

15 April 26

Ms Anna Collyer  
Chair Australian Energy Market Commission  
Via AEMC website

Dear Ms Collyer,

### **Improving life support processes draft rule determination**

PLUS ES welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Australian Energy Market Commission's (AEMC) draft rule determination on Improving Life Support Processes.

PLUS ES is a registered Metering Co-ordinator (MC) and an accredited Metering Provider (MP), Metering Data Provider (MDP) and Embedded Network Manager (ENM) in the National Electricity Market (NEM). Our skilled workforce provides metering services across Australia and supports Consumer Energy Resources (CER) deployment. We provide metering services through Retailers and directly to customers ranging from small residential customers through to Australia's largest manufacturers and mining operators.

PLUS ES supports the AEMC's objective to strengthen life support processes by ensuring reliable, consistent, and accurate identification of customers— including those in embedded networks—with critical and quality – of - life equipment needs. An overview of our feedback has been provided to indicate areas requiring further consideration:

- The role of the ENM within the proposed framework – We support clear, retailer-led accountability for communicating life support requirements for customers in embedded networks. In the absence of a clearly defined and justified role for the ENM within the framework, we oppose the proposed role for the ENM as an intermediary in these communications. The rules should instead require retailers to identify and communicate directly with the relevant Exempt Embedded Network Service Provider (EENSP) to ensure clarity of responsibility, timely information flow, and effective management of life support obligations;
- Planned Interruption notifications for life support customers – We support the objective of ensuring planned interruption notifications are provided to life support customers and, where available, their nominated secondary contact. However, we note that this obligation may extend beyond retailers and distributors, as retailers may have outsourced their notification functions to metering service providers. The framework should clearly recognise the broader operational impacts including, but not limited to, B2B mechanisms for communicating this information; and
- Centralisation reduces cost, complexity and third-party risk – The communication and transparency of a life support status against a NMI, has been a recurring cost burden on market participants. A centralised database would reduce cost, complexity, and implementation risk by eliminating the need for ongoing system enhancements and third-party dependencies required to manage fragmented data arrangements, while improving accountability and the reliability of critical information under the rules.

Further detail is provided in the sections below. In addition, we welcome ongoing engagement to discuss this submission or any other matters arising from the consultation. If you have any questions or wish for further discussion, please contact Helen Vassos on 0419 322 530 or at [Helen.vassos@pluses.com.au](mailto:Helen.vassos@pluses.com.au).

Yours sincerely,



**Andrew Divitaris**

**PLUS ES – Director of Metering Business Development & Strategy**

## 1. Communicating the life support status to the EENSP

PLUS ES supports placing clear responsibility on retailers to communicate embedded network on - market customer life support requirements to the EENSP. We also acknowledge the current deficiencies in role clarity and retailer visibility of contact details for the relevant EENSP. In the absence of a clearly defined and justified role for the ENM within the framework, we do not support the proposed approach that effectively assigns the ENM an intermediary function for conveying life support information to the EENSP. This approach introduces unnecessary complexity, dilutes accountability, and risks delays in critical communications. The rule framework should instead require retailers to identify and communicate directly with the relevant EENSP, ensuring accountability and timely, reliable management of life support obligations without reliance on an intermediary.

Our key qualifications are as follows:

- The role of the ENM within the framework – The introduction of the ENM within the proposed NERR clauses 124(1)(d) and 124D appears to be arbitrary. The framework appears to position the ENM as a contingent intermediary to support retailer notification of life support status to the EENSP, rather than as a core participant with primary responsibility. This is reflected in clause 124(1)(d)(ii), which acknowledges circumstances where an ENM may not exist at a customer's premises, and clause 124D, which imposes a time-limited obligation on the ENM only where one is engaged. These provisions suggest the ENM's role is conditional and derivative, warranting further consideration as to the necessity and proportionality of embedding the ENM within the primary life support communication framework.

### **NERR clause 124(1)(d)(ii) –**

*(d) where there is no distributor for the customer's premises, no later than 1 business day after receipt of advice from the customer under paragraph (a), notify:*

*(i) the Embedded Network Manager responsible for the customer's premises; or*

*(ii) where there is no Embedded Network Manager for the customer's premises, the exempt embedded network service provider, that a life support user is residing or intending to reside at the customer's premises and the date from which the life support equipment is required.*

### **NERR clause 124D – Obligations of Embedded Network Manager**

*Where an Embedded Network Manager has been notified by a retailer under subrule 124(1)(d)(i) or 124B(1A)(a), the Embedded Network Manager must within 1 business day of receiving the notice provide the information in that notice to the relevant exempt embedded network service provider.*

#### **Note**

*The AEMC proposes to recommend that rule 124D be classified as a tier 1 civil penalty provision under the National Energy Retail Regulations. (See clause 6 and Schedule 1 of the National Energy Retail Regulations.)*

- National Electricity Objective (NEO) – The proposed rule changes would require retailers to operate dual process pathways for notifying life support status to the EENSP: one via the ENM, and a separate direct process where an ENM is not available. This introduces additional process layers that increase cost and complexity to the retailer by requiring them to maintain parallel notification arrangements for the same underlying obligation. Including the ENM, introduces unnecessary dependencies on an intermediary party creating the potential for delay or failure. The incremental costs and risks associated with introducing an intermediary role are not proportionate to any demonstrated improvement in consumer outcomes, rather it achieves the opposite by increasing the risk.

Alternatively, PLUS ES' recommendation of requiring the retailer to identify and directly communicate to the EENSP supports clear accountability, timely information flows, and outcomes consistent with the NEO, such as efficient processes, system reliability, and customer safety.

- Retailer access to EENSP contact details – PLUS ES acknowledges that retailers may not currently have visibility of EENSP contact details. However, AEMO is expected to hold this information through the embedded network exempt seller application processes. Enhancing the MSATS CATS\_EMB\_NET\_ID\_CODES table to include basic contact details (such as an email address), with access appropriately restricted by AEMO, would provide retailers with the necessary visibility.

This represents an efficient and proportionate mechanism for facilitating retailer communication with EENSPs, as it:

- Promotes efficiency and reduces regulatory costs - by establishing a single, consistent process for retailers, reducing process complexity, avoiding confusion, and lowering ongoing compliance and implementation costs for retailers and, where applicable, ENMs (by removing the ENM from the notification pathway); and
- Supports practical and proportionate outcomes - by reflecting the structural and operational realities of market participants, including those that do not operate via B2B arrangements, thereby improving implementation, reducing barriers to compliance, and supporting proportionate regulation.

## Recommendation

PLUS ES recommends that the AEMC amends the proposed rules to require:

- The retailer to directly communicate with the EENSP. This would include removing all obligations which include the ENM in the proposed framework; and
- The EENSP contact details to be included in MSATS as recommended above.

## 2. Market centralisation of life support status on customer's premises

PLUS ES acknowledges the sensitivity of privacy considerations associated with recording life support status in a centralised market database. We consider that, through effective industry collaboration, it is possible to design an appropriate solution that delivers efficiency gains while appropriately mitigating privacy risks.

To date, significant time and cost have already been and continue to be invested in B2B-based communication mechanisms between participants, which have perpetuated fragmented data arrangements. These arrangements require ongoing reconciliation, continuous system enhancements to address data gaps and inconsistencies, and the management of inter-system dependencies, resulting in increased cost, complexity, and operational risk over time.

A centralised database for life support customer management would promote the NEO by:

- supporting efficient, reliable, and safe supply for vulnerable consumers at lowest reasonable cost;
- Providing a single source of truth for life support status, centralisation would improve data accuracy, enable timely and reliable information sharing across responsible parties;
- Reducing the risk of missed notifications or protection failures during planned and unplanned interruptions;
- Clarifying accountability for maintaining life support information, reducing operational complexity and duplicative system costs, and minimise reliance on manual processes and third-party interfaces; and
- Providing a scalable and future proof system to accommodate future rule changes or additional participants.

Overall, a centralised approach would deliver net benefits to consumers by improving safety and reliability outcomes while avoiding the disproportionate costs and risks associated with fragmented, disparate life support data arrangements.