
**ENERGY
CHARTER
DISCLOSURE
REPORT
2019-20**

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Referencing guide

EQL	Energy Queensland Limited The term Energy Queensland is used throughout the report and acronym EQL is used to refer to work across the Group)
EEN-EX	Ergon Energy Network and Energex
EER	Ergon Energy Retail
YKA	Yurika

The points relevant to the Independent Accountability Panel Recommendations 2019 are referenced with a R#. A copy of those [recommendations](#) is available on the Energy Charter website.

About this report

This report covers the Energy Queensland Group's (the Group's) Energy Charter disclosure from July 2019 to June 2020. It reports the contribution of Energex Limited, Ergon Energy Corporation Limited, Ergon Energy Queensland Pty Ltd, and Yurika Pty Ltd.

This Energy Charter Disclosure Report is on our website at www.energyq.com.au/publications. We welcome feedback to help us improve our reporting. Comments can be directed to energycharter@energyq.com.au

Chairman and CEO message

In this disclosure report, we share how we're working on delivering better outcomes for the many different customer segments and communities we serve.

In addition to direct customer feedback, much of this journey has been guided by insights from our Customer Council, customer advocates and our fellow Energy Charter signatories. We thank them for working with us and truly challenging us to do better.

Focus areas from the year include:

- we rose quickly to the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, with both a customer and operational response
- we focused on our business culture, with new tools and measures, improved our internal customer advocacy and developed a shared-language around our customers' diverse needs
- affordability remained core to our revised Regulatory Proposals and Tariff Structure Statements, which have now translated

into better price outcomes and we laid the foundation for new tariff choices

- we had to balance the impact of safety-driven investment on reliability performance while formalising our commitment to enable the transition of the Queensland electricity industry to a low carbon future in line with our customers' expectations
- we advanced both our Retail and Network online customer portals, making it easier for our customers to engage with us.

For the first time we've assessed ourselves from a maturity perspective against each of the Energy Charter's five principles. This was a valuable process, driving healthy debate on where we needed to focus strategically to meet future customer expectations, and helping us understand more deeply what 'good' looks like from a customer perspective.

The collation of this Energy Charter Disclosure Report is central to remaining relevant, and delivering valued products and services to all our customers and communities into the future, and to ensuring no one is left behind.

We look forward to delivering 'better together', through the Energy Charter, in the coming year.

Yours sincerely



Phil Garling
Chairman



Rod Duke
Chief Executive Officer

Customer Council message

As the Customer Council for Energy Queensland, we acknowledge and appreciate the effort that has been made to engage with Council members in developing this disclosure statement, and for incorporating our views on both the progress made against the principles of the Energy Charter over the past year, and Energy Queensland's inaugural maturity assessment.

We believe that Energy Queensland now better understands their customers' diverse expectations and bring this focus to improving their service delivery. We commit to continuing to work with Energy Queensland on realising these improvements and the promises of the Energy Charter for the communities and customers that we represent.

Customer Council Members			
Dale Holliss	Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group	Wendy Miller	Queensland Council of Social Service
Gabriel O'Keefe	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland	Luke Reade	Energetic Communities
Pamela Bessette-Guard	City of Gold Coast Council	Georgina Davis	Queensland Farmers Federation
Robyn Robinson	Council on the Ageing Queensland	Elly Desmarchelier (new member)	Queenslanders with Disability Network
Michael Fullelove	Local Government Association Queensland	Colin Coverdale	Small Business Association of Australia
Anthony King	Master Electricians	Judene Andrews	UnitingCare Queensland
Andrew Barger	Queensland Resources Council	Martin Zaltron	Urban Development Institute of Australia

Our customers and communities

Energy Queensland is Queensland's 100% owned group of electricity distribution, retail and energy services businesses.

This report focuses on our end-user customers and the communities we serve from the Tweed River to Torres Strait and from Brisbane across to Birdsville. This includes circa. 2.3 million connected customers, 738,000 regional retail customers, 25 large-scale solar farms and 550,000 small-scale solar energy systems.

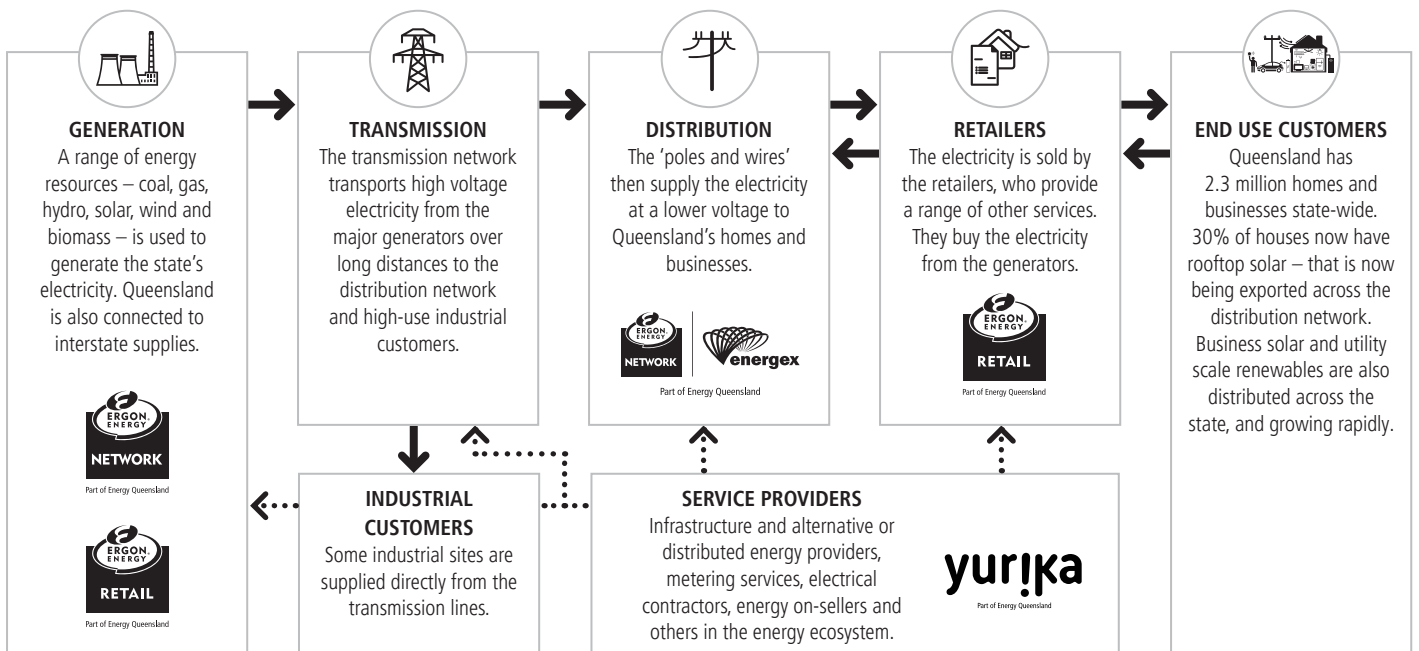
We deliver electricity across Queensland through our 'poles and wires' businesses Energex and Ergon Energy Network, with 33 stand-alone power stations for our isolated communities. Our retailer, Ergon Energy Retail, sells electricity to customers throughout regional Queensland. These essential service activities are also supported by a

range of products and services delivered through our Yurika and other market brands, both in Queensland and nationally.

To help us understand our end-user customers, we have a needs-based segmentation framework that maps our residential and business customers to three macro-needs – connection, control and progression (see Case Study 2).

To meet the needs of our end-user customers (the focus of this report), we work closely with the Queensland Government and industry regulators and invest in building positive relationships with community stakeholders, industry partners and our people (employees).

Our stakeholders



Our scorecard

Our scorecard links our high-level customer and community metrics to the Energy Charter Maturity Assessment Framework. The targets shown form part of our annual performance agreement with our shareholding Ministers as a Government Owned Corporation.

	Key Performance Measures			Energy Charter Maturity Assessment				
		Metric and Target	Result	Elementary	Emerging	Evolved	Empowered	Exemplary
We will put customers at the centre of our business and the energy system	We measure the customer mindset in our organisational culture, by how enabled employees feel to deliver for our customers	Energy Queensland Customer Enablement Index ¹ : Target ≥5.6	6.9 ▲		●			
We will improve energy affordability for customers	We track price and affordability perceptions (this year's improvement prior to the economic impact of COVID-19)	Household concern about ability to pay the bill – (a) % moderate-high concern (b) % low bill concern	(a) 57% ▼ (b) 42% ▲			●		
	We outline tariff trends in our Annual Report	Retail price changes July 2020: Residential Small Business	5.3% ▼ 5.0% ▼					
We will provide energy safely, sustainably and reliably	Safety: We have a suite of community and workplace safety measures detailed in our Annual Report	Community safety incidents involving contact with our networks	323 24% ▼			●	N/A	N/A
	Sustainability: We're playing an important role in Queensland's transition to a low-carbon energy future for more see our Annual Report	New solar connections to our networks	67,594 28% ▲			●		
		Energy Queensland controllable direct emissions	131,420 tCO ₂ -e 3% ▲					
	Reliability: Our networks' performance across the state for our outage frequency and duration standards are detailed in our Annual Report	Household satisfaction with network reliability ³	76% ▲			●		
12 power outage standards: Target 100%		83% ▼						
We will improve the customer experience	Customer outcomes and communication: We measure service satisfaction through our Voice of the Customer program (for more on our service standards see our Annual Report)	Energy Queensland Customer Index ¹ : Target ≥6.7	7.1 ▲			●		
	We track and analyse complaints to refine our service standards	Complaints per 100 customers: Retail Network	0.04 ■ 0.02 ■			●		
We will support customers facing vulnerable circumstances	We track the success of our hardship programs with a range of measures reported to our regulators (for more information see our Annual Report)	Retail disconnection for non-payment ⁴	9,350 12% ▼				●	

¹ Voice of the Customer program.

² Queensland Household Energy Survey: Question. Indicate on the scale (0-10), how concerned are you about your ability to pay your electricity bill? (Low concern % based on 0-5. High concern (8-10). Please note, survey responses were from November 2019 pre COVID-19.

³ Energy Consumers Australia Energy Consumers Sentiment Survey June 2020. Question: How satisfied are you with the number of times you've had loss of power, blackouts or other faults with your electricity supply in the past 6 months? Scale 0-10, Positive 7-10. Result 76% is above national average in this benchmarking research.

⁴ Result for first three quarters, down 12% compared to same quarters in 2018-19, prior to stopping disconnections for non-payment as part of our COVID-19 response. Others: internal surveys and operational data.

Our performance

This year we have assessed our performance as a Group of companies against the [Energy Charter Maturity Model](#).

In doing so, we've considered the varying degrees of maturity of our portfolio of brands against the five Energy Charter principles and assessed ourselves accordingly.

We also refer to the Independent Accountability Panel recommendations from last year, noting some themes are being addressed through the Energy Charter #BetterTogether initiatives that have been reported on separately. In addition, we have taken the opportunity to highlight the impact COVID-19 had on our customers and our response.

COVID-19 – our response

While the safety of our customers and communities is always paramount, we also have an obligation as a Government Owned Corporation and essential service provider to support them through times of hardship, as has been during our COVID-19 response.

During this time, we were leaders in our response to customers and communities. Immediately we established the Emergency and Crisis Executive Leadership Team and EQL Emergency Management Team to oversee response activities and maintain delivery of core services. We monitored the customer experience and collaborated with Energy Charter signatories and customer advocates to pre-empt customer impacts and to design and fast-track our response to support our customers and communities.

Customer Impacts (March – June 2020)

- 5,966 Ergon Energy Retail customers advised they had been affected financially by COVID-19 (4,961 residential, 790 small business, 215 large business).
- 1,048 new Ergon Energy Retail residential customers joined the hardship program and 948 existing customers on the hardship program advised they were impacted by COVID-19.
- 20 complaints relating to COVID-19 were recorded by Ergon Energy Retail, 65 complaints were received on planned outages for Energex and 24 for Ergon Energy Network.

- We recognised the overall impact to communities and community organisations.

Our Response

- Across Energy Queensland, we stopped disconnections for non-payment, fast-tracked the Queensland Government's Utility Bill Relief Assistance package, a \$200 relief payment for households and \$500 for small business, and promoted payment and assistance options for customers experiencing financial stress.
- Ergon Energy Retail expanded its Credit Policy criteria, empowered and upskilled additional customer service representatives to support hardship, brought forward improvement initiatives and reminded Ergon Energy Retail customers of no fees for late payments.
- Energex and Ergon Energy Network minimised the frequency and duration of planned outages for critical works and provided as much notice as possible to assist customers and supported impacted business customers through short term tariff changes due reduced forecast energy use.
- Across Energy Queensland, we addressed specific community information needs, such as First Nation communities, and adopted new work practices to continue to safely serve communities.
- Community investment funds were redirected to a COVID-19 Support Package, funding a Diploma of Financial Counselling Scholarship Program, in an industry collaboration with Powerlink Queensland, as well as other initiatives.
- Through collaborating with other Energy Charter signatories, we focused on making it easy for customer advocates to guide customers on how to access rebates or seek support in bill payments and supported the Energy Charter initiative to co-ordinate advocacy for customers experiencing financial stress.

Principle 1 – We will put customers at the centre of our business and the energy system

While we have implemented several initiatives to drive a customer-centric culture through our 2018-20 Customer Experience Roadmap, these are yet to be reflected in consistent customer outcomes. As a result, we've assessed ourselves as *emerging* against Principle 1. Foundational to progressing our maturity in this area was the elevation of the customer and community strategies to the Executive Committee level in late 2019.^{R16}

Our Customer Index, which measures our customers' experience out of ten, increased significantly from 6.71 in 2018-19 to 7.11 in 2019-20. Customer feedback continues to be monitored daily and reported regularly to managers and teams through our Customer Experience Network, Customer Strategy and Insights Council (General Manager level representation), Executive Committee and Board^{R17} and is integrated into all employee performance agreements.^{R19} In 2020/21, we'll pilot new Key Performance Indicators in addition to the Customer Index, to more broadly track customer and stakeholder satisfaction and community trust to improve ease of benchmarking against other industry and non-industry participants.^{R19}

We continue to measure our employees' perceptions on how well we're delivering for our customers through our Customer Enablement Index, to help identify areas of opportunity to improve customer outcomes. This year, we recorded a 10% improvement on last year's result and exceeded our stretch target. Over 2,200 employee verbatims from this survey are informing business improvement action plans aimed at delivering better customer outcomes. In addition, we continue to embed our customer principles - 1. Know Our Customers, 2. Deliver Value and 3. Make it Easy - particularly through the Customer Award in our employee recognition program. This year, we developed additional tools and measures to assess and report on the customer culture of the business to effect cultural change.

While we have a strong foundation of capturing customer insights, this year we developed our Customer Advocacy Framework to more effectively harness customer feedback to action issues

and improve future experiences. While we seek consistency in how we advocate for customers, we were effective in our collaboration with the Queensland Government to deliver utility bill relief during COVID-19.^{R18}

We also continued to work with governments, industry bodies and other key stakeholders to advocate for customers through designing programs to better understand and meet our customers' needs (see Case Study 1) and in developing regulations to support customers for example, enabling suitable Electric Vehicle charging. Furthermore, we completed our first Stand-Alone Power System trial for an agricultural site as part of our plan to transform Fringe of Grid Supply, continuing engagement to influence regulations around connection requirements to enable innovation for electricity supply improved customer choice and affordability.^{R18}

This year, we recognised the diversity of our customer base and improved our understanding of our customers' needs through the development of our first Energy Queensland portfolio-wide Customer Segmentation Framework for residential and business customers. (See Case Study 2)^{R1, R2}

We also aligned our Stakeholder Materiality Assessment and Energy Charter Principles in Action to more effectively address key stakeholder and community issues and continued to deliver community and customer engagement training to our network and retail employees to better engage with our customers and communities.

Focus areas for improved customer outcomes

- Improve customer and stakeholder engagement to inform customer focused decision making through revisiting our engagement structure and activities and incorporating a new engagement satisfaction measure into performance agreements.^{R19} EQL
- Integrate customer needs-based segmentation into strategic decision-making to meet our customers' needs and expectations and deliver value. EQL
- Aim to increase customer satisfaction and community trust through trialling new customer corporate key performance indicators measures and acting on insights obtained. EQL
- Embed our Culture Model, which recognises employee experience equals customer experience, into the business to drive improved customer service delivery and interactions. EQL
- Embed our Customer Advocacy Framework with a focus on quantifying customer issues and processes for quality assurance and further integrate our Customer Council and specific interest groups into our decision-making processes to ensure we are focused on what matters most to our customers and communities.^{R17} EQL
- Continue Stand-Alone Power System trials in partnership with customers to inform the next phase of our plan to transform Fringe of Grid Supply and provide more cost-effective options for our customers and communities into the future. EQL
- Continue trials to build new capabilities to support customers' investment in more distributed energy resources, through enabling the dynamic export of energy. EEN-EX
- Consider our understanding of and advocacy for customers who are least likely to provide feedback and/or complain. EQL

Case Study 1 – Programs to improve understanding of business customer needs^{R18}

With funding from the Queensland Government, Ergon Energy Network and Ergon Energy Retail have been implementing several programs to assist large businesses facing a bill impact from transitioning to cost reflective tariffs in 2020-21.

The [Large Customer Adjustment Program](#), [Large Customer Adjustment Trial and Audit and Awareness Program](#) have enhanced our understanding of the needs of large customers who have significant electricity demand and the challenges they face in adjusting to new tariffs predominantly structured around demand and fixed charges.

An outcome of these programs is the development of tailored website content relevant to all business customers, both large and small, to assist those customers to implement their own energy management programs.

Case Study 2 – Know our customers^{R1 R2 R5}

We've long had a good understanding of the diversity of our communities' needs, from remote and regional areas to cities. What we needed was a shared language across the Energy Queensland Group to work more collaboratively to deliver for our customers.

In 2019/20 we finalised our Customer Segmentation Framework which provides us with a more granular understanding of our diverse customer base. By mapping our residential and business customers under the macro-needs of Connection, Control and Progression, identified through market research with our customers, we are now much better placed to collectively understand what drives our customers' decision making and behaviours and take a customer-centric approach to product and service design and decision-making.

Within the Framework, there are five tiers – Residential, Small Business, Medium to Large, Big End of Town, and Agriculture, which are underpinned by a total of 16 Customer Profiles describing each segment's energy needs, attributes, preferences, pain points, and their propensity to adopt new

technologies.

Since the launch, the Customer Segmentation Framework has been integrated into business planning workshops, our customer research program, including the Queensland Household Energy Survey, tariff design and call-center research activities to ensure we understand the needs and preferences across our diverse customer base before we commence product and service development.

Principle 2 – We will improve energy affordability for customers

With a strong focus across Energy Queensland on affordability, and “acting on all dimensions which contribute to the customer’s experience of affordability”^{R20}, we have assessed ourselves as evolved against Principle 2.

We continue to monitor customer sentiment on the affordability of electricity through the [Queensland Household Energy Survey](#), an annual research program conducted on behalf of Energex, Ergon Energy Network and Powerlink Queensland. Results for 2019 show stated average electricity bill sizes have dropped by around \$40 on average per quarter¹ over the past three years with the number of customers highlighting that they had moderate-to-high levels of bill concern falling by 14% from 71% in 2017 to 57% in 2019². However, despite this fall, customers have indicated that electricity bills remain the top household cost of living concern among regional Queensland households and third for households in South East Queensland, after medical and fuel costs. Despite a downward pressure on prices, about 67% of customers believe pricing will increase beyond 5% in coming years, indicating we still have work to do on customers’ perceptions, confidence and trust versus actual pricing trends.

In collaboration with our Customer Council, customer advocates and other key stakeholders participating in a purpose-built advisory group, Energex and Ergon Energy Network proposed a reduction in our revenue requirement of 19.3% for Energex and 13.6% for Ergon Energy Network in 2020 in our Revised Regulatory Proposals to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) in December 2019. In addition, the proposed suite of tariffs, now approved by the AER, provides for greater savings if customers choose to optimise their energy use.

Our customer advocates provided feedback highlighting that whilst they felt our engagement on the Regulatory Proposals met expectations, our engagement around the proposed new tariffs fell short. Subsequently, we made changes to our proposed tariff suite for the 2020-25 regulatory period, realising that we needed to work in closer partnership with our customers and stakeholders to obtain better insights on customer impacts. Work is underway to address concerns raised.

In further support of affordability, several initiatives were progressed across the Energy Queensland Group. Energex and Ergon Energy Network continued to improve network management to enable customers to take advantage of renewables, batteries and smart technologies, in line with customer needs to manage their electricity use. Ergon Energy Retail continued to action customer and employee insights to deliver a range of products and services to help customers manage their energy bills – including advancements to the functionality of the [My Account](#) portal and the [Energy Analysis](#) tool. Ergon Energy Retail also extended the [Energy Savvy Families](#) program, resulting in a key finding that easy to access and understandable energy data made possible through smart/digital meters, positively affects energy consumption behaviours. In demonstration of going beyond regulation, while in April 2020 the Federal Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction proposed a rule change to customers’ electricity bills to help customers make more informed decisions, Ergon Energy Retail had already completed significant customer research to design a new bill to achieve this very outcome. Yurika continued to offer cost-effective energy solutions and metering, with several tailored energy supply solutions delivered throughout the year. Their customer-focus was highlighted with the winning of a landmark 15MW solar contract for major shopping centers owned by Queensland Investment Corporation.

Efficiencies continue to be sought as means to addressing affordability for our customers. Our networks continued work to deliver unified systems and processes, including a single model optimising the program of work, customer service portals and design tools, which improve ease of access for information for customers as well as lower operating costs. Our networks also launched a [Home Energy Management Systems trial](#) in October 2019 to involve customers directly in testing the potential role of market-led demand response solutions.

Focus areas for improved customer outcomes

- Drive cost efficiencies in line with the AER’s revenue determinations. EEN-EX
- Improve customer access and understanding of energy data by implementing the new retail

bill design and broadening the customer base for Energy Analysis so customers can more easily engage and be empowered in making decisions around their energy use. EER

- Continue to test the acceptance and efficacy of Home Energy Management Systems for demand response with customers so that their experience and needs form policy development and activity in this area. EEN-EX
- Work in partnership with customers to help understand their information and communication needs and identify supportive information tools to maximise the impact of messaging and uptake of initiatives that can help address energy affordability. EEN-EX

Case Study 3 – Agricultural tariff trials leading to improved options^{R20, R25}

The [Agricultural Tariff Trial](#) was an initiative under the [Queensland Government’s Regional Business Customer Support Package](#), implemented by Energy Queensland through Ergon Energy Network and Ergon Energy Retail in 2017-18.

The Trial was implemented in partnership with Queensland Canegrowers, Queensland Farmers Federation, Cotton Australia and Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group. From the collated load profile data of primary producers, many of whom are on transitional tariffs, both a controlled load tariff and a seasonal time of use demand tariff (Tariff 24) were evaluated. Results informed Energy Queensland, key stakeholders and customers about energy consumption profiles and current and future tariff options.

At the request of stakeholders, a follow-on program continued through 2019-20 to further explore the suitability of load control tariffs for agricultural customers. Due to the success of these trials, and the expected benefit for both customers and the network businesses of increasing load under control, three new controlled load tariffs have been approved, with customer support, by the AER for the 2020 -2025 regulatory period.

¹ Refer to Queensland Household Energy Survey, p 75.

² Refer to Queensland Household Energy Survey, p.79.

Principle 3 – We will provide energy safely, sustainably and reliably

Safety, sustainability and reliability are core elements of our business. Given our steadfast focus on these elements we have assessed ourselves as *evolved* against Principle 3.

Safety

Safety continues to be the priority for Energy Queensland, with strong performance supported by monitoring and continuous improvement processes and systems for our people, customers and communities.

Our [public safety campaigns](#) continue to raise awareness on the potential dangers of powerlines, and we continue to seek ways to provide customers and communities with increased accessibility to information that will enable them to work safely around our network. In addition, our [Safety Heroes program](#) for schools continues to deliver great learning outcomes with the younger generation.

We continue to roll-out employee safety initiatives such as progressing the Network Controller Assessment Training and Recruitment Program in collaboration with Macquarie University to develop standardised industry tools to assess the skills of network controllers and understand the fatigue limits of controllers to support more effective, reliable and safer networks for customers.

Sustainability

To show leadership and meet the expectations of our customers, Energy Queensland made a [Low Carbon Future Statement](#) this year with commitments to enabling the transition of the Queensland electricity industry to a low carbon future and to build greater resilience in our network, communities and across our businesses to mitigate potential risks of a changing climate. The statement also makes a commitment to proactively reduce our carbon footprint.

In our Future Grid Roadmap, which has a focus on our energy technology and digital capability requirement, we seek to lead the way in shaping the energy future of Queensland. Ergon Energy Retail launched our first Electric Vehicle Home Charging Plan with planned promotions anticipated to increase uptake of electric cars. Through Yurika, our energy services business, we continue to develop offers that are responsive to customer needs and incorporate solar generation, battery and energy management systems. We are progressing work to support growing adoption of electric vehicles and meet customer demand in this area.

As these plans are outworked, we envisage moving towards being empowered in this area.

We continued to listen to our customers and learn from our responses to significant events, including the bushfires that occurred across Queensland between September and December 2019 and our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are continuing to advance our position through the development of an [Energy Queensland Environmental Sustainability & Cultural Heritage Policy](#), which focuses on a low carbon future, waste and incidents, cultural heritage and community relationships, and reducing the impact of natural disasters.^{R21}

Reliability

Consistently our customer insights research results suggest we are meeting our customers' expectations on reliability. For our remote and isolated communities, we are advancing towards more sustainable ways of delivering safe and reliable energy solutions (see Case Study 4).

Our regional Queensland network has different challenges to our South East Queensland network (see Case Study 5), whereby reliability standards are being impacted due to terrain and planned outages associated with an increase in safety-driven works on ageing sections of the network.^{R24}

In 2019/20 we focused on the implementation of Guaranteed Service Levels (GSLs) for reliability in remote and isolated communities for card operated meter customers so we can deliver improved customer service outcomes and hold ourselves to account.^{R22} EEN/EX

Focus areas for improved customer outcomes

- Advance our planned approach to a low-carbon energy future, continue to decarbonise remote communities and enable distributed energy resources and further consider impacts of energy transition on communities.^{R21, R22, R23} EQL
- Progress work to support an increasing take-up of electric vehicles and continue to develop electric vehicle network and retail tariffs for residential and business customers. EQL
- Investigate the customer experience during power outages, through utilising customer journey mapping and other customer research, to identify and action improvement opportunities.^{R24} EEN-EX

Case Study 4 – Decarbonising isolated communities^{R22 R23}

Ergon Energy Network and Yurika are partnering with the Queensland Government's Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy to support the decarbonisation of energy supply to our remote and isolated communities located in Far North Queensland.

These projects include a mix of centralised ground mounted solar and decentralised rooftop solar. Integral to enabling these installations is distributed energy resource monitoring and control which enables solar power generation while maintaining network stability.

This year saw 100kW of solar installed on four Doomadgee community rooftops, and our solar farm outside town was expanded by 304kW, with advanced monitoring and control systems. Progress has also been made in Pormpuraaw and others are planned to follow.

The outcome of these projects is decreased reliance upon diesel generation; this is delivering savings for the community, training and employment opportunities for locals, and is a win for the environment.

Principle 4 – We will improve the customer experience

As a result of a range of initiatives across Energy Queensland, our Customer Index, which is based on more than 19,000 survey responses following key service interactions with each customer group, recorded steady improvement over the last three years, with a notable uplift in 2019-20. While this result is positive, our customers and stakeholders continue to advise there is room for improvement (See Case Study 6). On balance, we have assessed ourselves as *evolved* against Principle 4.

Customer outcomes

While we are now delivering customer benefits identified through our established measures, systems and processes, we are striving for greater consistency across our customer experience.

We continued to expand measuring our customers' experience to include Yurika's Commercial and Industrial Energy Services customers, Ergon Energy Retail's Customer Support Team and Credit Triage, and tailored our networks' major customers connection surveys to help maximise customer feedback being provided to the business.

Several initiatives undertaken this year have delivered improved customer outcomes. Ergon Energy Retail made improvements to customers' experiences when using digital channels including webforms to reduce the number of handoffs across teams and Divisions, as well as using voice analytics to verify customers calling in, and routing customer to the correct team the first time.^{R26} Ergon Energy Retail implemented a customer facing checklist that guides customers through the steps to identify the reason for a high bill and provides tailored solutions relevant to their situation. Ergon Energy Retail also proactively transferred credits from closed customer accounts to new accounts opened by relevant customers limiting any delays in funds being credited to customers. Yurika worked with industry participants to improve the end-to-end process following the Power of Choice implementation review, to ensure jobs are completed within agreed timeframes with minimal rescheduling of customer work and thereby limiting any potential inconvenience to customers.

We're also continuing to give focus to Key Theme 5 – 'closing the loop', from the 2019/20 Independent Accountability Panel Report, by proactively taking steps to close the loop with our customers, communities and stakeholders to demonstrate we are listening and taking action.

Communications

We have made significant improvements in our customer communications and channels, providing customers with streamlined, portable and trustworthy access and information to facilitate improved decision making. By nature, the energy industry is confusing to customers and we recognise that clear communication on core services, such as network and retail tariffs, is an opportunity for improvement.

In 2019/20, to address customer feedback service improvements were made to Ergon Energy Network's and Energex's Customer Self Service Portal. (see Case Study 8) Ergon Energy Retail focused on empowering customers to make decisions through making information accessible and easy to understand. For example, a customer-centred process was used to design a new bill, planned for roll-out in 2020-21. In addition, improved access to energy data was delivered through the promotion of online tools, [My Account](#) and [Energy Analysis](#).^{R26}

Complaints

We continue to report customer complaints to our Executive Committee and Board, including case studies demonstrating systemic issues for attention. In addition, we report on annual benchmarking for retailers conducted by the AER, which shows Ergon Energy Retail's strong performance against other retailers. A range of customer experience improvements, led by Ergon Energy Retail, has seen a significant improvement in complaints handling and overall improvement in experience for residential and small business customers (See Case Study 7). Network referrals from the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland are in line with best practice performance.^{R25 R26}

Focus areas for improved customer outcomes

- Understand customer pain points in relation to metering and implement improvements. EQL
- Use a customer-centred design process to develop and implement a new Interactive Voice Recognition system to manage the one million customer calls handled each year, enabling faster and more accurate call management for customers. EER
- Continue to look at technology investment to help our customers engage with us, especially in regional/remote areas. EER^{R26}
- Improve management of the customer experience for Yurika customers. YKA^{R25}

Case Study 5 – Quality of supply for Blackbutt^{R24}

In early 2020, several customers in the Blackbutt community west of Maryborough made complaints to Ergon Energy Network in relation to their dissatisfaction with their reliability of supply.

Power to this community is supplied via a long rural powerline, extending approximately 20-30 kilometers from the Yarraman substation. We recorded 19 outages through December to late February 2020 - with a significant number being caused by external impacts to the network from wildlife, vegetation from outside of clearance zones and storm damage.

Customers and the local community were kept informed of Ergon Energy Network's awareness and response to the reliability issue through relevant channels, including the Area Manager engaging community stakeholders, media management and information shared with leaders of social media forums.

Following investigations, Ergon Energy Network committed to improvements to locate and isolate faults more easily to reduce the duration of the outage events and fast-tracked a project to enable power to automatically restore in events (when safe to do so). Improved power outage notifications delivered through our Business Improvement and Automate Systems Project is further assisting in managing the customer experience during power interruptions.

- Deliver further improvements for the large business customer experience. EEN-EX^{R25}
- Ongoing website improvements, including enabling our customer portal to be accessed via mobile devices and therefore delivering new channel choices to customers. EEN-EX^{R26}
- Develop information and support tools to assist customers in better understanding their tariff options and adoption of tariffs that best suit their circumstances and address their affordability concerns. EQL
- Develop and implement further mechanisms to close the loop on customer feedback and action improvements so that customers know their feedback has been considered in decision making. EQL^{R12}

Case Study 6 – Meter installation experience for large customers

Key external customers/stakeholders whom we regularly look to for service performance insights, have been very constructive in working with us to identify improvement opportunities to drive a more consistent experience for all our customers, specifically in relation to the customer metering experience. While improvements have been made in this area since Power of Choice, we acknowledge there is still work to do, particularly in relation to consultation on access to sites and timeframes for meter installations for large customers. While most installations are being upgraded in timeframes that meet customer expectations, there are still instances where this has not been the case.

One such example relates to a meter upgrade required for a Queensland Council, which experienced long delays in installation from the initial request. For this meter upgrade, there were three service requests issued by Ergon Energy Retail, crews were dispatched on three occasions and the customer received three power interruption notices before the request was successfully completed. It highlighted a clear breakdown in effective communication between internal Energy Queensland work groups. As a result, the process has been refined with more work still to be done.

The process for a tariff change request and the associated meter upgrade (when required) touches many work groups and systems/portals within Energy Queensland, including Ergon Energy Retail, Metering Dynamics and Ergon Network. A review of the end-to-end process is underway to identify opportunities for system and process enhancements to remove bottlenecks and improve quality assurance with the aim to limit disruption to customer operations and improve communications and timeframes for delivery.

Case Study 7 – Transformation of customer complaints

In late 2018, through the Voice of the Customer program of post-interaction surveys, our internal Customer Experience Network identified the need to improve customer experience when making a complaint. Ergon Energy Retail conducted a review by analysing customer verbatims, customer account data and complaint cases, as well as interviewing complainants and compliance officers and observing business practices.

Seven recommendations were implemented, including targeting the roll out of digital meters to customers with high account enquiries and rates of estimated meter readings, an employee education program to fill knowledge gaps, creating a centralised complaints toolkit, transitioning the complaints function to a new system to support case management, recruiting a Complaints and Compliance Officer to support the bill redesign work, and establishing a joint working group to agree an organisation-wide process around metering. In addition, a quality improvement framework was implemented to support employee management of complaints.

As a result, a sustained improvement in customer satisfaction continues to be evident across all the key satisfaction drivers, with significant improvements in keeping the customer informed and complaints resolved in a timely manner.

Case Study 8 – Improved online experience

In 2019-20, phase two of Ergon Energy Network's and Energex's Business Improvement and Automate Systems Project actioned feedback requests to improve interactions for customers, including Retailers and Electrical Partners, with enhanced ability to interact electronically via our [Customer Self Service portal](#).

The responsive design enables customers to access services on the device of their choice (e.g. desktop, tablet, mobile) and offers new channels of engagement (e.g. SMS, email, webchat, portal) for a range of online services. These include management of a customer's own information online, providing self-meter reads, subscribing to receive notifications for unplanned and planned outages, reporting of power outages, faulty street lights, graffiti/vandalism and trees in powerlines.

Performance and feedback will be continuously monitored and considered for future projects to ensure provision of relevant services to our customers.

Principle 5 – We will support customers facing vulnerable circumstances

We have strategies and systems in place to support the diversity of needs of our customers, with significant programs which go 'above and beyond compliance.'^{R6} As such, we have assessed ourselves as **empowered** against Principle 5.

This year, Energy Queensland gained endorsement from Reconciliation Australia for our [First Nations Connections Plan](#), a commitment to strengthening our relationship with First Nations people, with an initial focus on building our cultural capability internally, as the foundation for investing in place-based initiatives. Through the [Queensland Chapter of the Thriving Community Partnerships](#) we collaborated with other corporates, not-for-profit and government agencies to explore opportunities collectively for positive change in our disaster response when the community is most vulnerable.

R27

In 2019, Ergon Energy Retail broadened the service provided by the Customer Assist Team, a team now established for 12 years, through delivering the foundation year of a [Financial](#)

[Inclusion Action Plan](#) (See Case Study 9). This work integrated with the implementation of recommendations from a communications review resulted in extensive face-to-face engagement to further support vulnerable customers (See Case Study 10). In addition, we refined our [Hardship Policy](#) for Ergon Energy Retail to increase customer protections in line with regulatory changes and advanced early identification processes to support customers earlier.^{R30 R31}

The maturity of Ergon Energy Retail's focus on vulnerable customers was highlighted during COVID-19 with the priority placed on helping customers entering hardship and fast-tracking of support generally.

Ergon Energy Retail also joined the Energy Charter's #BetterTogether Initiative Voices for Power, in alignment with their ongoing engagement with multicultural groups to deliver recommendations on suitable products and services to assist these groups in the area of financial inclusion.^{R27 R32}

To further support energy inclusion and fairness in the changing marketplace, Ergon Energy Retail continued to deliver the [Sunny Savers Trial](#) and the Queensland Government's Solar for Rentals Trial with the goal to provide tenants access to the benefits of renewable energy. In addition, Ergon Energy Retail continues to proactively raise awareness of concessions and rebates available to customers with a total number of 215,435 customers accessing rebates, an increase of 4,166 customers since last year.^{R29}

Focus areas for improved customer outcomes

- Commence the next phase of the Financial Inclusion Action Plan, which includes delivery of energy literacy programs that will assist customers in better understanding energy matters. EER
- Continue to work with Queensland's First Nations community leaders to design location-based initiatives to improve customer outcomes in indigenous communities. EQL
- Continue to invest in an internal Domestic and Family Violence Working Party, seeking to learn from similar practices in Victoria and go beyond legislative requirements in delivering improved services for customers who are victims of domestic and family violence. EER^{R28}

Case Study 9 – Foundation year for financial inclusion

R29,R30,R32

2019 was the founding year for Ergon Energy Retail's [Financial Inclusion Action Plan](#) (FIAP). Led by Good Shepherd on behalf of the Australian Government and in partnership with the Centre for Social Impact, this Plan has the goals of ensuring financial inclusion, developing financial resilience, promoting inclusive growth and reducing inequality.

By developing a FIAP, with input from customer advocates, Ergon Energy Retail made it easy for customers to access government financial assistance programs by administering the Queensland Government's [Home Energy Emergency Assistance Scheme](#) and by being the first retailer to offer online access to the Queensland Government Electricity Rebate for eligible pensioners, seniors, health care card holders and asylum seekers.

The work completed in 2019 was independently audited to ensure the business was on track and Ergon Energy Retail is now ready to progress to the next phase in 2020-21. Planned opportunities include regular participation in Bring Your Bills days, information sharing through quarterly bulletins to community groups in regional Queensland and ongoing development of our energy literacy resources for use by customers and non-government organisations as a tool to build financial resilience.

Case Study 10 – Face-to-face engagement (prior to COVID-19)

Following a communication channel review which recognised the need to overcome barriers such as location, language, and access to technology, Ergon Energy Retail has committed to face-to-face community and customer engagement.

In the last year, Ergon Energy Retail engaged 20 of our 32 remote card-operated meter communities in education and training sessions, mainly on energy and financial literacy. As part of these engagements, customers called for the increase in presence and visibility within communities and to deliver highly accessible, easy to use products and services specific to their needs. The proposed next steps include development and delivery of energy literacy programs and support on a broader scale to build greater financial resilience.

Ergon Energy Retail continued to provide Bring Your Bills days each month in Rockhampton and Townsville to increase energy literacy. In addition, customer kiosks were successfully trialed in Rockhampton and Woorabinda, with high customer satisfaction on this digital technology as a communication channel.

In September 2019, Ergon Energy Retail sent a contingent to support the Drought Outreach Programs. Events were held in the Maranoa, Balonne, Paroo, Murweh, Bulloo, Quilpie, Southern Downs, Toowoomba and Kingaroy Shires. Farmers in drought-declared regions experiencing financial difficulty were supported through waived charges and deferred payment and access to appropriate financial products and services were provided as part of ongoing support for vulnerable groups.



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