

Minutes of the meeting of the Network Connections Technical Group

**Held on 8 April 2024, 9.00am to 5.00pm
EA Office, Level 7 AON Centre, 1 Willis Street**

Members present: Grant Benvenuti (Chair), Gavin Bonnett, Ronald Beatty, Michael Gibbs, Howard Wood, Paul Blue, Matt Gazzard, James Byrne, Tim Edmonds, Trent Tscheuschler, Stuart Johnston, Anna Li, Rupert Holbrook, Suzanne Doran

In attendance: Allen Davison, Daniel Griffiths (9.30-9.40am), Katherine Hume-Pike, Jasper Eaton

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed the members to the meeting.

- 1.1. The members introduced themselves and discussed the project purpose and desired outcomes of the Network Connections Technical Group (NCTG) and the Network Connections Project (the project).
- 1.2. The NCTG discussed the following areas of interest and desired outcomes for the project, which included:
 - nationally consistent connection standards and timeframes
 - information availability and transparency
 - efficient processing costs and resource allocation
 - coordination and visibility between the grid owner and distributors
 - consideration of emerging technologies and market products
- 1.3. The EA provided a brief introduction to the Network Connections Project (project). The main objective of Stage one is *connecting to networks, and amending existing connections, is more efficient (e.g., easier, faster, more consistent, more equitable)*.
- 1.4. Stage one is focused on
 - large capacity DG applications
 - large load applications (e.g. industrial decarbonisation, public EV chargers).

- 1.5. The NCTG acknowledged the work of other participants in the industry such as Drive Electric and the need to include a broad industry perspective in our work.

2. Project overview

Daniel Griffiths joined the meeting at 9.30am

- 2.1. The EA manager of retail and network policy provided an introduction of the EA's vision and goals and where the NCTG and project sit within this.
- 2.2. The NCTG noted the EA's ambition to progress at pace and consider how we can operate creatively and collaboratively.

Daniel Griffiths left the meeting at 9.40am

3. Introduction to the network connections project

- 3.1. EA staff provided the *Network connection project* presentation.
- 3.2. The NCTG discussed the need to coordinate with the other technical groups, such as the Common quality technical group (CQTG). The EA noted this would occur, particularly for Stage Two of the project.
- 3.3. The NCTG noted the importance of data and the EA spoke to its distribution work in this area e.g. access to MEP data, registry improvements.

4. Transpower's Connections Management framework

- 4.1. Transpower presented on *Transpower's Connections Management Framework*.
- 4.2. The NCTG discussed how the Connections Management Framework (CMF) initiation could be applied in a network context. The NCTG noted Transpower's applicants are larger scale and inevitably require a bespoke approach. This is different to the 'cookie cutter' approach sought for the distribution sector.
- 4.3. The NCTG noted Transpower's fee approach discourages speculative applications and 'queue banking'.
- 4.4. The NCTG discussed the difference between the allocation of capacity rights for the grid and networks.
- 4.5. Transpower discussed how stakeholders were originally opposed to the CMF but feedback has been very positive on the connections pipeline now that it is in place.
- 4.6. The NCTG noted how Transpower's CMF has led to fewer and higher quantity applications to connect, as projects need to meet milestones before they can enter the CMF queue.
- 4.7. Transpower discussed how it queued load differently to DG (load is prioritised on need and urgency/consequences, while load is first ready, first served).

5. Questions for adopting a connections management approach

- 5.1. EA presented on the *Part 2 DG application process (proposed for large capacity load)* document and invited feedback from the NCTG.
- 5.2. The NCTG discussed size thresholds, including whether a 1MW threshold should be used for large DG. Ultimately the group settled on 300kW but to seek views via consultation.
- 5.3. The NCTG discussed the proposed network connections pipeline and options to deliver this (e.g. central database portal).
- 5.4. The NCTG (both distributors and access seekers) generally supported the proposed upfront fee for large DG applications.
- 5.5. The NCTG discussed 'hosting capacity' and technical challenges to calculate. EA agreed to add to the issues register.

6. Considering the approach to load and generation applications

- 6.1. The NCTG discussed the CMF approach and how it might benefit distribution networks. There was differing opinions on what project thresholds (e.g. resource consents), if any, might apply to be eligible for final approval and access to capacity rights. The NCTG noted Transpower prioritises load and DG differently and this should be considered for networks.
- 6.2. The EA spoke to its conversations with access seekers for load (e.g. industrials, public EV chargers) and the barriers to connect and change the capacity of existing connections (e.g. variation in distributor processes, long periods for approval, lack of information on available capacity).

7. Stage two – Part 6 Connection of distributed generation review

- 7.1. EA staff provided an overview of *stage two – Part 6 connection of distributed generation review*. The NCTG supported the proposed (draft) scope.
- 7.2. The NCTG discussed the importance of managing congestion, including consistent distributor practice.
- 7.3. The NCTG discussed connection and operations standards, and the need for energy safety standards to be updated (e.g. Regulation 28).
- 7.4. The NCTG was supportive of the Authority's work on the registry.
- 7.5. The NCTG discussed delays in getting export meters installed, noting Code does not provide sufficient guidance. The Authority will add this to the issues register.

8. Next meeting

- 8.1. The NCTG agreed 9.00am Wednesday 17 April for its next meeting.

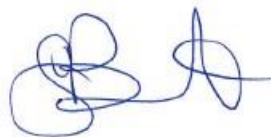
8.2. The meeting concluded at 4.30pm

9. Summary of outstanding action points

Action	Who	When
Draft amended TPs CMF application form for Part 6	Authority	14/04/24
Draft network application processes - proposed guiding principles	Authority	14/04/24
Provide feedback on <i>Questions for adopting a connections management approach</i>	NCTG	14/04/24
Provide feedback on <i>Part 2 DG application process (proposed for large capacity load)</i>	NCTG	14/04/24

Confirming that the NCTG has approved that the meeting minutes are a true and correct record.

Dated 24 February 2025



Grant Benvenuti

Chair