**VESI Technical Standards Committee (VTSC)**

**Purpose**

This document sets out the terms of reference for the VESI Technical Standards Committee.

**Committee Name**

VESI Technical Standards Committee (**VTSC**)

**Background**

The Government was made aware by the housing and land development industries about delays by electricity distribution businesses (distribution businesses) in providing connections to new property developments. In May 2018, the Minister for Finance (the Minister) wrote to the commission’s Chairperson asking for his advice on:

*“The existing economic regulatory framework in Victoria (in particular, that administered by the Essential Services Commission) and whether the framework, or the way in which it is administered and enforced, could be enhanced to better support the Government's policy objectives for affordable housing. [The] advice should have regard to the maintenance of existing safety standards.”*

*The Essential Services Commission worked with stakeholders to develop solutions for delays in new connections, and these were agreed in principle by the development industry. The solutions target the underlying causes of the delays, and can be quickly implemented to deliver improved outcomes for industry participants. The electricity distribution businesses voluntarily agreed to deliver a number of initiatives outlined in a Service Improvement Commitment (the commitment).*

*In August 2018 the Essential Services Commission (ESC) engaged with Victorian electrical distribution businesses seeking acceptance of a proposed Service Improvement Commitment (SIC). The ESC has undertaken to understand the residential connections process and where the greatest advancements can be made. All DBs have committed to achieve the following outcomes:*

1. Improve developers and contractors understanding of distribution business’ policies and practises, or how they can influence them
2. Minimising avoidable delays in connecting greenfield developments to existing distribution networks
3. Improving how technical standards are managed and communicated
4. Improve audit processes and practises
5. Promoting efficient competition in connection services (or component parts)
6. Resource constraints – evidence that resourcing is sufficiently aligned to increased residential development activities

The VESI Technical Standards Committee has been established to meet the outcome 3 above and specifically to:

* Making standards across distributors consistent whilst allowing for justifiable differences.
* Ensuring consistent interpretation of standards by different distributors and auditors.
* Improving certainty and transparency about which standards are applicable.
* Ensuring timely consultation about changes to standards and their implementation

**Objectives**

The VTSC objectives are to:

* Identify opportunities to harmonise electricity distribution technical standards that relate to Underground Residential Distribution (URD) developments across the Victorian Electricity Distribution Industry
* Implement the identified harmonisation opportunities
* Improve the manner in which the technical standards are managed, communicated and complied with
* Provide a forum for raising issues and information sharing

**Scope**

The committee will focus on the Electricity distribution technical standards relating to Underground Residential Distribution (URD) developments with a primary focus on those relating to civil construction.

**Membership**

The VTSC will consist of the following members (or their delegates):

* Leesa Penaluna – Ausnet Services
* James Osbourne – Jemena
* James Walker – CitiPower/Powercor
* John Mifsud – CitiPower/Powercor
* Craig Savage – United Energy
* Anthony Grodzki - Association of Land Development Engineers (ALDE)
* John Forbes – Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA)
* Chris Braddock – Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)
* John Kilgour – Civil Contractors Federation (CCF)
* Geoff Reynolds – Civil Contractors Federation (CCF)
* Glenn Shallard – Winslow/Civil Contractors Federation
* Sam Nettleback – Design – Plan B Services

**Governance**

Membership of the committee will be for a period of 24 months from the first meeting date. This period may be extended subject to need and with the consent of the committee members.

Meetings will be chaired by John Mifsud

**Meetings**

The Committee will meet quarterly at Powercor’s office (40 Market Street, Melbourne 3000) commencing on 25 June 2019.

The meeting agenda will be distributed to members and meeting notes will be posted on the VEDN News and Bulletins’ webpage.

**Reporting**

The Committee will report progress to the Service Improvement Commitment Governance Committee at its regular governance meetings