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Powerlink wins 2021 Consumer Engagement Award

Electricity transmission system operator Powerlink Queensland has won the 2021 Energy Network Consumer Engagement Award.

Run jointly by Energy Networks Australia (ENA) and Energy Consumers Australia, the award recognises an Australian energy network that demonstrates best practice consumer engagement.

Powerlink Queensland received the award for its consumer engagement approach during its 2023-27 revenue determination process.

Energy Consumers Australia CEO Lynne Gallagher said the network's submission showed outstanding engagement practice and represented a new high-water mark for customer consultation.

"It was pleasing to see Powerlink's willingness to undertake a genuine co-design process together with consumers, market bodies and executive teams within the business," she said.

"When networks undertake this kind of work, discrepancies between industry assumptions and the reality of consumer experiences are laid bare. A clearer understanding of your customer's values, expectations and needs leads to better-served consumers and is better business as well."

ENA Chief Executive Officer Andrew Dillon said the integration of consumer engagement into energy networks business planning was vital to putting customers first and achieving optimal outcomes in pricing and services.

"Powerlink's engagement through its revenue determination process took customers on the journey, rather than assuming their needs and informing them of a pre-determined outcome," he said.

Powerlink Queensland CEO Paul Simshauser said the business was keen to share its experiences and learnings with the energy sector.

"We are eager to offer insights on our engagement approach to other network businesses," he said. "If we can help them better understand the benefits and risks of a co-designed approach, we can work to achieve better outcomes for our customers."

Mr Dillon and Ms Gallagher congratulated the other shortlisted finalists on their outstanding submissions – AGIG, Horizon Power and Energy Queensland.

Background on the award entry

Commencing engagement in May 2019, Powerlink explicitly set an industry-leading objective of delivering a revenue proposal that was capable of acceptance by customers, the Australian Energy Regulator and the organisation. To achieve this goal, Powerlink co-designed its engagement approach – one that was iterative over an 18-month period based on customer feedback.

Powerlink's customer collaboration and willingness to be vulnerable by sharing more information than ever before as part of this revenue determination process has been recognised by customer advocates and industry representatives as 'best practice.

This engagement approach drove a culture of constructive discomfort to strengthen trust and ultimately deliver better value for Powerlink's customers and stakeholders.

ENDS

Media Contact: Tamatha Smith | 0433 569 701| tsmith@energynetworks.com.au

Energy Networks Australia is the national industry body representing Australia's electricity transmission and distribution and gas distribution networks. Our members provide more than 16 million electricity and gas connections to almost every home and business across Australia.

Media contact: Dan Silkstone | 0414 622 762 | daniel.silkstone@energyconsumersaustralia.com.au

Energy Consumers Australia is the independent, national voice for residential and small business energy consumers. We enable residential and small business energy consumers to have their voices heard by the sector by working with other consumer groups to gather evidence-based research with a national perspective, distil it to key viewpoints, and feed it back to the market to influence outcomes.