AusNet

Private electric lines

Your responsibilities

Table of contents

Private electric lines 4

Rights and responsibilities 5

Our responsibilities 6

Types of private electric lines 7

Planting and pruning vegetation around powerlines 10

Private electric lines

Private electric lines are the overhead and underground powerlines that connect properties to our distribution network. Most customers have overhead private aerial lines (PALs).

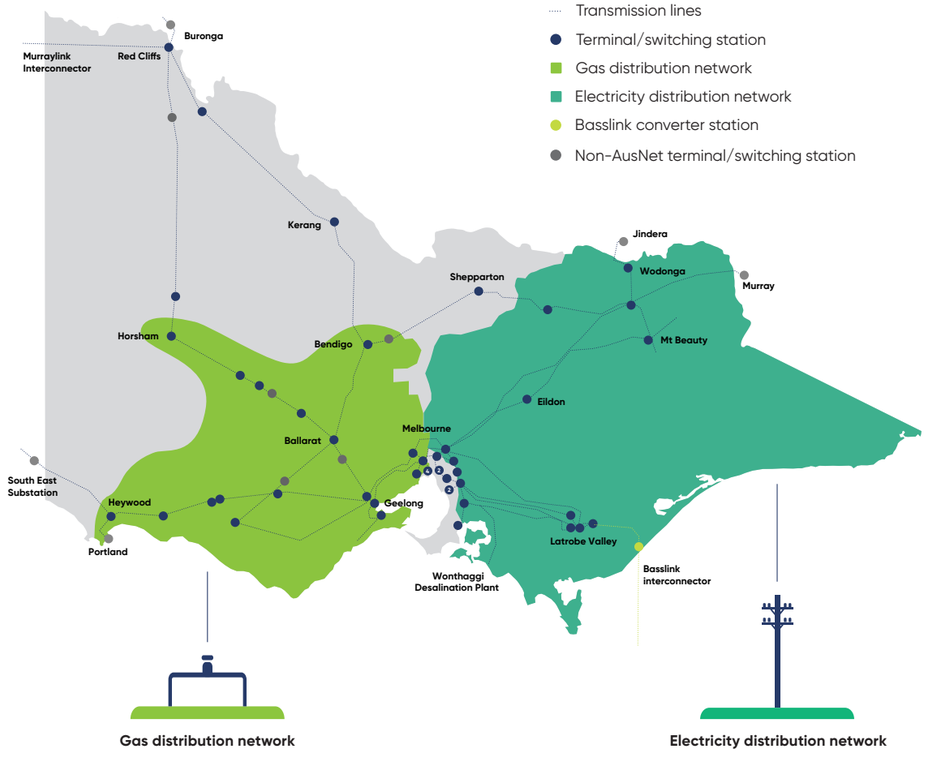
About AusNet

We are one of five electricity distributors in Victoria. We own and operate:

- Victoria's high voltage electricity transmission network
- a gas distribution network in western Victoria
- an electricity distribution network across eastern Victoria.

For more information on who we are and what we do, visit **ausnetservices.com.au/about**.

We provide our customers with a safe and reliable supply of electricity.
However, if you own private aerial lines, you also have some responsibilities.



Rights and responsibilities

Your responsibilities

You're responsible for all wires, poles and other electrical equipment from the point of supply on your property. You're not responsible for our metering equipment.

It's your responsibility to regularly inspect your PAL to make sure it's in good condition and clear of trees and branches. This will help support safe and reliable power supply to your property and reduce the chances of electrocution or fires. We recommend using binoculars to inspect the cable covering (insulation). You also need to check your poles to make sure they aren't rotting or damaged. Download our maintenance checklist at **ausnet.com.au/pal**.

Electrical work on private lines

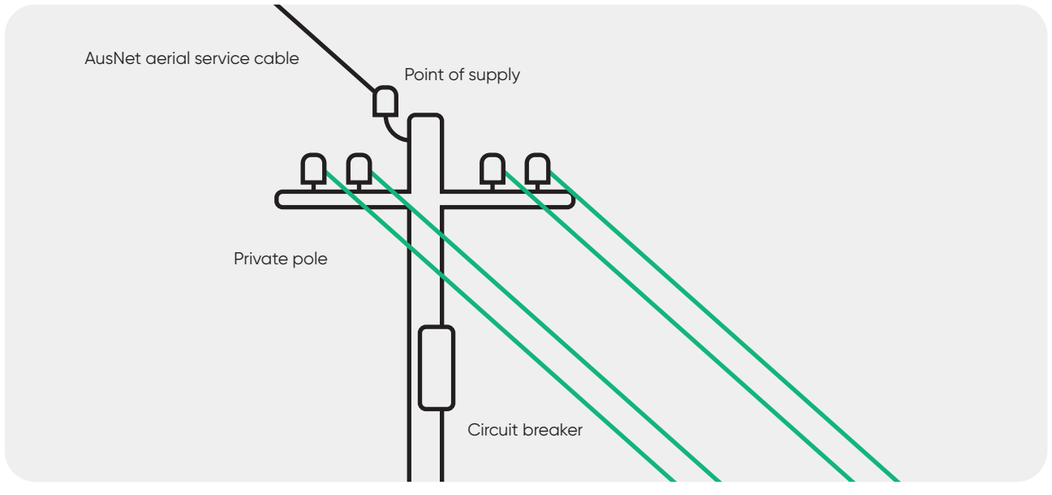
We recommend inspecting your private electric line(s) and poles at least once a year or hire a registered electrician to inspect it for you and repair any damage or wear and tear.

When an electrician alters or repairs your PAL, the entire line must comply with the current AS3000 wiring rules and Electricity Safety (General) Regulations 2019. Make sure you get a Certificate of Electrical Safety from the electrician as you'll need to send this to us after any work is done.

Circuit breakers

When a registered electrician does maintenance on your PAL, they must fit a circuit breaker if there isn't one already. A circuit breaker is a switch installed at the start of your private line. It works like a fuse box where the breaker will automatically switch off the power source to avoid a dangerous situation. If this circuit breaker 'switches off', you may be able to restore the power supply yourself. If you're not comfortable doing this, contact a registered electrician.

If a circuit breaker is switched off for tree pruning or maintenance, ask your registered electrician to confirm the private electric line has been isolated and isn't live before starting work.



Our responsibilities

Under the Electricity Safety (Bushfire Mitigation) Regulations 2023, we must inspect PALs every three years in high bushfire risk areas and every five years in other areas. We can also inspect your private line(s) at any time to check it's safe, including the pole, crossarms and wires.

If we find any defects, we'll send you a letter explaining what you need to do. If we find a dangerous situation, especially on total fire ban days and in conditions deemed highly dangerous, we have the right to disconnect your electricity supply immediately without notice to keep everyone safe. If this happens you'll be charged a disconnection and reconnection fee.

We're responsible for all high voltage powerlines, even if they cross your property. To check whether a powerline is privately owned or owned by us, call 1300 360 795 between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

Is this a legal requirement?

Electricity customers have always been responsible for their PALs. In 1984, the legislation governing this clearly defined the 'point of supply' and reinforced the need for PAL owners to keep their lines in good working condition and clear of vegetation. You could be liable if your PAL causes injury or property damage. This is why it's important to regularly inspect your PAL and organise necessary repairs if you find any damage. For more information about the *Electricity Safety Act 1998*, visit esv.vic.gov.au.

Did you know?

Under the *Electricity Safety (General) Regulations 2019*, any PAL in a high bushfire risk area that is more than 20% defective (either in wiring and/or poles) must be replaced with an underground alternative at the owner's cost. You can avoid this additional cost by regularly inspecting your PAL.

Types of private electric lines

There are two types of private electric lines:

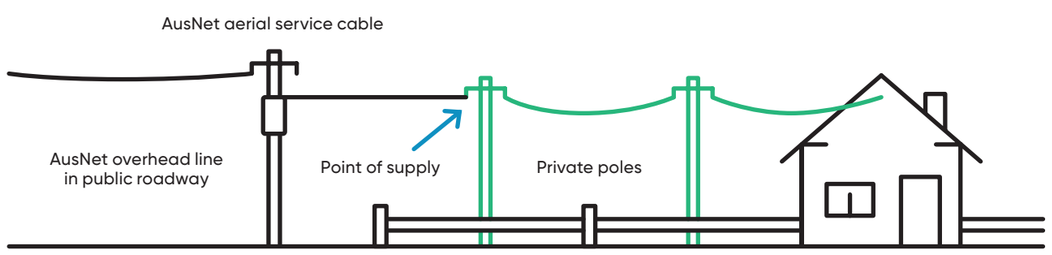
- Bare and insulated private aerial lines (PALs).
- Underground powerlines.

Both types of private electric lines begin at the point of supply.

Bare and insulated PALs

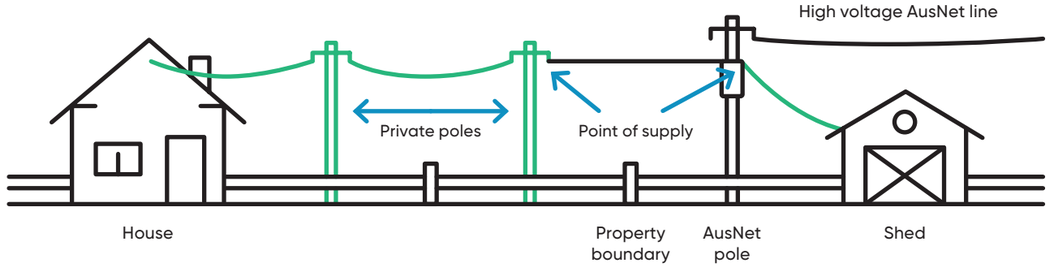
Example 1

When an overhead line starts from a public road and is carried onto your land by private poles, the point of supply and your maintenance responsibility starts from the first private pole. See the lines and poles marked green below.



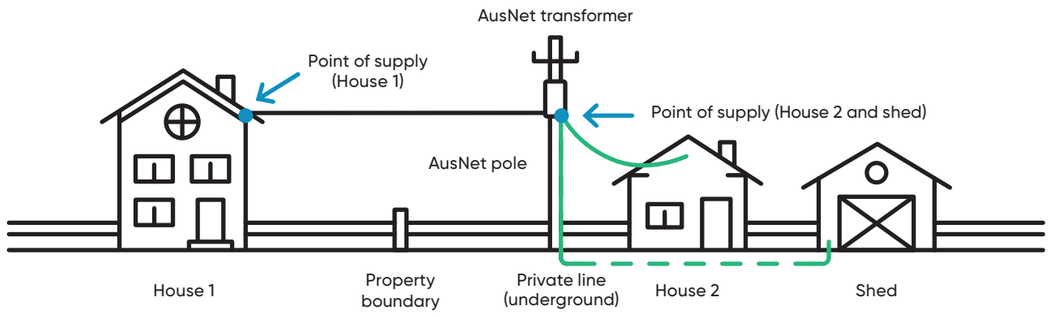
Example 2

If some private lines on your property have a transformer fitted on the pole, the point of supply starts where your lines connect to our pole – this can be a single or double connection. In this case, you're responsible for all connection boxes and circuit breakers mounted or associated with your line(s). See the lines and poles marked green below.



Example 3

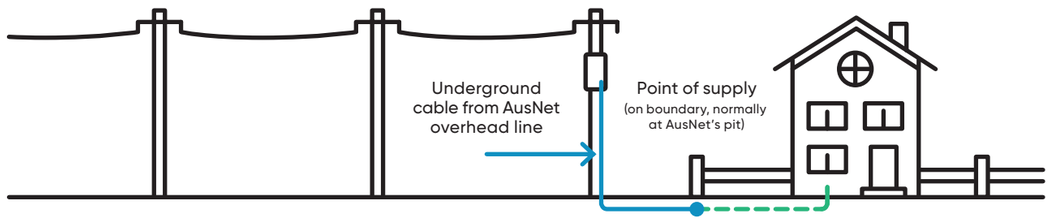
The point of supply for House 2 and its shed is where the private lines are connected to our pole (see Example 1). If there is a second house located across a boundary line which doesn't need a private pole, the point of supply is where the wire connects to the actual house. In the diagram below, the green line shows the responsibility for House 2 and its shed, and the blue dots show the points of supply.



Underground lines

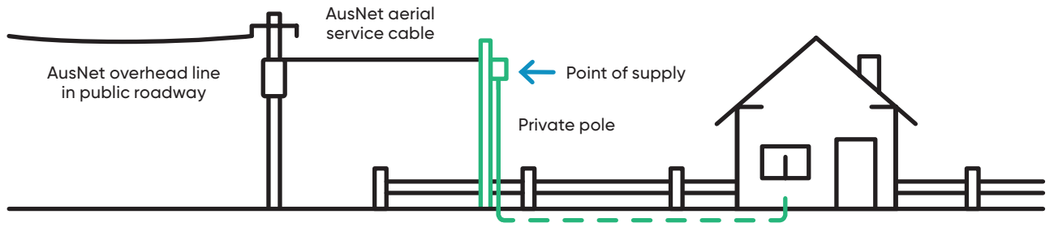
Example 4

The diagram below shows an example of how an underground line might work. The underground supply is where the cable crosses your property boundary or connects to your property at our boundary service pit. In this case, you're responsible for clearing and maintaining vegetation over and around the pit. We'll service and maintain the underground supply cable.



Example 5

Sometimes the point of supply is both above and below ground as shown in the diagram below. In this case, you're responsible from the point of supply on the pole, including the underground electricity line.



If your PAL needs a lot of reconstruction or repair, we're legally required to ask you to replace your overhead line with an underground line. This is safer than an overhead line that is not in good working condition, as it reduces the risk of fires and electrocution.

Be careful when digging near underground electricity cables and always check with Before You Dig Australia first. For more information, visit **byda.com.au**.

Planting and pruning vegetation around powerlines

Vegetation

It's important to keep your PAL clear of overgrown trees, shrubs and grass. Before adding new plants or trees, consider whether these will impact your PAL in the future. Read our guidelines for planting near electric lines at **ausnet.com.au/vegetation**.

Clearance space between vegetation and electric lines

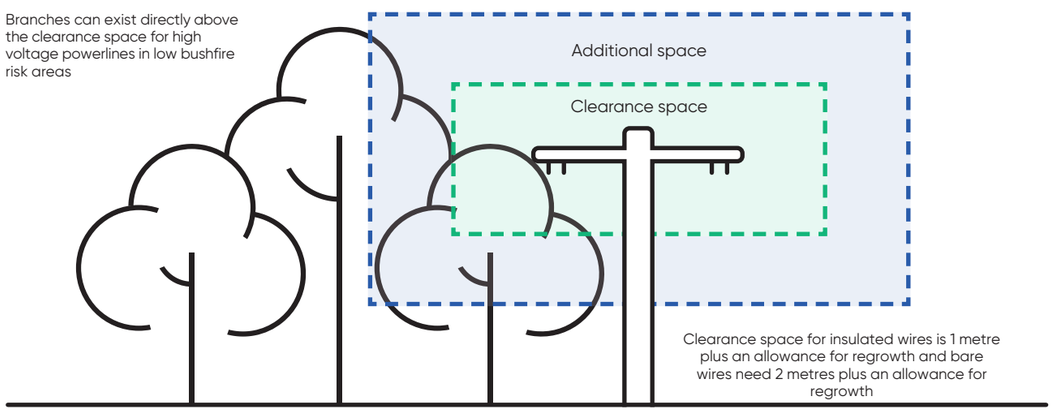
There is always a fire risk when plants grow too close to powerlines. If in doubt, don't plant any trees close to powerlines.

Some tips:

- The safe distance between vegetation (trees, branches and shrubs) and powerlines and poles is called a clearance space.
- Vegetation with a maximum mature height of 3 meters or less, can be planted within 3-7 meters of a powerline.
- Larger vegetation should be planted more than 7 metres away from powerlines.
- Plant vegetation away from powerlines to avoid them from falling onto them during storms or as they age. For example, plant a tree that can grow 10 meters at least 13 meters away from a powerline.

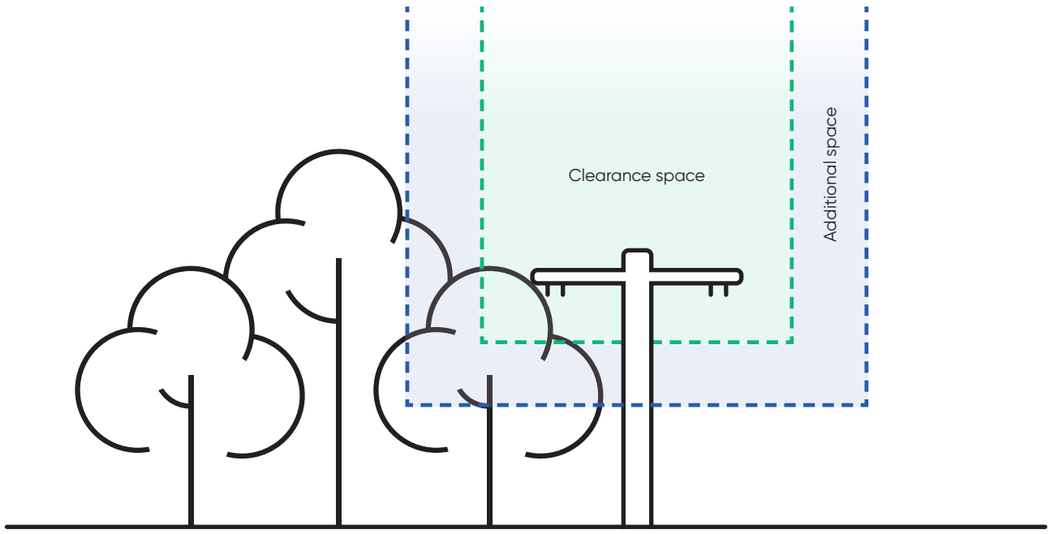
Low bushfire risk area

In low bushfire risk areas, branches can grow directly above the clearance space for bare wire powerlines. For insulated wires, clearance space is one metre plus an allowance for regrowth. For bare wires, regrowth space is two metres plus an allowance for regrowth.



High bushfire risk area

In high bushfire risk areas, branches must not grow directly above the clearance space. For insulated wires, regrowth space is one metre plus an allowance for regrowth. For bare wires, clearance space is two metres plus an allowance for regrowth.



Use a qualified tree clearer

Never climb a power pole or prune branches near powerlines. Touching live wires can cause death or serious injury. The best option is to contact a certified tree clearer or arborist to clear vegetation from powerlines.

Council permits

In some areas, you may need a local council planning permit before you can cut or prune a tree. However, if you get a notice from us asking you to prune trees around your PAL, you don't need a council planning permit before engaging a certified tree clearer.

AusNet

Follow us on

@AusNet.Energy

@AusNet

ausnet.com.au