGM, System Design, AEMO	Online
Matthew Myers	GM, Stakeholder Engagement, AEMO (Chair)	Online
Emily Duck	Manager, Consumer and Community, AEMO	Online
Kerri Major	Senior Stakeholder Advisor, AEMO	Online

Apologies:

Name	Position
Karrina Nolan	ACSL member

Disclaimer

This document provides an overview of the main points of discussion at AEMO's Advisory Council on Social Licence (ACSL) meeting on 29 April 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to share insights on emerging social licence matters across industry, support a mutual reflection on the ACSL's achievements to date, and discuss the group's future direction. Please note:

- this document is a summary only and is not a complete record of discussion,
- for presentation purposes, some points have been grouped together by theme and do not necessarily appear in the order they were discussed, and
- the views expressed at the forum and reflected here are not necessarily those of AEMO.

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Actions

#	Action	Status	Responsibility
1	AEMO invited ACSL members to attend AEMO's Consumer Forum on 29 November and Draft 2024 ISP Webinar on 20 December.	Complete	AEMO

Discussion notes

1 What has happened since the last meeting

- AEMO led a group reflection on a broad range of social licence related reports, consultations and activities underway or announced across government and industry since the last meeting, including:
 - Release of the [AEIC Community Engagement Review](#) final report,
 - Release of the CSIRO's [Australian attitudes toward the energy transition](#) research report,
 - Release of SEC Newgate's latest [Mood of the Nation](#) study
 - Recent Parliamentary discussions tabling the [Net Zero Economy Authority Bill](#),
 - Pending release of the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) National Guidelines on Social Licence, expected later in 2024, and
 - Pending release of the Commonwealth Government's ISP Review report and the [response from Energy Ministers](#).

2 Reflection on ACSL's achievements

- Established in late 2022, AEMO's Advisory Council on Social Licence was formed to help AEMO better understand broader community sentiment, execution challenges and possible opportunities presented by the energy transition.
- Reflecting on its history, AEMO expressed appreciation to members for their time, consideration and valuable input to multiple aspects of AEMO's work, including shaping AEMO's role and decision-making in supporting social licence for the energy transition. Tangible aspects of ACSL's impact included:
 - Greater integration of consumer and community considerations within AEMO's 2024 ISP through contributions to a new, dedicated social licence appendix and sensitivity modelling;
 - Greater consideration of key social licence matters within broader industry regulatory and policy development, through member input to various AEMO-led submissions; and
 - Contributing to the enhanced focus and importance placed on social licence by governments and industry over the last 12-18 months, through effective member advocacy and insights sharing with influential decision makers both in and outside of ACSL forums.
- AEMO then opened a discussion with members seeking reflections on their individual experiences, group achievements to date, and opportunities to enhance group value going forward.

- Members thanked AEMO for its investment in the group, including opportunities to build knowledge and capacity through exposure to other members' perspectives and featured presenters from across governments and industry. Members also noted that:
 - Broader government and industry awareness and support for social licence and better practice community engagement has improved considerably since ACSL stand up, addressing a key reason for its formation.
 - With ACSL sessions running for several hours and covering a broad and often technically complex range of topics, not all members felt they had the relevant experience or time required to provide meaningful and informed feedback on all discussion items within meetings.
 - Looking forward, members would support changes to group structure and format that enable more targeted engagement around specific priority topics for AEMO and advocates, aligned to their areas of expertise and interest.

3 Evolution of the ACSL and next steps

- Based on these and earlier discussions, AEMO and ACSL members discussed the mutually agreed decision to evolve the ACSL group and format into a Consumer and Community Reference Group (CCRG).
- The CCRG is envisioned to be a cohort of respected consumer and community advocates that AEMO can engage as needed for input and guidance advice on key topics related to its work and the energy transition. As consultation opportunities arise, members will be invited to register their interest to participate based on their areas of expertise, interest and capacity, thus supporting relevant, targeted and meaningful consultation where it delivers most value for all parties.
- To promote and support recruitment, AEMO will put out a public call for Expressions Of Interest, and members will be selected based on their expertise, experience, representation and/or qualifications. All current ACSL members will also be invited to express their interest to join the CCRG.
- Members welcomed the opportunity for the CCRG to drill down into specialised focus groups, with enhanced scope and opportunity to drive meaningful outcomes for all involved. In doing so, they provided a range of insights and suggestions for AEMO to consider in its stand up, including:
 - Mapping the skills and expertise of existing ACSL members against AEMO's anticipated key engagement topics, to enable a gap analysis and support recruitment of new CCRG members that deliver on these needs.
 - Ensuring clarity of the CCRG's role, where it fits into AEMO's engagement sphere, how it impacts on decisions and how key outcomes will be shared.
 - Providing channels for CCRG knowledge sharing and engagement with similar groups led by other market bodies, agencies and government departments, to support a systems or regional level approach to issue identification and problem solving, and ensure the voices of many diverse groups are directly heard and considered by decision-makers with the power to act.
 - A topic focus on improving information accessibility and transparency around AEMO's key publications and data, especially related to costs to consumers. This could also include developing information on AEMO's roles in the energy transition versus other key players.

- AEMO thanked members for their thoughts and committed to consider all feedback. AEMO also confirmed that it was already in discussions with relevant contacts on the potential value of a Government-led social licence advisory group that could address topics outside of AEMO's purview.
- In closing, members provided some additional suggestions for AEMO to continue to enhance and apply social licence learnings across its broader work, especially the ISP, including:
 - Leveraging academic research, including CSIRO's research on [Australian attitudes towards the energy transition](#), [Griffith University's research into the optimal mix of gas](#), and the [Grattan Institute's consideration of the evolution of the ISP](#) to help inform AEMO's thinking.
 - Promoting consideration of social licence at a systems-level by ensuring consultative groups include key decision-makers (such as governments and other market bodies) as observers.
 - Providing greater transparency around the degree to which social licence or community sentiment may affect the Optimal Development Path within the ISP, and broadening its consideration from a dedicated appendix and sensitivity into other areas and phases. For example, having stronger regard to biodiversity or new infrastructure impacts on agricultural land in the development of the Inputs, Assumptions, and Scenarios Report (IASR).
 - Developing a consistent, overarching narrative around consumer energy resources (CER) to address misconceptions that CER and grid scale generation are mutually exclusive, and frame fossil fuel generation as "traditional loads" rather than use technology-specific terms.
 - Better explaining the meaning, role and impact of CER integration for consumers, including the opportunities it presents and how increased levels of integration will enhance system strength and resilience, lower large infrastructure costs, and benefit consumers in the long-run.
 - Delivering deliberative forums including representative groups from across different regions and communities to guide AEMO's energy transition narrative and sentiment research, especially to address enhanced 2026 ISP community acceptance modelling requirements driven by the Commonwealth's ISP Review.
- AEMO thanked members for their feedback and committed to further consider the concept of deliberative forums and reach out to interested members on CER messaging development.

4 Summary of next steps

- AEMO will share a public call for Expressions Of Interest to join its new CCRG from June 2024.
- AEMO will consider the ACSL's suggestions on how best to continue conversations and/or cross-pollinate discussions with governments, other market bodies, and decision-makers.
- AEMO will reach out to interested ACSL members to seek further input to ISP CER messaging.
- AEMO will further consider the opportunity to host deliberative forums with communities, as part of its energy transition and ISP Review research and messaging.