



FIRST PEOPLES ENGAGEMENT

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CitiPower acknowledges and respects the Traditional Owners as the original custodians of the lands and waters our network covers. We recognise First Peoples' unique and inherent rights as Traditional Owners and thank all Traditional Owners for continuing to care for Country and their deep spiritual connection to it. CitiPower honours Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

1. First Peoples engagement

Our network is located on Wurundjeri and Bunurong/Boonwurrung Counties and is home to approximately 1700 First Peoples customers, 20 First Peoples businesses, two Registered Aboriginal Parties and three community organisations. Given our network footprint across First Peoples Countries, we have established dedicated roles within our business to drive First Peoples engagement, the establishment of a First Peoples Advisory Committee (FPAC) and the development of our business' first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The establishment of our RAP is an important milestone for empowering and increasing the self-determination of Victoria's First Peoples communities. This is achieved through mutually beneficial partnerships training, employment, and business opportunities.

In addition to the Customer Advisory Panel (CAP), the FPAC was established in mid-2023 to provide expert advice on First Peoples engagement and the development of our RAP. The Chair of our FPAC has also been incorporated as a member of the CAP. Their role has been to ensure recommendations provided by the FPAC are actively considered and represented, engaging on a range of topics including customer vulnerability, reliability, resilience and affordability.

During the Regulatory Reset period we have engaged with First Peoples to better understand their lived experience with our distribution network and to identify First Peoples energy related issues and priorities through attending key community events and running an online survey. Within the network we have engaged with 7 community members, one Registered Aboriginal Party and one community organisation. We attended the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy roundtable in Geelong where we heard about the need for capacity building including energy literacy and First Peoples interests to build, own, and maintain renewable energy projects.

1.1 Objectives and methodology

First Peoples are our customers, community members and businesses which operate across our network. Traditional Owners have a deep and continual connection to Country and a long-standing history of land custodianship. To better understand the energy equity gap for First Peoples we had tailored engagement sessions to learn about First Peoples energy-related concerns and priorities.

First Peoples engagement objectives:

- Support the networks longer-term goal to establish strong relationships with First Peoples
- Identify and understand customers' current needs and preferences for the immediate and longer-term
- Understand how customers' unmet needs could be met through investment or divestment in our network
- Identify the key themes and priority areas for First Peoples
- Identify areas of energy inequity and consider how as a distribution company we can reduce the energy equity gap

1.1.1 IAP2 Spectrum engagement:

The First Peoples engagement was a mixture of involve, collaborate and empower to ensure First Peoples self-determined what programs were most important to their communities. First Peoples self-

determined which priorities were most important for their communities and our FPAC will hold the decision making over the programs.

	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	ENGAGEMENT STEPS TAKEN
Inform	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	
Consult	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	First Peoples at the Bay Mob Expo and through the online survey were engagements where we consulted on to understand the priorities for households and communities. This identified key inputs that helped us shape which programs would be put forward under the First Peoples Program.
Involve	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Registered Aboriginal Parties, Aboriginal Organisations helped shape the focus of further engagement and the programs to ensure we were capturing the concerns and aspirations of communities throughout our engagement.
Collaborate	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Engagement programs and questions to include in the design were developed in collaboration with the FPAC.
Empower	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.	

1.2 Engagement with community organisations

We engaged with a Registered Aboriginal Party within our network area on their energy related priorities, and attended the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy roundtable in Geelong where we heard about the need for capacity building including energy literacy and First Peoples want to build, own and maintain renewable energy projects.

Throughout the engagement, the below table outlines First Peoples customer priorities identified across the network.

FIRST PEOPLES PRIORITY SENTIMENTS AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Access to energy is a human right	a. First Peoples haven't been afforded the same generational wealth as the wider population. The health and equity gaps continue to widen, highlighting the need for programs that help those who are struggling to pay for electricity. b. Due to the fear of rising electricity bills. Elders within First Peoples communities aren't using their heating or cooling, which is leading to knowledge holders becoming severely unwell.
Energy literacy	First Peoples noted the importance of independent and unbiased energy literacy resources that aren't being given by the Government or energy retailers due to the distrust with these organisations. It was recommended that energy distributors like United Energy could provide information on how to read bills, energy efficiency, and information on renewable energy that is easy to read and unbiased.
Renewables	First Peoples responsibilities to care and protect Country go together with the transition to more cleaner energy sources. It was recommended by First Peoples that United Energy could provide assistance with connecting and provide specific information on what is/isn't possible at the proposed connection of the renewable energy project. It was also requested that United Energy provide an investment fund for First Peoples to invest in Renewable Energy, similarly to the Water Utilities funding Water is Life. First Peoples also shared the sentiment of wanting funding to undertake feasibility studies, build, own or co-invest in renewable energy projects. The lack of funding and support was noted as frustrating.

1.3 First Peoples Advisory Committee regulatory reset input and prioritisation

In June 2023 we established the FPAC, made up of 5 community members (currently 4) from across our network. The Chair of the FPAC also sits on the Customer Advisory Panel. The FPAC has met 7 times to date with the business and has provided feedback, input and endorsement of the proposed First Peoples program in our regulatory reset proposal.

In June 2024, we engaged the FPAC to hear their feedback on key initiatives included in the regulatory reset proposal. Their feedback and recommendations are detailed in the table below.

	ABOUT THE INITIATIVE	FPAC RECOMMENDATIONS
Customer vulnerability	Initiatives designed to alleviate the burden on customers experiencing vulnerability due to energy poverty. The package includes community outreach programs, web-based resources, energy advisory services, First People's programs, and enhanced outage notification service for vulnerable and life support customers.	Discussion touched on the role of the broader supply chain in contributing to this, difference between retailers and distributors. It was recommended that the network learn off the water vulnerability programs for customers and run programs that contribute to closing the equity gap. The risks of leaving people behind and making sure to bring people along the journey as an essential service was highlighted.
Supporting additional solar power	Allow residential customers and businesses to connect and export more excess energy produced from small scale generation units	Question asked on where First Peoples voices are at the start of these conversations (using solar as an example), highlighting the importance of engaging First Peoples at the start of the process. It was recommended that the network support access to information, funding and partnerships for solar, batteries and microgrids etc.
Large scale renewable energy generation	Network support to connect additional large scale renewable generation capacity, lowering emissions for Victorian customers and powering homes with renewable energy	FPAC agreed that large scale energy generation should prioritise access of energy to vulnerable customers or low reliability areas. In addition, a credit pool was discussed regarding redistributing energy to those who can't afford it.

1.4 Understanding First Peoples' energy priorities

During the current regulatory reset period we have engaged with First Peoples to better understand their lived experience with our distribution network and to identify First Peoples energy related issues and priorities through attending key community events and running an online survey.

Across October-November to better understand First Peoples energy related priorities we promoted an online survey and attended community events. In total we received feedback from 23 community members within the network, which highlighted that affordability was a key priority. Community members stressed the inaccessibility to new energy appliances and the need to help Elders have access to heating and cooling.

1.4.1 Key Findings:

TOPIC	ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES
Value from the overall regulatory proposal	85% of respondents felt the bill impact represents the value for the service they received and expect from us.
Energy equity	All respondents rated the Elders heating and cooling rebate program in the top two priorities and overall, it was the highest priority for their communities.
First Peoples customers	70% of respondents say that access to affordable energy is the most important energy priority for their household.
Energy literacy	75% of respondents would like tailored information on how to read and reduce electricity bills, information on energy efficiency programs and government rebates.
First Peoples top 3 Priorities	1. Heating and cooling rebates for Elders 2. Programs that help low-income households upgrade to more energy efficient appliances 3. Programs that support access to solar and batteries.
Respondents' additional commentary	- Too often Elders are freezing and getting sick because of electricity bills, it is costly, and our Elders suffer because they worry about their energy usage - Additional medical assistance - Work with established entities to promote programs and energy information.

1.5 Endorsements

On Monday 25th of November 2024 we met with the FPAC to present an overview of our engagement, key findings and proposed First Peoples Program. The FPAC were satisfied with the engagement, outcomes, proposed initiatives and endorsed the program. The program was later presented to the Customer Advisory Panel who also endorsed the programs.



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