



# Stakeholder Engagement Framework

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# Foreword from our Commissioner and Chairperson

I am pleased to introduce this draft version of our stakeholder engagement framework. As Victoria's independent regulator for energy safety we exist to achieve the highest standards of community safety by protecting against safety risks arising from energy supply and use. We deliver our statutory obligations as a safety first, data driven and customer focused regulator.

Genuine and purposeful engagement with stakeholders including the Victorian community we serve is a key tenet of our regulatory approach. Effective engagement will ensure that the work we do is in line with community expectations and needs.

We are committed to achieving consistent, best practice engagement across the organisation and using feedback to inform our decision making. This framework is one of the initiatives we have taken to extend our stakeholder reach and take action where stakeholder feedback indicates we need to do better to provide the best possible service and value to Victorians.

Our stakeholder engagement framework sets out our commitment to how engagement activities are planned, designed and delivered. An updated Charter of Consultation and Regulatory Practice will be included in the final version of our stakeholder engagement framework to ensure consistency in our approach. The final stakeholder engagement framework will be published in the 2022/2023 financial year.

Our framework outlines our commitment to five principles of engagement with our stakeholders. These key principles will guide our work and ensure we cultivate consistent, strong and effective relationships with you.

Our framework helps to ensure we continue to deliver the best safety outcomes for all Victorians.

*Marnie Williams*



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## Who we are

Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) is an independent statutory body responsible for ensuring the safe generation, supply and use of electricity, gas and pipelines in Victoria. Established under the Energy Safe Victoria Act 2005, ESV oversees the regulatory safety frameworks that prevent death, injury, damage or loss due to electrical, gas and pipeline product safety hazards.

On 1 January 2021, ESV became the Victorian Energy Safety Commission (the Commission) and will continue to be known as Energy Safe Victoria (ESV). The Commission is responsible for providing leadership and strategic guidance and overseeing ESV's transformation as a modern, fit-for-purpose regulator, capable of effective, best practice regulation to achieve the highest standard energy safety outcomes for Victorians.

## What we do

ESV has statutory responsibilities to achieve the objectives and functions as specified in the *Electricity Safety Act 1998*, *Gas Safety Act 1997* and the *Pipelines Act 2005*. These include certain statutory objectives that ESV must fulfil to prevent serious electrical, gas, and pipeline safety incidents by ensuring that:

- Energy installations are safely operated, and energy infrastructure and pipelines are safe during their construction, operation, and decommissioning.
- Bushfire danger prevention and mitigation is promoted.
- Only competent licensed and registered individuals and businesses undertake gas and electrical work in accordance with prescribed safety standards.
- Electrical currents do not cause loss or damage to existing structures.
- Electrical equipment and gas appliances supplied or purchased in Victoria are safe to operate.



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# Framework definitions

These definitions support a consistent understanding of what is meant by terms used by us within this framework.

## Stakeholder

A stakeholder is defined as an individual, organisation or group with an interest in, or concern about something, or who is impacted by a decision or change.

Our stakeholder reach covers areas like:

- regulatory reform decisions or reviews
- administrative decisions and procedures
- compliance and enforcement functions
- policy changes affecting stakeholders
- educating regulated entities to support compliance
- information sharing about identified safety risks
- public education.

## Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is the practice of actively bringing stakeholder voices into decisions that affect, impact or interest them.

It is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of concepts including community and stakeholder consultation, education, relationship development and capacity building. Stakeholder engagement also includes the various methods used to engage with stakeholders – from meetings, workshops and forums, to more complex collaborative methods such as co-design.

We recognise stakeholder engagement as a fundamental accountability mechanism, since it obliges us to involve stakeholders in identifying, understanding and responding to issues and concerns, and to report, explain and answer to stakeholders for our decisions, actions and performance.

## Co-design

Co-design is a collaborative approach that engages a broad range of stakeholders in a design process to build services, improve policy and solve complex problems.

## Community engagement

A planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest or affiliation, to address issues affecting their well-being<sup>1</sup>.

## Consultation

Consultation, as it relates to our Charter of Consultation (currently under review), is defined as a process where information is exchanged in a structured way to inform a decision-making process. The purpose of consultation is to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to consider and reflect on an issue and provide feedback. This process ensures that relevant information is considered as part of our decision-making process.

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1 International Association for Public Participation Australasia, *Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement*, May 2015

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# Why is stakeholder engagement important to us

We have adopted the Victorian Government's public engagement vision of "working together to make better decisions and improve the lives of Victorians".<sup>2</sup>

We engage with stakeholders to build enduring and trusted relationships with those who have a stake in our work. Stakeholder engagement is an integral part of our ability to execute our statutory mandate, gain insights and deliver sound regulatory decisions that support energy sector sustainability, innovation and viability and protect the Victorian community, while providing public value.

## **Effective engagement with our stakeholders has many benefits, including:**

- continually improving the way we engage and regulate
- more efficient and effective education for compliance, in line with community expectations
- more innovative solutions that will improve safety
- development of shared solutions for complex safety issues
- understanding if there are any perverse outcomes through our regulatory approach
- improved access to and understanding of decision making processes
- ensuring that accessing us is easy both directly and through our systems
- advancing our relationships
- greater social acceptance, support and reduced conflict.

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2 Department of Premier and Cabinet (Victoria), *Public Engagement Framework (consultation draft)*, 2020 p.6

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# Our stakeholder landscape

The following list of stakeholders is not exhaustive but provides an overview of the three key stakeholder categories we routinely liaise with.

At different points in time the way we engage with each stakeholder will vary and the nature of the relationship may vary too. Some stakeholders may naturally exist in more than one of the stakeholder categories listed below. These categories are descriptive only.

We interact with a broad range of stakeholders across our public education and regulatory compliance and enforcement activities, these include:

## Government

- Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
- DELWP
- Local government
- Co-regulators in the energy and safety sectors
- Commonwealth and state government agencies, including other regulators.

## Industry

- Regulated entities (large corporations, medium to large local businesses, small to medium enterprises and sole operators)
- Peak bodies, industry associations and unions
- Manufacturers and retailers of gas appliances
- Business advisers or other intermediaries (lawyers, lobbyists, labour hire companies)
- Academia
- Media.

## Community

A community is a group of people who live in the same geographical area or have a shared background, interest, affiliation or membership.

- Advocates
- Energy users (protectees), recipients of safety messages
- Local communities
- Victorian public
- Consumers.

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# Our commitment to our stakeholders

Our stakeholder engagement framework will ensure accessible and fair participation that is transparent, well-planned and efficiently coordinated.

We will provide clear objectives, opportunities for meaningful input, and will listen, hear and incorporate feedback into our work.

To achieve this, we will continue to foster a culture that seeks and values stakeholder input and a variety of views. We will build the skills and capacity of our people through training and support, evaluating our engagement and sharing the learnings in order to continuously improve.

The process of developing our engagement framework was informed by consultation with our people, and a number of external stakeholders.

This framework and our engagement approach are informed by the key engagement pillars, processes and standards developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), the draft Victorian Government Public Engagement Framework and the Victorian Auditor General's Better Practice Guide.



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# What you can expect from us

## Principles that guide our work

Our five stakeholder engagement principles are inter-related. They rely on each other, yet the weighting, or consideration given to each of the principles, may not be uniform.

They acknowledge that each engagement has a different purpose, is undertaken in a different place, with different external influences and with different people.

### Purposeful and effective

We are driven by our strategic priorities and we remain aware of our stakeholders' objectives, environment, expertise and level of influence.

We begin every engagement with a clear understanding of what we want to achieve, understanding who we need to engage with, the level of engagement and how engagement will be evaluated.

We only engage where feedback will influence decisions and we will clearly communicate what is negotiable based on feedback and what is not.

We will use a range of engagement techniques to ensure our approach is appropriate and relevant to our purpose and will be most effective for engaging with our stakeholders.

## Inclusive

We are flexible and tailor engagement and communication to meet different participant's needs, and take steps where needed to provide our stakeholders with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

We ask participants about the best way to engage with them and we consider the time and resources needed by stakeholders to engage effectively.

We identify and make every reasonable effort to enable the participation of those people and organisations who contribute to, influence, or are affected by our work by actively seeking out all relevant voices and diversity of representation.

We aim to provide fair access to engagement processes by making reasonable adjustments, where necessary, to remove barriers to participation and ensure an inclusive approach.

We use plain language to assist stakeholders to understand issues and make informed contributions.

## Timely and responsive

We involve stakeholders from the start to encourage a greater range of ideas and solutions to emerge, to test assumptions, and to enable consideration and constructive debate on issues.

We negotiate with stakeholders, where possible, on timelines for input.

We will address stakeholder concerns in an honest and forthright way and respond quickly to all questions and complaints with courtesy.

## Transparent and accountable

We are open and honest in our approach and seek to build trust and credibility for the engagement by clearly explaining the process and communicating the roles and how input will inform projects and decisions.

We will disclose all information relevant to stakeholders understanding and evaluation of our decisions (subject to privacy and confidentiality requirements).

We are transparent in how feedback has informed our decision-making, and we will communicate back to participants how the feedback was used.

We will support a process of continuous improvement by seeking feedback on our engagement activities using a range of methods, including evaluation.

We will report on consultation activities and their effectiveness, at minimum, on our website and in our annual report.

## Respectful

We acknowledge and respect the expertise and alternative perspectives of our stakeholders and we take care to be open to alternative views and to listen as well as speak.

We will allow shared interests to be discussed whilst keeping our engagement processes purposeful and effective.

We will strive to build strong relationships and constantly value the trust that is built and brought to the engagement activity.

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# Our approach

## How we will engage and types of activities

(Derived from IAP2 and **NSW Better Regulation Stakeholder Engagement Strategy**)

The methods of engagement detailed on the following page are indicative of some of the ways we engage with our stakeholders. It should be noted that some methods will exist across more than one category. We also seek to tailor our engagement to the needs of specific groups and ensure a diversity of voices is heard.

The spectrum shown below provides examples of the techniques that may be used in our engagement activities. Elements of the spectrum will be used as appropriate for the issue concerned.



## INFORM

We will provide balanced, objective, accurate and consistent information to support stakeholders to understand issues, opportunities and solutions.

## CONSULT

We will seek feedback from stakeholders, listen to concerns and aspirations and inform them of the outcome of their feedback.

## INVOLVE

We will work directly with stakeholders to ensure their needs are directly and consistently understood and considered, and provide feedback on the outcome of their contribution.

## COLLABORATE

We will partner with stakeholders, including: development of alternative plans, decision-making, and identifying preferred solutions.

## EMPOWER

We will engage with stakeholders to build networks, create opportunities and empower groups to lead the development of initiatives.

Stakeholders are enabled/equipped to actively contribute to the achievement of outcomes.

## WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE

- |  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Guidelines</li><li>• ESV magazine</li><li>• Fact sheets</li><li>• ESV website</li><li>• ESV social media</li><li>• Digital and print publications</li><li>• ESV campaigns such as "Look up and Live"</li><li>• Performance reporting</li><li>• Sector briefings</li><li>• ESV presentations and events</li><li>• Media releases</li><li>• ESV contributions to inquiries</li><li>• Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) Corporate documents (annual report, corporate plan)</li><li>• Correspondence</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calls for comment or submissions</li><li>• Exposure drafts of guidelines</li><li>• Surveys</li><li>• Focus groups</li><li>• Workshops</li><li>• Roadshows and briefings</li><li>• Strategy reviews</li><li>• Public or industry meetings</li><li>• Interactive online tools eg Bang the Table</li><li>• Kitchen table conversations</li><li>• Webinars</li><li>• Education sessions</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stakeholder workshops</li><li>• Taskforces and advisory panels</li><li>• Professional standards forums</li><li>• Advisory committees</li><li>• Communities of practice</li><li>• Deliberative forum-style processes</li><li>• Partnership agreements/ memoranda of understanding with timelines and review points</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technical advisory groups</li><li>• Roundtables</li><li>• Reference groups or expert panels</li><li>• Co-design of industry guidance</li><li>• Use of online collaboration tools</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joint planning</li><li>• Provision of data</li><li>• Shared projects</li><li>• Sponsorships</li><li>• Best practice resource and tools development</li><li>• Partnership project deliveries</li><li>• Capacity building</li></ul> |
|--|---|---|--|---|

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# Monitoring and evaluation

We will monitor and evaluate our performance with a view to continually improve what we do and how we do it, and we will maintain a strong focus on the customer experience.

The measures of our success will include:

- stakeholder feedback via our consultations, online surveys, webinars and social media
- post engagement evaluation via survey

- one-on-one interactions with stakeholders (qualitative)
- annual stakeholder research (quantitative)
- project level customer satisfaction surveys
- website accessibility satisfaction data collection.

## References

Department of Premier and Cabinet (Victoria), Public Engagement Framework (consultation draft), 2020

Department of Finance, Services and Innovation (NSW), Better Regulation Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, June 2016

Essential Services Commissions (Victoria), Stakeholder Engagement Framework

International Association for Public Participation Australasia, *Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement*, May 2015

Victorian Auditor-General's Office, *Public Participation in Government Decision-making: better practice guide*, January 2015.

## Tell us what you think

We welcome your feedback on this framework and how we can best engage with you.

Send feedback to [consultation@energysafe.vic.gov.au](mailto:consultation@energysafe.vic.gov.au).

We value your ideas and will be routinely monitoring our stakeholder engagement activity to make improvements.



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# Connect with us

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