

Energy Safe Victoria

Powerline Bushfire Safety Committee Charter

This document sets out the charter of the Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) Powerline Bushfire Safety Committee (PBSC) established in 2016 by ESV under Section 8 of its Act.

Purpose

The PBSC exists to provide the Director of Energy Safety (DoES) with comprehensive expert advice to support ESV in its administration of the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Amendment Regulations 2016 (the regulations) and any advice ESV may in turn provide government on further policy changes that maybe required in the light of actual experience.

In addressing its purpose, the PBSC will have regard to the regulations, the regulatory impact statement (RIS) including the target fire risk reduction benefits set out herein, and the statement of reasons (SoR).

Objectives

The objective of the PBSC is to provide transparent, independent oversight and advice to ESV in undertaking its regulatory responsibilities to hold the distribution business accountable for the delivery of the fire reduction benefits implicit in the regulations.

Scope

The scope of the PBSC deliberations and activities is that of the regulations, viz:

- Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiters (REFCLs) or other technologies that provide the capacity for polyphase network earth fault performance set out in the regulations.
- Powerline modification or replacement to reduce fire risk (underground cable, covered conductor) in defined areas.
- Automatic Circuit Reclosers or equivalent devices that meet the functional description set out in the regulations.
- Operation of electricity networks to meet the regulation consistent with other objectives such as supply reliability.

Functions

The functions of the PBSC are:

1. To advise the DoES on administration of the regulations, including on its responses to requests for variations or exemptions to the specific requirements contained in the regulations.
2. To consider the effectiveness of the regulations in delivery of the target benefits contained in the RIS as revealed by experience following their implementation.
3. To consider industry experience in the implementation of the regulations and recommend or advise on the comparative desirability of different implementation options (if any) measured against the business case set out in the RIS.
4. To consider and advise on trade-offs (e.g. with supply reliability) involved in implementation and operation of new network facilities, policies, procedures, standards and guidelines.
5. To receive and consider advice from the Victorian Electricity Supply Industry Technical Working Group and other stakeholders.

6. To receive and consider advice from ESV's Electrical Infrastructure Division.
7. To identify and recommend for consideration any adjustments to the regulations necessary to preserve delivery of the target benefits or to further reduce fire risk.
8. To preserve and evolve the expertise and knowledge base required to continue to effectively carry out the functions listed above.

Structure

The PBSC will be comprised of:

A. Members

1. A Chair who is respected across senior levels of the government and industry.

David Harris Original member of the Powerline Bushfire Safety Program Project Control Board and several State committees regarding the Black Saturday bushfires. Comprehensive strategic knowledge of Victorian emergency management arrangements and extensive involvement in the protection of people, infrastructure and information. Previously chair of various COAG, state, national and industry forums. Experienced executive in government and industry.

2. Six independent members with the group having expertise in one or more of the following:

- a. Risk management best practice.

Gaye Francis experienced risk and due diligence engineer. Long association with ESV and involvement, through her firm R2A, in the Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce, conducting specific ESV workshops on the adoption of REFCLs. Development of safety case regimes. Long association with "Women in Engineering" committees, industry associations and promoting women in technical roles.

- b. Infrastructure, strategic/engineering planning and project delivery.

Gail Moody. Deputy Secretary, Corporate Governance and Infrastructure, Department of Justice & Regulation since August 2007. Responsible for overseeing the department's key public accountability and governance requirements, including procurement, performance monitoring and reporting, risk, audit, ICT, environment, and coordination of Budget. Also manages the governance and delivery of the Ravenhall Prison Project, and other major construction, procurement and ICT projects. Prior to joining the Department of Justice & Regulation, Gail held senior roles in the departments of Infrastructure and Transport.

- c. Powerline ignition research and associated technology development.

Tony Marxsen. Original member of the Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce that recommended REFCLs be considered, led all the original and later research and advised government on the technical performance specifications in the bushfire amendment regulations. Chairman of AEMO and over 45 years' experience of all aspects of electricity industry.

- d. Electricity network planning and operations.

Gary Townes. Original member of Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce that recommended REFCLS be considered and more recently independent advisor to the Government on the preparation of the bushfire amendment regulations and RIS/SoR, and member of the government's expert assessment panel for the covered conductor grant program. Electrical engineer with over 30 years' experience in industry and consulting.

- e. Powerline earth fault management in relevant international jurisdictions.

Steve MacDonald. Engineering Support Manager at Orion NZ Ltd. Orion is a community owned entity electricity distribution business servicing the Central Canterbury area on New Zealand with 20 REFCLs installed across their network. Considered to be the region's leading expert on REFCL technology. Lead engineer of the REFCL commissioning team for the installation of the original United Energy REFCL. Advisor to the government on the installation and operation of REFCLs and a member of the government's Review of technologies for prevention of fire starts by Electricity networks workshop.

- f. Policy development and regulatory practice in the public sector.

Claire Noone Claire is a Principal with Nous Group working in the areas of regulatory design, governance and integrity management. She advises government, regulators and business, drawing on her 20 years of experience in the Department of Justice, where she was Acting Secretary, Deputy Secretary Regulation, and Director of Consumer Affairs Victoria.

B. Observers

Five invited observers:

- a. Senior representatives from Victoria's two major rural network owner businesses.
 - i. Powercor - Steve Neave (General Manager Electricity Networks)
 - ii. AusNet Services - Tom Hallam (General Manager Regulation and Network Strategy).
- b. A senior representative of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. Ashley Hunt or Department nominee
- c. ESV
 - i. DoES.
 - ii. A senior representative from ESV - Ian Burgwin (ESV General Manager - Electrical Safety and Regulation)

Ad hoc observers:

- a. Observers identified by the Chair as having a useful contribution to particular proceedings of the PBSC.

ESV will provide the secretariat support and funding for the PBSC.

Procedures

The PBSC will operate in accordance with the following procedures:

Membership

Members will be appointed by the DoES following selection in consultation with the Minister and the Chair. Membership will be reviewed each 24 months.

Meetings

It is anticipated that the PBSC will meet four times per year. The Chair will decide if circumstances require additional meetings. The Chair will determine the conduct of the meeting that best suits the achievement of the PBSC objectives. The secretariat will maintain a 12 months forward calendar of meetings.

Quorum

A quorum will comprise four members plus the Chair. If the Chair is unavailable, the DoES may ask another member to act as Chair for that meeting.

Changes in the charter

The PBSC may recommend to the DoES changes to this charter. Decisions on such changes will be taken by the DoES in consultation with the Minister.

Agenda and minutes

Following review by the Chair, the secretariat will circulate an agenda with supporting papers to members and observers seven days prior to a meeting. Proposed agenda items and submissions should be provided to the PBSC Secretariat at least 28 days prior to scheduled meetings. Draft minutes of meetings will be circulated to members and observers within 28 days of the meeting and confirmed by resolution at the start of the next meeting.

Committee Reports

Following each meeting the Chair will make a formal report to the DoES on matters of significance including, but not limited to, the overall progress of the distribution businesses in meeting their regulatory obligations, work programs and advice on any application made by the businesses for exemptions and or the acceptance of the relevant plans submitted by the distribution businesses to ESV.

Consultation and Transparency

The committee's consultation processes, formal reports received and advice provided to the DoES will normally be made publicly available on the ESV website (except where they contain commercially sensitive or confidential information). The Chair will consider any views expressed by PBSC attendees or other interested parties for the need to treat any relevant matters as confidential for an appropriate period.