Submission to the Senate Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy

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Preamble:

Ross is the former Head of Energy and Infrastructure at the Electric Vehicle Council.

Ross' background includes:

- Detailed work in the National Construction Code (NCC) to create EV readiness requirements in new buildings,
- Submissions to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) that have shaped the AER's advice to ministers on consumer protections for EV charging.
- Input into regulatory reset processes, shaping the tariff structures applicable to public charging infrastructure operators in WA, NSW, Victoria, SA, and QLD.
- Close engagement with NSW government on the majority of EV charging programs currently in operation, including the kerbside program.
- Participation in the development of Australian Standards relating to demand response, electric vehicle maintenance, vehicle to grid, and the national electrical wiring rules.

For the avoidance of doubt, this submission is not to be considered the position of the Electric Vehicle Council. It is the position of an active industry expert, made as a private citizen, under conditions of parliamentary privilege.

This submission addresses efforts being made to use misinformation with respect to the rollout of public EV charging equipment, and projected EV uptake, to secure changes that will favour the monopolies in the Australian energy industry over the competitive businesses that are serving consumer's needs today.

It is presented as a simple sequence of events, with links to sources. In keeping with the request that submissions be concise, it's not exhaustive, but should serve to sufficiently illustrate the issue.

The key concern raised is that Ausgrid, ENA, and the AEMC are all putting forward arguments that favour the winding back of existing ringfencing rules which protect free market competition, and hence protect the consumer interest, and that they are basing their arguments on information which is well known to be incorrect.

My recommendation is that DCCEEW at a federal level take responsibility for compiling and publishing a trusted 'source of truth' of numbers and types of public EV charging equipment, and a clear forward roadmap of what is actually forecast to be required.

Sequence of Events:

1) Ausgrid (the monopoly operator of the poles and wires in and around Sydney) decide that they'd like the rules of the market changed, such that they are allowed to own public facing EV charging equipment.

   A change of this nature, would, over time, net them billions of dollars in revenue, because it would enable them to impose the cost of all the new hardware, the maintenance of it, and their profit margin, on everyone's energy bills – whether they can afford a car or not.

   The alternative (which is the current situation) is that competitive businesses own public charging infrastructure, and recover their costs from the EV drivers, in a 'user-pays' arrangement that is typical of the vast majority of goods and services procured by consumers in Australia today.

   The decision to pursue this fundamental change to the functioning of the market was likely taken some time in 2023. It was given public voice by the CEO of Ausgrid in a paid piece in the Fin Review in June 2024[1]

2) Energy Networks Australia (and advocacy organisation funded in part by Ausgrid) published a report called 'the time is now'[2], in August 2024, in which they called (among other things) for rule changes and changes in regulations to enable Ausgrid's desired outcome.

   This report also offers modelling suggesting that allowing DNSPs to own this type of infrastructure (compared to the counterfactual of allowing a competitive market to do the job), would deliver an additional 1.2 million EVs on Australian roads by 2030.

   There is no rigour to the model whatsoever. The team at LEK appear to have plucked a number out of thin air, and presented it to ENA for their use, on the basis of a notional 'tipping point'.

[1] https://www.afr.com/policy/energy-and-climate/distributors-can-drive-lower-cost-transition-20240620-p5jndk

[2] https://www.energynetworks.com.au/assets/uploads/The-Time-is-Now-Report-ENA-LEK-August-2024.pdf

3) Energy Networks Australia ran federal election asks in April 2025[3], citing data from the IEA which has been clearly (and previously) demonstrated as being incorrect[4], indicating that Australia has approximately 68 EVs per public charging point, compared to a global average of 11.

   The ENA omits to mention that the global average of 11 is heavily influenced by China and Korea, where EV owners generally cannot charge at home, because the housing mix is vastly different to Australia's.

4) ABC coverage of the issue occurs in May 2025[5].

   Multiple points of view are put forward, with competitive businesses highlighting that they're doing the job today, and an independent expert highlighting that "**we need to think very carefully before handing out a potentially very large cheque to existing monopolies"**.

   Ausgrid assert in that piece that they "want to own and maintain the hardware just as we own and maintain the power poles and the wires that go to it", which leads directly to the cost being washed across all energy users.

   The ENA's position in that article is that "the cost of maintaining EV chargers wouldn't necessarily be put onto all energy users", despite their recent federal election asks calling for rule changes to enable exactly that.

   It's not clear whether this is intentional misrepresentation on the part of ENA, or simply difficulty in maintaining a consistent position across their election asks and their media soundbites.

5) In response to community concern, NSW parliament ran an inquiry into these matters, with hearings occurring on June 30 and July 1, 2025.

   Ausgrid made a written submission to that enquiry, which included statements like:

   "We believe that we can help deliver a significant portion of the 38,000 public EV charging ports the CSIRO estimates will be needed in NSW by 2030 by installing EV chargers on our power poles".

   No reference was provided for this claim, and it does not appear that CSIRO has actually made a specific estimate of this nature. It appears that Ausgrid has taken some data from CSIRO, added their own assumptions, and then credited CSIRO with an estimate that suits Ausgrid's narrative.

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[3] https://www.energynetworks.com.au/assets/uploads/ENA-April-2025-Powering-our-Future_final-2.pdf

[4] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/hey-iea-your-ev-charging-data-australia-looks-bit-odd-ross-de-rango-ubdcc/?trackingId=gvmXTBbORqaRYqzZckvGfQ%3D%3D

[5] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-05-14/ev-charging-stations-on-power-poles/105089316

Further, the historical estimates of future EV uptake by CSIRO have been badly flawed for years. For example, up until February 2024, AEMO was predicting – on the basis of CSIRO data – that we'd be seeing about 50% of new vehicle sales in Australia being Battery Electric by 2026/27[6]

"there are currently 68 EVs per public charge point in Australia, compared to a global average of 11"

This is the same incorrect line as used by ENA in their federal election asks, and once again without any context as to the difference in housing mix in Australia, which means that we simply don't need as many public EV chargers as the global average – because most Australians can do most of their charging at home.

"The competitive market is not currently delivering the infrastructure needed to support EV take up"

This is pure opinion, presented as fact…. And it is belied by the ~15,000 purchases each month, by Australians, of battery electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles today. Those people aren't suddenly finding, after they've bought the car, that they cannot charge it - we know that, because if they were, it would be all over the media.

On the days of the hearings, where representatives of the people of NSW were putting questions to interested stakeholders, Ausgrid did not turn up to answer questions under oath and on the public record.

Instead, they ran a self-congratulatory media piece on an unrelated topic (V2G) on the same day as the hearings.[7] One could conclude from the timing that they wished the coverage in the press that day to be favourable to them, rather than covering the criticisms of them that were levelled in the hearings.

6) The AEMC is the rule maker in the Australian energy market. Should it be the case that the rules of the market are changed, in a manner that favours monopolies over competition, the AEMC is the logical party to be the one changing the rules.

Interestingly, the AEMC's submission to the NSW parliamentary inquiry[8] included the same context free and erroneous data point being spread by Ausgrid and ENA:

"In its Global EV Outlook 2024, the International Energy Agency found that Australia has 68 EVs per public charger compared to the rest of the world at 11 EVs per charger."

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[6] https://electricvehiclecouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/EVC-response-to-FAU-2024.pdf

[7] https://www.ausgrid.com.au/About-Us/News/Vehicle-to-grid#:~:text=Ausgrid%20has%20successfully%20connected%20a,offers%20substantial%20benefits%20to%20customers.

[8] https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/ladocs/submissions/90003/Submission%2034%20-%20Australian%20Energy%20Market%20Commission.pdf

I personally reached out to the Chair of the AEMC (who was signatory on the NSW parliamentary submission) on this matter, providing an analysis of why the IEA had it wrong, in June 2025.

7) In August 2025, an AEMC commissioner delivered a speech at an event run by ENA, which the AEMC chose to publish on their website[9].

   This speech was riddled with inaccuracies, including references to the same incorrect data source on public EV charging numbers (the IEA) that Ausgrid, ENA, and the AEMC have all used to this point, and which was drawn to the attention of the AEMC's chair in June.

   I provided a fairly comprehensive and public review of the shortcomings in that speech, with better data, the following day[10], and have offered to assist the AEMC in this respect. I've not heard back from them.

   That review included multiple sources which indicate that the number of EVs per public EV charger in Australia is around 30.... and that this is roughly in step with the global market leader for EV uptake, which is Norway.

8) Also in August 2025, Ausgrid engaged directly with the MPs running the NSW parliamentary inquiry into EVs, with a hosted site visit to their depot in Artarmon[11]. The social media photos include a representative of Ausgrid, speaking to Ms Linda Voltz (MP), in front of a pole mounted EV charger.

   The specific charger involved in that photograph is one that was delivered by a competitive business, EVX, who have repeatedly expressed public concern about the risk posed to their business of permitting Ausgrid to secure anti-competitive rule changes in their favour – this is a core matter that the inquiry is looking into.

   Unlike the formal process of the hearings conducted for this inquiry, where parliamentarians asked questions of stakeholders which were answered on the public record, and under oath, this approach allowed Ausgrid to present any points they wished to the MPs on the committee, without risk of those points being seen or challenged for accuracy by industry experts.

9) In the week leading up to this submission, a quick review of Ausgrid's website shows claims on this matter which are both incorrect *and* inconsistent:

[9] https://www.aemc.gov.au/news-centre/speeches/powering-transition
[10] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/contribution-conversation-ross-de-rango-o9x8c
[11] https://www.linkedin.com/posts/parliamentofnsw_as-part-of-its-inquiry-into-infrastructure-activity-7363087490297049088-xFeK

Australia's future needs

Australia currently averages about 76 electric vehicles for every public charging point, one of the highest ratios globally and a clear signal that infrastructure needs to scale fast.

https://www.ausgrid.com.au/About-Us/Future-Grid/Electric-Vehicles,
https://www.ausgrid.com.au/About-Us/Future-Grid/Electric-Vehicles,
accessed 9SEP2025

> Australia faces a significant challenge in supporting the growth of EVs due to an insufficient public charging infrastructure, with a ratio of 45 EVs per public charger - one of the highest in the world (IEA, 2025)

https://www.ausgrid.com.au/About-Us/Future-Grid/Electric-Vehicles/Kerbside-charging
accessed 9SEP2025

It is self-evident that these numbers from Ausgrid cannot both be correct…. And, per my public review of the AEMC's speech, neither of them are consistent with data published by NSW government[12,13]

Prior to this week, Ausgrid's website has made other claims, like this one:

NSW's future needs

The NSW Government estimates that approximately 38,000 public EV charging ports will be required in NSW by 2030.

https://www.ausgrid.com.au/About-Us/Future-Grid/Electric-Vehicles
Accessed 8AUG25 – noting that it has since been removed.

[12] https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/government-strategies-and-frameworks/electric-vehicle-strategy/nsw-public-ev-charging-network
[13] https://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/data-and-research/drives-reporting-portal/registration-snapshot-report

> What's notable is that the NSW government never made this claim. Per above, Ausgrid appear to have calculated this number based on some CSIRO reports and some of their own assumptions, and then misattributed this number to the Government of NSW, after previously misattributing it to CSIRO.

Conclusion

Based on the conduct of Ausgrid and the ENA in this matter, it would be reasonable to treat any data they put forward with respect to EV uptake, and numbers of public EV chargers either in existence, or required in future, as questionable at best.

There is a multi-billion dollar agenda in play, and it seems that both Ausgrid and ENA are comfortable making inconsistent misrepresentations that serve Ausgrid's interests. There is a significant lack of informational integrity in the data which these entities have chosen to share publicly and use as their basis for public advocacy on this topic. One can only reasonably assume a similar lack of informational integrity in the 'data' they share when advocating behind closed doors.

Based on the repeated presentation of data from the **same incorrect sources** on this front by the AEMC (a federal government rule making body), **after** industry stakeholders identified the errors for them, it would be reasonable to question AEMCs processes for securing accurate information on which to base their views and their future rule changes in this space.

If the AEMC is uncritically accepting data points given to them by the ENA or Ausgrid, and using those data points to form views even when industry stakeholders identify the errors for them, that's not going to end well for Australian consumers.

A useful path forward here would be for the federal government (specifically DCCEEW) to take on the role of being the 'trusted source of truth' for data of this nature, **before** state governments, federal government, or regulators consider making anti-competitive changes to market rules along the lines of what Ausgrid and ENA are campaigning for.

This trusted source of truth would need to include existing public EV charging equipment of all types, across all jurisdictions. It would need to forecast future requirements, with that forecast being based on a transparent and well described open-source model, utilising publicly accessible data sources.

The transparency and open source parts are critical, because if the model forecasting the requirements is proprietary, and/or based on data that no-one else can readily access, it becomes far too easy for well connected vested interests to skew the model in their favour.