



IPART Energy
Sustainability
Schemes

Safeguard Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

October 2024

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Acknowledgment of Country

IPART acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders both past and present.

We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship and celebrate the contributions of First Nations peoples.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

IPART's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Further information on IPART can be obtained from [IPART's website](#).

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1 Introduction

1.1 About this document

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of NSW (**IPART**) is committed to stakeholder engagement across all levels of the organisation. Two of IPART's strategic goals driving our engagement approach are to maintain best practice governance and to ensure our regulatory approaches, engagement and communications remain citizen focused.

Our role as regulator and administrator of the Energy Security Safeguard (**Safeguard**) helps guide how we engage with stakeholders. Our goal is ensuring the Safeguard schemes operate successfully and with integrity.

A successful scheme is one in which people and businesses participating in the Safeguard play their part responsibly ensuring the Safeguard operates as intended. This in turn ensures the Safeguard can achieve its objectives of making energy in NSW more affordable, reliable, and sustainable. Scheme integrity is important to ensure a level playing field for businesses participating in the schemes and confidence for energy consumers in the genuine benefits they can receive.

Our engagement is directed towards these aims:

- To operate successfully in the Safeguard our stakeholders need to understand their responsibilities and requirements. There is a strong educative component to our engagement because we want to ensure our stakeholders have the information they need.
- A successful Safeguard also means requirements are practical to comply with. We will consult with affected stakeholders when proposing changes to our processes or systems to achieve this.
- We recognise a successful Safeguard means everyone should be striving to improve and we welcome feedback at any time.

This Safeguard Stakeholder Engagement Strategy (**2024 Strategy**) reflects our continued commitment to strengthening our engagement approach to ensure the schemes' success and integrity. It explains:

- the stakeholder engagement landscape in which we operate
- our engagement framework
- strategic priorities for strengthening our engagement approach for 2024 onwards
- how you can expect to engage with us.

1.2 Our approach to engagement is continuing to evolve

We developed our inaugural Safeguard Stakeholder Engagement Strategy in 2021. This document reflects a 2024 refresh of our 2021 Strategy.

Many changes since 2021 have affected how we engage with stakeholders. For example, remote technologies adopted during the COVID pandemic are now a regular means of engaging with stakeholders. The Peak Demand Reduction Scheme (**PDRS**) commenced in late 2022. In line with our 2021 Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, we are using our new online system TESSA which seeks to streamline and consolidate processes, reduce administrative burden and improve user experience.

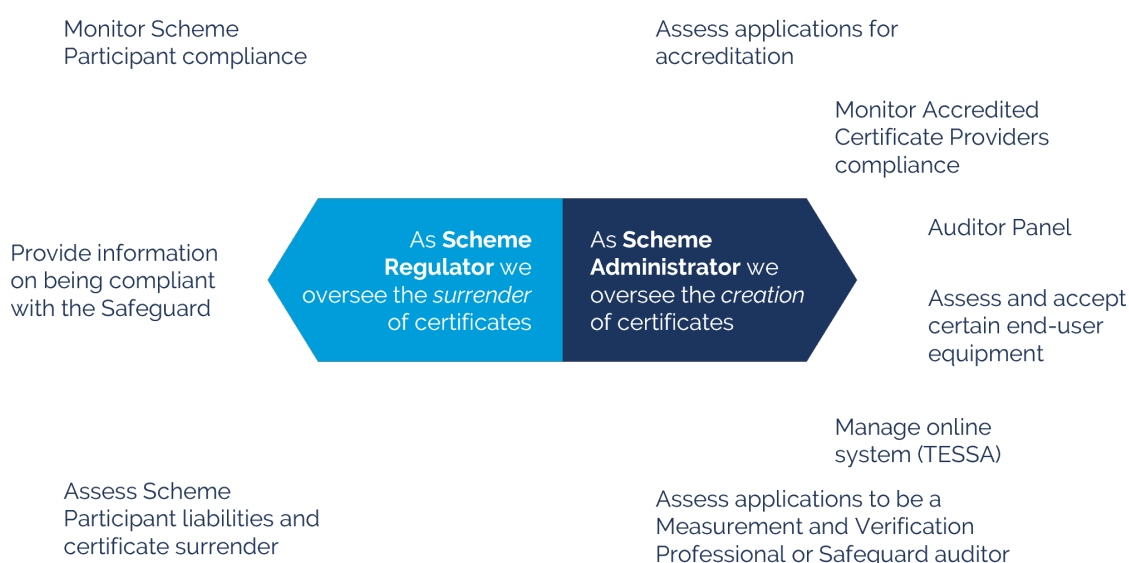
Our 2021 Strategy highlighted the need to regularly review our engagement approach, and we committed to revisiting the strategy after 2 years.

We will continue to regularly review our approach to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

2 Stakeholder engagement landscape

2.1 Who we are and what we do

IPART is the regulator and administrator for schemes that sit under the Safeguard. We aim to ensure each scheme operates in line with its legislated design so the Safeguard can realise its intended outcomes. This contributes to making energy in NSW more reliable, affordable, and sustainable. This involves a mix of helping businesses or individuals join and/or operate successfully in the scheme as shown below.



Three schemes sit under the Safeguard:

- **Energy Savings Scheme (ESS)**
 - We are responsible for administering the ESS and regulating businesses that participate in the ESS. We need to regularly engage with stakeholders to ensure they are fit for accreditation and operate in line with how the scheme is set up to operate.
- **Peak Demand Reduction Scheme (PDRS)**
 - We are also responsible for administering the PDRS and regulating those businesses that participate in the PDRS. As with the ESS, we need to engage with stakeholders to ensure they meet accreditation requirements and operate in line with the parameters of the scheme.
- **Renewable Fuel Scheme (RFS)**
 - The RFS framework is currently under development and set to run from 2026. We will need to engage with stakeholders to help them operate successfully within the scheme.

2.2 Why we engage

As an outcome- and risk-based regulator, our activities focus on ensuring the schemes operate successfully and with integrity to achieve their legislative outcomes.

Many people and businesses need to play a role in this success. This includes stakeholders like Accredited Certificate Providers and Scheme Participants. They play their part by operating in line with how each scheme is designed to function to achieve its legislative outcomes. We encourage everyone involved in the Safeguard to consider the success of the schemes when meeting their compliance obligations, not simply meeting a compliance checklist.

This focus helps make energy in NSW more affordable, reliable, and sustainable. It also contributes to the scheme's integrity and reputation so that energy consumers can have confidence in the scheme's offerings.

Stakeholder engagement is an important tool to support scheme success and integrity.

We typically engage with stakeholders to:

- help onboard them to the relevant scheme
- educate them about the scheme and their obligations so they can build their capability to operate successfully within the parameters of the scheme
- co-operatively work with stakeholders to support compliance objectives in a way that also fits with their business priorities
- seek feedback on proposed changes to our guidance and processes
- inform stakeholders of relevant updates to schemes (e.g. changes to ESS Rule or PDRS Rule)
- let them know if they are not complying with the scheme and what to do to comply.

2.3 Who we engage with

We regularly engage with the following stakeholders to ensure the schemes we administer and regulate continue to operate successfully:

- **Accredited Certificate Providers**

We engage with prospective Accredited Certificate Providers (**ACPs**) to see if they meet the requirements for accreditation and subsequently accredit them. We then engage with ACPs to help them understand how to operate in the schemes and let them know if they are not complying and how to address this. We also deliver educational sessions, provide information about rule updates and consult on changes to our guidance and administrative arrangements and requirements.

- **Scheme Participants**

We engage with Scheme Participants (**SPs**) – the liable entities – to ensure they are aware of their obligations and support their reporting obligations through our online system TESSA. We also provide information about rule updates and consult on changes to our administrative arrangements and requirements.

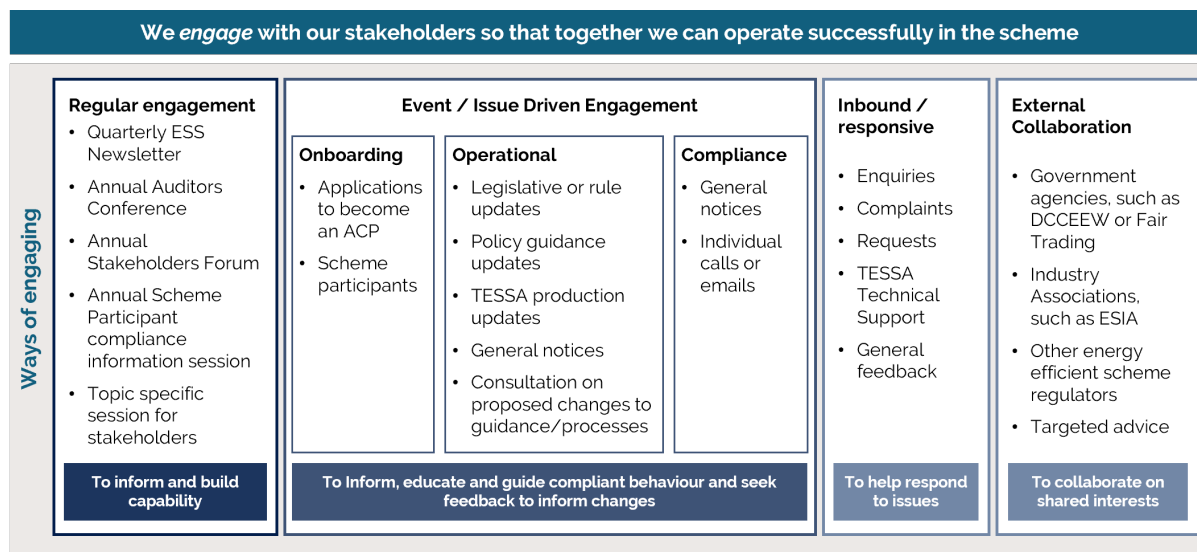
- **Auditors**

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- We accredit auditors to sit on our Auditor Panel, from which they can be engaged by ACPs and SPs to meet their auditing obligations under the Safeguard.
 - We engage with auditors to help them understand scheme requirements and any changes, so they are in the best position to conduct audits.
 - **Measurement & Verification Professionals**
 - We engage with our Measurement & Verification Professionals (**M&VPs**) to assess their applications to become an approved M&VP, (ACPs can only engage M&VPs we have approved). We also monitor their performance as approved M&VPs, provide some scheme-specific education, and provide information on a range of project queries.
 - **Manufacturers or ACPs applying for acceptance of products**
 - Manufacturers or ACPs can request for us to accept specific lighting, chimney dampener or water heating products for use in the schemes. The approval process includes ensuring products meet scheme requirements.
 - **Industry organisations**
 - We consult with industry bodies that represent our stakeholders to keep them informed on developments relating to their members and gather feedback. This includes organisations like the Energy Savings Industry Association (**ESIA**).
 - **Business and Householders**
 - Although our engagement focus is on matters relating to the administration of the Safeguard, we also respond to general queries from businesses or householders (energy consumers) on what they can expect from ACPs and refer them to other regulatory bodies where required.
 - **Government agencies**
 - We work closely with other government agencies and regulators. For example, we regularly engage with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (**DCCEE**), which is responsible for developing and maintaining the legislation that governs the Safeguard schemes. We also work with the NSW Building Commission to target inspection activity and NSW Fair Trading to deliver better outcomes for consumers.
 - **Interstate agencies**
 - We collaborate with regulators of similar schemes in other jurisdictions to share our learnings and resources to maximise the benefit of our combined experience and expertise.

3 Our engagement framework and approach

3.1 Our engagement framework

Our engagement framework supports an outcome-based approach. We use stakeholder engagement as a tool to achieve scheme-related outcomes when it is appropriate to do so. Our engagement framework is shown below.



- | | | |
|------------|--|--|
| How | Applying our principles of engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with you and be open to feedback Make timely decisions Keep you informed and be responsive Get to know you Provide clear and accessible information Act fairly, with empathy and respect Make it easier to engage with us | Employing broad types of engaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online events, such as information sessions or TESSA training sessions Location-based events Emails (EDMs) Emails and phone calls (individual) Documents (guides, QRGs, guides, info sheets and notices) Videos on demand Consultation papers |
|------------|--|--|

We are committed to helping people understand how to comply so that we can support the schemes' outcomes

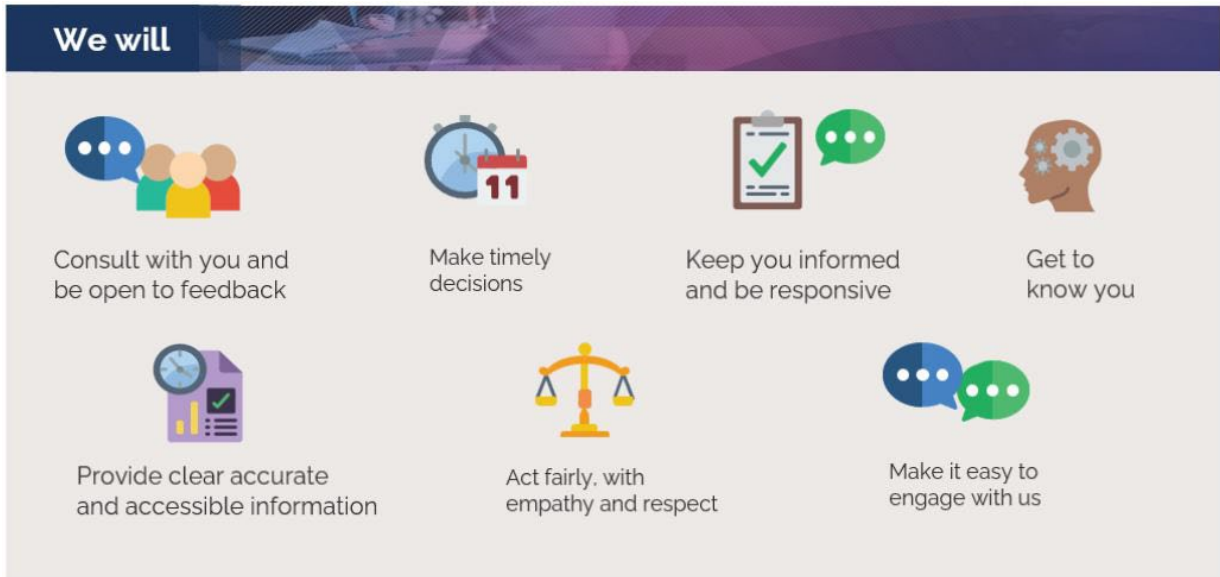
3.2 Our engagement approach

Our approach to engaging with stakeholders is built around the stakeholder engagement framework explained above. We take specific steps so that our approach aligns with specific behavioural outcomes that support the schemes' objectives. We also consult with stakeholders on proposed changes that will affect them because we want to make sure we make informed decisions.

3.3 Our principles for engagement

We follow the principles of engagement shown below. These principles outline our commitment to engaging with our stakeholders and are described in more detail in section 6.

We will



The infographic features a dark blue header with the text 'We will' in white. Below the header, seven principles are arranged in two rows. Each principle is represented by a colorful icon above a text description. The icons include: a group of people with speech bubbles, a stopwatch with a calendar page, a clipboard with a checkmark and a speech bubble, a head with gears, a document with a clock and bar chart, a scale of justice, and two overlapping speech bubbles.

- Consult with you and be open to feedback
- Make timely decisions
- Keep you informed and be responsive
- Get to know you
- Provide clear accurate and accessible information
- Act fairly, with empathy and respect
- Make it easy to engage with us

4 Priorities for enhancing engagement

The 2024 priorities for improving stakeholder engagement focus on achieving outcomes and centralising our messaging around the stakeholder.

We have identified 4 strategic priorities for the 2024 strategy:

- aligning our approach to an outcome-based model
- making it easier for the team to engage strategically
- centralising our messaging around the stakeholder
- consistent engagement through different channels.

Each priority has a series of goals that we have prioritised to achieve as part of the 2024 Strategy. The following sections provide an overview of each priority and then what we plan to do (goals) to achieve this.

4.1 Aligning to an outcome-based model

We engage with stakeholders to support the Safeguard's legislative outcomes through compliant behaviour. This ultimately helps the schemes continue to operate successfully and with integrity.

To achieve this priority, we plan to:

- have a clear, practical stakeholder engagement framework tailored to how we use stakeholder engagement to achieve outcomes
- reframe our engagement approach and practices to be more strategic and outcomes focused
- formalise a process for engaging with stakeholders that ensures we work through the right sequence to achieve outcome-based strategic planning.

4.2 Making it easier to engage strategically

We currently have a de-centralised approach to engaging with stakeholders. Different teams will respond to different enquiries.

We will centralise stakeholder engagement operationally by having a dedicated function to support a strategic approach to engagement. This function will oversee the strategic element of key planned engagements and help team members where they require assistance for successful engagement.

We aim to make it easier for the team to engage strategically by having centralised engagement support.

To achieve this priority, we have set up a centralised engagement function within the Energy Sustainability Schemes team's operational structure to oversee and support formal and planned engagement activities. This new team is called PESA (Policy, Engagement, Systems and Analytics).

The PESA team will continue to:

- support the wider team for planned and significant engagements they are involved in
- help the team develop an outcome-based engagement approach capability.

4.3 Centralising our messaging around the stakeholder

A traditional approach for regulators to engage with stakeholders has been to broadcast messages or instructions from the perspective of the regulator. This messaging reflects the perspective of the sender rather than the receiver.

To achieve better outcomes from the way we engage, we need to be more stakeholder centric. We need to reflect this through our messaging.

To achieve this priority, we plan to:

- include stakeholder journey maps in our strategic engagement planning
- tailor our approach and messaging to specific audiences and contexts
- improve the way we manage the different touch points we have with our stakeholders
- actively promote to stakeholders how they can expect to access relevant information from us to be successful within the schemes
- simplify our methods of communicating
- provide information on the website in a way that is meaningful for our stakeholders.

4.4 Consistent engagement through different channels

We communicate with our stakeholders in different ways, ranging from formal consultation processes through to one-on-one conversations on specific matters. We want to make sure that our messaging is consistent and that information and feedback we get through one channel can inform our overall approach.

To achieve this priority, we plan to improve our internal communication processes to ensure all stakeholder feedback, including informal feedback is effectively captured, collated and reported to inform our overall engagement strategy.

5 What stakeholders can expect from us

Stakeholders can expect us to engage with them in line with our engagement principles.

Further, stakeholders can expect us to:

- engage in different ways to suit different circumstances
- seek and use their feedback
- be responsive and continue to find ways to improve the quality of our engagement by measuring the success of our engagements and the 2024 Strategy.

5.1 Engaging with you in different ways to suit different circumstances

We actively avoid 'cookie cutter' or 'one size fits all' models of engaging with stakeholders. Each stakeholder has unique needs, as does each circumstance. Stakeholders can expect us to take this into account. That said, you can expect us to engage with stakeholders:

- at regular intervals
- in response to phone or email enquiries
- in response to an update or issues
- regarding compliance matters.

5.1.1 At regular intervals

Our aim is to ensure stakeholders can operate successfully within the design of the schemes in the interests of achieving the legislated outcomes.

A key part of this is updating stakeholders on latest developments through:

- **Quarterly ESS Newsletter emailed to ACPs, SPs and auditors**
 - This newsletter provides latest updates on matters relating to ACPs, SPs and auditors. It also includes information about upcoming activities and things a stakeholder may need to prepare their business for.
 - Our newsletter is a critical piece in us keeping stakeholders informed.
 - We recommend stakeholders look out for our newsletter at the end of each quarter. Stakeholders may need to change their email settings to receive our newsletter.

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- **Annual Stakeholder Forum**
 - The annual Safeguard Stakeholder Forum is an event for stakeholders to hear from IPART and DCCEE. It features a mix of learning new things and opportunities to ask questions on key topics relating to the schemes.
 - We provide this event for stakeholders to build capability for operating in the scheme.
 - An ACP, SP, or auditor can expect to receive notification about the conference towards the last quarter of the year. It is up to individual stakeholders to register and attend. Advance notice of dates is also published on our website and in the ESS Newsletter.
 - **Regular Auditors Conference**
 - Generally, a conference is held in the second half of each year or at other times as required.
 - **Annual Scheme Participant compliance information session**
 - This is a session to help SPs understand what they need to do to comply with their annual obligations.
 - **Topic specific sessions for stakeholders**
 - Information sessions on topics relevant to understanding aspects of the Schemes and compliance requirements.

5.1.2 Enquiries (phone or email)

When someone calls or emails IPART to enquire about any aspect of the scheme, we will be available to provide support. Our response time is guided by our Key Performance Indicators, ensuring timely acknowledgements and regular updates on all open queries. This does not mean we will be able to answer everything – some things will be outside of our remit, and we won't be able to provide our assurance on what complies in every specific case. Where it is not possible to help, we will do our best to point to the appropriate place for the best solution.

5.1.3 In response to an update or issue

There can be changes to how a stakeholder needs to operate following changes like Rule updates. While IPART doesn't make decisions on the Rule or other legislative changes (this responsibility sits with DCCEE) we want to make sure everyone impacted by the change knows about it and how it impacts them. Affected stakeholders can expect to receive an email from us with information about the change and references to detailed information on our website. We always recommend stakeholders regularly check our website for any updates they may have missed from an email inadvertently landing in a junk email box.

Sometimes IPART makes changes to our own guidance or processes that might affect stakeholders. This can be as a result of a Rule or legislative change, to improve efficiency, or to fix problems or issues we have seen with how the Safeguard is operating. It is important for us to consult with our stakeholders on these changes to make sure we have all the information we need to make an informed decision.

5.1.4 Regarding a compliance matter

When stakeholders do not comply with scheme requirements, we need to take action. In these cases, we will reach out to one or all stakeholders on compliance matters. This can be done by sending a broad email or a focused email or phone call to an individual.

5.2 Measuring success of the 2024 Strategy

We will measure the success in 4 ways:

- **By engagement outcomes**
 - We will review the success of an engagement approach by the outcome/s defined and documented in our planning process. If we see a tactic that can be improved to better reach an outcome, we will modify accordingly and adopt for future engagements.
 - This approach aligns with our wish to see the schemes operating as outlined by legislation.
- **By measuring each strategic priority**
 - For each of the priorities, we have measurement indicators in place to see if it has been implemented well.
- **Report against Scheme Key Performance Indicators**
 - We will submit an annual report to the Minister for Energy detailing performance outcomes against 4 identified objectives.
- **Seeking feedback from stakeholders**
 - We regularly invite stakeholders through surveys to let us know how we are performing against our engagement principles and progressing with our priorities. Responding to these requests for feedback is the best way for stakeholders to have a say in our engagement approach.
 - We also collate and review ad hoc feedback regularly throughout the year.

5.3 Seeking and using your feedback

We are committed to improving the way we engage with stakeholders.

We will regularly review and update the Strategy as priorities change, seek your feedback on how we are doing and monitor our performance.

To be responsive to our stakeholders' needs, we regularly reach out for feedback through surveys, consultations on documents we produce or focused information sessions. It is a great opportunity for stakeholders to have a say in areas where we operate. We take all feedback seriously and use it to make relevant decisions.

To provide feedback on our Strategy or engagement approach please email ess@ipart.nsw.gov.au.

6 Our engagement principles

We will:

- **Consult with you and be open to feedback.**

We will look for innovative ways to consult with you and let you know the outcome of the consultation.

How will we do this:

- We will be flexible and tailor our approach to engagement to meet the needs of our different stakeholders.
- We will listen to feedback and check back with you to understand your perspective.
- We will be clear with you about what we can consult on and how your feedback informed our decisions.

- **Make timely decisions.**

We will have clear and realistic timeframes for decision making.

How will we do this:

- We will provide clear timeframes for the decisions that we make.
- We will always respond to questions and requests relating to decisions as soon as practicable and will let you know how long it will take for us to respond.

- **Keep you informed and be responsive.**

We will update you on the progress of your queries and other interactions with us.

How will we do this:

- We will respond to inquiries and let you know when you can expect to hear from us.
- We will acknowledge when our responses are delayed and tell you why.

- **Get to know you.**

We will enable personalised interactions through consistent and informed engagement.

How will we do this:

- When we talk to you, we will take the time to make sure we understand your needs.
- Our staff will be trained appropriately so that they can deal with your queries efficiently and effectively.

- **Provide clear accurate and accessible information.**

We will communicate by using direct and clear language.

How will we do this:

- We will provide information in a format that is easy to read and understand so you can make informed choices.
- We will tailor information to meet stakeholder needs by asking for feedback and continually improving the way we deliver our information.

- **Act fairly, with empathy and respect.**

We will make decisions in an open and transparent way and engage with you to understand your needs.

How will we do this:

- We will communicate with you to make sure we understand your situation when we make a decision.
- We will always explain why we have made the decision.
- We will share available information with you to allow understanding and better decision making.

- **Make it easier to engage with us.**

We will provide multiple opportunities for you to get involved, provide feedback, and share your ideas.

How we will do this:

- We will seek feedback and continuously review our engagement channels to ensure they are intuitive and easy to use.
- We will work to understand your communication needs and find ways to meet them by reviewing existing processes and exploring opportunities for new and better ways to communicate.

7 Acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym / Abbreviation	Meaning
ACP	Accredited Certificate Provider
ESS	Energy Savings Scheme
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
IPART	Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
M&VP	Measurement & Verification Professional
PDRS	Peak Demand Reduction Scheme
PESA	Policy, Engagement, Systems and Analytics Team
RFS	Renewable Fuel Scheme
Safeguard	Energy Security Safeguard
SP	Scheme Participant
TESSA	Online portal for the ESS Team