

Customer Panel Meeting Summary

Attendees	Names and titles
Panel Members	Andrew Richards, CEO, Energy Users Association of Australia Chris Hazzard, Social Justice Committee member, St Vincent de Paul Society Christy Englezakis, Development State Leader – Queensland, Neoen Claire Finch, Director Energy Frameworks Policy, Queensland Treasury (<i>proxy for Leanne Caelers</i>) Damien Sewell, Process Engineer, Shell Australia (QGC) (<i>proxy for Evashnee Chetty</i>) 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 John Gardner, Research Scientist, CSIRO (<i>proxy for Stephen Snow</i>) Jimmy Patel, Manager Sub-transmission Planning, Energy QLD (<i>proxy for Sisira Weeratunga</i>) Katie-Anne Mulder, CEO, Queensland Renewable Energy Council Leisa Dowling, CEO, Gladstone Regional Council Matt Tapsall, Policy Director, Queensland Resources Council (<i>replacing Jana Dore</i>) Mark Grenning, Consumer advocate Nardia Yeates, Commercial Infrastructure and Energy Leader, Aurizon Robyn Robinson, Director, Council on the Ageing QLD Stephanie McKechnie, Energy Engagement & Education Advisor, QLD Farmers' Federation Tanya Howard, District Manager – Bundaberg, QLD Canegrowers (<i>proxy for Chris Gillitt</i>)
Powerlink Members	Daniel Andersen, General Manager Energy Markets - Energy Futures Eleonore Bridier, Customer Engagement Specialist (Convenor) Gerard Reilly, GM Communications, Customer & Engagement (Chair) Ian Lowry, Executive General Manager Major Projects Jacqui Bridge, Executive General Manager Network Investment, Powerlink Jenny Harris, General Manager Network Regulation - Energy Futures Natasha Browne, General Manager Business Development Roger Smith, Director Revenue Reset Wendy Miller, Customer Strategist
Guests	Craig McClintock, Board Director, Powerlink Dr. Seán Mc Goldrick, Chief Executive, Powerlink Richard Douglas, Board Director, Powerlink Wayne Collins, Board Director, Powerlink
Guest presenters	Brendan Boyd, Principal Engineer Strategic & Future Network Operations, Powerlink Jonathan Dennis, Principal Network Strategist, Powerlink Sarah de Valence, Senior Policy and Government Relations Advisor, Powerlink
Invited observers	Ben Fu, AER Observer Ben McGregor, Team Leader Regional Grid Planning & Data Support, Powerlink David Wiggington, Development Director, Powerlink Michael Brothers, AER Observer Peta Starkey, Senior Market Specialist, Powerlink Rachael Cole-Hawthorne, Indigenous Governance & Policy Team Leader Sarah Huang, Executive General Manager Delivery & Technical Solutions, Powerlink Stewart Bell, Executive General Manager Operations & Planning, Powerlink
Apologies	Chris Gillitt, Farm Business Resilience Project Manager, QLD Canegrowers Evashnee Chetty, Commercial Operations Advisor, Shell Leanne Caelers, Executive Director, Frameworks & Engagement Policy, Energy, QLD Treasury Sisira Weeratunga, General Manager Grid Planning, Energy Queensland Stephen Snow, Research Scientist, CSIRO Tracey Dodd, Senior Lecturer, School of Management, Adelaide University

AGENDA

Time	Duration	Item	Presenter/s	Papers	Level
1:05PM	15	Meet the new Chief Executive	Dr. Seán Mc Goldrick	Nil	
1:20PM	5	Overview	Gerard Reilly	Nil	
1:25PM	40	Central Queensland Investment Update	Ian Lowry Jacqui Bridge	Information Resource – Investing in System Strength	
2:05PM	10	Central Queensland Transmission Network Forum: Report Back	Sarah de Valence	Nil	
2:15PM	20	Break			
2:35PM	60	Flexible Load Services	Jacqui Bridge Andrew Richards	Incentivising flexibility from transmission-connected loads	
3:35PM	25	Update on our Revenue Proposal	Roger Smith	Nil	
4:00PM	Close				



Papers supplied for pre-reading:

- [Information Resource - Investing in system strength](#)
- Briefing Note – Incentivising flexibility from transmission-connected loads

Papers supplied for noting:

- RIT-T Report (June 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

Overview

Presenter: Gerard Reilly

Gerard Reilly welcomed attendees, acknowledged new Customer Panel representatives and proxies, Powerlink Board members, executive leadership and Australian Energy Regulator (AER) observers.

The purpose of the meeting was outlined as:

- introducing Powerlink's new Chief Executive
- providing an update on major investment activities in Central Queensland
- discussing system strength and the upcoming Contingent Project Application for synchronous condensers
- reporting back on how Customer Panel feedback had influenced the design of the Central Queensland Transmission Network Forum
- exploring opportunities and challenges associated with flexible load services
- providing an update on the 2027–32 Revenue Proposal.

Gerard noted the meeting would trial a customer-led discussion format during the Flexible Load Services session, with Customer Panel members participating in a 'Panel-in-a-Panel' discussion.

Meet the new Chief Executive

Presenter: Dr Seán Mc Goldrick

Dr Seán Mc Goldrick introduced himself to the Customer Panel and reflected on his first weeks with Powerlink.

He spoke about:

- his experience across transmission businesses internationally
- Queensland's significance in the global energy transition, with many international organisations closely observing developments in the Queensland electricity system
- the scale of change currently underway across the transmission network and generation mix
- the importance of maintaining safe, reliable and affordable electricity services as the energy system evolves.

Dr Mc Goldrick emphasised the value of the Customer Panel in helping Powerlink stay connected to customer and community perspectives.

He encouraged members to continue providing candid feedback and perspectives from the constituencies they represent, noting that customer input is particularly important as Powerlink progresses major investments and works through the 2027–32 revenue determination process.

Central Queensland Investment Update

Presenters: Ian Lowry and Jacqui Bridge

Ian Lowry provided an update on Powerlink's program of work in Central Queensland.

The update covered:

- the strategic importance of the Gladstone region to Queensland's electricity system and economy
- the Gladstone Project and transmission reinforcement activities
- preparations for the delivery of four synchronous condensers in Central Queensland
- progress through associated regulatory and investment approval processes

- a refresher on the role of system strength and its importance
- Powerlink's obligations and planning approach to meeting Queensland's System strength needs and the significance of synchronous condenser order lead times
- the upcoming lodgement of a Contingent Project for four synchronous condensers in Central Queensland

Powerlink also noted that significant community engagement activity is continuing across affected regions as projects move toward delivery.

Discussion

Environmental approvals and project delivery

Panel members asked about the timing of Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act approvals and the factors contributing to the timely approval outcome.

Powerlink highlighted a memorandum of understanding between them and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) had supported earlier information sharing and more iterative engagement throughout the assessment process.

Powerlink noted that the approach did not change regulatory requirements but allowed issues to be identified and addressed earlier, reducing the likelihood of delays later in the process.

Jacqui Bridge provided an overview of system strength and evolving requirements for system strength services that Powerlink will provide as the System Strength Services Provider (SSSP) for Queensland.

System strength and developer experience

Discussion included energy developer experiences with addressing efficient system strength requirements. They described system strength as a much more significant consideration during project development than it had been historically.

Discussion highlighted that system strength now influences:

- project location
- technology selection
- staging decisions
- connection strategies
- overall project feasibility and deliverability.

The speakers noted that they now typically assume a level of self-remediation as a given and incorporate system strength solutions into project design.

The speakers described growing use of grid-forming technologies and investment in system strength capabilities within projects, noting benefits of self-remediation such as greater certainty, flexibility and control.

There was broad discussion about the role of emerging technologies, including:

- grid-forming batteries
- inverter-based resources
- gas turbines with clutches
- synchronous condensers.

Participants acknowledged that technologies continue to evolve rapidly and may influence future system strength solutions.

Synchronous condensers and future investment needs

Panel members discussed:

- whether future system strength requirements could be met through alternative technologies
- the differences and opportunities for large synchronous condenser units and smaller modular units
- the balance between investing in physical assets and procuring market-based services
- uncertainty regarding long-term requirements for synchronous condensers
- potential cost impacts associated with synchronous condenser deployment
- experiences from other jurisdictions, and opportunities for cross-jurisdictional coordination on procurement, procurement timing and technology mix.

Questions were raised regarding:

- whether pumped hydro projects could provide similar system strength services
- the potential future role of grid-forming technologies in meeting minimum system strength requirements
- community concerns relating to synchronous condensers, including noise and local impacts.

Powerlink reflected that:

- pumped hydro and other technologies can contribute system strength under certain circumstances
- a market scan of potential providers is ongoing
- grid-forming technologies are being monitored closely but are not as yet proven for this need
- technical and regulatory barriers currently limit the extent to which some emerging technologies can replace minimum system strength investments.

Discussion highlighted the challenge of making long-term investment decisions in an environment where technologies, connection and generation patterns continue to evolve, particularly given the long lead times required to procure and deliver synchronous condensers.

Community engagement

Members also discussed community engagement associated with synchronous condenser locations.

It was noted that synchronous condensers remain a relatively unfamiliar technology for many communities and therefore require additional explanation and engagement.

Engagement has focused on:

- explaining the need for the projects
- describing the role of system strength in maintaining reliability
- discussing technology options and site selection considerations
- responding to community questions and concerns.

Community feedback to date has generally recognised the importance of maintaining system security and reliability.

Central Queensland Transmission Network Forum

Presenter: Sarah de Valence

Sarah de Valence reported back on how Customer Panel feedback from the March 2026 meeting had influenced the design of the upcoming Central Queensland Transmission Network Forum.

It was advised that the forum approach had evolved significantly from last year's inaugural forum in Central Queensland, with input from the March panel engagement significantly shaping this year's approach.

Rather than relying primarily on presentations, the event has been designed to:

- encourage direct interaction between stakeholders
- increase opportunities for businesses and community representatives to engage with project teams and contractors
- support local participation and procurement outcomes
- focus on practical regional opportunities and impacts.

How feedback was incorporated

Sarah outlined how Customer Panel suggestions had informed the agenda.

This included:

- providing stronger regional context
- clearly explaining Powerlink's roles and responsibilities
- focusing on upcoming activities rather than past decisions
- increasing representation from regional stakeholders
- creating greater opportunities for networking and discussion, less one-way information provision and more engagement.

Flexible Load Services

Presenters: Jacqui Bridge, Brendan Boyd, Jonathan Dennis

Member panel-in-a-panel session: Andrew Richards (EUAA) in conversation with Damien Sewell (Shell) and Nardia Yeates (Aurizon)

This session explored whether greater flexibility from transmission-connected loads could help reduce future network investment requirements and create value for customers.

Powerlink outlined:

- how demand response signals based on wholesale energy market prices don't always support network outcomes and sometimes exacerbate network congestion.
- growing opportunities created by controllable industrial loads, batteries and new technologies
- limitations of existing market arrangements
- challenges and opportunities associated with aligning customer flexibility with transmission network needs.

The discussion highlighted a key opportunity: the ability to identify shared value given the win-win potential available to all participants and a key challenge with existing arrangements: that network planning depends on reliable and predictable capability, so voluntary responses cannot be included in planning assumptions which would realise broader benefits for energy consumers.

Customer-led discussion

Customer Panel members shared their own perspectives as representatives of large energy users.

Discussion focused on:

- whether current regulatory arrangements provide sufficient incentives for flexible load participation
- potential barriers to greater participation
- operational and commercial risks associated with providing flexibility
- the relationship between market outcomes and network outcomes.

Questions were raised about:

- whether Powerlink was seeking increased voluntary participation from customers

- whether alternative operating approaches could provide additional network capability
- how benefits would ultimately flow through to customers.

It was clarified that there is currently no dedicated regulatory mechanism allowing transmission businesses to broadly procure flexibility from load customers.

Discussion highlighted that any future approach would need to balance:

- customer choice
- operational practicality
- fairness
- dependability of load response
- affordability outcomes.

When asked about tangible benefits, Powerlink noted that greater use of flexibility, if it could be achieved in the way outlined, could potentially defer or reduce future network investment, lowering costs for all consumers.

Engagement outcomes

The session provided an important opportunity to test emerging thinking with Customer Panel members.

Update on our Revenue Proposal

Presenter: Roger Smith

Roger Smith provided a brief update on progress of the 2027–32 Revenue Proposal and associated regulatory processes.

The update covered:

- current engagement activities
- upcoming milestones
- interactions between the Revenue Proposal and other investment approval processes, including the Gladstone Project Priority Transmission Investment process and upcoming Contingent Project Application for four synchronous condensers in Central Queensland.

Powerlink reinforced its commitment to ongoing engagement with the Customer Panel and Revenue Proposal Reference Group as the regulatory processes continues.

Additional agenda item: Security of Critical Infrastructure cost pass through

Presenter: Jenny Harris

Jenny Harris provided an update on Powerlink's recent Security of Critical Infrastructure (SOCI) cost pass through application and the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) decision, which had been released the previous week. The details of which are available on the AER website.

ACTIONS

OPEN ACTIONS

ACTION	STATUS

CLOSED ACTIONS

ACTION

Circulate draft Revenue Proposal Reference Group (RPRG) submission on the 2027–32 Revenue Proposal to wider Customer Panel on 27 March

Customer Panel Members to provide their views on the draft RPRG submission by 15 April

Individual discussions about accountability review (optional)

Circulate outcomes of the Asset Reinvestment Review