

People's Panel

Shaping our services for the Territory



Terms of Reference

August 2026

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1 About the People's Panel

1.1 Vision and purpose

The People's Panel is a refreshed customer and stakeholder engagement forum. It builds on the award-winning panel¹ that helped inform Power and Water's 2024–2029 Power Networks proposal and the Australian Energy Regulator's final determination for that period. The refreshed panel will help Power and Water prepare for upcoming economic resets, including but not limited to the 2029–2034 Power Networks AER determination.

1.2 Scope

A regulatory determination is a decision by a regulator about how much revenue Power and Water can recover from customers for regulated services. The decision is based on the efficient cost of delivering services to an agreed standard. This includes day-to-day operating costs and the cost of maintaining, replacing and improving network infrastructure. These decisions matter because they influence service levels, investment priorities and the costs customers pay.

The panel's role is to provide informed input and feedback as these economic reset proposals are developed. This includes helping Power and Water understand customer priorities, service choices, affordability concerns and trade-offs. A single Territory-wide People's Panel is the most suitable approach for the Northern Territory because it is a small jurisdiction with connected communities, shared service challenges and a limited customer base. The panel will include residential customers, small-to-medium business customers, and advocacy organisations so different views are heard and explained clearly. The AER's Better Resets Handbook is a key benchmark for this approach. The panel is designed to help Power and Water meet the regulator's expectations for genuine consumer engagement and to support proposals that show clear evidence of customer value.

1.3 Engagement approach

Our engagement commitment

We will engage early, listen genuinely, communicate openly and work with members to improve our decisions. We will be clear about what can be influenced, provide the information and support needed for meaningful participation, and explain how feedback has been considered.

For most activities, the People's Panel will follow Power and Water's Stakeholder Engagement Framework and Toolkit and the Engagement Institute's IAP2 principles² at the 'Involve' level. This means Power and Water will work directly with members, give them clear information, listen to their views and explain how their feedback has been considered. Some topics may involve deeper discussion where members help test options, preferences and trade-offs.

Power and Water may meet with the full panel or with specific groups, depending on the topic. For example, residential customers may be brought together separately to discuss household impacts, affordability and service expectations. Small-to-medium business customers may be asked to explore commercial impacts, reliability needs and cost pressures. Advocacy organisations may be asked to help explain the needs of customers who may face barriers to participation or who are more affected by service issues. If and as required, these separate sessions will help Power and Water genuinely understand each cohort's voice before bringing the broader panel together to test shared priorities, differences and trade-offs. Where views

¹ Power and Water - [Award winners 2023 - Chief Minister's Awards](#)

² IAP2 [Spectrum](#) of Public Participation

differ, Power and Water will record and explain those differences rather than forcing one agreed view. This helps make sure the panel is credible, fair and useful for regulatory proposals.

Power and Water will:

- Be clear about what members can and cannot influence.
- Involve people who may be affected by the matters being considered.
- Support inclusive and accessible participation.
- Provide balanced, timely and plain English information.
- Seek member input into meeting priorities, formats and engagement methods.
- Recognise and report different views rather than forcing consensus.
- Explain how feedback was considered and where it influenced outcomes.
- Regularly review and improve the panel with its members.

The People's Panel will:

- Provide customer and community insights on services delivered by Power and Water.
- Share individual, community, and organisational knowledge and lived experience.
- Explore customer preferences, priorities and service trade-offs.
- Consider outcomes relating to accessibility, affordability, sustainability, safety.
- Help inform Power and Water's customer service commitments and regulatory proposals, including proposals submitted to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER).

The People's Panel will not:

- Be required to reach a consensus on every topic. Different perspectives and areas of disagreement will be recorded and reported.
- Resolve or advise on individual customer billing enquiries, complaints or operational service matters.
- Set Northern Territory Government energy or water policy, legislation or customer prices.
- Make decisions on behalf of Power and Water, the Northern Territory Government, a regulator or another organisation.
- Replace broader customer, stakeholder, community or Traditional Owner engagement required for particular projects or proposals.

1.4 Key benefits for People's Panel members

Members can help shape better service outcomes for Territory customers and communities. By sharing their experiences, views and advice, members can help Power and Water better understand what customers value, what they are concerned about, and what trade-offs they are prepared to consider.

Members will work with Power and Water leaders, subject matter experts and other panel members. They will learn more about how Power and Water's essential services are planned, funded and regulated, and how customer feedback can influence decisions about service standards, investment priorities and cost.

2 Membership and commitment

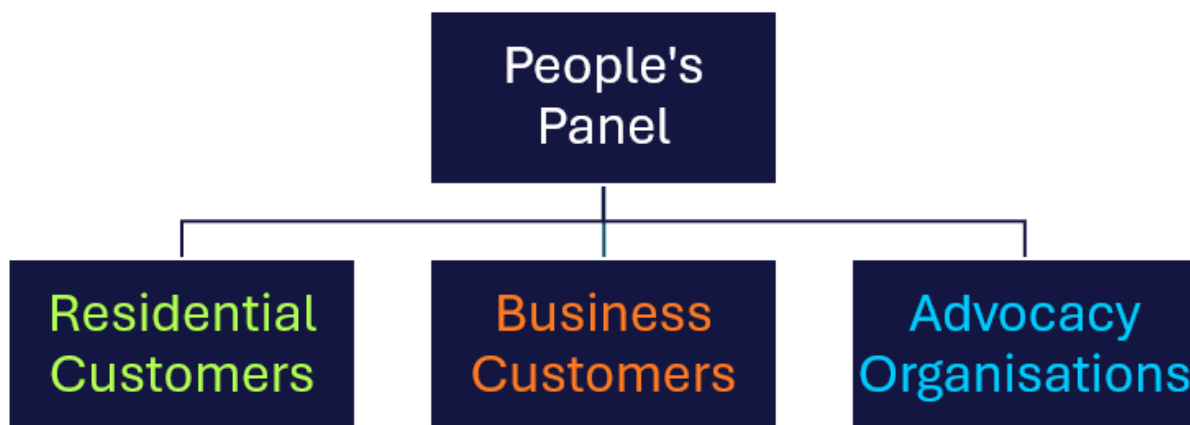
2.1 Composition

The People's Panel consists of a minimum of 25 members representing residential customers, small-to-medium business customers and advocacy organisations. Membership will primarily be drawn from Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs, with targeted representation from Katherine and Tennant Creek. Power and Water will seek a balanced mix of panel members from various locations, backgrounds, experiences and

perspectives, including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, disability, owner/builders, youth and vulnerable customer perspectives where possible.

Meetings will be supported by an independent or appropriately appointed facilitator to create a respectful, inclusive and informed environment.

People's Panel Structure



2.2 Eligibility

Membership criteria will support balanced, credible and inclusive participation. Current employees of Power and Water, Territory Generation, Jacana Energy, relevant regulators, and organisations with a material commercial interest in matters before the panel will generally not be eligible. Recent employment, contracting relationships and other real or perceived conflicts will be considered through the selection and conflict-of-interest process. Applicants must be at least 18 years old and able to meet the expected time commitment.

2.3 Selection and term

Residential and small-to-medium business members will be selected through an application process. Advocacy organisations may be invited or approached to help address underrepresented member groups. Applications will be assessed against eligibility criteria such as location, customer type, diversity of experience, ability to contribute constructively and availability to attend meetings. An external recruitment partner supports this process.

Members will generally be selected for a term of up to three years. Membership may be extended where this supports continuity and the member continues to meet the eligibility and composition requirements. Members may resign at any time by providing four weeks written notice to the People's Panel team.

2.4 Meetings, preparation and proxies

The panel will generally meet at least three times each year, with additional sessions arranged where required. Meetings may be held in person, online or in a hybrid format. Dates and times will be discussed with members, and reasonable notice will be provided. Power and Water will work with members to support participation across the Northern Territory, including reasonable adjustments, accessible formats and digital participation support where practicable.

Agendas and pre-reading materials will be provided in advance in plain English and accessible formats where practicable. Members may be asked to review materials before meetings. Preparation time will be recognised and remunerated where applicable under the approved remuneration arrangements.

For continuity it is preferred that the same member attends each meeting. On an exception basis, small-to-medium business and advocacy organisation members may nominate a proxy if they cannot attend a session. Proxies must be fully briefed and meet applicable confidentiality and conflict-of-interest requirements. The primary member must notify the People's Panel team in advance that a suitable proxy will attend in their place. Residential members cannot nominate a proxy because they participate based on their individual experience. Members who cannot attend should notify the People's Panel team as early as possible and may be invited to provide written feedback.

3 Roles and expectations

3.1 What we ask of People's Panel Members

As active participants helping inform regulatory proposals and future initiatives, panel members are expected to:

Expectation	What this means
Actively participate	- Consistently attend meetings and advise early if unable to attend. - Listen respectfully to diverse perspectives. - Contribute constructive customer perspectives and lived experiences.
Remain inquisitive	- Build an understanding of how about electricity, water and sewerage services and systems, and regulation work in the Northern Territory. - Ask questions and consider balanced information, data and research.
Problem-solve constructively	- Offer thoughtful and constructive feedback, including on complex matters. - Help explore options and practical responses, not only identify issues.
Be future focused	Consider long-term customer and community needs, sustainability and emerging technologies.
Contribute perspectives	- Share firsthand experiences or the perspective of the organisation or community they have been appointed to represent. - Be clear when expressing an individual view rather than a broader organisational or community position.

3.2 What you can expect from Power and Water

Grounded in our vision '*to be a proud, trusted, modern multi-utility delivering value now and into the future*' Power and Water will:

Expectation	What this means
Listen to understand	- Listen to our customers and appreciate their different experiences. - Create a respectful environment focused on understanding customer and community perspectives.
Maintain transparency	- Communicate openly and clearly, subject to legal, privacy, cultural, security and commercial requirements. - Explain the scope of influence and relevant constraints.

Expectation	What this means
Support informed participation	● Provide balanced, timely and accessible information. ● Give members reasonable access to relevant subject matter experts. ● Support member understanding through accessible information, education and briefing materials, particularly where complex regulatory, financial or technical topics are being discussed. ● Support member education over time.
Close the loop	● Take feedback seriously and respond consistently. ● Explain what changed, what did not change and why.

3.3 Feedback and reporting

Meeting outputs will be provided to the Power and Water Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and relevant business units to inform planning, regulatory proposals and service improvement.

Power and Water will report back to members through a structured “What we heard and how we responded” process. This will explain the key themes raised, what changed as a result, what did not change and why, and where decisions were constrained by legislation, government policy, regulatory requirements or responsibilities held by other organisations. Meeting summaries will record significant differences of view and will be provided to members for review before finalisation. Public summaries may be published where appropriate.

4 Operations, governance and remuneration

4.1 Operating procedures

The panel will operate in line with these Terms of Reference and agreed meeting protocols. An independent facilitator will support meeting design and conduct, inclusive participation and balanced discussion, and assist in recording different views. The Executive General Manager Customer and Strategy is the panel sponsor and accountable decision-maker. Members may propose agenda items within scope. Agendas will be agreed by the sponsor with input from the facilitator and members. Meeting summaries will be reviewed by members before finalisation. Members may raise concerns about the integrity of the engagement process with the People’s Panel team or the Executive General Manager Customer and Strategy.

4.2 Confidentiality

Members are encouraged to discuss publicly available panel activities and their own views within their communities. Confidentiality will apply only to information clearly identified as confidential, such as culturally sensitive knowledge, security-sensitive material or commercial-in-confidence information. The reason for confidentiality will be explained where possible and obligations will continue after a member’s term ends. Members should not disclose another person’s confidential information or attribute comments to individual members without permission.

Information used by the People’s Panel is subject to the *NT Information Act 2002* and Power and Water’s information release, storage, privacy and security requirements. Members may be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement at the start of their term, limited to information that reasonably requires protection.

4.3 Accessibility and inclusion

Power and Water will seek to remove barriers to participation. Support may include accessible documents, interpreters, translators, culturally appropriate engagement, travel assistance, digital access support and other reasonable adjustments. Members are encouraged to tell the People's Panel team what support they require.

4.4 Conflicts of interest

Members must declare any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest when appointed, update their declaration annually and raise relevant conflicts at the start of meetings. The Executive General Manager Customer and Strategy will determine an appropriate response, which may include recording the conflict, limiting access to particular information or asking the member to step out for part of a discussion.

4.5 Code of conduct

Panel members are expected to contribute respectfully, listen to different perspectives, follow agreed meeting protocols, protect confidential information, and declare conflicts of interest. Harassment, discrimination, intimidation and disrespectful behaviour will not be accepted.

Where a member does not meet these expectations or repeatedly misses meetings without reasonable notice, Power and Water reserves the right to review their membership. The member will be informed about the concern and given a reasonable opportunity to respond before a decision is made. The Executive General Manager Customer and Strategy will make the final decision, informed by advice from the facilitator and People's Panel team.

4.6 Relationship to broader engagement

The People's Panel is one important source of customer and community insight. It does not replace broader engagement with customers, communities, Traditional Owners, industry, government, regulators or other stakeholders. Power and Water may undertake additional engagement where an issue has significant local, cultural, environmental, commercial or community impacts, or where affected stakeholders are not adequately represented on the panel.

4.7 Monitoring and evaluation

The panel's effectiveness, membership accessibility and operating arrangements will be reviewed at least annually. Members will be invited to assess what is working, identify improvements and help shape future engagement methods. Evaluation will consider participation and retention, diversity and inclusion, accessibility, quality and usefulness of information, member trust and understanding, quality of discussion, timeliness of feedback and evidence that panel input was considered at the appropriate stage and influenced understanding, options, risk assessment, communication or final proposals where relevant. The Terms of Reference may be updated following consultation with members.

4.8 Remuneration

Residential and small-to-medium business customer members will be remunerated for approved meeting and preparation time in line with the NT Classification Structure Determination (CSD) framework, Class 3. Community and advocacy organisation representatives will generally not be remunerated where participation forms part of their role. Approved travel will be arranged by Power and Water or reimbursed in

line with applicable Northern Territory Government requirements. Remuneration and reimbursement arrangements will be explained before appointment.

5 Questions

We encourage members to speak up during meetings and through the engagement platform. Questions, different perspectives and constructive challenges are welcome at any stage.

For questions about these Terms of Reference, or to raise a query about the panel process, contact the People's Panel team at peoples.panel@powerwater.com.au, or visit www.powerwater.com.au/peoples-panel

6 Definitions and references

Full Term	Abbreviation or Definition
Advocacy Organisations	Community organisations and/or lived experience advocacy groups who represented specific groups of people.
Australian Energy Regulator	AER
Business customers/members	This includes small-to-medium business customers.
Customers	Residential and small-to-medium business customers who receive electricity, water and sewerage services from Power and Water, as relevant to the matter being discussed. This includes but is not limited to residential customer, small-to-medium business customers, generators, and retailers.
Members	People appointed to the People's Panel
Northern Territory	NT
People's Panel	The standing, ongoing, customer and community engagement panel. May be addressed as 'member/s' or 'the panel' throughout this document
Regulated Areas	Areas of electricity supply which fall under the jurisdiction and rules of the AER
Territorians	All people who live and/or work in the NT
Unregulated Areas	Areas of electricity supply which do not fall under the jurisdiction and rules of the AER
Utilities Commission	UC

7 Helpful Links

[Australian Energy Regulator Better Resets Handbook](#)

[Power and Water Customer Charter](#)

[Power and Water Customer Contract](#)

[Customer Experience Strategy](#)

[People's Panel Website](#)

Contact

Customer and Strategy
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powerwater.com.au/peoples-panel