

Vulnerable Customer Strategy

Understanding vulnerability

What drives vulnerability?

Vulnerability is not a label. It is a situation in which customers find themselves at a point in time. This can be long term, or very acute. They can move in and out of vulnerability.

Factors which result in vulnerability include:

LOW HIGH

Cost of bills

How high is the bill relative to others, and compared to the person's overall income?

Ability to reduce bills

What agency does the customer have to reduce their bills?

Ability to access support

What is their ability to seek support when they are most vulnerable?

Impact of unexpected events

What is the effect and impact of unexpected events, are they able to make rational decisions or does it put their health or safety at immediate risk?

Who are our customers that are experiencing vulnerability?

In order to define an actionable strategy for such a diverse range of people, we've looked at six segments of customers facing diverse circumstances.

An individual may relate to many of these types. SA Power Networks wants to assist all these people in appropriate ways, within the constraints of the regulated electricity market. Where we cannot act alone, we seek to develop partnerships to provide valuable assistance.



People experiencing isolation



People experiencing financial difficulties



Culturally and linguistically diverse people



People with health conditions, disabilities and the ageing



People relying on life-support systems



Small and medium businesses doing it tough

Vision

Partner to deliver assistance, a responsive customer environment and improve customer experience to those most vulnerable in our community

How will we help?

There are many ways in which we can assist people experiencing vulnerable circumstances. Some of the roles we can play include:

Leading/delivering

There are direct ways in which we can assist people, ranging from the way we interact with them on the phone or in person, to how we discharge our regulatory duties.

Advocating

Ultimately we work for our customers, and where appropriate we can amplify their voice, for example in regulation and rule changes.

Partnering

Our ability to directly assist people is greatly enhanced when we partner with other organisations such as retailers, community groups, water utilities, who have more direct and frequent relationships with people in vulnerable situations.

Supporting

We can actively support other organisations with their initiatives, by aligning our policies, adjusting our language or through our employee community engagement program.

Vulnerable Customer Strategy

Taking action

We will build a vulnerability-aware culture

Driven by our values, the mindset we will bring to our work is:

We won't assume

Every person is unique. We won't assume to know your needs based on the limited information we have on you, the way you look, act or sound.

We will listen and try to understand the lived experience

We will express a genuine desire to understanding you and your situation, and how we fit in.

We will be tuned in to recognising vulnerability in our dealings with customers

We will normalise having a conversation about your situation

Anyone could find themselves in a vulnerable situation at some point in their life. We won't label you but strive to make talking about this an accepted and normal thing.

Vision

Partner to deliver assistance, a responsive customer environment and improve customer experience to those most vulnerable in our community

Our top priorities to implement this strategy

Investigate a social tariff or other measures

We will investigate the merits of a social tariff or other measures for those people in a prolonged vulnerable position.

Education

As a trusted organisation in South Australia, we have many opportunities to inform people, change behaviour and raise awareness, for example:

- Energy advisory
- Simple communication

Partnerships

Work with other utilities and agencies to identify possible opportunities to assist vulnerable customers.

Accessibility

We will review communications materials, correspondence, our website and others to make them more accessible to various people, eg. CALD people.

Employee Foundation

Investigate opportunities to assist vulnerable customers and align activities with our vulnerable customer strategy.

Sponsorship program

Investigate opportunities to support and assist vulnerable customers and work with other agencies that are supporting vulnerable customers.

Internal training

We will build awareness and train our people to better understand, adjust to and support people in vulnerable situations.

Disconnections for non-payment

We will review our arrangements with retailers and our processes to determine how we might assist customers facing pending disconnections.

Life support customers

Investigate the process to refine and more accurately identify this group of customers, in order to provide enhanced services to genuine life support customers.