

Customer Forum Week 13: Customer engagement on draft proposal



Update

25 March 2019

Updates

- ▶ **Focus group findings**
- ▶ **Social media**
- ▶ **Website**

Focus group findings



About the research

- ▶ **Qualitative research was conducted from 5 to 15 March, with a total of 55 participants, comprising:**
 - › Face-to-face focus group discussions in Sale (5 participants), Wangaratta (10 participants) and Mernda (15 participants)
 - › Online focus group discussions (15 completed responses) with customers from our broader distribution area, including half of participants selected from areas impacted by 25 Jan rolling blackouts
 - › Due to lower than expected attendance at face-to-face focus groups held in Sale and Wangaratta as a result of bushfires, an additional online focus group discussion was held for participants from Sale and Wangaratta (10 completed responses)
- ▶ **Primary purpose of the research was to inform the development of a quantitative survey designed to track AusNet Services' brand and customer perceptions over time.**
- ▶ **As part of that research, we explored customer responses to a 'Customer Flyer', which was developed to encourage feedback on the draft proposal**

General observations from the research

- ▶ **In terms of general perceptions (not specific to draft proposal), the sentiment is fairly consistent with what we've heard through other research. In particular, affordability is a key concern, customers are generally satisfied with current reliability levels, there is a lack of awareness of AusNet Services, and there is an opportunity to improve our communication with customers, particularly around outages**
 - › Rising electricity costs are a concern, people tend to have had a personal experience of price rises or have heard about it through the media
 - › AusNet Services customers are generally satisfied with the reliability of their electricity supply
 - › Mixed views on AusNet Services' communications about outages. Some people praise text messages and letters during planned and unplanned outages, and report that power is restored ahead of the estimated time. Other report text messages coming too late (when the power has been out for a long time or after the power has been restored) or not receiving any information at all.

General observations from the research

- ▶ **Messages around reducing bushfire risk and maintaining recent improvements in reliability are well received: reducing bushfire risk is a necessary obligation for AusNet Services and an important safety requirement. Maintaining recent improvements in reliability is expected by customers.**
- ▶ **Focus group discussions preferred to community forums, as an opportunity to be honest without fear of offending AusNet Services, and equal opportunity to provide an opinion, whereas at community forums, attendees generally have an issue and dominate discussion.**
 - › In the main, many people stated they would be unlikely to attend a community forum run by AST to gather feedback on the draft plans. Those who found the topic interesting would attend if it was a convenient time and location.

Feedback on customer flyer



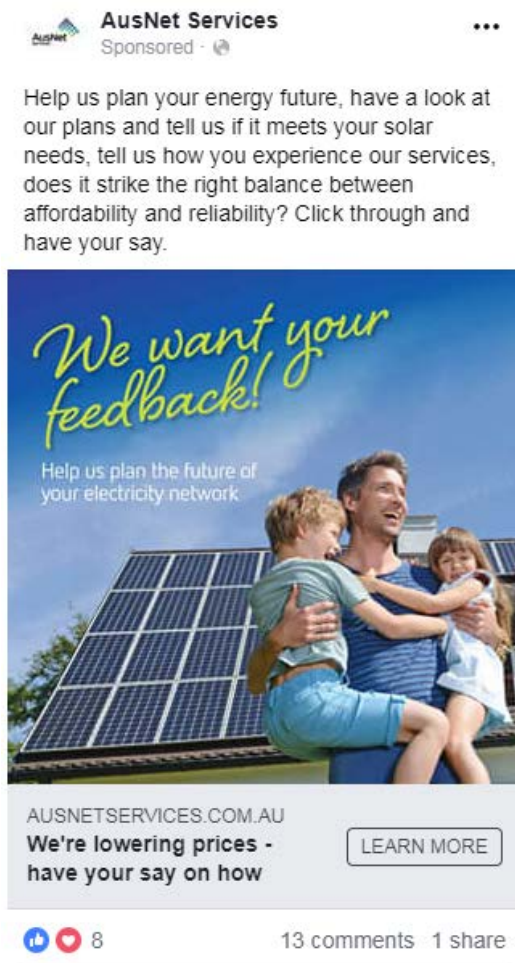
▶ **Seeking feedback from the average customer on the draft proposal is challenging, as context is very important in providing a response to consultation questions but simplicity is necessary to pique interest**

- › \$38 in lower prices lacks context. It is seen as a small saving and people are unsure if retailers would pass it on to customers. There is also confusion if this means \$38 less per month, quarter or year
- › There is confusion regarding the questions. For example, “What’s the right balance between keeping costs down and allowing more customers to sell more solar power back into the grid? And should all customers contribute to these costs – or just those wanting to start or increase grid exports? People simply do not understand what this means.

Social media and website



Facebook posts



► Static post on our Facebook page on 13th Mar

- › Organic reach: 1,316 Facebook users
- › Eight users liked the post on our page
- › The post has been shared once. We do not have visibility of the shared post but we do know there are two comments on the shared post and an additional 3 likes
- › The static post has created 20 link clicks
- › There are no comments on the post that appears on our Facebook page

► Geo-targeted advertising campaign 20th – 31 Mar

- › Targeted postcodes to rural areas of the distribution network to appear in news feeds to all users within the areas during the advert campaign period, whether they follow our page or not
- › Advert links directly to the feedback page on the website
- › As at 25 March, it reached 41,884 users
- › Advert has generated 552 link clicks
- › One customer has publically commented on solar tariffs under the advert.

Website

- ▶ **From 11 Feb (when the web page launched) to 22 March, there were:**
 - › 620 page views for the electricity distribution regulatory review page. This represents 0.12% of total web traffic
 - › 40 page views of the draft proposal feedback form but no responses submitted
 - › 428 of these entrances to the page were from direct links, e.g. if the link was sent via email (as opposed to google search)
 - › 80% bounce rate, which means 80% of people who viewed the page did not go on to complete the feedback form or navigate to any of our other pages after
 - › Average time spent on the page was 1.31 minutes

General observations from social media and website



- ▶ **Both the static facebook post and paid advertising has generated a reach and response that is typical of other campaigns we've run**
- ▶ **The figures suggest that customers are engaged on the topic, but the website bounce rate of 80% demonstrates that they choose not to provide feedback**
- ▶ **This may indicate that either the format for providing feedback is not accessible or easy to navigate, or the consultation questions are difficult to respond to without more context**
- ▶ **We're adopting a learning approach to this form of engagement to improve our understanding of what works, for example, testing if paid advertising makes a difference**

Next steps

▶ To improve engagement, we will:

- › extend the deadline for feedback to the end of April
- › promote engagement through social media channels of other stakeholders, including consumer advocate groups, local councils and MPs
- › explore the use of LinkedIn as another social media tool
- › redraft some consultation questions with more context to encourage feedback