



Wyndham City Council

Timely negotiated electricity connections

Stakeholder feedback




Summary

Wyndham City Council welcomes the opportunity to be able to provide feedback on Essential Services Commission 2020, Timely negotiated electricity connections: Issues paper.

Council's feedback will be focussed on the four approaches considered by the ESC as per the following;

- A. Allowing distribution businesses to continue voluntarily reporting publicly on their performance relating to negotiated connections.
- B. Placing specific obligations on distribution businesses to publicly report their performance.
- C. Placing a general requirement on distribution businesses to regularly review and improve the way they manage the negotiated connections processes.
- D. Regulating the timeframes to undertake stages of the negotiated connections process.

Where applicable council will provide a response to all the questions that have been outlined in the issues paper.



Maintaining the focus on timely negotiated connections

Stakeholder question 1 – do problems remain?

Taking into account the concerns identified in 2018, do issues remain in the negotiated electricity connection process and if so where in the process? Please provide evidence to support your response.

The Mayor and Councillors at Wyndham City have taken a direct interest in the processes in place to ensure critical community infrastructure is delivered. The delays in energising new connections is a major concern for them in providing community infrastructure in a timely way to meet the demands of a rapidly growing community.

Wyndham has seen some improvement in liaison between Council staff and Powercor staff that has helped each of us to understand the processes and issues to energise specific locations. Whilst this has been helpful, it has not always resulted in faster connections when Council has identified community safety issues.

A more reliable process to ensure that public safety is prioritised in Powercor's decision making would be very helpful and a clear and reliable escalation process is essential. This should include a very clear and responsive complaints process, with strict timelines, for resolution by the Regulator.

Wyndham's experience has been that the auditing process is yet to address problematic practises and they lack consistency amongst the distribution business colleagues. This has led to delays in energising critical community safety infrastructure (i.e. traffic lights, pedestrian lights and public lighting) when audits need to be rescheduled in order to get compliance.

Wyndham has experienced problems with the management and processing of both minor and major design/construction changes/requirements and communication/acceptance of such items by the PM and the auditor. Items have led to delays in both the project, and if it had of been noted in the first audit it would have had less impact on the completion of the project. Some of these delays have seen traffic lights outside our schools on busy roads remain unconnected, putting students and parents at risk.

It has been a problem for Wyndham that Powercor does not provide a prioritised service for sites from a public safety perspective. Live sites where there is existing use of public roads and/or the safe use of the infrastructure is reliant on either the public lighting schemes and/or points of supply to traffic signals to be connected. These sites are generally reliant on temporary arrangements to make them functional.

Wyndham has also experienced sub-standard output from Powercor accredited consultants/contractors, which suggests that there is a need for better education/training/supervision and or review of accreditation system from Powercor. Council is forced to use these suppliers and when they are not competent to carry pout their work to Powercor's satisfaction, it delays completion of our works.

The Powercor audit process and method of proving services/works within current of future road reserves (where infrastructure has been constructed), has also resulted in infrastructure being compromised/damaged. This is due to ordinary audit processes and/or as a result of sub-standard works by accredited contractors. From the perspective of ordinary audit requirements, the disturbance to infrastructure would be dramatically reduced if different excavation methodology was implemented such as non-destructive digging and/or made a requirement of the audit process. This should be a mandatory requirement of Powercor to ensure that contractors have the required equipment on site when audits are carried out.

In the lengthy delays that seem common for contractors to obtain Powercor approval infrastructure is left exposed which has a detrimental impact on Council assets. Such as open excavations damaging other assets such as drains and pavements in developments.

Stakeholder question 2 – our assessment criteria

Are there any other factors we should consider when deciding which approach to adopt?

Drive consistency in whichever approach is adopted.

Inclusion/measurement of the consultant/contractor's accreditation with a focus on continuous improvement, education and review of performance during the relevant processes rather than at milestones.

Stakeholder questions 3 and 4 – approach A

3. Under a continuation of voluntary reporting arrangements, should distribution businesses continue to use the existing key performance indicators? Or should different key performance indicators be used? If so, please advise what they should be and why.

4. What are the opportunities and downsides with this approach that we should be aware of? Please give examples.

KPI's should also incorporate response times to relevant processes- drawing approvals/audits/connections.

Stakeholder questions (5-9) – approach B

5. If we adopted this approach, which stages, or steps of the negotiated connections process that distribution businesses or the contractors they directly control should be regulated to be meaningful?

6. How should timeframes be set: using method (a), method (b), or another method?

7. How should we set reasonable targets (portions of cases that must met within a maximum timeframe or maximum timeframes)?

8. What is a reasonable frequency for regulated reporting?

9. What are the opportunities and downsides with this approach that we should be aware of? Please give examples.

There should be time frames included for different stages of the process. Time frames should include fixed response times to requests however may be more flexible in relation to actual approvals, audits, sign offs etc. (i.e. tie in request submitted- response with a date for tie in within 7 days for tie in work to be completed within an agreed timeframe).

This would provide customers with the status information within a set timeframe but will allow the service authorities flexibility to schedule in works.



Stakeholder questions 10-13 – approach C

10. This approach proposes a range of obligations that would promote ongoing good management of the negotiated electricity connections process. Are there any other obligations that should be included?

11. Are there some of the listed obligations that could be removed? Please provide support for your response.

12. Which requirement(s) should be enforceable through the Electricity Distribution Code? Are there any requirements that are best implemented through guidance?

13. What are the opportunities and downsides with this approach that we should be aware of? Please give examples.

This approach may not provide flexibility in order to adapt to industry pressures/workloads.

Stakeholder questions 14-15 – approach D

14. What are your views on regulated maximum timeframes, compared to a negotiated timeframe unique to each stage in each development?

15. What are the opportunities and downsides with this approach that we should be aware of? Please give examples.

This may be complicate the process as it could end up with parties laying the blame on each other for breakdown/delays rather than having more open and transparent communication in delivery the desired outcomes.

Stakeholder questions – general

16. Which approach or combination of approaches or parts of approaches would address your issues now and manage negotiated connections effectively over the longer term?

17. Is there another approach not documented here that would be effective?

Approach B (including comments) would most likely provide better communication on timeframes and expectations.