



# Public engagement summary: Reviewing the Gas Distribution System Code of Practice

## Project background

Gas distributors own and operate the network of pipelines that deliver gas to homes and businesses across Victoria. Recent changes in the Victorian energy landscape are driving a need to update regulations for gas distributors.

The Victorian Government made commitments and regulatory changes for the gas sector to achieve the state's net-zero emissions targets. This includes a ban on new gas connections for homes that require a planning permit from 1 January 2024 and incentives for replacing gas appliances with electric ones.

National regulators also made recent changes that affect gas distributors. The Australian Energy Regulator lowered the fee Victorian gas distributors may charge customers for abolishing their connections. The Australian Energy Market Commission made changes to the National Gas Rules to allow facilities which will produce renewable gases to participate in Victoria's gas market.

The key goals of our review were to:

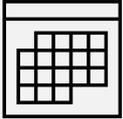
- align the code of practice with our enforcement framework to allow us to effectively monitor compliance and enforce obligations
- update the rules for new gas connections
- streamline regulation and remove overlaps with the national regulatory framework
- provide additional consumer protections for Victorian gas network customers.

Our new code of practice follows over 12 months of engagement with stakeholders. In making the new code of practice we considered current rules and processes for connecting new customers and for abolishing connections of those who no longer use gas. We also considered stakeholder feedback and the costs and benefits of proposed changes.

The development of the new code of practice involved a structured engagement program. This program included requests for feedback via Engage Victoria, information sessions, and meetings

with stakeholders. Through our engagement activities, stakeholders confirmed the need for an updated Gas Distribution Code of Practice to address the risks associated with the energy transition and improve protections for gas network customers.

## How we engaged



### Key dates

- 21 March 2023: [Issues paper](#) published
- 20 April 2023: Stakeholder information session (online)
- 4 May 2023: Consultation on the issues paper closed
- 15 November 2023: [Draft decision](#) published
- 21 December 2023: Consultation on the draft decision closed
- 9 May 2024: Final decision published
- 1 October 2024: New Gas Distribution Code of Practice takes effect
- 1 January 2025: Upfront connection charges take effect

All submissions and decision documents can be accessed on our webpage: [Reviewing the Gas Distribution System Code of Practice | Essential Services Commission](#)



### Methodology

We provided several opportunities for stakeholders to engage with this project.

#### Issues paper and initial engagement

We released an issues paper for public consultation on 21 March 2023. The paper outlined our rationale for reviewing the code, our objectives and assessment framework in remaking a code of practice.

We held an online public information session on 20 April 2023. We incorporated stakeholder feedback to our issues paper into our draft decision.

#### Draft decision and draft code of practice

We sought public submissions via Engage Victoria and via email.

Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback on the draft decision using a method most suitable to their needs. Stakeholders had the option to make submissions through an online survey on Engage Victoria, or by making general comments over email, mail or phone. We also welcomed individual discussions with stakeholders.

Stakeholders were notified about this opportunity through emails and the commission's webpage.

### One-on-one meetings with stakeholders

We held discussions with specific stakeholder groups to discuss their submissions. These meetings were held on various dates from March 2023 to February 2024. We met with:

- gas distributors
- gas retailers
- property developers
- other regulators (including the Australian Energy Market Operator, the Australian Energy Regulator, and Energy Safe Victoria)
- consumer protection groups, and
- climate action groups.



### Number of participants

- 3,921 views of our Engage Victoria page between 21 March 2023 to 30 March 2024
- 36 attended our online information session on 20 April 2023



### Number of submissions received (written/verbal)

- 20 written submissions in response to our issues paper
- 136 submissions to our draft decision, including from:
  - Australian Gas Infrastructure Group
  - AGL Energy
  - AusNet Gas Services
  - Bass Coast Climate Action Network
  - Brotherhood of St Lawrence
  - Darebin Climate Action Now
  - EnergyAustralia
  - Energy Consumers Australia
  - Environment Victoria
  - Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria
  - Gas Networks Victoria
  - Housing Industry Association
  - Lighter Footprints
  - Master Plumbers and Mechanical Services Association of Australia

- Momentum Energy
- Origin Energy
- Victorian Council of Social Services
- Community members (119)