

## Frequently Asked Questions for ASP1s

The following document summarises frequently asked questions relating to upcoming changes within Ausgrid Customer Connections, relating to the following initiatives:

1. Advancement of preconstruction meeting, and other system enhancements
2. Universal Connections Contract
3. Shared Performance Program for ASP1s and ASP3s.

Should you have any additional questions, please refer them to [Connex@ausgrid.com.au](mailto:Connex@ausgrid.com.au)

### FAQs

#### **Q. *What is changing?***

**A.** To address some of the identified customer, ASP and employee pain points captured over the last three years, and to start to work towards a more seamless connections experience, we are making a number of changes as part of a broader reform program. We will be:

1. Updating our pre-construction process and advancing the pre-construction meetings into the Design stage of the connections journey.
2. Introducing two design statuses, to facilitate the advancement of the pre-construction meeting – Ready for Tender (RFT) and Ready For Construction (RFC).
3. Digitising the pre-construction meeting request process, enabling the ASP1 project managers to request a pre-construction meeting via the Connections Portal.
4. Enhancing the Outage Request process to enable ASP1s to upload their on-the-day outage documentation to the Portal without the need to create a duplicate outage and reducing the number of unnecessary emails to our customer/applicants.
5. Enabling ASP1s to submit critical dates for review and acceptance via the Portal, removing the need for the Project Planning Form (PPF).
6. Implementing automated email notifications to the customer and schedule auto-reminders to provide property related documentation to Ausgrid prior to electrification outages, reducing the risk of property-title related outage cancellations and last-minute scrambling.
7. Consolidating the multiple contracts and offers we currently provide to our customers across all connection types (pending AER approval).
8. Undertaking a discovery and design process to investigate the option to implement a Shared Performance Program initially for ASP1s and ASP3s.

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### ***Q. Why are we implementing these changes***

**A.** During market engagements conducted over the last three years, we have heard the pain points experienced by our ASP partners, contractors and customers, which have highlighted a range of challenges faced during the construction phase of a project.

The construction phase involves a number of parallel pathways utilising multiple systems, all working towards achieving energisation of the customer's project. These pathways are fragmented and necessitate continuous communication back and forth between Ausgrid, our ASP partners and our customers.

Currently, the median energisation time for contestable projects at Ausgrid is well above acceptable levels. Ausgrid cannot achieve reduction in median energisation timeframes without significant reform, with the ultimate goal to deliver a faster, easier and better value connections experience for our customers.

### ***Q. Will you be issuing a revised Connection Process Flowchart?***

**A.** Yes – this will be updated and released prior to the launch on 13 September.

### ***Q. Will you be improving the portal and its navigation?***

**A.** We are undertaking a review of the Portal and will be looking to improve the interaction and user experience of it throughout FY25 and FY26. We are committed to improving this aspect of our customer and partner interface.

***Q. In some cases the ASP1 will request a design change to simplify the construction of a project. However sometimes these solutions don't comply to Ausgrid network standards. E.g. joints within 6m of a road crossing. This can add to the frustration of the ASP3 having to manage these change requests. Has Ausgrid got a plan to manage these requests to ensure the design certification is not delayed?***

**A.** Ausgrid will continue to work with the ASP3 and ASP1s to ensure all designs are compliant with network standards and where required, appropriate exemption pathways are followed. There is not expected to be a change in this process moving forward.

***Q. How long will a connection offer be valid for if it takes over a year to reach Ready For Tender?***

**A.** The design validity period, regardless of whether the design has been certified as Ready for Tender or Ready for Construction, will be 12 months from certification as Ready for Tender (or 24 months for complex projects). Construction phase milestones and validity are still under consideration as part of the new Universal Connection Contract Suite.

***Q. Would there be an expiry timeframe on Ready For Tender designs?***

**A.** As above, the design validity period, regardless of whether the design has been certified as Ready for Tender or Ready for Construction, will be 12 months from certification as Ready for Tender (or 24 months for complex projects).

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### ***Q. What is the difference between a Ready For Tender (RFT) design and a Ready For Construction (RFC) design?***

#### **A. Ready For Tender (RFT)**

This stage is achieved when the design, which includes all necessary drawings, specifications, schedules, and other relevant materials, has undergone a desktop audit to the reasonable satisfaction of Ausgrid. However, it has not been physically inspected on-site by all relevant stakeholders, including ASP Level 1 and Ausgrid representatives. This status indicates that the design documents may be used for the tender process, allowing contractors to prepare and submit their bids, and for the design documents to be used as the basis of the pre-construction meeting. The design will be updated with a watermark indicating it has been certified as Ready for Tender.

#### **Ready For Construction (RFC)**

This stage is achieved when the design has been validated via an on-site physical inspection by all relevant stakeholders, including the ASP Level 3 design team, ASP Level 1, contractors, and Ausgrid representatives, and all necessary design-related approvals and permits have been obtained. This status indicates Ausgrid consents to the design being used for construction once all pre-requisites required by the Connection Contract have been met. Once certified as Ready For Construction, a Ready for Construction number will be appended to the design title block.

### ***Q. What will the Ready For Tender status and Ready For Construction status look like?***

**A.** The design will be updated with a watermark indicating it has been certified as Ready for Tender. Once certified as Ready For Construction, a Ready for Construction number will be appended to the design title block.

### ***Q. Is Ausgrid trying to change the roles and responsibilities?***

**A.** There is no change to the current roles and responsibilities of any key stakeholders in the process.

- ASP3s will continue to be responsible for delivering a constructable design
- As the network constructor, ASP1s will continue to facilitate and attend the preconstruction meeting ensuring that the pre-certified design is constructable based on an onsite assessment, and to discuss with the customer any potential staging or energisation-specific requirements that may impact the delivery time.
- Contestable Project Coordinators (CPCs) will continue to certify the ASP3s design and support the ASP3s with network standard and engineering-related questions. Where required, they will attend the pre-construction meeting.
- Network Connection Coordinators (NCCs – previously known as Compliance Officers) will attend the pre-construction meetings and provide the ASP1s with support regarding operating and outage requirements.

If the design complies with network standards and is feasible to construct, it will be certified. If the ASP1 believes they can achieve the project at a lower cost using an alternative method, it is up to the customer and the ASPs to agree on the best approach.

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***Q. How does the additional RFT step minimise ASP1 variations? If an ASP1 needs to be engaged prior to Design Certification, then they will be submitting their tender price on the basis of the “Ready For Tender Design” and would therefore initiate their variations to the developer immediately after the pre-construction meeting.***

**A.** The advancement of the pre-construction meeting into the Design stage enables the ASP1 to engage with the project prior to certification as Ready For Construction (RFC). This enables the ASP1 to provide comments on construction methodology and potential alterations to design based on an onsite assessment. The primary advantage of this proposed change is that the design can be amended prior to construction commencement meaning less down time once crews mobilise works.

***Q. Do these changes mean that the ASP1 shall be appointed prior to final certification?***

**A.** Yes, the tendering process and nomination of the ASP1 will occur earlier based on a Ready For Tender design. It should be noted that the tendering process can start at any stage. However, the design is not certified Ready For Tender (RFT) until Ausgrid certifies it as such based on a desktop audit.

***Q. The changes make it seem like the design will be redesigned by the ASP1, making the design process more complicated with a longer time before final design certification.***

**A.** The proposal will not change the clear roles and responsibilities of the ASP1, ASP3s, and other key stakeholders in the process. To be clear, *there is no intent for any redesign by an ASP1*. Our proposal is looking to bring forward existing ASP1 input, which already occurs at the pre-construction meeting, into the design phase. As with the current process, Ausgrid will continue to work with our delivery partners to ensure projects flow through the stages efficiently to achieve their desired outcomes for our customers.

***Q. Has Ausgrid considered how this change will impact how and when customers engage ASP1s? It is common for customers to have separate timelines for design and construction. E.g. to secure funding against risk.***

**A.** Ausgrid's intent is for the ASP1 to be engaged earlier to ensure their input is captured as part of the design process, rather than after certification. We anticipate key benefits for Customers in reducing the risk of scope changes and associated costs and delays during construction.

The proposed changes and processes will be incorporated into the revised Connection Contracts and will incorporate a design “Ready For Tender” status, both of which can provide early Customer visibility of scope of works and process.

***Q. The concern I see with engaging ASP1 early for a large-scale project is the tendering process - which is currently based on certified plans prior to engaging an ASP1.***

**A.** The certified “Ready For Tender” design will have gone through the same desktop design checking process as per the current process. The “Ready For Construction” Certification will be provided following the pre-construction meeting with input from all required parties.