








## Customer Panel Meeting Summary

Meeting date: Thursday, 26 March 2026, 1PM – 4PM AEST

Attendees	Names and titles
<b>Panel Members</b>	<p>Andrew Richards – CEO, Energy Users Association of Australia            Christy Englezakis, Development State Leader – Queensland, Neoen            Don Woodrow – Market Policy Manager, CS Energy            Gavin Dufty – National Director Energy, Policy and Research, St Vincent de Paul Society            Ian Christmas – Engineering Lead, Grid Connection and Technical, Edify Energy            Jana Dore – Policy Director, External Affairs, Queensland Resources Council            Katie-Anne Mulder – CEO, Queensland Renewable Energy Council            Leisa Dowling – CEO, Gladstone Regional Council            Mark Grenning – Energy expert and consumer advocate            Monica Rackley, Commercial Leader Energy and Infrastructure, Aurizon (proxy)            Robyn Robinson – Director, Council on the Ageing QLD            Sisira Weeratunga – General Manager Grid Planning, Energy Queensland            Stephanie McKechnie – Energy Engagement &amp; Education Advisor, QLD Farmers' Federation            Stephen Snow – Research Scientist, CSIRO            Tracey Dodd – Senior Lecturer, School of Management, Adelaide University            Yale Hudson-Flux, Senior Policy Officer Energy Frameworks Policy Queensland Treasury (proxy)            Zoe Kemp, Director - Community Benefits, Queensland Treasury (proxy)</p>
<b>Powerlink Members</b>	<p>Daniel Andersen, General Manager Energy Markets - Energy Futures            Eleonore Bridier, Customer Engagement Specialist (Convenor)            Gerard Reilly, GM Communications, Customer &amp; Engagement (Chair)            Ian Lowry, Executive General Manager Major Projects            Jenny Harris, General Manager Network Regulation - Energy Futures            Natasha Browne, General Manager Business Development            Roger Smith, Director Revenue Reset            Wendy Miller, Customer Engagement Strategist</p>
<b>Guests</b>	<p>Craig Doyle, Board Chair, Powerlink            Liz Cunningham, Board Director, Powerlink            Anthea Craig, Acting General Manager – Community and Delivery Services, Powerlink            Darryl Rowell, Chief Executive (Interim), Powerlink            Linda Whatman, EGM Network Investment (Acting), Powerlink            Regan Strutt, GM, BIT &amp; Digital Delivery, Powerlink            Sarah Huang, EGM Delivery &amp; Technical Solutions</p>
<b>Guest presenters</b>	<p>Stephanie McKechnie – Energy Engagement &amp; Education Advisory, QLD Farmers' Federation</p>
<b>Invited observers</b>	<p>Ben Fu, AER Observer (apology)            Kirk Zammit, AER Observer (apology)</p>
<b>Apologies</b>	<p>Chris Gillitt – Farm Business Resilience Project Manager, QLD Canegrowers            Chris Hazzard – Social Justice Committee member, St Vincent de Paul Society            Claudia Brumme-Smith – CEO, Townsville Enterprise Limited            Evashnee Chetty – Commercial Operations Advisor, Shell            Jacqui Bridge, EGM Network Investment, Powerlink            Leanne Caelers – Executive Director, Frameworks &amp; Engagement Policy, Energy, QLD Treasury            Nardia Yeates – Commercial Infrastructure and Energy Leader, Aurizon</p>

## AGENDA

TIME	MINS	ITEM	IAP2	PAPERS	PRESENTER/S
1:00PM	15	Welcome		Nil	Gerard Reilly
1:15PM	30	Report Back: Stakeholder Perception and Community Sentiment Surveys		Nil	Gerard Reilly
1:45PM	40	Revenue Proposal		2027-32 Revenue Proposal and Overview	Roger Smith Steph McKechnie
2:25PM	40	Break: table discussion and meet new members		Nil	Table hosts
3:05PM	40	Central Queensland Update	 	Information Resource - Investing in system strength	Ian Lowry
3:45PM	15	Looking forward			Gerard Reilly
4:00PM		CLOSE			



Inform



Consult



Involve



Collaborate

## Papers supplied for pre-reading:

- [Powerlink 2027-32 Revenue Proposal Overview - January 2026 \[PDF\]](#)
- [Powerlink 2027-32 Revenue Proposal - January 2026 \[PDF\]](#)
- Information Resource - Investing in system strength

## Papers supplied for noting:

- Briefing Note - Community Benefits Framework Report Back
- RIT-T Report (March 2026)

**Additional background resources (optional):**

***On Priority Transmission Investments***

[Powerlink | Priority Transmission Investment \[webpage\]](#)

[Powerlink | Priority Transmission Investment: Gladstone Project \[webpage\]](#)

***On system strength***

[Australian Energy Regulator \(AER\) | Role in regulating system planning \[webpage\]](#)

[AEMO | System Strength Framework Overview \[webinar\]](#)

[AEMO | System Security Planning \[webpage\]](#)

[AEMO | System Strength Explained \[PDF\]](#)

[Powerlink | System Strength Overview \[PDF\]](#)

[Powerlink | Addressing system strength requirements in Queensland from December 2025 \(RIT-T\) \[webpage\]](#)

[Powerlink | Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission Overview \[PDF\]](#)

***On Contingent Project Applications***

[Australian Energy Regulator \(AER\) | Contingent projects \[webpage\]](#)

[Australian Energy Regulator \(AER\) | Process guideline for contingent project applications 2007 \[PDF\]](#)

***On Revenue Determinations***

[Powerlink | Snapshot on Revenue Determination Process \[PDF\]](#)

[Powerlink | Understanding Transmission Pricing \[video\]](#)

[Australian Energy Regulator \(AER\) | Better Resets Handbook - July 2024 \[guideline\]](#)

## MEETING SUMMARY

### Welcome

*Presenter: Gerard Reilly*

Gerard Reilly welcomed Panel Members and outlined changes to the Customer Panel format for 2026, including a shift to in-person meetings to support more interactive discussion and reduce one-way information flow. New Panel Members and proxies were acknowledged, along with attending Powerlink Queensland board members and executives. All attendees briefly introduced themselves.

### Report back: stakeholder perception and community sentiment surveys

*Presenter: Gerard Reilly*

#### Stakeholder perception research

- Powerlink Queensland completed approximately 71 in-depth interviews with stakeholders across multiple groups during mid-2025.
- Overall reputation and performance scores increased compared to the previous year.
- Key themes raised by stakeholders included:
  - The importance of alignment with Queensland Government energy policy.
  - Safety performance as a core driver of trust.
  - Ongoing uncertainty about the roles of Government Owned Corporations in the energy system.
  - A desire for greater transparency about future network planning.
- Stakeholders recognised Powerlink's technical expertise, while noting the need for continued clarity about Powerlink's role in the energy transition.

#### Community sentiment research

- More than 1,900 Queenslanders across 17 local government areas participated.
- Trust in Powerlink increased modestly overall, with variation across local government areas.
- Trust drivers remained consistent with prior years, including:
  - Perceived net benefits of projects.
  - Procedural and distributional fairness.
  - Confidence in governance and regulation.
- Emerging drivers that erode trust, include:
  - Environmental impacts.
  - Road safety.
- Research showed growing recognition that renewable energy is required, alongside continued concern about cumulative impacts and coordination of development.
- Findings indicated that traditional information sessions are not reaching most community members.
- Powerlink spoke to changing practices in response to these insights, moving to offer more place-based engagement approaches that 'meet community members where they are' such as pop-ups in shopping malls and stands at community festivals.

### Discussion

- Panel Members discussed coordination challenges across multiple projects and proponents, particularly in regions experiencing high development activity.
- In consideration of recent amendments to state planning regulations, the role and expectations of local governments in individual and cumulative project social impact assessment and community benefit processes was discussed.
- The importance of explaining Powerlink's role, limitations and regulatory obligations to communities was reinforced.
- The research's trust model statistical methodology was also discussed and clarification provided that positive numbers reflect the weighted contribution of that element to driving trust or acceptance- the higher the number the stronger the correlation. Conversely, negative numbers indicate the factor erodes trust or acceptance.

### Revenue proposal overview

*Presenter: Roger Smith*

Roger Smith provided an overview of the 2027–32 Revenue Proposal submitted to the Australian Energy Regulator on 30 January 2026.

Key points included:

- The regulatory determination process and associated milestones, including the AER Issues Paper and upcoming Public Forum.
- Forecast capital and operating expenditure, reflecting increased complexity, workforce constraints and supply chain pressures.
- Price impacts, noting an average annual increase of around five percent in the transmission component of electricity bills in the context of current cost of living pressures impacting Queensland households.
- Interaction between the Revenue Proposal and other processes, including Priority Transmission Investments and contingent project applications.

### RPRG perspective and capability of acceptance

*Presenter: Stephanie McKechnie*

Stephanie McKechnie presented the Revenue Proposal Reference Group's (RPRG) perspective.

Key points included:

- The RPRG met regularly and independently to test assumptions and build capability.
- Engagement with Powerlink was described as open, detailed and influential.
- The RPRG felt Powerlink focused consistently on matters important to customers including **affordability, price-stability, reliability**.
- The RPRG considered the proposal against agreed capability of acceptance criteria, including engagement quality, transparency and evidence of customer influence.
- The RPRG's preliminary view was that the Revenue Proposal is capable of acceptance, noting:
  - Credible justification for forecast expenditure.
  - Strong engagement processes.

- Ongoing risks related to cost uncertainty, deliverability, workforce availability, cost escalation and productivity challenges faced across the industry.

### Discussion

- Clarification was provided by the RPRG to the panel that “capable of acceptance” relates to the engagement process and explanation provided, not endorsement of specific expenditure levels.
- Panel Members discussed productivity, long-term cost pressures and impacts on different customer groups.
- Timing and approach for asset reinvestment (repex) was explored, with Powerlink detailing the multicriteria approach it uses.
- The importance in Powerlink clearly highlighting what is in or outside of Powerlink’s control was reiterated.

### Break: table discussion and meet new members

Due to time constraints, this session did not take place and will be rescheduled.

### Central Queensland update

*Presenter: Ian Lowry*

Ian Lowry provided an update on Powerlink’s Central Queensland program of work, covering:

- An overview of the program of investment in Central Queensland, spanning transmission reinforcement, provision of system strength and enabling energy proponent connections.
- Detailed outline of the transmission reinforcement for Gladstone, including scope, staging, timeframes, preliminary works investment to-date, status of contracting and procurement, and regulatory pathways.
- System strength regulatory requirements and the proposed installation of an initial four synchronous condensers.
- Developer connections and interdependencies between generation, transmission and system security.
- Delivery risks, community considerations and coordination with government and industry.

Discussion focused on:

- Managing system security as the generation mix changes.
- Balancing risk and cost for customers.
- Community impacts, including noise, land use and cumulative effects.
- The importance of early engagement and clear communication.

### Table Discussion on Central Queensland Transition Network Forum

*Facilitator: Gerard Reilly*

Panel Members provided input on how the 2026 Central Queensland Transmission Network Forum could be shaped to provide greatest value to stakeholders attending, drawing on the region’s changing context and increasing clarity around major projects.

### Summary of key suggestions

- Clear context-setting on how projects and timelines fit together, including providing a view beyond 2030.
- Practical updates on transmission, system strength and major project milestones.

- Greater focus on regional impacts, benefits and workforce opportunities.
- Involvement of other industry and government stakeholders.
- More interactive, higher-engagement formats, less emphasis on formal one-way presentation sessions.

### *Emergent design principles*

#### **Context before content**

Start with a shared system and regional story (policy, industry, infrastructure, timing), not individual projects. Speak in the language of the region e.g. Gladstone Power Station is referred to as NRG locally.

#### **Clarity of roles and constraints**

Explicitly explain Powerlink's role versus developers, existing generators, regional industrial companies, government and market bodies, including funding and cost recovery.

#### **Shift from “what we did” to “what’s next”**

Acknowledge past work briefly, but focus on upcoming decisions, sequencing and implications.

#### **Regional opportunity lens**

Make jobs, procurement, skills and business opportunities visible and practical. Make network connection opportunities visible and discuss how to best support investment certainty throughout Powerlink's construction and commissioning of the transmission project and looking further ahead.

#### **Engagement, not presentation**

Design for dialogue, uncertainty and “what ifs”, not polished presentations.

#### **Continuity and trust**

Be explicit about how this forum connects to future engagement and decisions.

### *Record of detailed feedback provided*

#### **Purpose and framing**

- Panel Members emphasised the need to clearly articulate “what is the need – why this, why here, why now”, particularly in light of recent announcements affecting Central Queensland.
- The forum should provide a whole-of-context view, helping stakeholders understand how transmission, system strength, generation changes and industrial developments fit together from a regional perspective.
- There was support for explaining what is within Powerlink Queensland's control and what is not, including the respective roles of developers, the shared transmission network, and government, as well as who pays for what.

#### **Content priorities**

Panel Members identified a number of topics that should be addressed explicitly:

- Updates on Priority Transmission Investment and synchronous condenser timelines, including key dependencies and risks.
- An update on Powerlink's Social Impact Assessment work and how regional impacts are being understood and managed.
- An overview of the Gladstone Project, including how transmission, system strength and generation changes align.
- Clarification of how recent developments, including the Gladstone Power Station closure and related announcements, fit into the broader plan for the region.

- Discussion of cost impacts, recognising that some audiences will seek clarity on affordability and bill impacts.
- A Powerlink Reset update, including responses to issues raised and any changes to forecasts.

### **Regional benefits and opportunities**

Panel Members noted that potential attendees may be quite focused on jobs, local business opportunities and workforce transition.

Energy proponents considering or progressing opportunities in the area reflected that details on this transmission project are critical to providing them investment certainty and managing investment risk in their project development.

Suggested topics included:

- Local procurement and purchasing strategies.
- Business and training opportunities that allow communities to plan ahead.
- How transitional workers may be supported as the region evolves.
- There was support for involvement from Gladstone Regional Council, such as regards its community benefits policy and framework, to help situate projects within regional development priorities.

*Noting discussions had in the first session of the Customer Panel meeting, possible multistakeholder engagement between Powerlink, local council, QREC, developers and others regards social impact assessments, cumulative impact, expectations.*

### **Stakeholder participation**

Panel Members suggested broadening participation to include:

- Major industrial and infrastructure stakeholders such as Rio Tinto and Gladstone Ports, to provide updates on their plans and future developments.
- Consideration of a government speaker or local mayor to provide broader regional and policy context.
- The mix of invitees should differ from the Brisbane Forum, with a greater focus on regional community leaders, business representatives, as well as developers who are seeking certainty beyond 2030.

### **Format and engagement**

- Strong preference was expressed for a less formal, more interactive format, with greater opportunity for discussion rather than presentation-heavy sessions.
- Given the volume and complexity of issues, one group suggested the forum could be a full-day event.
- The forum was seen as marking a new phase of engagement, moving from explanation of past decisions to a focus on “what’s next” and how to achieve the best outcomes as projects progress.

### **Managing uncertainty**

Panel Members noted that stakeholders are likely to raise “what if” questions, including:

- What if projects are not delivered to planned timeframes?
- What if key assumptions change?
- Addressing how concurrent timetables are being managed and risks mitigated was seen as important for building confidence.

### **Closing the loop**

- Panel Members emphasised the importance of being clear about next steps and future engagement, so stakeholders do not perceive the forum as a one-off event.
- Clear commitments to reporting back and ongoing engagement were seen as critical to maintaining trust.

## Looking forward

Due to time constraints, this session did not take place and will be rescheduled.

## ACTIONS

### OPEN ACTIONS

ACTION	STATUS
Circulate draft Revenue Proposal Reference Group (RPRG) submission on the 2027–32 Revenue Proposal to wider Customer Panel on 27 March	COMPLETE
Customer Panel Members to provide their views on the draft RPRG submission by 15 April	OPEN
Individual discussions about accountability review (optional)	OPEN
Circulate outcomes of the Asset Reinvestment Review	COMPLETE

### CLOSED ACTIONS

ACTION
<b>Closed in 2025</b>
Submit any feedback or issues on the draft Proposal to RPRG members
Submit Powerlink's 2025 Energy Charter Disclosure Statement to the Energy Charter
Draft Submission circulated with wider panel
Individual submissions on the draft Proposal
Draft Submission submitted to Powerlink
Close the loop on feedback provided on the Disclosure Statement through Annual Feedback Summary
Report back on the Community Benefits Framework interactive session held at April 2025 meeting
Provide feedback on the <i>draft 2024-2025 Energy Charter Disclosure Statement</i>
Provide feedback on the <i>fy2025 Powerlink Disclosure Statement Outline</i>
Provide views on the <i>fy2025 Maturity Self-Assessment</i>
Provide views on the RR27-32 Revenue Proposal 'Capable of Acceptance' criteria