

Future-Proofing in Australia's Electricity Distribution Industry (FPDI)

AECOM IES Technology Testing Survey Workshop Minutes

23rd July 2015

Attendees:

Tom Butler, CEC
Maryanne Coffey, CEC
Mark Lampard, AECOM
Angela Rozali, AECOM
Ian Foster, ReneSolar
Paul Scerri, RFI
Yu Chan, Canadian Solar
John Krbaleski, Victorian Government
Ned Halliday, Yarra Energy Foundation
LyleDeSousa, Legal Energy Lawyers
Gautam Vimalanathan, AGL Energy Ltd

Welcome

Meeting opened at 10.45am.

CEC welcomed, thanked all for attending and gave an overview of the FPDI project, context for this work and expectations for the workshop.

Attendees were asked to express what they had hoped to get out of the session

JK (Gov.): The Victorian Government has announced the \$20 million New Energy Jobs Fund which will support businesses and community groups to develop renewable energy projects. The government is also keen to lead the policy discussion and keep abreast of ways to enhance commercial opportunities.

GV (AGL): from a grid connection application perspective, questioning objectives and looking for a better way to get things done for commercial solar.

LDS (Legal Energy Lawyers): Looking to assist clients including: solar developers, lease providers and community groups in grid connection process

IF (ReneSolar): Looking to gather information on grid connection.

PS (RF): Customer base is moving to commercial solar so keen to work to improve connection processes efficiency.

YC (CS): Experience is in large commercial and we hope to assist in improving connection processes.

AECOM presentation - Mark Lampard and Angela Rozali

- Consultation findings concluded that there is a need for a national testing and compliance framework and there is lots of support for it to be progressed from the surveyed parties.
- The findings looked at the key areas of process, technical, management and interfaces to develop an idea of what the framework could look like.
- In the development of a framework, who owns and who should own risks should be considered?
- The framework would need to be administered by an independent third party.
- There is no body that is responsible for managing such a framework. Who is 'above' the industry on a technical level?
- Ongoing operational compliance (periodically assessed) was a new issue that DNSPs are concerned about and could be part of the framework
- Concerns were also raised about the ability for owners to change inverter settings after commissioning.
- International standards provide a good starting point, but none are a perfect fit for the Australian market.
- The framework would need to be technology neutral.

JK (Gov.): Could Energy Safe Victoria take responsibility for this? They have technical people although this would need further investigation. This would mean that one jurisdiction would be leading the way and would then have to go to COAG to progress a national outcome. This could also open up funding opportunities. There will be a need to sign up to the objectives but I think this organisation is the closest fit.

LDS (LELC): Could this be done through NATA certification? What third parties do they use in Germany and US?

AR (AECOM): In Germany and US they have an accreditation process to determine third parties. (After meeting note: German third parties comply with EN45011, while US third parties are listed on the Nationally Recognised Testing Laboratory Program)

TB (CEC): Inverter energy systems over 30 kilowatts do not fall into the scope of AS 4777.

GV (AGL): One of the revised 4777 rules covers off secondary protection.

TB (CEC): CEC to check the revision but our understanding is that this is high level and limited by the standard's scope.

ML (AECOM): Assessment of risk and resulting connection equipment costs is a major differentiator between DNSP's.

General comments from attendees

- Government/industry would be able to progress this more readily with a cost benefit analysis.
- If there was an appropriate body to lead this work then industry would accept it once implemented.
- Many issues in the connection process come down to knowledge about available capacity, if this was known connection applicants would be less likely to pursue unviable connection applications.
- Creating a rule change to mandate this via the AEMC is a 3 year process but it could be useful in addition to this CEC led project.
- One of the key issues to be understood is risk transfers.
- Is benchmarking of connection processes a good start to identify and promote best practice?
- The Victorian government's renewable energy action plan is under development and looking to be completed in the next couple of months (looking for quick wins and long term goals).
- Victoria has the most competitive energy market (retail competition, number of networks, etc.) so if rolled out here it would be a good demonstration for other states and territories.

Actions to progress the work's recommendations (butcher paper notes)

- How do we get technical standards/expectations aligned?
- Can an existing government 'compliance' body take this on? (e.g. CER, ESC, ERAC).
- Need to understand the nuances between different technical requirements and why they exist and what is already relied upon in the industry? (e.g. IEC requirements for reverse power protection equipment)
- Would some form of control by DNSPs help them to appreciate the opportunities?
- How do we define a benefit to networks?
- This framework would be likely to require some regulatory adoption to progress.

Next steps:

- CEC to circulate notes for feedback
- CEC will consider discussion in light of standards scoping request for proposal