



# Customer Interactions and Monitoring Report

OUR PERFORMANCE IN FY20  
(APRIL 2019 - MARCH 2020)

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# Background and purpose

AusNet Services owns and operates one of five electricity distribution networks and one of three gas distribution networks in Victoria. We deliver electricity to customers in the east of the state and gas to customers in the west. We also operate Victoria's electricity transmission network, which covers the entire state.

The services that we provide are 'monopoly' services, which means that no other business supplies gas or electricity to these areas. To ensure that we operate efficiently and in the long term interests of our customers, we are regulated by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). Every 5-years we go through a review with the AER to set out our price and customer service levels. As part of the recent review of our electricity distribution network, we appointed a Customer Forum. The Customer Forum was responsible for ensuring that the business understood the views and expectations of customers.

Over 2018 and 2019 the Customer Forum negotiated agreements with us, these have been presented to the AER for determination this year. The agreements reached between the Customer Forum and AusNet Services included a series of customer experience actions, one of which was the production of an annual Customer Interactions and Monitoring Report (CIMR). This document is the first such report.

Although the Customer Forum's negotiations were focused on electricity distribution customers, we have committed to service improvements for all of our customers. This report, therefore, goes beyond the actions negotiated with the Customer Forum. Part 1 of the report covers the actions negotiated with the Customer Forum, and Part 2 covers a range of other service improvements implemented. Part 3 provides an overview of future customer experience improvement commitments.

## We would love to hear from you

We are continuing to make changes to improve our customers' experience. If you would like to provide feedback on your experiences, or suggestions for the future:

Email us: [research@ausnetservices.com.au](mailto:research@ausnetservices.com.au)

Write to: **Customer Research Manager,**  
**Locked Bag 14051, Melbourne City Mail Centre 8001**

Visit our website: [www.ausnetservices.com.au](http://www.ausnetservices.com.au)

Or contact us on social media:

Twitter: [@AusNetServices](https://twitter.com/AusNetServices)

LinkedIn: [@AusNetServices](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AusNetServices)

Facebook: [@AusNet.Services.Energy](https://www.facebook.com/AusNet.Services.Energy)

# Our customer experience commitments



## Building our understanding of customers' needs and expectations.

We talked and listened to our customers through lots of research activities.



## Collaborating with the community and taking care of our most vulnerable customers.

We identified 17 areas on our networks where customers and community workers need more support.



## Making the claims process easier.

We changed our process to make claims applications simpler and quicker.



## Making our organisation easier to deal with.

We are providing additional training to our staff to ensure superior customer service.



## Aligning our incentives with customer outcomes.

We embedded customer satisfaction targets across the business.



## Fixing customer pain points and improving the customer experience.

We made it quicker and easier for customers to connect solar and gas.



## Establishing a clearer accountability for customers.






We appointed a senior point of accountability for customer outcomes.

# Improving the experience that customers have with us

# Overview of our customer satisfaction survey results

## Gas FY20

Our gas satisfaction score is up from 7.1 to 7.9 out of 10.

	Average	N	(0-6)	(7-8)	(9-10)
 Unplanned Interruptions	8.3	435	18%	18%	64%
 Planned Interruptions	7.9	418	20%	33%	47%
 New Connections <sup>1</sup>	↑ 7.6	358	↓ 27%	22%	↑ 51%
 <b>Aggregate<sup>1</sup> (excluding complaints)</b>	↑ 7.9	1211	↓ 21%	25%	↑ 54%
 Complaint	4.2	39	67%	26%	8%







We saw notable increase in the number of gas customers who gave us a rating of 9 or 10, up from 40% to 54% this year.

We also saw an increase in the number of customers who rated our gas new connections process highly, with 51% of customers giving us a 9 or 10 (up from 32% last year).

We still have a little way to go to meet the industry average of 8.2 out of 10.

## Electricity FY20

Our electricity score is up from 6.3 to 7.0 out of 10

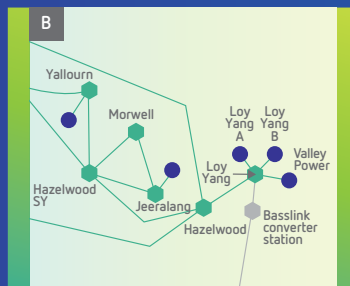
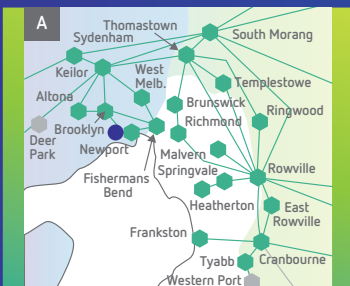
	Average	N	(0-6)	(7-8)	(9-10)
 Unplanned Interruptions	6.4	443	42%	35%	23%
 Planned Interruptions	7.5	461	28%	31%	41%
 New Connections <sup>1</sup>	↑ 7.1	382	↓ 31%	28%	↑ 41%
 <b>Aggregate<sup>1</sup> (excluding complaints and solar and battery connections)</b>	↑ 7.0	1286	34%	31%	35%
 Complaint	4.4	104	64%	21%	16%
 Solar and Battery Connections	7.3	354	29%	29%	42%

We saw a big increase in the number of customers who gave us an excellent rating (9 or 10) on the electricity new connections process, up from 27% to 41% this year.

We still have a little way to go to meet the industry average of 7.2 out of 10.

1. Scores highlighted blue with an upward arrow are statistically significantly higher (p <.05) than last year. Scores highlighted red are statistically significantly lower (p <.05) than last year.

# Location of our electricity and gas networks



**Legend**

- AusNet Services' electricity distribution network
- AusNet Services' gas distribution network
- AusNet Services' terminal/switching stations
- Non-AusNet Services terminal/switching stations
- Power stations (non-AusNet Services)
- AusNet Services' regulated transmission lines
- Non-AusNet Services transmission lines

## PART ONE:

# How we performed against our customer experience commitments

We made many customer experience improvement commitments to the Customer Forum. Our performance over the financial year (FY20: April 2019 – March 2020) against each of these is outlined below.

# Initiative 1: Building our understanding of customers' needs and expectations

## Our research activity and how we have used those insights in the business.

To better understand our customers' needs and expectations, we have been undertaking regular research. This helps us identify and solve the problems that matter to our customers. For example, we heard that customers wanted less frequent and shorter planned outages during the COVID-19 lock-down. We responded by cancelling all of our non-critical planned works and shortening outages. Specific details on our ongoing research plan can be found in Attachment 1.

To increase our research capability within the business:

- We appointed a Customer Research Manager responsible for the design and implementation of a quality research program to build sound evidence of customer needs and expectations.
- We partnered with the Consumer Policy Research Centre, enhancing our understanding of and support for our most vulnerable customers.
- We appointed a dedicated Customer Relationship Manager to support the information needs of our stakeholders, ranging from large industrial customers to local councils.

Research activity	Purpose	Impacts
<p><b>Customer satisfaction program – Quantitative component (residential and small business customers).</b></p>	<p>To measure customers' level of satisfaction with the delivery of our services.</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>Monthly updated average scores for performance on outages, new connections, and complaints.</p> <p>Detailed statistical analysis and appraisal of open-ended feedback to better understand factors affecting customer satisfaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underpins Corporate Targets and employee key performance measures.</li> <li>• Used to measure progress on the customer centricity pillar of the energising futures corporate strategy.</li> <li>• Underpins the new Customer Service Incentive Scheme.</li> <li>• Informs Customer Experience improvements and is used as a performance metric.</li> <li>• Informs business plan development.</li> <li>• Reported monthly to executive to monitor the delivery of customer commitments.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Customer satisfaction program – Qualitative component (transmission large customers and stakeholders).</b></p>	<p>To explore the energy-related issues and concerns of our transmission customers and stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>Yearly performance feedback and insights on the needs and expectations from large and industrial customers utilising our distribution and transmission network.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insights are currently being considered and incorporated into our planning for the Transmission Network Regulatory Proposal that will be submitted to the AER in October 2020.</li> <li>• Inform internal business plan development.</li> </ul>



Research activity	Purpose	Impacts
<p><b>Attitude and perception research was undertaken as part of the Electricity Distribution Price Review (EDPR). The Customer Forum commissioned much of this research.</b></p>	<p>To elicit the unfiltered attitudes and perceptions of customers concerning electricity and the services that they expect from their distributor.</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>Insights on customers’ needs and preferences around: energy generally, our services, replacement expenditure, solar investment and network upgrades, demand management and outage management.</p>	<p>Customer views, via negotiations with the Customer Forum, were incorporated into the Regulatory Proposal and resulted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making our services more affordable.</li> <li>• Maintaining reliability and safety.</li> <li>• Greater support for customers’ rooftop solar investments.</li> <li>• More innovation to support the energy future and support customer choice.</li> <li>• Identify better ways to utilise smart meters to benefit customers.</li> </ul>

Research activity	Purpose	Impacts
<p><b>Reputation tracker.</b></p>	<p>To build our understanding of customers’ energy-specific needs and gather feedback on how we engage with them and how that might be improved.</p> <p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>This yearly research provides insights on:</p> <p>Awareness of AusNet Services among electricity customers.</p> <p>How favourable we are perceived to be (i.e., net favourability) and the drivers of favourability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informs the external media and advocacy strategies.</li> <li>• Guides improvements to communication and message development for campaigns.</li> <li>• Reported to the executive to monitor commitments to improve reputation.</li> </ul>

## Initiative 2: Establishing a clearer accountability for customers

We made changes to how we operate and how our business is structured in FY20 to ensure that we are accountable for how we treat customers. These changes mean that we are more responsive to what customers want and action change to deliver better customer outcomes.

Actions	Purpose	Performance measures and metrics
<b>Appointed a General Manager, Customer Experience in April 2019.<sup>2</sup></b>	To provide a senior-point of accountability within the business for customer outcomes.	Key responsibilities include: to innovate and improve service delivery, ensure superior customer experiences, build strong customer relationships, improve the experience that customers have with our front-line employees.
<b>Resourcing of a dedicated Customer Experience Team.</b>	To purposely design and implement customer experience improvements to ensure that service delivery meets the needs and expectations of customers.	Comprising Customer Experience Service Designers and User Experience Designers. All team members have customer satisfaction metrics linked to their remuneration benefits (i.e., bonus).
<b>Regular customer service working group meetings.</b>	To share customer insights, issues, and action improvements.	Senior members of the Customer Service, Strategy and Transformation and Customer Experience Teams (i.e., the Customer Family) meet monthly to discuss customer satisfaction results and other customer-facing issues/initiatives.  Additional monthly discussions are held with Delivery and Customer Services teams for gas and electricity, who have a direct influence on customer outcomes, to discuss the same.
<b>Regular meetings between AusNet Services senior management and customers/customer representatives.</b>	To ensure that senior staff are directly engaged with customers, ensuring that they hear the personal and direct customer perspective.	We made sure that all of our senior executives met with at least 1 customer a month.  Meetings were held either at their homes, businesses (regional and urban locations), on phone, or our head office. This was managed by the Customer Experience Team.  Executives and their teams also regularly visited the call centre to listen to customer calls.
<b>Regular meetings and workshops between Customer Relationship Manager and large customers, community groups and local councils.</b>	To ensure that we continue to build strategic relationships with these stakeholders and hear their direct perspective.	More than 40 locally hosted customer workshops with large customers were undertaken (11 of these involved senior management attendance).  Ongoing engagement and support provided for 7 active community groups across the network.  Liaised with multiple local councils exploring increased renewable adoption and solar farms.

2. This role was changed as a result of a re-structure in early FY21 to include the customer service function, and re-titled to: Head of Customer Relations and Services. Broadly, the re-structure has consolidated all customer functions under the Network Operations Division reporting to the role. This move highlights the business' commitment to better customer outcomes through simplification and clearer accountability. We will provide more detail in next year's version of this report.

## Initiative 3: Aligning our incentives with customer outcomes

A number of incentives were introduced this year to measure and monitor how customer-focused we are.

Actions	Purpose	Performance measures and metrics
<p><b>Developed Corporate Targets for Customer Satisfaction.</b></p>	<p>To set clear expectations on desired customer satisfaction improvements for the year.</p>	<p>Customer satisfaction targets were formally embedded into Corporate Targets.</p> <p>Improvements of 5% were set and exceeded.</p> <p>Customer satisfaction was set as the measure of success on the Customer Centricity component of the Energising Futures Strategy. This is reported to the Board each month.</p>
<p><b>We have aligned our performance incentives with customer outcomes.</b></p>	<p>To motivate employees to work towards the desired customer satisfaction improvements.</p>	<p>All Regulated Business Divisions and teams have embedded customer satisfaction into their key performance goals (which determine performance and bonus).</p>
<p><b>Proposed a new Customer Service Incentive Scheme (CSIS) for the electricity distribution network and submitted to the regulator.</b></p>	<p>To financially motivate and incentivise the whole business to strive for exceptional customer satisfaction improvements.</p>	<p>AusNet Services and the Customer Forum finalised negotiations on a CSIS for the electricity distribution network plans.</p> <p>The CSIS was developed to provide a more holistic incentive to improve the customer experience.</p>
<p><b>Embedded customer satisfaction measures into delivery partner contracts.</b></p>	<p>To hold our third-party service providers accountable and ensure that they are motivated to achieve the same customer satisfaction improvements as AusNet Services employees.</p>	<p>Customer satisfaction targets were embedded in gas and electricity delivery partner contracts. Our delivery partners are responsible for much of the work that happens out in the field. Performance improvements were set at 5% and exceeded this year. This ensures that contractors have greater levels of accountability to customers.</p>
<p><b>Formally integrated customer-focused indicators into employee engagement surveys.</b></p>	<p>To track how customer-focused employees perceive AusNet Services to be.</p>	<p>We commenced a yearly Employee Engagement Survey.</p> <p>For this first time, this survey includes questions to measure (i) employee understanding of customer centricity (ii) how customer-centric they believe the executive and business to be, and (iii) how easy (or difficult) it is to act in a customer-centric way, delivering good outcomes to customers.</p>

# Initiative 4: Fixing customer pain points and improving the customer experience

We know that the process of connecting to our networks is particularly frustrating for our customers.

Through our research, we are listening to feedback and learning how we can do better. This research is a long-term commitment, not just a short-term focus. We want to design our customer interactions purposely to ensure a seamless experience. As we make improvements, we test them with customers to ensure we are responding to their needs.

We know that the process of connecting to our networks is frustrating for customers. We know this because customer satisfaction scores were low at the beginning of the year (below 6 out of 10). This year, we focused on fixing customer pain points when connecting solar and gas.

## Solar and battery connections

Actions	Purpose	Performance measures and metrics
<p>Developed and implemented an online pre-approval tool for solar and battery connections (this was previously done manually).</p>	<p>To reduce the time required to process residential solar applications, improving the customer experience, and to reduce costs.</p>	<p>The tool is successfully automating 95% of approvals for systems &lt;30kW (&gt;32,000 applications automated) as connection numbers increased by 57% this year.</p> <p>Installer Net Promoter Score (a measure of the likelihood of installers speaking favourably about AusNet Services to their friends and family) improved from a score of -71 to -29 through the implementation of the tool. NPS scores range from -100 to +100, where the closer the score to +100, the better the perception of the organisation.</p> <p>The tool has increased efficiency within our operations, specifically through automation.</p>
<p>Digitised the manual connection application form (this was previously a paper-based application).</p>	<p>To align the application process to customer’s digital preferences.</p>	<p>This made it easier for customers to complete the connection application. Customers can also see the status of the application, allowing greater visibility of progress (i.e., removes the need for customers to chase up the application).</p>
<p>Re-designed the manual process for applications to ensure resourcing was appropriate and introduced project management.</p>	<p>To reduce the time to connect for customers.</p>	<p>Application handling time was reduced, ultimately reducing the overall time to connect substantially.</p> <p>Enabled cross-skilling within the team to ensure that processing times for other types of applications were being progressed quickly, reducing time frames in other processes.</p>

## Gas new connections

Actions	Purpose	Performance measures and metrics
<p><b>Implemented process and resourcing changes within the new connections team.</b></p>	<p>To reduce the time to connect for customers (and meet compliance time frames).</p>	<p>Almost doubled the proportion of customers connected to the gas network within 20 business days (compliance target) from &lt;50% to &gt;95% over FY20. We have also seen significant reduction in average days to connect over the year, from 25.9 days in April 2019 down to 9.1 days in March 2020.</p> <p>The new connection customer satisfaction rating increased from 5.9 to 7.6.</p>
<p><b>Established a joint Victorian Distribution Business working group.</b></p>	<p>To standardise the gas new connections process in Victoria.</p>	<p>Together, we are aiming to create one clear connection process across Victoria to remove confusion for customers, particularly plumbers and builders, who work across multiple locations.</p>
<p><b>Launched the first ever joint Distribution Business site readiness guidelines with MultiNet and Australian Gas Networks.</b></p>	<p>To standardise the gas new connections process in Victoria.</p>	<p>Standardised site readiness requirements across all businesses and made it clear to customers what 'site ready' means.</p>
<p><b>Trialled SMS communications with customers to alert them about when AusNet Services would be attending their site to connect gas and to provide clear instructions to have the site 'ready' to allow the works to go ahead.</b></p>	<p>To streamline communication with customers and reduce the number of individual site visits required to commence works.</p>	<p>The average number of site visits required to commence the connection works reduced from an average of 1.7 visits to 1.3 visits.</p> <p>We also saw improvement in the number of sites that were 'ready' to commence the works at the first time we visited (often we had to come back a second or third time to commence the work).</p> <p>Specifically, this improved from 39% of sites being 'ready' at the first visit to 62% being ready.</p>

## Initiatives 5 and 6: Collaborating with the community and taking care of our most vulnerable customers

We want to improve how we collaborate with communities and take care of our vulnerable customers.

Our work during the bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic show we are making progress, but there is always more to do.

We have made progress on these commitments through our partnership with the Consumer Policy Research Centre (CPRC). Through this partnership, we are learning about the types of disadvantage that customers are experiencing. We also better understand the specific energy information needs of our disadvantaged customers. We used this information to inform our bushfire and COVID-19 support efforts.

Actions	Purpose	Performance measures and metrics
<p>Conducted desktop research to identify important measures/characteristic of disadvantage.</p>	<p>To identify locations within the AusNet Services area where households with these disadvantage characteristics reside.</p>	<p>Identified key measures of disadvantage and used these to identify 17 locations across our gas and electricity networks where significant numbers of customers are particularly vulnerable.</p>
<p>Undertook a range of research activities with community workers.</p>	<p>To understand the energy information needs of disadvantaged households and their community support networks.</p>	<p>This research was undertaken through a number of co-design workshops. Learnings were used to develop the materials for the Energy Simplified Program. AusNet Services was involved in the development of the materials, and they can be found on our website.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ausnetservices.com.au/Residential/Energy-Saving-Tips">www.ausnetservices.com.au/Residential/Energy-Saving-Tips</a></p>
<p>Produced a series of new energy information resources.</p>	<p>To support disadvantaged households and community support workers to understand and take control of their energy bills.</p>	<p>The Energy Simplified materials can be found on our website.</p>

Actions	Purpose	Performance measures and metrics
<p><b>Planning a series of online webinars.</b></p>	<p>To support disadvantaged households and community support workers to understand and take control of their energy bills.</p>	<p>We are planning to run 10 community worker and 9 household webinars.</p> <p>We had just commenced these at the time of drafting this report which are targeting community support workers and households in the 17 areas identified as being particularly disadvantaged within the AusNet Services networks. However, participation is open to all customers.</p> <p>Participant feedback from the first few community support worker webinars is provided in Attachment 2.</p> <p>Further, AusNet Services is funding the printing of the Energy Simplified materials to provide to those who cannot access the online materials and webinars.</p>

<p><b>Commenced work with the CPRC on 'Energy Information for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) consumers.'</b></p>	<p>This project aims to extend the energy information developed under the Energy Simplified program to support two in-need CALD communities.</p> <p>This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research to identify the most spoken language other than English in disadvantaged suburbs served by AusNet Services.</li> <li>• Developing tailored energy information materials through a process of translating intent of information and not just literal translations that may not be culturally meaningful.</li> <li>• Employing two community leaders to guide the project and engage the communities to embed materials.</li> </ul>
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## Initiative 7: Making our organisation easier to deal with

**Our front-line teams are usually the first people customers talk to when they are experiencing an outage or having issues with our services.**

Our Contact Centre is usually the first point of contact customers have with us. They typically call when they are experiencing a power outage or having issues with our services. Our focus is on ensuring that our Contact Centre teams are empathetic and empowered to deliver the best experience for customers.

Actions	Purpose	Performance measures and metrics
<p><b>Mystery calling program introduced into the Contact Centre, undertaken by an independent service provider.</b></p>	<p>To assess employee soft skills, providing monthly feedback and performance scores.</p>	<p>We have a total of 20 full-time Contact Centre agents operating our customer service line that is assessed in this program. A total of 50 mystery calls are made each month, with all employees being assessed at least once a month.</p> <p>The overall average score for agents in FY20 was 58% which sits above the energy sector benchmark of 54%. AusNet Services ranked 3rd out of 32 energy organisations (i.e., retailers and other networks) in the program.</p>
<p><b>All Contact Centre employees underwent soft skills training.</b></p>	<p>To address areas of improvement identified through the mystery calling program.</p>	<p>All 20 full-time employees attended the half-day training in February 2020.</p>
<p><b>Internal call coaching was implemented. This involves live listening and assessment of Contact Centre staff calls by a peer.</b></p>	<p>To assess employee soft skills and whether or not correct processes were followed, and correct information provided to customers. Individual feedback is recorded after each session.</p>	<p>Coaching is undertaken during the less busy periods within the Contact Centre. Employees attempt to assess, and be assessed, at least once per month.</p>



Actions	Purpose	Performance measures and metrics
<b>All Contact Centre colleagues completed the Customer Service Excellence Course provided by the Australian Institute of Management (AIM).</b>	To improve the customer service skills of Contact Centre employees.	All 20 full-time employees attended this full-day training in March 2020.
<b>Increased first call resolution rates.</b>	To reduce the time taken to resolve customer issues.	We have committed to tracking this metric. However, we do not currently have the capability to do so. We are exploring possible solutions.
<b>Trialled call-recording during COVID-19.</b>	To record real customer calls and use for training and coaching purposes.	The concept has been tested; however, the business is investigating how it can be integrated permanently. Call assessment was undertaken on recorded calls for training purposes.

## Initiative 8: Making the claims and complaints process easier for all customers

Customers suffering household appliance damage from power surges are entitled to compensation, but in many instances, they find this process with AusNet Services extremely frustrating.

High Voltage Incidents (HVI) occur on electricity networks from time to time. These incidents happen when there is a surge of electricity, causing voltage levels to exceed safe levels. When this happens, customers experience an outage and potential damage to their electrical appliances.

The Customer Forum spoke with a number of customers impacted by HVI events in 2019. They raised a number of issues with the business. As a result, we made changes to our processes (listed below) and we have agreed to conduct regular research with customers who experience an HVI event.

Improvements made in FY20, include:

- Sending members of the customer resolutions teams on-site (to areas where an HVI event occurred) to provide outage information and assist customers with their compensation claims.
- Improved communication between the Contact Centre Shift Supervisor and Resolution Team members on-site to allow vulnerable/elderly customers power restoration to be prioritised.
- Send an SMS to customers impacted by an HVI event when they are without power, requesting that they contact us for assistance.
- Significantly reduced claim assessment time frames and customer discomfort by partnering with electricians that can assist customers immediately with on-site emergency repairs and provide a report to support their compensation claim.
- Provide a voucher for financially vulnerable customers to allow them to purchase a temporary replacement appliance (e.g. a small heater).
- Be available for 24/7 phone assistance to help customers complete their claim form.
- Once the claim has been assigned, a direct contact number and email address are provided to customers.
- Provide more flexible and timely compensation amounts by paying the higher of market value or second-hand item, rounding up to the nearest \$100 and transferring funds via EFT instead of cheque.

## PART TWO:

# Significant external events impacting our customers

Recent events like the Victorian bushfires and COVID-19 have had a major impact on customers' lives. We acted quickly to support customers through a number of efforts.

## Our response to the Victorian 19/20 bushfires

At the peak of the bushfires, we had 7,000 customers without electricity.

Around 1.4 million hectares of land, including poles and wires, were burned. Many of our customers' homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed. We continue to work with affected customers as they re-build.

## To help our customers, we did the following:

Actions	Details
Provided a customer bushfire support payment.	A payment of \$250 to customers who contacted us seeking funds for spoiled foods or \$500 in extreme circumstances. A total of 150 customers have benefited, totalling more than \$37,500 in assistance.
Paid 'Guaranteed Service Levels' (GSLs) directly to customers.	Around 8,000 customers were directly paid their GSLs via electronic transfer (EFT). As at April 2020, almost 90% of payments had been claimed, totalling more than \$315,000 in assistance. We are working with retailers to credit the bills of those who have yet to collect the payment.
Established a Victorian Bushfire Workplace Giving Appeal.	An initial company donation of \$100,000 was made along with a commitment to match all donations made by employees to this appeal. A total of \$232,336 was donated, including our initial pledge.

## We also improved how we communicated with customers during the bushfires, for example:

Actions	Details
Created a dedicated customer line for affected customers.	Created within our Contact Centre between 8am and 8pm / 7 days a week. More than 1800 calls were received.
Communicated directly with customers without power via SMS.	SMS messages were sent on 10 January and 17 January 2020.
Made health check phone calls to customers who were without electricity for an extended period.	Calls were made between the 16 – 25 January to check on customers. Those who were not contactable by phone we contacted via SMS.
Provided timely and relevant information to customers.	An information flyer was printed and handed out to customers by our regional managers at all community events. Information flyers included information on tips to cope without electricity, our restoration efforts, and time frames.
Sent information brochure about the bushfire support for customers.	Unaddressed mail sent to all impacted customers. Brochure sent through early January to early February.
Local newspaper advertising.	With content outlining what we were doing to restore power and timelines. Campaigns ran from mid to late January.
Used social media to communicate what we were doing to restore power in specific locations and time lines.	Regular communications ran up-until mid-February.
Attended community events and relief centres to answer customer questions in person.	Approximately 30 events were attended by senior AusNet Services employees.
Purchased 100 small generators kits, power boards, extension cords and torches to be provided to customers who were experiencing extended outages.	Approximately 21 kits were lent out to 18 households (a few received 2 generators because they needed more support).
Provided large-scale emergency community generators.	Generators supplied to Mallacoota, Numeralla, Omeo and Corryong. Supplying more than 1,000 customers with electricity.
Substituted all meter reads during the outage period to zero.	Impacted customers to avoid that customer receiving an estimated read. At the peak we substituted data for 1,200 customers each day, whose meters had lost connection.

# Our response to the global COVID-19 pandemic

At the time of writing this report, Victoria was in a state of emergency and commencing Stage 3 restrictions. This meant that many customers were confined to their homes. The need for a reliable supply of gas and electricity was high.

To financially assist customers, we announced the COVID-19 Energy Relief package. We developed this with Energy Network Australia (ENA) on behalf of network businesses. It is anticipated that the package will provide up to \$100 million in relief to customers.

In Victoria, energy retailers are responsible for energy billing. Retailers advise networks when they need to disconnect a customer for non-payment. AusNet Services decided not to disconnect customers who are unable to pay their bills at this time. Instead, we are monitoring these customers and working with retailers to provide financial support. We did this before the AER and Essential Services Commissioner announced this as a requirement.

We are also reducing the number of planned outages that we take. This ensures that fewer customers are without power when they need it. We will only proceed with planned outages for critical works, such as bushfire preparation. To help with planning, we will also give customers as much early notice of a planned outage as we can. We are also trying to reduce the length of outages to under five hours. At the time of writing this:

- The proportion of customers experiencing a planned outage has been reduced by 35% compared to the same time last year (from around 140,000 customers experiencing an outage down to around 90,000).
- Of those customers experiencing an outage, 10% less experienced an outage of more than 5 hours compared to the same time last year.
- Overall, planned outage length was down to 3.3 hours from 3.9 hours this time last year.

Actions	Details
COVID-19 web page.	Set-up a COVID-19 web page on our website with information on customer support measures, information on planned outages, information on how to prepare for power outages and information on social distancing practices for our field crews. Web page went live in March 2020.  <a href="http://www.ausnetservices.com.au/Community/Coronavirus-COVID-19">www.ausnetservices.com.au/Community/Coronavirus-COVID-19</a>
Ongoing social media posts.	We ran some Facebook posts that directed customers to our COVID-19 web page and paid targeted Facebook advertising in postcodes impacted by planned outages.
Targeted digital advertising.	In April, we ran targeted digital advertising on NewsCorp and Nine Group websites along with local print advertising about the energy relief package.
Print advertising.	14 – 20 April. We ran print advertising in local papers (9) across our network that talked about the energy network relief package.
Video explaining why critical planned outages need to go ahead.	26 March. We created a video explaining why critical planned outages need to go ahead and our approach to reduce their impact on customers.  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1057496814624261">www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1057496814624261</a>

## PART THREE:

# Future customer experience commitments

We made many customer experience commitments to the Customer Forum that extend beyond the eight outlined in this report. These are to be implemented in the coming years.

## Our commitments for FY21.

Actions	Details
<b>Implement call recording.</b>	We will endeavour to establish permanent call recording capability within the customer Contact Centre for quality assurance and training purposes.
<b>Develop and publish a map of solar connections.</b>	We will publish a statement, and map, showing where solar and battery specific revenue is spent in the next CIMR.
<b>Focus on the complaints and claims journey.</b>	Improving these processes will make it easier for customers to interact with us when things go wrong.
<b>Focus our attention on the experience that customers have when connecting electricity to their homes and businesses.</b>	This project will focus on improving the experience and time taken for customers to connect to our electricity network.
<b>Commence work on the discovery and design stages of the unplanned outages journey.</b>	These efforts will focus on improving how we communicate with customers during an unplanned outage, which is a source of considerable frustration today. The team will also explore initiatives to reduce the duration of an unplanned outage.
<b>Implement changes to our corporate website to make it more accessible to customers.</b>	Surface popular information on the website more clearly than it is today. Improve the navigation functionality on the website to reduce customer effort in finding information that they are after.



Actions	Details
<b>Focus on how we can utilise digital communications to improve our messaging to customers during planned outages.</b>	Improve the frequency and timeliness of communication with customers ahead of, and during, an outage.
<b>Create an 'Outage Hub' on our website.</b>	Surface all details related to planned and unplanned outages, including support materials in one place, so that customers know how to prepare and cope during an outage.
<b>Improve our self-service capabilities to make them user-friendly and informative.</b>	This will empower customers to manage their interactions with AusNet Services.
<b>Make improvements to the Outage Tracker.</b>	This will ensure that customers are receiving detailed and accurate information with respect to planned and unplanned outages. Customers will also be able to track an outage easily.
<b>Expand our understanding of disadvantaged and vulnerable customers through the development of a targeted strategy.</b>	Provide additional and tailored support to our vulnerable and disadvantaged customers.
<b>Develop a new measure to track how long it takes to reconnect power to life support customers following an outage.</b>	This goal is to understand how long it takes us to reconnect life support customers after an outage and improve this over time.
<b>Continue our transformation of the Customer Service function within AusNet Services.</b>	The goal of this transformation is to make it easier for customers to interact with our business.



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