

Electricity Authority Advisory Group meeting notes

Second Digitalisation Sub Group Discussion

10am – 12pm Friday 19 September 2025

Attendees

Electricity Authority

Carl Billington - Principal Advisor Advisory Groups; Larissa Lutchman – Manager, Strategy Planning & Performance.

Advisory Group

Jamie Silk (Chair); Steven Graham; Liz Kilduff; Jeremy Adamson; Fiona Wiseman; Miranda Struthers; Gareth Cartwright; Helen Tua;

Apologies

Sam Elder; Jason Larkin; Jodi Gardner;

Confidentiality

The confidentiality status for this engagement was set as open, limited – which means that participants are welcome to indicate to peers and colleagues they are engaged on this topic and share high-level information in confidence and invite feedback.

Confidentiality status may change at later stages of this work and the Authority will advise if this occurs.

EAAG – Confidentiality & Information Sharing Rubric			
OPEN		CLOSED	
1. No restriction: share openly & widely	2. Limited: share in-confidence with a pre-agreed circulation. This might also mean we are open about the topic we are discussing but not the detail yet.	3. Temporary: will become open for sharing soon, but hold til then.	4. Confidential: Don't share.

Introduction and context

The Chair and the Authority Representative provided a brief introduction and recap of the engagement to date.

Following on from the release of the “[Our future is digital](#)” discussion paper, the Authority has engaged with a wide range of external stakeholders. This discussion builds on the earlier session with EAAG members as well as some of the input from wider engagement sessions.

Overview

The Authority provided a summary of feedback to-date (which has since been [published here](#)), and then frame this discussion around three key areas:

1. Refining the problem/opportunity definition
2. Reviewing proposed changes as a result of stakeholder feedback to date (changes to foundation principles and decision-making criteria).
3. Initial review of a draft system map

Key messages from our advice

The group commended the layered approach provided in the Authority’s work that helps makes this digestible for stakeholders. Key recommendations (from some or all members) included:

- Clarity on the ultimate link back to affordability and reliability objectives;
- Spotlight how to deliver accessibility for all and use digitalisation to help us measure community impact and be accountable to our communities;
- Spotlight how to deliver usability (noting multiple actors deliver end solutions);
- Spotlight how to deliver trust (includes consumer trust, privacy, security and data trust). Rigorous standards with good process when it goes wrong;
- Properly segment and understand consumers – consumers are nuanced, cannot generalise;
- The system map the EA can influence is clear, but the links should also acknowledge how this interacts with non-energy data (e.g. home material environment or business logistics context) so it is consistent with integrating to deliver end-user solutions;
- Mapping overseas centralised v decentralised experience to NZ context then piggyback off what works;
- Make engagement digestible by splitting platform enablers from work focused on people/end-outcomes/at the detailed level;
- Need to also specifically consider AI opportunities and risks;
- Balance focus on innovation for future solutions with opportunities to change some basics that simplify and unlock the power of data today. (This reflected a view that market infrastructure/rules have supported decentralised data with highly restricted access and resulting business models that secure rents/value from this restricted access);

- Clear plan to balance tension between moving fast (no-regrets; low risks) and deep, and also between addressing less certain or more complex needs of selected segments and providing a robust base for very long-terms needs

With this work in support of a discussion paper, the workshop focused on providing individual expert feedback within the context of collective group discussion (and the wide stakeholder input already received). It did not seek to drive investigative or analytic work that would resolve differences of opinion.

In the bullets below, the matters raised may be the view of one or more member and will not necessarily reflect a collective view.

Problem/opportunity framing

The Authority provided the following slide as a discussion prompt and invited feedback from EAAG members, specifically regarding any changes they would recommend based on the summary of stakeholder feedback to-date:

The initial problem/opportunity framing

Getting digitalisation right will enable consumers, industry participants and innovators to take advantage of a range of important benefits:

Consumers will benefit by:

- simplified and more consistent information about their electricity use
- more choices, leading to greater flexibility in how they use energy
- lower costs through more choices and a more efficient system.

Industry participants and innovators will benefit by:

- improved consumer engagement through better information and automation
- a smarter system, resulting in more efficient and sustainable investment choices
- lower barriers to entry for the creation of new services.

Everyone wins from system-wide benefits due to:

- greater and faster uptake of energy assets, including distributed energy resources
- increased consumer mobility, promoting healthy competition in the market
- a clear view of challenges and opportunities, resulting in better planning and stronger systems.

Member observations, questions or recommendation:

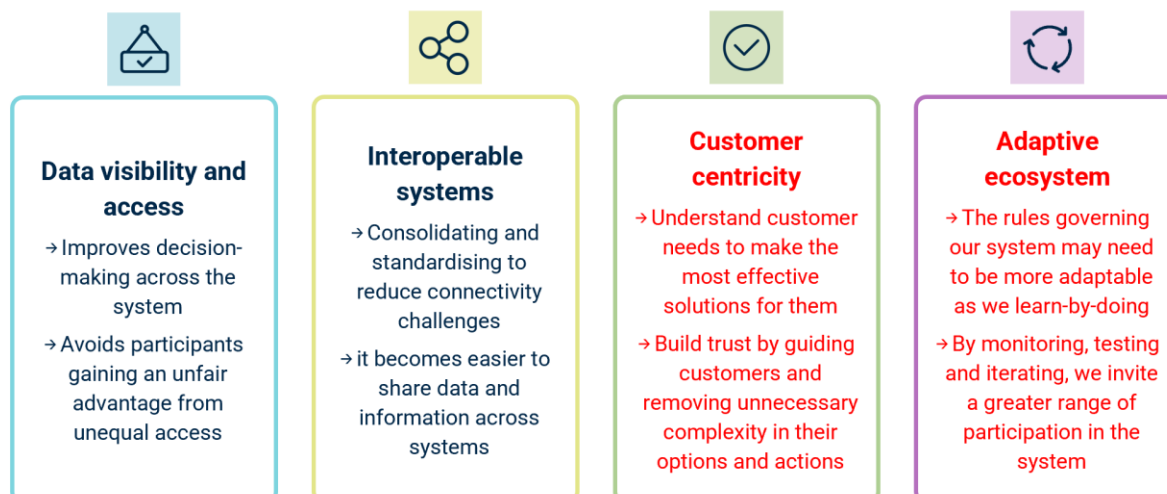
- General positive feedback from the group regarding the problem framing and the focus on the outcomes being sought.
- Ultimately about affordability and reliability – keeping focused on how this work leads to that is powerful.
- NZ has gone down a much more decentralised path in general, whereas Australia have remained more centralised. Considering the pros and cons of each approach, have we considered the value of having a single agency managing data?
- Consumer Data Right and the need to remain aligned with this.

- Which customer segments were the focus of these initiatives – is digitalisation a realistic option for all consumers? Noting that consumers don't all have equal access to power, how is the Authority factoring those issues into the design and targeting of this work.
- Challenge of staying relevant to both current economic conditions and social concerns, as well as the challenge of building a long-term piece of work that is as politically future-proof as possible.
- Suggested a range of additional sources of input and research the team could draw on:
 - The Digital Equity Coalition of Aotearoa (DECA) as a recommended point of contact for the project.
 - The research of Dr Sea Rotmann
 - Research of various EAAG members' organisations (ERGANZ, Mercury, Energy Hardship Coalition).
- Risk of focusing on platform design while missing the need to design for people and their needs.
- Data ownership was raised with a strong view that data about the consumer should belong to the consumer. Another member suggested the Office of the Privacy Commissioner needed to be involved in this work.
- The project needs to also consider the risks to consumers of digitalisation – the current approach to date seems to focus only on the benefits.
- For digitalisation to be successful, and accessible, there are a number of dependencies the group felt lie outside the control and/or scope of the Authority. These need to be considered.
- The issue of low consumer trust is a potential barrier to building consumer uptake and support for this work – however it was felt that once consumers start seeing products in the market that are designed to benefit them, this will inevitably build trust.
- There was shared support for taking a longer term horizon for this work (ie a 20 year look ahead) and designing with well researched consumer profiles in view.
- Some communities are already quite far ahead with a clear vision and desire for becoming self-determining. We need to be able to accommodate these users too.
- Conversely, not everyone is engaged or even wants to be. They just want a solution from industry that meets their needs and they don't care beyond that. Because of the data that is now becoming available, some solutions we could just get on with.
- There are some things we might want centralised (like data), as they're vital inputs into potential solutions.

Section 2: Principles & Decision Making

The Authority outlined the changes that have been made to the initial draft principles and decision-making criteria following stakeholder workshops. These are summarised in the slides below (new content in red).

Changes to foundational principles



Potential decision-making criteria to prioritise initiatives



The EAAG subgroup were invited to add further feedback in response to the updates. Member observations, questions or recommendations were:

- Queried the definition the Authority is using for 'customers' – confirming it includes innovators and other government agencies, and noting that the process of building trust in these initiatives will be different depending on which 'customers' we are

engaging with. Several group members noted the risk of ‘generalising’ customers when undertaking our design work – they are not homogenous.

- Positive feedback for the focus on monitoring – reiterating the need for the regulator to monitor behaviour and the importance of applying penalties for non-compliance.
- Support for the *adaptive ecosystem* approach, but noted this also needs to be balanced against rigor and robustness. Things will go wrong and unexpected factors will emerge – we need to be able to respond to these occurrences without losing robustness or rigor.
- Other actors in the system are likely to make some significant decisions based on the data we will collect - so there needs to be some rigor around who can access what data, when and how. We need to protect the system from actors with processes that lack robustness and resilience.
- It was suggested that current market rules assume decentralised data which inevitably restricts transparency. Consequently there are business models that rely on decentralised data and restricted access. This will need to be challenged.
- Queried whether we need to add something more explicit here about the risks to customers in terms of privacy and cyber security etc.
- Other countries have progressed at different levels in some of these areas and there must be much we can learn from those experiences – with the potential for a fast-follow approach on some of the successes.
- The challenge of accurately capturing or attributing benefits was noted – as many benefits happen outside the system.
- How the Authority will identify high-value vs low-value initiatives when prioritising work? What about controversial vs non-controversial components?

Specific feedback and thoughts regarding data

- Researchers were also identified as expected customers/consumers of the data.
- Observed that some of the data we will need isn’t currently collected.
- With increasing digitalisation, there’s the potential for all sorts of data to be collected – other appliances, residential conditions etc.
- Not all data points are mandatory and if something isn’t mandatory it stops being collected (generally for reasons of efficiency).
- Any data collected will need to be validated and updated overtime. There’s no small amount of work involved in this.
- There is no reference to AI in the current framing of this work. That will need to be addressed. A generic ethics/ due diligence based approach as introduced by some professional bodies was exemplified as a start point.

The Authority acknowledged these contributions and signalled an expected approach of starting at the lowest level and building up, establishing use cases over time.

System and infrastructure

- Support for the development of data-sharing infrastructure as it makes it easier for innovators to access the same information and compete more equally.
- Be mindful that any system we build will need to be able to interact with data from other ecosystems outside the EA sphere of influence e.g. non-energy data such home material environment or business logistics context so it is consistent with integrating to deliver end user solutions.
- The various factors and issues feeding into a digitalised future exist on a spectrum with some lending themselves to a more centralised approach and others a more decentralised approach. There isn't a single position answer to this and we will need to navigate that complexity.
- Caution about the focus on disruption and enabling disruptors – we also need to consider what parts of the system need to remain stable to ensure the system is robust and reliable.
- The principle of open data may be more important than a centralised-vs-decentralised approach.
- Important to have good data structure and good system infrastructure in place, so that data moves where it needs to easily and is well supported and readily accessible by those who need it.