

Minutes



Arborist Reference Group for Vegetation Management near Powerlines

Meeting Details

Organiser	Alex Lewis
Date	17 December
Time	10.30am-12.15pm
Location	Damien on Fisher, 123 Fisher St, Fullarton

Attendance

Attendees	Doug Schmidt, General Manager Network Management (Chair) Kelvin Trimper, SA Tree Advisory Board Henry Haavisto, Arborist Association of Australia Luke Hounslow, Active Tree Services Peter Watton, Trees for Life Marlene Weise, community representative Kev Connell, Manager Vegetation Alex Lewis, Stakeholder Engagement Lead
Apologies	Chris Taras, City of Charles Sturt Glenn Williams, Treenet Ben Freeman, Freshford Nurseries Kim Syrus, HMA Andrew Carrick, Botanic Gardens of SA
Confirmation of Previous minutes	Noted – meeting 13 September 2018
Business arising from previous minutes	Refer to agenda items

1. Welcome

Doug noted the apologies.

2. Business arising from last meeting

Refer to agenda items.

3. Regulatory Reset Proposal 2020-25

Doug provided an update on the Regulatory Proposal 2020-25. The Draft Proposal was launched on 8 August 2018 and following the consultation period, 32 submissions were received in response to the Draft Plan.

Overall, there is support for our approach to vegetation management and the way we are working collaboratively with our stakeholders. SA Power Networks Customer Consultative Panel (CCP) has supported our vegetation management proposal and it is also recognised that the ARG is the most mature of our reference groups. The ARG submitted a letter in support of our approach for vegetation management in 2020-25.

SAPN continue to benchmark well in comparison to other DNSPs (AER benchmarking report) in relation to vegetation management both in terms of total vegetation management costs per customer and total vegetation management costs per km of route length.

It was agreed that each year SA Power Networks should report back to the ARG on End of Year (EOY) performance, including:

- Vegetation Clearance Compliance Audit results.
- Annual Vegetation Management Cost Benchmarking results.
- Summary of pre/post clearance surveys.

Our Regulatory Proposal will be lodged with the AER on 31 Jan 2019.

4. Levels of Service

Alex and Kane Scott presented on the development of the Levels of Service (LoS) for the business, outlining the categories and their intent.

There are 34 proposed levels of service in total, with the following ones being presented in more detail to the LGA WG.

- *Safety* – Vegetation clearance compliance
- *Safety* – Fire starts
- *Customer experience* – Customer satisfaction
- *Aesthetics* – Customer satisfaction with vegetation clearance
- *Efficiency* - Relative performance efficiency rank compared to other Australian distributors
- *Efficiency* - Average annual asset replacement rate

Members were asked to complete a survey ranking the Levels of service from 1-3 by importance (1 being low, 3 being high).

Discussion included:

- Clearance survey outcomes – sample size. The idea of undertaking a door knock to understand resident response to our pruning was suggested for action by SAPN. Clearance surveys to be included as an agenda item for the next meeting including actual wording of some of the responses received.

5. Regulatory amendments – 10-year review of Regulations

The current Regulations expire on 1.9.2021 and SA Power Networks is proposing a number of amendments.

Following stakeholder feedback (workshops) a revised discussion paper has been sent to stakeholders seeking final feedback prior to lodging our formal submission with the OTR in early 2019.



In terms of next steps:

- Submissions on revised discussion paper close 25/1/19.
- OTR position paper – Feb 2019.
- SAPN formally lodge submission with OTR – March 2019.

It was suggested that SAPN should run a half day workshop with members of the LGA WG, ARG and other key stakeholders, including representatives from country regions, to get a response prepared in collaboration.

Also need to consider media eg. HMA and engagement with the OTR.

6. Powerline friendly list of species

The species list has been revised following feedback from key stakeholders, including the nursery industry. The revised booklet will be ready for launch in early 2019.

Roll-out of the strategy with Councils needs further consideration but as a minimum SAPN need to liaise with Councils (LGA Circular and letter to CEO's) and work with HMA, NIASA and other bodies to promote in local press, social media and key nurseries eg. Bunnings, Mitre 10.

7. Update on strategic initiatives

7.1 Protocol review

A new section 1.3 key challenges will be included in the Introduction chapter to highlight some of the key challenges, including tree removal, urban infill, urban heat island and visual amenity.

The Protocol has been updated in consultation with our consultative groups, the ARG and LGA Working Group, and following feedback from Councils in early 2018. The Protocol will go to the LGA Board for endorsement in early 2019.

AL to email the proposed section 1.3 to members for feedback.

7.2 ATS branding

The proposed new branding for the ATS chippers was tabled. The signage provides a good opportunity to put positive messages out in the community as well as educating the community on how much we cut.

Five trucks will be fitted with the signage at the end of Dec/ early Jan. Following that, AL will review the response and signage for other trucks going forward.

7.3 Visual amenity assessment

The UAAA has written to Standards Australia requesting an official appointed position on the key steering and working group to provide accurate and timely input into the review of AS 4373. One of the major challenges utility arborists face is negotiating the practicalities of utility vegetation management in line with the general requirements in AS4373 for reduction pruning. Developing more specific guidance for utility works would help to establish consistent best practice nationally, credibly



communicate with stakeholders and alleviate some of the subjectivity which may arise through different interpretations.

KC outlined the recent cutting and approach taken at Stanley Flat on a row of Ash trees planted as an Avenue of Honour. Whilst the trees are not of State Heritage significance, they are of cultural and community value. The cost of pruning was 4-5 times greater than the compliance clearance but resulted in a good outcome for the local community. The group is currently seeking a grant from the RSL to underground 3 spans. The site will need to be monitored over the next 12 months to assess the cutting outcome.

The next proposed site is a row of Ash trees on Woodside Rd, Lobethal. The trial should undertake cutting when the trees are dormant and in-leaf (Winter and late Spring).

The idea of approaching Keith Conlon (SA Heritage Council Chair) regarding grant funding was proposed in relation to creating a fund to manage heritage vegetation near powerlines that is of cultural/ community value but not heritage listed and doesn't meet current PLEC criteria.

7.4 Training program for contractors

The hazard tree and sapling identification training was rolled out to our internal vegetation clearance auditors. ATS staff were in attendance and the next step is to rollout for ATS scopers and supervisors in Q1 2019.

7.5 Clearance surveys

Surveys are currently being undertaken in Unley. The surveys to be added as an agenda item for the next meeting.

8. Other business

- **CCP update** – the CCP and Reference Groups are undergoing an internal SAPN review. SAPN is proposing to send a package of material, including vegetation management material, to all Elected Members following the Council elections in Nov 2018.
- **Thank you** - Doug thanked the group for their continued involvement and contribution throughout 2018. The meeting was followed by lunch.

9. Next meeting: Thurs. 7 March, 9.30-11.00am, NIC 229 Richmond Rd

Agenda items:

- Regulatory amendments
- Clearance surveys
- Focus areas for 2019

