

Minutes

Electricity Connections – Governance Committee Meeting #8

Time and date: 1.30-3.00 pm, 3 March 2020

Location: Commission Boardroom room, level 37, 2 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne 3000

Committee Members Present

Name	Organisation	Name	Organisation
Paul Cassidy	Victorian Planning Authority	Sarah McDowell (Chair)	Essential Services Commission
Adam Gellie	United Energy	Justin Betlehem	AusNet Services
Matt Thomas	Powercor	Chris Masson	Jemena

Apologises

Matthew Kandelaars – Property Council of Australia
 Urban Development Institute of Australia (Victoria)
 John Hamill – Essential Services Commission

Committee Support

Aaron Yuen – Essential Services Commission
 Merryn Wilson – Essential Services Commission

Agenda items

Service Improvement Commitment and Performance Reporting Updates

Ausnet Services

AusNet Services that it go ‘live’ with its customer portal within the next month and that the portal would provide a number of options for developers. AusNet Services gave an overview of its performance reporting for H2 2019. They reported:

- 100 percent of audit reports were returned within the target of 10 days. This occurred in all months except July where the result was 96 -98 percent.
- design reviews met the target of 15 days in all months except August – this was because of a system change

- regulatory timeframes for standard and basic connections were met

AusNet Services and Powercor stated that there had recently been an increase in new connections offers being made and that at the end of 2019 there was an increase in audits being undertaken. They added that there had been a surge in solar connections of between 20 to 50 per cent since the grants schemes were announced.

United Energy

United Energy reported that following CitiPower/Powercor's work it was reviewing its website in and that within the next 12 months expected to have similar portals in relation to connections. One of the expected benefits of the portal was being able to track subcontractor performance. United Energy added that it had begun to measure the time taken to grant practical completion and currently this measure was 4 days.

Powercor

Powercor reported that in Western Victoria particularly works quality was affected changing ground conditions. This in turn creates delays for civil contractors to complete work as they need to dig deeper foundations which can impact on clearances between assets. Powercor stated that they observed when demand is very high and surges then the quality of works often declines. They added that the volume of work over the past three years compared to other years in the past decade.

Powercor reported that its customer portal went live in November and that they had received positive feedback from customers about their experiences with the portal.

Powercor noted that's master plan review process was operating following its decision to make master planning contestable. They commented that most design houses are satisfied with this arrangement. Over H2 2019 Powercor's review of master plans took on average 16 days against a target of 10 days. Powercor commented that it would continue to work towards the 10 day target.

Powercor is trialling a 20 day electrical tie-in however, most developers have indicated that 6-8 weeks from application to tie-in meets their needs.

Jemena

Jemena reported that it had received positive feedback about its connections portal over the time since its launch 12 months ago. And that it was now in the process of launching a second version of the portal. Jemena added as a result of its digital restructure permanent resources so as it evolves as industry evolves. Some features of the portal are offer times for basic connections taking 5 minutes. Jemena has also shared its GIS systems with design houses and councils for the public lighting layer. This means developers or their consultants don't need to go to Jemena for as built drawings or for negotiated connections.

Jemena reported that the average time to prepare an offer is 27 days this is against the statutory requirement of 65 days. Jemena observed that this result was supported by the business restructure and the portal.

Jemena remarked that some delivery timeframes for some turnkey projects are falling behind, this was likely because of a breakdown in communications between consultants, contractor and builders. Other distributors also reported similar sentiments.

General discussion

Participants had a general discussion about issues relating to contractor performance on site. Some considered these issues were exacerbated by a lack of training for project managers or civil contractors about the distribution business's expectations about work quality. They added that the issues mainly arose with new players. The action from this discussion was for industry professionals to organise a whole day training session where participants could share learnings about matters concerning connections. The training could focus on providing information about 'if you want a good outcome here then you need to take into account ...'. A suggestion was made that the Urban Development Institute of Australia and the Property Council of Australia could also prepare educational pieces for industry.

Participants added that technical standards committee (which includes The Australian Land Development Engineers and the Civil Constructors Federation) was progressing and had prepared draft harmonised standards for limited release and comment. Next steps include running information sessions for the wider industry.

Finally, commission staff proposed that the next Governance Committee meeting be dedicated to discussing how and what timeframes could be made enforceable. Staff also suggested that The Australian Land Development Engineers and the Civil Constructors Federation should be invited to attend this meeting.

Next meeting

Given the currently changing public health situation, the next Governance Committee meeting will be facilitated over the internet we will forward details once we have more certainty about possible dates.