

Energy Charter Feedback Summary 2023-24



TasNetworks

Powering a
Bright Future



Acknowledgement of Country

TasNetworks acknowledges the palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal community) as the original owners and custodians of lutruwita (Tasmania).

TasNetworks acknowledges the palawa have maintained their spiritual and cultural connection to the land and water and we pay our respect to the Elders past, present and emerging.

About this report

After joining the Energy Charter in 2021, TasNetworks published its third Energy Charter Disclosure Report (ECDR) in August 2024. The report includes our maturity assessment landings based on feedback from both internal and external stakeholders. This process allowed us to identify what we're doing well and where we can improve so we can better align our future goals and progress with the energy charter maturity model. The ECDR also highlights important customer outcomes achieved in 2022–23 and outlines our key focus areas for the next 12 months.

Although only established in July 2024, our Customer Advisory Group (CAG) and Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) have been incredibly supportive of this work. We greatly appreciate their time and valuable feedback, which has been essential in shaping the ECDR and refining our future commitments. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with these groups as we work together to create a better energy future.

This report summarises our engagement processes, stakeholder feedback and our responses, and considerations for continuous improvement.



Our engagement approach

While preparing our draft Energy Charter Disclosure Report, we held three stakeholder discussion sessions followed by an online survey to gather stakeholder feedback anonymously. This feedback helped shape our maturity self-assessment ratings and provided input on the achievements highlighted in the final report. Members of our Executive Team attended these meetings to ensure stakeholder feedback was heard and considered at a senior level.

After publishing our Energy Charter Disclosure Report, we invited members of our Stakeholder and Customer Advisory Groups to join a forum chaired by our CEO, to discuss our 2024 Disclosure Report, future commitments plan, and engagement approach.

The forum aimed to foster open conversation where stakeholders could share their insights and ideas on where we can better support our customers and advance our maturity.

This year's CEO forum also featured an address from Bec Jolly, Director of Energy Equity at The Energy Charter, who provided attendees with a national view of some of the opportunities and challenges facing the industry.

After providing an update on key achievements, challenges and opportunities, we actively sought feedback from participants through open discussions and online anonymous surveys.

Feedback from stakeholders gathered during the maturity assessment and CEO Forum have been themed and are listed in the following tables.



General feedback

You said/ we heard

- Ensuring a diverse representation of people in the energy charter maturity assessment process is key, including a better representation of youth in the 18–25 year age bracket.
- It's important to provide regular updates on progress, both positive and negative, to gather feedback on where to focus efforts.
- Online meetings are useful, but often dominated by a few people, limiting the range of perspectives heard. There may be benefit in using breakout rooms/ multiple smaller groups to gather feedback.
- The TasNetworks ECDR was very easy to read and digest.
- TasNetworks made stakeholders feel comfortable to provide honest feedback, and everyone was made to feel valued, no matter their role or ability.
- TasNetworks should do more to promote the positive initiatives they are delivering as part of the Energy Charter, as many people won't actively search for it online.
- The work TasNetworks is doing with customers and stakeholders is commendable and, while it's just starting, it's off to a strong beginning.
- There should be more focus on providing better communication to customers to help address misinformation about Tasmania's energy sector.
- Many of TasNetworks' business goals and achievements focus on outputs but don't clearly explain the impact they will have on customers. This makes it hard to evaluate their success, as the intended outcomes are unclear.
- The work on the impact of the Energy Charter is crucial, and supporting businesses across the supply chain, while leading by example with Better Together initiatives should be a top priority.
- One of the best aspects of the Energy Charter's accountability culture is its honesty, embracing a "warts and all" approach.

Our response - we said/ did

We agree that diverse representation in our engagement activities is crucial. While we do have youth representation in our advisory groups, we will investigate expanding involvement in future engagement activities, alongside leveraging CAG and SAG to ensure a broad range of voices are heard.

This year we used a mix of online discussion sessions and anonymous post-session surveys to gain stakeholder feedback and insights. We will consider face-to-face and smaller group structures during next year's Energy Charter engagement sessions to ensure we are capturing everyone's diverse perspectives.

We have committed to having the Energy Charter as a regular agenda item in our CAG and SAG engagement programs, where we will transparently share our progress against our commitments.

As part of our commitment to build the capability of CAG and SAG members, we are exploring ways to effectively communicate information on aspects of Tasmania's energy sector that TasNetworks is involved in, so that this information is freely available to all customers in the longer term.

We will look at proactive ways to raise awareness about the positive work we are involved in under the Energy Charter, internally as well as externally. We are also committed to doing more to focus on customer outcomes in our communications.

TasNetworks has recently published an Engagement Framework that has a number of principles that we will use to guide our communications and engagement. One of those is 'transparent and timely' communications and engagement.

We understand the importance of effectively conveying the impact of our business goals and we will be embedding the new Energy Charter Impact Framework in 2025 to help us do this.

Our focus is on framing these goals and initiatives in terms of tangible outcomes for customers, ensuring that the benefits and long-term impacts are clearly understood. This will allow us to properly evaluate the success of our initiatives.

Principle 1

We will put customers at the centre of our business and the energy system.

You said/ we heard

- Involvement of senior leadership and the CEO in direct engagement with customers and stakeholders should continue. This is an important way to demonstrate TasNetworks' commitment to its customers and foster positive, long-lasting relationships.
- Business integration is key – the Energy Charter shouldn't be seen as an extra task, but as a tool that helps businesses achieve their customer goals through collaboration, capability building, and accountability that drives ongoing improvement.
- It's clear that TasNetworks has gone to great lengths to embed the Energy Charter process internally and is working hard to lead a customer-centric culture and take the lead on meeting business commitments.
- The key to making a real impact is understanding what matters most to customers. There's been great work across the business to identify important issues and opportunities. Use data strategically to focus on the big priorities that will deliver the most value to customers.
- It's important to improve electricity literacy across the community so people can better understand and accept the message. If it sounds too complicated, many might think you're trying to hide something. This also applies to CAG and SAG members, as they'll play a key role in advocating for the message later on.
- There needs to be a stronger focus on ensuring a diverse and inclusive experience for customers.

Our response - we said/ did

We agree that it's crucial for senior leadership to remain actively engaged with our customers and stakeholders. Hearing feedback directly ensures our customers' needs are being considered in business decision-making. We will continue to prioritise this approach and aim to increase leadership involvement moving forward.

TasNetworks remains committed to improving our engagement maturity and customer-centric approach, through the delivery of our engagement culture and capability uplift program. This program has been shaped around the Energy Charter Framework as a way of embedding it further into the business.

We agree that improving electricity literacy across all Tasmanian energy users is essential. Clear, straightforward communication is at the heart of this effort, and we are committed to simplifying complex topics to reduce confusion and build trust in what we do.

Through initiatives like our People Power Program, Bright Sparks Program, and other energy literacy partnerships, we are making progress in this space but recognise there is still more we can do to enhance our messaging and reach more people.

We will continue to collaborate closely with our advisory groups, ensuring they have the training, knowledge, and resources needed to engage effectively with us. Additionally, we will rely on these groups as a valuable sounding board to represent the perspectives, preferences and needs of Tasmanians.

TasNetworks' new Engagement Framework includes three key principles and one of those is focused on being 'inclusive and accessible' in all of our engagement activities. A toolkit has been developed to support our engagement activities and draw focus to aspects of engagement such as this.

Principle 2

We will improve energy affordability for customers and communities.

You said/ we heard

- The People Power Program is a strong initiative, but it requires more attention to the diversity of its participants, particularly in terms of gender and outreach to underrepresented groups like refugees and migrants. Additionally, there should be more focus on understanding decision-making dynamics within households, particularly around budgets, domestic responsibilities, and energy management.
- TasNetworks should move forward with their ideas but be open to adjusting them based on feedback. For example, the Men's Shed initiative is great, but feedback showed it may not represent all demographics.
- While TasNetworks has been good at providing technical details and initial cost estimates for large projects, the benefits and how they were calculated were often unclear. When costs increased, there didn't appear to be a re-evaluation of the costs and benefits for certain projects. Any infrastructure investment or upgrade should clearly demonstrate a positive cost-benefit outcome, with a transparent and clear communication process for stakeholders.
- Use data strategically to focus on the big priorities that will deliver the most value to customers. The report highlights that affordability is the top concern, so staying committed to addressing this is crucial.
- TasNetworks should focus on minimising the impact of its decisions on consumer energy bills, especially when investing in new or upgraded infrastructure.
- I'm concerned that the recent government subsidy has been used to cover cost increases that happened during the Revenue Reset process. Unfortunately, these higher costs will persist in future years, while the subsidies were only a one-time support for consumers.

Our response - we said/ did

The People Power Program is a pilot initiative that is still in proof-of-concept stage. We acknowledge that it may not be easily accessible to all demographics at this point, but we are committed to ensuring that it reaches a diverse range of participants once we have proven the program to be effective and sustainable.

TasNetworks is also focusing on building awareness around its free energy support program that also includes assistance on energy efficiency.

TasNetworks is also working with two of our CAG members who have expertise in diversity and inclusion areas to gain further insight into the demographic analysis, which will help ensure the program has the broad reach we intend.

We will work on being more transparent and accommodating with the information we provide stakeholders on our business investments, including more detailed explanations of how costs and benefits are calculated and what sensitivity analysis has been undertaken. We're committed to improving communication and making sure stakeholders are fully informed and can actively engage with us on investment projects.

We understand that energy affordability is a critical concern for our customers. TasNetworks continues to face the challenge of providing safe, sustainable and reliable services at a price that customers can afford in an environment of increasing cost. We will involve our customers in these priorities and trade-offs where they have the ability to influence.

In 2024, we are particularly focused on delivering commitments to support our most vulnerable customers. This includes raising awareness of concessions, participating in the Knock To Stay Connected program, and partnerships that provide:

- practical energy efficiency advice to help customers make informed decisions about their energy use
- empowering customers to reduce energy bills and improve their overall energy efficiency
- creating tangible, positive outcomes for those who need it most.

Principle 3

We will provide energy safely, sustainably and reliably.

You said/ we heard

- There is uncertainty if the Commonwealth Climate Risk Disclosure reporting requirements should be listed as a commitment under the Energy Charter given this is a mandatory reporting requirement.
- Providing data and statistics is essential to help people understand the details of the renewable energy business and its future direction.
- People need clearer and more timely information about large projects (like the wind farms and North West transmission developments) and their long-term customer impacts. This includes understanding the full scope, future plans (e.g. upgrades, replacements), and how their concerns will be addressed throughout the process.
- Customers don't care about the details of the energy system (network, generation, transmission, retailer etc.). They just want reliable affordable power to run their homes. Energy is a service that supports many aspects of daily life, not something they view as a separate commodity.

Our response - we said/ did

We understand the concern about whether this should be listed as a commitment under the ECDR, given that it is a requirement for our business. This work represents a significant shift in how we report on climate-related risks and opportunities, and the actions we are taking to address them. While the new reporting structure requires substantial effort and resources, it also presents a valuable opportunity to advance our sustainability maturity and drive positive outcomes for both our business and the broader community. Considering this feedback, we will carefully review whether this new reporting structure should be included in our ECDR commitment list and lean on the Energy Charter Impact Framework to guide our future commitments, ensuring that the ECDR focuses only on 'above and beyond' initiatives.

We will continue to work to share relevant data and statistics on the renewable energy sector and the direction we are heading in a way that is accessible and meaningful to all our customers.

We understand providing clearer and more timely information about large projects is essential so customers can understand not only the scope of these projects but how we will address their concerns throughout the process. This feedback has been provided to our project teams and we commit to improving our communication and transparency on these fronts through our engagement processes.

Our research confirms the majority of customers care most about reliability and affordability of energy. They value and want consistent, affordable power to support their daily lives, not necessarily to understand the intricacies of the Tasmanian energy system. We'll continue to focus on delivering a reliable service while also ensuring that we provide information that helps them better understand the larger picture when they choose to engage on energy topics that interest them.

Principle 4

We will improve the customer and community experience.

You said/ we heard

- The current customer segmentation model is useful but overlooks certain groups, such as children, teenagers, and household members with limited power or voice. Additionally, it fails to capture 'indirect' customers – people who use power but do not have a meter or retailer, including those experiencing homelessness, couch-surfing, incarcerated individuals, or tourists. These groups still rely on energy and contribute to the broader community, so it's important to consider them in a more comprehensive understanding of energy usage in Tasmania.
- The customer segmentation model is a great start, but I am looking forward to seeing how it will be used to improve the experience for all electricity users.

Our response - we said/ did

Our customer segmentation model has provided the business with a sound foundation to work from. It has helped the business better understand the diverse needs, priorities, and preferences of different customer cohorts.

We acknowledge that the research focused on customers with an active energy account, which excludes certain groups, such as children, teenagers, and indirect customers.

We recognise that these groups are still affected by energy use and contribute to the broader community, and we will take this into account when refining our customer segmentation model in the future.



Principle 5

We will support customers and communities facing vulnerable circumstances.

You said/ we heard

- The Knock to Stay Connected program should place more emphasis on identifying individuals struggling mentally or physically, framing visits as welfare checks to provide comprehensive support. While the program has significantly reduced disconnections (by 65%+), it calls for more focus on long-term outcomes, including tracking those who re-enter the disconnection cycle and assessing whether current support mechanisms are effectively preventing this.
- The Knock to Stay Connected initiative is great, and I encourage a closer look at repeat disconnections to understand long-term outcomes. I'd also love to hear more about the wellbeing outcomes achieved. It's a strong case study, and we can keep raising the bar, especially if we aim to make it a standard practice across all areas.
- I support the focus areas identified and encourage TasNetworks to keep working with community groups and individuals to co-design projects. However, I think there should be more attention given to diversity in both the design and execution of these projects.
- It seems supporting vulnerable customers and helping those at risk of disconnection is being handled very well.
- The general public needs to know about what TasNetworks is doing, especially regarding supporting vulnerable customers (like in Principle 5). Many people are struggling, and it's good to hear that TasNetworks is trying to help. If more people knew about these efforts, they would likely be more engaged.

Our response - we said/ did

Recent results show the Knock to Stay Connected program has successfully reduced payment-related disconnections by approximately 65% in Tasmania. The program has become an integral part of our business-as-usual activities.

Given its success, we agree there should now be more of a focus towards long-term customer outcomes, such as tracking individuals who re-enter the disconnection cycle, providing additional support mechanisms, and placing more emphasis on early identification of those who are struggling.

We will continue to discuss the longer-term improvements we can make to this program in our upcoming discussions with both Aurora Energy and the Energy Charter and continue to engage with the CAG and SAG on this important program.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that our programs are inclusive and meet the needs of a broad spectrum of people with varied needs. Moving forward, we'll aim to integrate even more diverse perspectives into the design process of projects to ensure that all groups feel heard and supported.

TasNetworks has recently completed some bespoke training on diversity, equity and inclusion for around 35 team members, including on some effective tools we can start using in the business. We also have a Lived Experience short-course coming up in December 2024 which complements our Vulnerability Plan.

Our engagement performance

Engagement culture and capability uplift

In 2023, we launched the Engagement Culture and Capability Uplift Program, a multi-phase initiative aimed at improving how we engage with stakeholders across all levels of our business. The program focuses on transforming our engagement culture, integrating engagement into daily systems and processes, and strengthening our internal capabilities.

A key part of this program was redesigning our engagement group model, which led to the creation of two new advisory groups: the Customer Advisory Group (CAG) and the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG). We recruited members for these groups through a competitive expression of interest process, selecting 18 members for the SAG and 11 for the CAG. Dr Cynthia Townley and Amy Abraham were appointed as independent chairs for the CAG and SAG, respectively. This marks an important milestone for TasNetworks, as it is the first time we have appointed independent chairs to our engagement groups.

Both advisory groups play a crucial role in ensuring customer interests are central to TasNetworks' decision-making. The CAG provides insights based on the experiences of Tasmanian energy users, while the SAG brings diverse perspectives from across the energy supply chain, representing a wide range of stakeholder groups and organisations.

Feedback on our engagement performance

Anecdotal feedback from members during our feedback forum has been largely positive. However, we will continue to work with our members to address areas for improvement. Given the CAG and SAG are newly established, many members are still familiarising themselves with the Energy Charter framework. This year, we will focus on building their capability and knowledge to support and enable members to provide informed feedback during the assessment and feedback processes they will be involved in over the coming years. Feedback from customers on our engagement style and performance has been included in the General Feedback table above.



Appendix

Feedback summary discussion questions and anonymous online survey questions included:

1. Do you have any specific feedback about the process we went through and/or our maturity assessment outcome for 2023–24?
2. Do you have any ideas about how we could improve our process and/or Disclosure Report for next year?
3. How confident are you that the 2024–25 commitments demonstrate continuous improvement against each Energy Charter principle?
4. What types of things should TasNetworks be considering when deciding what to focus on?
5. Do you have any final general feedback about TasNetworks and the Energy Charter you would like to pass on?



Powering a
Bright Future