

Advisory Council on Social Licence

Notes and actions

Forum:	AEMO Advisory Council on Social Licence (ACSL) Meeting 4
Date:	14 August 2023, 10:00am to 3:50pm
Location:	AEMO Melbourne office & online

Attendees:

Name	Position	Location
Andrew Richards	ACSL member	AEMO Melbourne office
Amanda Cahill	ACSL member	
Bridget Ryan	ACSL member (for Andrew Bray)	
Gavin Dufty	ACSL member	
Jonathan Kneebone	ACSL member (for Karrina Nolan)	
Joy Thomas	ACSL member	
Peta Ashworth	ACSL member	
Andrew Dyer	Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, observer	Online
Lucy Graham	ACSL member	
Darren Edwards	ACSL member	
Russell Dunn	ACSL member	
Warrick Jordan	ACSL member	
Mark Grenning	ISP Consumer Panel	
Bev Hughson	ISP Consumer Panel	
Mark Henley	ISP Consumer Panel	AEMO Melbourne office
Nevenka Codevelle (Chair)	EGM, Government and Stakeholder, AEMO	
Merryn York	EGM, System Design, AEMO	
Nicola Falcon	GM, Victorian Planning, AEMO	
Andrew Turley	GM, Forecasting, AEMO	
Eli Pack	GM, System Planning, AEMO	
Matthew Myers	GM, Stakeholder Engagement, AEMO	
Samantha Christie	Manager, Strategic Planning, AEMO	
Mitchell Hume	Manager, Project Community and Stakeholder Engagement, AEMO	
Thomas Livingstone	Manager, Transmission Reform, AEMO	
Emily Duck (nee Keating)	Manager, Consumer and Community, AEMO	
Kerri Major	Senior Stakeholder Engagement Advisor, AEMO	
Samantha Lloyd	Stakeholder Engagement Lead, System Design, AEMO	
Levi Rosenbaum	Stakeholder Engagement Advisor, AEMO	

Guest presenters and observers:

Name	Position/Organisation	Location
Kate Kotarska	Assistant Director, Office of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commission (AEIC)	Online
Aastha Hora	Policy and Research Officer, Office of the AEIC	AEMO Melbourne office
Leigh Barker	Office of the AEIC	
Gloria Chan	Executive Director, Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC)	Online
Allina Fawcett	Manager, Strategic Research Programs, CEFC	
Sharon Rosenrauch	Director, Behavioural Science Unit, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)	
Alexander Cobb	Director (a/g) Transmission Policy, Electricity Division, DCCEEW	

Name	Position/Organisation	Location
Isaac Crawford	Ag Assistant Director of Networks Reform Rewiring the Nation Office, DCCEEW	
John Sheldon	Director Community Engagement, National Energy Transformation Division, DCCEEW	
Anita Tymkiw	Assistant Director, Behavioural Science Unit, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)	
Alex Thorn	DCCEEW	
Nicole Thomas	DCCEEW	
Sebastian Jarvoll	DCCEEW	

Apologies:

Name	Position
Andrew Bray	ACSL member
Karrina Nolan	ACSL member
Craig Memery	ISP Consumer Panel

Upcoming Advisory Council meetings

Date	Meeting	Location
20 November	ACSL meeting #5	AEMO Sydney Office

Disclaimer

This document provides an overview of the main points of discussion at AEMO's Advisory Council on Social Licence meeting on 14 August 2023. The purpose of the meeting was to provide information and invite perspectives and feedback on matters relating to social licence. 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.

Actions

#	Action	Status	Responsibility
1	ACSL members invited to participate in upcoming Draft ISP 2024 social licence sensitivities workshops in October and November 2023	Invite sent	AEMO
2	ISP Community and consumer considerations section to be updated with meeting feedback and recirculated to ACSL and ISP Consumer Panel members for further input ahead of consideration of the fully drafted section at the November meeting	AEMO integrating feedback ahead of section recirculation	AEMO

Discussion notes

1 What has happened since the last meeting

AEMO welcomed new attendees and led a reflection on the level and variety of activity on social licence underway since the last meeting. Members contributed to the conversation, adding the following to AEMO's list:

- AEIC Community Engagement Review ¹
- AEMC Draft Community Engagement Rules For Major Transmission Projects ²
- Queensland Renewable Energy Zone Roadmap Draft Release ³
- Queensland Renewable Energy Landholder Toolkit ⁴
- The Energy Charter Evaluating Transmission Undergrounding Initiative ⁵
- First Nations Clean Energy Strategy Roundtables ⁶
- Agricultural Industries Energy Taskforce ⁷
- Powerlink review of underground and overhead lines

1 See <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/renewable/improving-community-engagement-support-energy-infrastructure>

2 See <https://www.aemc.gov.au/news-centre/media-releases/aemc-releases-draft-community-engagement-rules-major-transmission-projects>

3 See <https://www.epw.qld.gov.au/about/initiatives/renewable-energy-zones>

4 See <https://www.qff.org.au/projects/renewable-energy-landholder-toolkit/>

5 See <https://www.theenergycharter.com.au/evaluating-transmission-undergrounding/>

6 See https://www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/inaugural_first_nations_clean_energy_strategy_roundtables_get_underway

7 See <https://aqenergytaskforce.org.au/aqenergytaskforce/>

2 ISP: Community and consumer considerations section

AEMO presented to and sought ACSL feedback on the concept and content of a new consumer and community focused section for inclusion in the Draft 2024 Integrated System Plan (ISP). The intention of the new section is to help better frame social licence and other key consumer and community issues in the context of Australia's energy transition (including social licence for infrastructure hosting and consumer mobilisation in electrification, energy efficiency and distributed energy resources), explain their importance to the ISP, and how AEMO will consider them within the 2024 ISP or as opportunities for future uplift.

ACSL members provided a range of insights, including the need to:

- acknowledge that social licence is not a set 'destination' but ongoing activity that requires the active building and protection of trust and meaningful relationships between organisations and individuals; the latter of which may also hold their own social licence considerations within communities.
- recognise the role that other energy industry members and/or bodies outside of AEMO - such as distribution businesses, transmission businesses and retailers - play in shaping the energy transition and matters such as transmission infrastructure hosting and consumer energy resources (CER) mobilisation.
- be upfront and honest about both the benefits and negative impacts within the energy transition for people, and situations where AEMO may not yet have proposals or answers but is still learning.
- provide clarity around the electricity infrastructure development process and key feedback channels to enhance people's agency, visibility of opportunities to influence (or not), and if or where needed recourse.
- consider how the ISP could better integrate social licence and the voice, values and experiences of people throughout the whole document, including through storytelling, the use of simpler language and recognising the role of regional and rural communities in supporting the transition.

AEMO also posed to ACSL members the concept of an additional paper – external to the ISP – to be co-developed by AEMO and/or members, further outlining opportunities for reforms to help manage key social licence issues. Members were satisfied with the level and type of content to be addressed in the new draft section and noted the number of different papers/reports etc. on social licence currently being prepared across the energy sector. Given this, based on ACSL member advice this paper will not proceed and any key matters relevant to the ISP will be covered in that document.

Initial and ongoing ACSL and ISP Consumer Panel member feedback will be integrated by AEMO into the evolving draft section over coming months, ahead of the Draft 2024 ISP publication in December 2023.

3 ISP: Social licence sensitivities

AEMO provided an update to ACSL members on the design of social licence sensitivities for the Draft 2024 ISP, sharing information on potential options for modelling and seeking any initial feedback on the four draft modelling parameters (representing different transmission and distribution related scenarios) as to which would be of most value or relevance.

Members discussed a range of views, including:

- The need to avoid language that refers to costs or delays to avoid detracting from people's agency.

- The opportunity to consider and/or account for 'smaller scale' solutions or differing levels of consumer-led investment and technologies and/or energy efficiency in the modelling of scenarios.
- The opportunity to consider and/or account for changes in the expected mix and volumes of various renewable technologies (for example solar, wind, pumped hydro) in the modelling of scenarios.
- The opportunity to account for the risk or discovery of significant social, environmental and/or cultural factors within identified areas of investment (for example, related to biodiversity, cultural heritage and native title).
- The current limitations of not modelling for the 'whole of system' – for example, potential impacts on project delivery costs or delays due to changing social licence around the extraction of minerals for industry technologies, or recycled resources or brought back into system.

ACSL members were advised that they would be invited to participate in further technical workshops across October and November, along with the ISP Consumer Panel members, if interested to contribute further insights and feedback to the social licence modelling options for inclusion in the Draft 2024 ISP.

4 Victorian Planning update

AEMO provided an update on the VNI West project, including five recent community drop-in sessions delivered by project staff and subject matter experts, which were attended by almost 400 local community members across July 2023.

AEMO also sought ACSL feedback on opportunities to further respond to local communities' need for information and potential feelings of uncertainty through the project development process. Members provided a range of valuable views, including around:

- positioning of local contacts along the development corridor
- transfer of knowledge between various parties across the project lifecycle
- clarity and honesty in communications, especially where answers are still being determined
- defining different engagement levels and pathways people may choose to get involved in
- strategies for 'onboarding' and 'offboarding' local voices to ensure a clear view of project status and contribution opportunities, conversation close outs and encourage new group engagement, and
- building genuine, culturally safe, and respectful relationships with local Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait community members.

5 Traditional Owner compensation

Russell Dunn (ACSL member) informed the Council of emerging conversations within certain Traditional Owner communities around compensation for the hosting of transmission infrastructure on Country.

ACSL members discussed a range of questions and views, including:

- the vital need and benefit to all persons, organisations and/or projects of investing in nurturing genuine, trusting, and respectful relationships with local Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities well ahead of any business discussions or negotiations taking place.
- the need for greater regulatory and policy clarity and consistency federally and across jurisdictions regarding the rights and supports available to people, and broadened inclusion of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within statutory benefits payment schemes.
- the opportunity to learn from other countries who may be further along in their maturity or approach to the matter, for example the United States or Canada.

6 Community Engagement Review

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner Andrew Dyer provided an update to ACSL members on the recently announced review into community engagement practices related to the deployment of renewable energy infrastructure, being led by the AEIC on behalf of The Hon Chris Bowen, Minister for Climate Change and Energy. The AEIC advised the review will provide advice and recommendations to key stakeholders on the best way to achieve effective engagement and would consider issues from the perspective of four major parties involved in infrastructure provision – the proponent, the landholder, the broader community and neighbours and local Councils.

Initial feedback on a range of matters was sought by the AEIC as input to the process, including licencing, what is good engagement, training of front-line staff, role of Executives and Directors. ACSL members were also invited to participate in the formal consultation process which would require written submission during September followed by round table discussions. The review timeline has a final report to be provided to the Minister by the end of December 2023.

7 National Guidelines for Social Licence

Representatives from The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) provided an overview to ACSL members on various policy and other Department-led activities underway to enhance social licence and transparency for communities, including the development of new National Guidelines for Social Licence for Transmission and jointly led CSIRO community sentiment survey.

Currently in development, the Guidelines seek to provide a clear and consistent national approach to community engagement and benefit sharing through the consolidation of existing resources, identification and addressal of gaps and building of a consistent approach by Transmission Network Service Providers (TNSPs).

Given the multifaced social, cultural, and psychological considerations involved the Department is taking a behavioural science approach to this work and will develop evidence-based insights to test with communities. While stakeholder interviews are still underway with TNSPs, peak bodies, experts, energy agencies, Aboriginal and Torres Strait and community organisations, key feedback themes heard to date included:

- the need for greater consistency in the current definition and application of social licence
- the importance of extensive and early engagement with communities
- the need for and value of genuine and transparent engagement, including accessible information

- the importance of understanding and responding to the needs and impacts of individual communities
- the need for benefits sharing to be considered differently – and desire from communities for legacy or enduring benefits spanning the life of infrastructure and not just projects.

ACSL members were invited to provide feedback – both in the meeting and ongoing – on any other considerations or examples that could be added to the project, and recommended a number of additional stakeholder groups that could be engaged for their guidance.

DCCEEW also committed to share a copy of the discovery report with AEMO and ACSL members in September, ahead of draft Guidelines being issued currently expected in the middle of 2024. The CSIRO survey will enable community sentiment tracking more broadly for the energy transition and is expected in early 2024.

Next steps

The next ACSL meeting is proposed for Monday 20 November at AEMO's Sydney office, with ACSL members to confirm their availability.