



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE A

Aurora Energy Pty Ltd

Monday 14 December 2020

MEMBERS

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair)

Hon Mike Gaffney MLC

Hon Sarah Lovell MLC

Hon Dr Bastian Seidel MLC

Hon Rob Valentine MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Meg Webb MLC

WITNESSES IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Guy Barnett MP, Minister for Primary Industries and Water; Minister for Energy; Minister for Resources; Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Prof. Mary O'Kane AC, Chair, Aurora Energy Pty Ltd

Ms Rebecca Kardos, CEO/Managing Director, Aurora Energy Pty Ltd

Mr Andrew Crozier, Chief Product and Customer Officer, Aurora Energy Pty Ltd

Mr Grant Russell, Project Executive Systems, Transitions and Decommissioning Aurora Energy Pty Ltd

Mr Kane Ingham, General Manager, People and Commercial Services, Aurora Energy Pty Ltd

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thanks, minister. Welcome to GBE scrutiny for this year, very late in the year. If you would like to introduce your team at the table for the purpose of Hansard and then I will invite you to make an opening comment if you wish, and we will go to questions.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for that and for the opportunity to be here for the GBE scrutiny hearings today with Aurora Energy. I would like to welcome and introduce Professor Mary O'Kane, chair of Aurora Energy; Rebecca Kardos, CEO of Aurora Energy; Grant Russell, Project Executive Systems, Transitions and Decommissioning; Kane Ingham on the CEO's right, also Andrew Crozier, Chief Product and Customer Officer at the table. We have a full book at the table to support the committee and to support me, the chair and the CEO through today.

With your permission I would like to share a few opening remarks, Chair.

It is a pleasure to be here for the 2019-20 financial year. As the Energy Minister I am excited to work with Aurora Energy to implement the Government's Tasmania First Energy Policy to provide lower electricity prices and to empower the people and businesses of Tasmania with the information and tools needed to manage their energy costs.

This year has been a particularly challenging one for all Tasmanians with the COVID-19 pandemic and Aurora Energy has played a significant role in helping to address the impacts of the pandemic. Through the challenges of COVID-19 Aurora has supported its 280 000 customers with a wide range of services. First, for small business, Aurora, along with other retailers, helped to implement the Government's waiver of quarterly electricity bills from 1 April this year. Aurora's small business customers' base had over \$17 million waived across their eligible bills, reaching 19 122 eligible small business sites.

Aurora Energy established a COVID-19 customer support program as an appropriate and targeted method that assisted customers during COVID-19 with actions such as bill relief, waiving fees or charges, and a range of other support measures. With just under \$4 million left in this fund, Aurora is willing and waiting to assist customers with high bills. Aurora also offered a dedicated help line to deliver the fund and other forms of energy bill assistance as well as restructuring a round of its grants to community organisations to enhance digital capacity, which was greatly needed as we all started to work and live more in the digital world.

By acting to address the impacts of the pandemic for Tasmanians, Aurora itself has been impacted. In 2019-20, Aurora Energy made a loss after tax of \$5.4 million, primarily impacted by the funding of the small business bill waiver as a COVID-19 support measure. As a result for the 2019-20 year, no dividend is recommended to the shareholders. However, when Aurora's financial result is adjusted for extraordinary items such as the COVID-19 support measures, Aurora's financial performance exceeded its 2019-20 budgeted profit.

Amongst the challenge of the pandemic the Government has maintained its commitment to lower the cost of living continues to benefit Tasmanians. We have delivered a regulated power price decrease of 1.38 per cent from 1 July 2020. Tasmanians continue to experience some of the lowest regulated prices in the nation according to the Tasmanian Economic Regulator's July report on the National Comparisons Standing Electricity Prices.

Aurora is a community and customer-focused organisation that Tasmanians should be proud of. This past year has seen the roll-out of its new digital product, Aurora+, which has

been an unqualified success in giving the customers more control and visibility over their energy usage.

Aurora has also provided tens of thousands of dollars in community grants in 2019-20.

These are exciting times in the energy space for Tasmania. We are now 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy, confirming our status as a world leader in renewable energy generation. We have also passed legislation to double our state's renewable generation to a global leading target of 200 per cent of our current needs by 2040.

Aurora Energy is a committed state-owned business dedicated to supporting the people and businesses of Tasmania through delivering renewable energy. I would like to hand to the chair for a few short opening remarks.

Prof O'KANE - I am pleased to appear before the committee today as chair of Aurora Energy. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on Tasmania. However, in spite of the unprecedented challenges and ambiguity presented, the business mobilised quickly to ensure support for our customers and the safety of our people. For Aurora Energy this meant new ways of working with 100 per cent of our workforce transitioning to working from home in less than a fortnight.

As chair I am incredibly proud of the way the business has adapted to new technology, new ways of engagement, and the challenges of working from home in a time of great change and uncertainty. I have also been heartened by Aurora Energy's unbroken focus on supporting our community, particularly those most vulnerable. As you may be aware this support has included a significant financial contribution through a \$5 million COVID-19 customer support fund along with the implementation of the Tasmanian Government's small business bill waiver.

Funding the small business bill waiver as a COVID-19 support measure in line with the shareholder direction to Aurora Energy was the primary driver, as you heard, of Aurora Energy's \$5.4 million loss in 2019-20. However, as I am sure the minister will agree, we are proud of the swift action taken to provide direct financial support to our customers at a time when they needed it most.

Alongside these measures and amid all the uncertainty Aurora Energy has also made significant progress on its strategy, focused on creating and delivering value for its customers. This began with the reset of the internal operating model. Through this process the organisational structure, core process and systems were redesigned to increase the speed with which the business was able to respond to continuing challenges in the market and delivering new products and services to its customers.

Through this process the business also took the opportunity to develop a new set of organisational values with widespread involvement across the Aurora workforce. These values importantly include the value 'customer obsessed' demonstrating its commitments to putting customers at the centre of the business. At the heart of delivering transformative customer experiences has been the roll-out of Aurora+, a new digital product which harnesses the benefits of advance meters to offer users greater convenience and control in managing their energy costs. Initially made available to customers transitioning off Aurora's pay-as-you-go product, Aurora+ is now available to all Aurora Energy's residential customers and particularly offers energy insights to customers with solar.

As the business continues to invest in product development, Aurora Energy recently launched Aurora+ business to offer small- to medium-sized business energy insights and create an integrated payment plan experience for customers who enter into payment plans which include those on Aurora Energy's industry leading Your Energy Support, better known as YES program. In marketing the rollout of Aurora+ as a key highlight for the year we also acknowledge the successful decommissioning of the pay-as-you-go product. This was a significant undertaking for Aurora Energy which saw the replacement of over 20 000 pay-as-you-go meters with advanced counterparts, and a comprehensive communication campaign to help customers select and transfer to new products.

These significant changes to Aurora Energy's product offerings have been complemented by a range of new online tools including a bill estimator and right plan calculator, along with the thriving community program which provided over \$80 000 in grants across 13 projects in 2019-20 supporting not-for-profit and community organisations to build digital capacity in support of their impact.

Moving into 2021, Aurora Energy still faces potential financial headwinds caused by the COVID-19 pandemic with the border economic impact expected to have adverse implications on Aurora Energy's future financial performance and position. That said, we had a better than budget first half of the year. We are working on the assumption that COVID-19 impacts are yet to hit us fully and to be fully seen. Before the COVID-related financial challenge, the existing energy industry disruption is also expected to continue. We recognise that there are still challenging times ahead for our customers and, as a proud Tasmanian owned and operated company, Aurora Energy is committed to doing what it can to help however long it takes.

It is fair to say that change and uncertainty will also continue to charters our operating environment. However, we welcome the opportunities that inevitably arise from change as we continue our journey to, as you see in our advertising, reimagined Tasmanian energy experience. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Does anyone want to open the questions?

Mr VALENTINE - I wouldn't mind having a question on the Aurora+. I am bemused by this because when you look at the figures around this, it is basically 11 cents extra a day for people to access information on their data - 37.9 cents a day is the cost to serve allowance; you add 11 cents to that. It is a 29 per cent increase for a person to actually gain access to the data via that method - it is their data and it is already calculated; you can get it through the help desk or call centre - why would you charge people to access their information in this way? It seems to be counterintuitive and the people who really need it the most are the ones that can least afford to pay that money. I am really left wondering. You provide grants to build digital capacity - you talk about that on page 9 of your annual report - and yet at the same time, the people who really need the information to help them manage their bills are being charged 11 cents extra a day.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks for your question. I can understand where you are coming from. It is best if the CEO provides a detailed response to that thoughtful question.

Ms KARDOS - Thank you very much for the question. I really appreciate the opportunity to explain the logic and rationale. You make really valid points about the

information being readily available through free mechanisms - you can access it and it is the customer's data.

However, what Aurora+ does is provides that in a format that makes it insightful and useful. What we learned through Pay as You Go Plus is customers really value the convenience and the control it gives. We want to further develop those insights and give customers greater understanding of what are the tangible and practical things they can do to control their energy within their home or business and make energy more manageable.

You also made the point around for those doing it tough: how can they afford an additional 11 cents? That is a really good point. For our YES customers, so those customers on our Your Energy Support Program, we waive that fee. We recognise that for those who are experiencing financial hardship, charging them for that fee is not appropriate. We waive it for them because we also recognise they will gain a lot of value in being able to see when and where they are using energy and how they can make that more manageable and potentially find savings far more in excess of 11 cents a day.

Going back to your initial point, customers have a choice of whether they want to go onto Aurora+; we have been really open and transparent around the fee. If a customer says, 'I have already got access to this data through free means', they can choose not to sign up to Aurora+ and their choice and we value that. However, the feedback we are getting from customers who have made that choice is they are being able to get greater control and visibility and are being able to find savings potentially greater than that 11 cents per day.

Mr VALENTINE - Is it made clear to them they are actually paying \$40 a year?

Ms KARDOS - When a customer rings up to inquire about Aurora+, we make it very clear of what the product service fee is. We itemise it on every bill. We have consciously done that because as a business, when we were looking at this, we had a choice. There is a cost in developing this product.

Mr VALENTINE - How much would that have been?

Ms WEBB - What was the cost?

Ms KARDOS - There is a cost in developing that product.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, but what was the cost?

Ms WEBB - What was that cost?

Mr VALENTINE - What was the cost?

Ms WEBB - Yes, so what are those costs?

Ms KARDOS - That's obviously commercial-in-confidence. I am not really at liberty to share the investment.

Ms WEBB - But we cannot assess whether what you are charging now covers the initial development and then whether the ongoing or whatever elements of that are covered.

PUBLIC

Ms KARDOS - I am happy to provide that in camera if it would appease the committee, given this is a public hearing and we operate in a competitive environment.

CHAIR - You can provide it in camera.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, you can provide it in camera, but I wonder why it has to be in camera.

Ms KARDOS - We can get that information, if you are comfortable with that, minister.

CHAIR - No, no, it is. If it's commercially sensitive, the committee can receive it in camera.

Mr VALENTINE - No, I appreciate that. I am wondering why.

CHAIR - But the ongoing costs wouldn't be.

Mr VALENTINE - No.

Ms KARDOS - But we are going to continue to invest and develop the product so part of the fee is reinvesting that into the product to enhance it and bring more features, insight, greater control and convenience for our customers. That is the intent.

Mr VALENTINE - How many customers would have this available to them if they chose to go down that path? How many customers are you talking about this being available to?

Mr BARNETT - It is a good question. My understanding is that over 30 000 customers are now using the product. I will just check with the CEO and she can provide more detail.

Ms KARDOS - More than 30 000 customers have chosen Aurora+. We have, over the course of this year, expanded that out, and we have -

Mr BARNETT - Is that 30 000 or 20 000. I am trying to remember. Is it more than 20 000 or more than 30 000?

Ms KARDOS - Andrew is our chief product and customer officer. He will know the numbers.

Mr BARNETT - How many customers have you got, Andrew?

Mr CROZIER - It is over 25 000.

Mr VALENTINE - Would they all have access to this Aurora+?

Mr BARNETT - That is my understanding.

Mr CROZIER - That is correct.

Ms KARDOS - They are customers who have chosen to sign up to Aurora+.

PUBLIC

Mr VALENTINE - You basically could raise a \$1 million a year through this?

Ms WEBB - That is only from the 25 000 current customers. There are a lot more than that potentially.

Ms KARDOS - When developing products there is always a cost involved in that. Those costs can be embedded into your standing prices. We made a choice to be transparent and for those customers who choose Aurora+ only they pay the product service fee. For those customers who want to continue to get that data through the freely available means that you highlighted earlier, they do not pay a fee associated with that. For those customers who are on our vulnerable customer program, the YES program, they do not pay for that. For those customers who see value in that product and are willing to pay that 11 cents a day, they are the only ones who are paying that. If, after using the product over time, they see no value, they can choose to opt out of that product as well.

Mr VALENTINE - Are there other utilities that employ this sort of a system that charge for it?

Mr BARNETT - If I can just kick it off, in terms of that response, it depends on the business case. This is, at the end of the day, it is a matter of choice. You do not have to do it, it is not compulsory, so it is not across all our customers in Tasmania. It is across, as Aurora indicated, 25 000-plus customers. You would think that maybe that would increase over time. It has obviously increased over recent months and since it started.

My point would be that it is a business case. The point you are making, you are getting a return on that investment, as the CEO has made, and you have made that point, and it is a good one. I am sure that Aurora Energy and the management and the board would think about what is the business case, what return, do we have the return based on that initial investment, and then the ongoing operational cost to deliver those benefits. Always remembering this is a choice for the customer so it is not compulsory.

In terms of other instrumentalities, government business enterprises, the boards look at it very carefully. It is all based on a business case. Whether it is for a dedicated customer set or a dedicated identified stakeholder group, it would depend on the policy position of the board as to whether they can get a return on those funds invested, remembering it is taxpayer's money at the end of the day in terms of the investment.

Mr VALENTINE - To clarify the numbers, I have some confusion going on here. The number of customers that you have as an organisation, as a utility, how many do you have?

CHAIR - How many overall connections have you got? That is the question, isn't it?

Mr BARNETT - The CEO can answer how many total numbers we have in terms of customers -

Mr VALENTINE - Total customers that might be able to access this. I am not talking about the ones that are. I am talking about the ones that could possibly.

PUBLIC

Ms KARDOS - That's a good question. There would be approximately 150 000 customers who would be eligible to sign onto the product, in terms of number of residential customers.

Mr VALENTINE - Residential?

Ms KARDOS - Assuming residential and small business customers, not all of them would choose the product, obviously. If they found value in it and felt that they were getting value for that 11 cents a day, they would have the ability to apply for it.

Ms WEBB - Can I clarify those numbers? My understanding is that your total customers is 280 000. Residential customers are about 85 per cent of that, which would make it about 238 000. Presumably all those would be potentially eligible to sign up to the app. If you could just clarify those figures are about right, because it is a more than you suggested.

Mr VALENTINE - That is different to 150, yes.

Ms KARDOS - I appreciate that, Meg, and I am just doing the numbers in my head. We would be talking about approximately 250 000; I was out 100 000. Thanks.

Ms WEBB - I was out 12.

Mr VALENTINE - 250 are residential customers?

Ms KARDOS - Residential and small business customers because we have developed an Aurora+ for business. Not all small businesses would find that product useful at this stage because we are still developing that. It is only a small proportion of that. Andrew, would you know what proportion of the small business customers would be eligible for Aurora+ for business?

Mr CROZIER - Yes, based on how it is currently designed it would be appropriate for nearly 50 per cent to 60 per cent because as the business gets larger the product probably becomes less useful.

Ms KARDOS - That would make it around 230 000. Is that right? So, 240 000.

Mr VALENTINE - At 238 000, it is \$10 million a year. My thinking says why not build that into your costs and just make it available if people wish to use it, rather than charging customers? It is just a question.

Ms WEBB - To clarify, if it is up to \$10 million a year, is that what you will be re-investing into further development - covering the initial development and then further development - or is that going to go into revenue? The question then is, on top of what you are collecting for the app is Aurora also making savings as a result of providing the app? Is there actually a double benefit to the revenue potentially?

Ms KARDOS - I think you are making really valid points. When we get to the point we have 100 per cent of customers on Aurora+ we as a business would make a decision then around how we do our pricing. At this point in time we have made a conscious decision, given the investment we have put into developing the product, to take the approach that only those

who choose to use the product will pay the product service fee recognising that we are waiving that for our vulnerable customers who participate in the YES program.

At this point in time that is the business decision we have made, but we operate in a market, in a competitive market. We are always looking at how we operate our business and if circumstances change and we are seeing that this has value for all customers and it no longer makes sense for us to do it that way, then we would consider changing that. But at this moment we have been really upfront and transparent around what the cost of that additional product is and that only those who choose that product pay that fee.

Ms WEBB - Can I clarify the other choices people might have? In last year's GBE Estimates, you pointed to Aurora Online portal as a free option for people to access to get similar information. That was subsequently closed down, is my understanding. That is one free alternative option people no longer have. What are the other options they have to get the same benefit that the app provides but for free?

Ms KARDOS - Unfortunately we found this year an underlying issue with Aurora Online. Consumer information privacy is paramount for us at Aurora Energy. Once we realised that there was an underlying issue with the legacy product, we made the decision to shut down Aurora Online to ensure that we can continue to protect customer data.

In doing that, we also quickly mobilised the functionality that Aurora Online provided on our website and the large majority of that functionality is all available online. There is, however, for some functionality that does require a customer service agent to assist with.

In terms of those customers who were using Aurora Online, all of the functionality that was available is now available on our website. So it is doing that. We also, as the Chair outlined, are continuing to invest in our product capability and we are continuing to look to ways we can meet our customers' expectations. We are looking at what else can we do to provide those services in 2020-21 to provide all our customers with the ability to have better control over their energy costs.

Mr VALENTINE - How many PAYG customers have switched to Aurora+? Can you tell us that?

Mr BARNETT - How many have switched? I will check. The CEO may have a response, otherwise somebody at the table might be able to assist. It is quite a focused question/operational matter. I will check with the CEO.

Ms KARDOS - We have transitioned all PAYG customers to an alternate product. Some of them chose Aurora+. The actual number who chose Aurora+, Grant, do you have that for me?

Mr RUSSELL - I do not have that exact number. It was running at about 45 per cent historically when we did the swap out. Whether those customers are on that product, I could not tell you whether that percentage has changed.

Ms WEBB - And that percentage represents what number?

PUBLIC

Ms KARDOS - Roughly around 10 000 PAYG customers would have changed to Pay as You Go Plus based on that because we had 20 000 Pay as You Go customers.

Ms WEBB - Is that included in the 25 000 who are currently on it?

Ms KARDOS - Yes, that is part of that 25 000. What we have done is the feedback from our Pay as You Go Plus customers, we have further expanded Aurora+ and made it available to a broader customer base, to customers who are on Tariff 31, 41, business customers, solar customers. We have created additional functionality where solar customers can see how much energy they have exported back into the network. We have been looking at amplifying the information and insight that customers can get so they can get greater control over their energy costs.

Mr VALENTINE - So that is 15 000 of the standing offer who have gone from PAYG to a standing offer?

Ms KARDOS - No, I think it would be closer. I am working on rough numbers here.

Mr VALENTINE - It is -

Ms KARDOS - Ten thousand Pay as You Go customers went to Aurora+.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, and the remainder?

Ms KARDOS - The remaining 10 000 would have chosen our normal base service offering.

Ms LOVELL - The 25 000 customers who have taken up Aurora+ and the business case and projections you are talking about, is that in line with what you were expecting at this point in time?

Ms KARDOS - Nothing is in line with what we were expecting at this point in time a year ago, given COVID-19. We have spent a lot of our time this calendar year ensuring the health and safety of our people, making sure we keep them safe in the circumstances we found ourselves in and then also ensuring we support our customers through this time. That included establishing our COVID-19 Customer Support Program, recognising that during winter we also had estimated real reads. We had people living, working and schooling from home so we saw increased energy usage and saw this winter a real amplification of bill shock.

This year we have spent a lot of time improving our readily freely available products on our website. We created a high bill checklist, a Right Plan Calculator where customers can check whether or not they would be better off on a time of use plan. All of those things are freely available, supporting Tasmanians to get the best offer they can and the best control of their energy costs.

Ms LOVELL - In terms of it not being in line and the impact of COVID-19, are you suggesting that the financial impact of COVID-19 has been an inhibitor for people coming across?

PUBLIC

Ms KARDOS - It is about us choosing where our efforts are best employed. During COVID-19 we put a lot of time and energy - we are a small organisation - we are always choosing where we most appropriately to put the efforts of our people. Our focus during COVID-19 was making sure we could support Tasmanians through that period, and putting online as many services as we can, so customers could have that self-service. Andrew Crozier, our Chief Product and Customer Officer, can talk more about what we've done on our website over the COVID period.

Mr CROZIER - Yes, we recognised quite quickly as a business we were living in extraordinary times. We had been very focused on encouraging uplift in our Aurora+ customer numbers, but at the moment that COVID hit, we repositioned all of our effort and activity towards trying to do the right thing, to create capability and support for customers.

We developed a wide range of capability on the website, and in other ways - from information on a high bill checklist, for example, to help customers who were really using more energy than normal, and also those who had been impacted by the estimated bill-read, which happened for a couple of months while TasNetworks paused bill reading for safety purposes.

We also created tools such as a bill estimating tool, so that those customers who were being impacted by estimated bills would be able to put in a read that they had received on their last bill, and what was actually on the meter at that particular moment, in order to start to understand exactly what their bill might be, just to give them some degree of surety.

At the same time, we did a number of other small things, like putting links to local charities which might be useful at that time, such as SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY. We went out of our way to think what could we do to turn the website into a service tool for customers, where we provide them with the right information to help them understand how to manage their usage, to give them the tools to enable them to understand their costs, and also to make the process of transitioning or moving home - or even moving onto us, if they choose to - easier at that time.

We also recognised that Aurora+ actually became incredibly powerful for customers, because on a daily basis they could see how their energy usage was - it was increasing, or decreasing - and they could take immediate action to do something about their costs and consumptions.

Ms LOVELL - People still have the option, obviously, to switch across, or take up.

Mr CROZIER - Absolutely.

Ms LOVELL - That's more where you've had your people and the organisation's priorities, rather than encouraging people to switch across?

Ms KARDOS - Exactly. We have invested a lot of time and effort and resource this year in making sure our website can deliver a range of functionality to support our customers during these really challenging times.

Dr SEIDEL - I am interested in the language you use because, as you mentioned, it's very powerful for customers, and we are, you know, customer-obsessed. You're actually developing some unique insights into customer behaviour, aren't you? It's quite a powerful

tool, and you get a lot of data, and you develop a lot of intelligence on behavioural economics. It's going to help your organisation quite substantially in predicting future customer behaviour. You also change information, so you know how customers actually react to it, so it's quite powerful, isn't it?

At what stage are you going to say, 'Well, the program pays for itself, and we don't have to charge customers anymore.'? Because the main beneficiary, it seems to me, is actually Aurora and not necessarily the customer.

I might be wrong, but I'm mindful you will get a lot of insights. If you had a team of artificial intelligence experts right now working on it to see how things develop, you will monitor customer behaviour quite closely, and you can see how people react to certain triggers and areas.

Ms KARDOS - Andrew, I will invite you to talk about our team of artificial intelligence experts.

Mr CROZIER - I think the most important thing to reference is that this is a product that is made for Tasmanians, in Tasmania. All Aurora+ has been designed and built either with Aurora staff, or using our partners based in Tasmania as well.

I think perhaps our capability in that space isn't quite as significant as you might expect, but certainly we're very much working to take the insights that we develop - either through the app or engaging with our customers - to really understand the unique needs and desires of the Tasmanian customer, so that we can do our best to meet that in a very specific way.

From an Aurora perspective, we're in a unique position where we are a community business, so anything that benefits Aurora benefits the people of Tasmania. We reinvest some of those funds in product development, or the funds go back to the state.

The product is being designed very specifically to help specific groups within Tasmania, and to take the insights that we have in order to understand how we can further develop and prioritise new things in the future. Everything that is developed does come back in one way or another to the Tasmanian community.

Ms WEBB - Just to pick up on the question I had before, which wasn't addressed. What savings are there to Aurora in this app, so we can understand the cost and where investment is required?

The energy charter disclosure says only 14-23 per cent of aurora+ customers log in daily. Is it 14 per cent, or is it 23 per cent? That is quite a range. If they don't log in, what benefits are they getting from it? How are you measuring the benefits? Are you putting efforts towards improving the active use of the app once it has been purchased for the \$40 a year?

Ms KARDOS - I think these are best answered by Andrew.

Mr CROZIER - How many people log in any particular day is actually a range. Different times of the week are more popular than others. What I can say is that 50-60 per cent of our customers log in during a month. Obviously, how often you log in and engage with that information is really dependent on how engaged you are with your energy use. We do have

some customers who are very engaged and look at it quite frequently. Some customers use it a little less frequently than that.

The app has insights which are incredibly useful every single day, but the benefits go beyond that. It sits on the individual metre, and also has very capable payment functionality where customers can go in and make payments any time they wish. The product is available to use whenever you need it, much the same way as an internet banking platform might be. We are also thinking what comes next, to help customers engage even more, but also provide insights and useful information on which they can then take action to reduce or change their energy consumption patterns. That is certainly something that we are looking to develop in the coming months.

Ms WEBB - My first question was around savings to Aurora.

Ms KARDOS - We haven't actually quantified the savings at this point. The onboarding experience of getting someone onto aurora+ is quite resource intensive. Plus, we haven't done detailed modelling of their change in cost, but we would hope it will assist us in becoming more operationally efficient in time. As I said before, we made the conscious decision to charge those who elect to choose aurora+ a product service fee, but that fee is waived for YES customers, and in time we may choose to take an alternative approach. We thought this was the most fair and transparent approach at this point.

Mr VALENTINE - Have you noticed an impact on your call centre traffic?

Ms KARDOS - This financial year, no. This is not a normal year for us in any way.

Ms WEBB - Two things you could probably take on notice, and get back to us, because it relates to figures. Of the 25 000 people who are currently signed up to the app, what proportion are concession customers, and of your total residential concession customers, what proportion of them are signed up to the app?

CHAIR - Do you need to take that on notice?

Ms WEBB - And a follow-up. Acknowledging that fees are being waived for YES customers, was consideration given to provide this for free to all concession customers, regardless of them being in circumstances such that they need the YES program - acknowledging that all concession customers will be vulnerable to some extent?

CHAIR - I will get you to put those in writing to our secretary, and they can then be forwarded through.

Mr GAFFNEY - How did you come up with the 11 cents a day? Was it modelling on what the app would cost? I have had people ask me, how do they get the 11 cents, because the app should not cost millions of dollars. If you do get to a stage where you find it is covering it really well, do we decrease that down to 5 cents a day or something. I accept the user pays principle. I think most people would, but at what stage do you find revenue is far exceeding the cost for the app and where are we going to take it? How do you as a board make that assessment?

Ms KARDOS - The 11 cents a day - when we did the original business case for developing pay as you go products, as the minister discussed, we looked at what was the cost of developing Pay As You Go Plus. We have enhanced it since then versus what would be considered a reasonable return on that investment. That is how we came up with that number. Kane, you were involved in developing that. Would you like to add anything further?

Mr INGHAM - That is mainly it. The other thing too, obviously this was replacing the legacy Pay As You Go product which relied on particular meter hardware at the meter and customers having a particular card. That had its own unique pricing structure. The other thing we overlayed that was together with the new pricing structure and the 10 cents per day or 11 cents including GST. How fair was that to the customer and how did that compare to the existing Pay As You Go pricing back then, which was a lot cheaper? Customers on those legacy products would be better off under the new arrangements. That was just another consideration on top of the one mentioned by Bec.

Dr SEIDEL - You mentioned initially the customer's data, but if you have a look at your privacy terms and conditions, they clearly state all intellectual property in relation to Aurora+ and its content mobile interfaces belongs to Aurora Energy or its licencees. You obtain no interest in that intellectual property. You really obtain it for your own purposes rather than giving it back to the customer. The insights you develop with Aurora+ -

Ms KARDOS - Sorry, I am still not sure understand the question.

CHAIR - What is the question?

Dr SEIDEL - The question is: are you willing to share the insights you develop with Aurora+ to the customers?

Ms KARDOS - That is why we developed the product - to empower our customers so they could get greater control over energy. Does that answer your question?

Dr SEIDEL - That is right.

Mr BARNETT - Can I conclude this session by saying Aurora Energy, being a state-owned enterprise, is there to protect and support Tasmania. The board has a job to do and based on the business case, they implement that through the CEO and the management, and this is a good example. We have been talking about the pros and cons, returns on funds invested, but at the end of the day, the whole objective is to support Tasmania and Tasmanians and to get the best possible outcomes.

I have talked about the importance of consumer empowerment with the board, with the CEO and others, and that is a message you can hear coming through - that we are trying to empower the consumers based on choice and opportunity and, of course, based on a business case. The overarching message I would share as minister is that it is Team Tasmania and we are trying to deliver for Tasmanians through Aurora Energy. You have seen that in the last financial year with the support through the waiver for the bills, the \$5 million support through COVID-19. It has been a particularly challenging year and that has been there to support Tasmania.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - We will move on to another area. I would like to look at the onerous contracts. On page 68, it talks about the provision from onerous contracts. What impact has the onerous contract with Cattle Hill Wind Farm had on the financial result?

Mr BARNETT - Perhaps if I can kick it off and the Chair and/or CEO might want to add to my remarks in terms of onerous contracts. Certainly, our market participants are committed to meeting their responsibilities and market liabilities at the lowest possible cost to minimise price impacts on that customer. That is an overarching message and, of course, this year we saw a downward 1.38 per cent reduction in the regulated electricity prices from 1 July,

CHAIR - Minister, we have heard this in the opening. I want to know what the impact of the onerous contract that the Cattle Hill Wind Farm had on the financial result.

Mr BARNETT - As I say, I will pass to the Chair and the CEO, but the renewable energy certificate charges account for just 7.4 per cent of the retail bill, so that is part of your answer. The contract signed by our energy businesses to support their market responsibilities, such as the purchase of the Renewable Energy Certificate, are part of the requirement for energy market participants to meet their mandatory market responsibilities. Some of those contracts are commercial-in-confidence.

CHAIR - I just want to know what impact this one has had on the financials? A pretty simple question.

Ms KARDOS - In meeting our wholesale and renewable obligations, we take positions in today's markets and we have approved strategies around how we go about that. As you are aware, there are accounting requirements where, if a contract we have entered into is no longer the value of that contract, the benefits are not in line with the economic value of that, it is then deemed onerous and that then flows through your accounts. I will get Kane to give you the actual specific numbers on that.

Mr INGHAM - For this financial year, the one that has gone, we recognised an onerous contract back in 30 June 2019. As you do every year, you reassess that value each year and that is what has happened for 30 June 2020. For this financial period, the impact of the onerous contract is not that great. A lot of it was recognised 30 June 2019.

CHAIR - So what was the impact for this year?

Mr BARNETT - It is around \$2 million and there was actually the value of the revaluation of the contract went up. I think it is a positive \$4 million this financial year.

Ms KARDOS - When you take a position in the market, the market is constantly moving and, as Kane explained, prices within the wholesale and renewable markets are continuing to fluctuate. Every financial year, we have to reassess that and that means it can become less onerous or more onerous, or that in time it could no longer be onerous.

CHAIR - I accept that. Was Aurora Energy directed by the minister to sign the contracts with Cattle Hill Wind Farm?

Mr BARNETT - No.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Obviously, Aurora Energy made that decision of its own necessity. There was no direction from the minister to Aurora regarding this onerous contract?

Mr BARNETT - Correct. There was no direction from the minister.

CHAIR - How many separate contracts relating to Cattle Hill does Aurora Energy has?

Ms KARDOS - To meet the mandated renewable energy legislation, we have a renewable energy strategy and to decide to what extent how best to meet that liability, ensuring we get the best outcome, because we operate in a competitive market, we went out to tender in 2018 - I checked the right year - to contract with a renewable energy party to assist us in meeting some of our liability to 2030. In doing that, we made a conscious decision to consider only Tasmanian renewable projects. If we are needing to invest in meeting that renewable energy target, we thought it would be best if we met that liability by supporting renewable development in Tasmania, given that we are owned and run by Tasmania, and also to support the 100 per cent renewable state policy around that, which we have recently achieved through the construction of Cattle Hill and Granville Harbour.

Through that procurement process where we assess value for money, buy local and the range of our procurement principles, we entered into a contract with Goldwind for the purchase of its large-scale generation certificates that will be produced by that wind farm.

CHAIR - Do the contracts require Aurora Energy to take all the LGCs from Cattle Hill?

Ms KARDOS - The contract itself is obviously commercial-in-confidence, but I would be more than happy to share that information in camera if the committee would like to.

CHAIR - I would be interested to see that, thank you. How many LGCs were bought from Cattle Hill in the 2019-20 year?

Ms KARDOS - Our liability for LGCs in 2020 was 850 000. I can't give you the specific numbers that Cattle Hill has provided this year at this moment.

CHAIR - In terms of the LGCs, I think you indicated in a previous answer that you purchase not just from Cattle Hill, but from other -

Ms KARDOS - From the market as well.

CHAIR - For Tasmanian product you are talking about?

Ms KARDOS - We have a renewable strategy; some of them we just buy from the market. They may be sourced from mainland renewable projects, but we take a balanced approach to our strategy in terms of meeting our liability.

CHAIR - With the recent changes in federal legislation giving the federal government powers over dealing with China, have they had any effect on these changes? China has an interest in Cattle Hill - Goldwind, isn't it? Is what's going on with China at the federal level, at the moment, having any impact here?

Mr BARNETT - That's a very big question. In terms of China trade policy and investment policy, that is as important to Tasmania as it is to Australia. Jeremy Rockliff as Minister for Trade has a leadership role there, but with respect to all of the productive industries, many of which or most of those I represent as minister, there has been an impact, absolutely.

We are assessing and monitoring our position very closely to advance Tasmania's interests and we are working closely with the key stakeholders in each and every respect, whether it be with respect to seafood and other productive industries. Whole logs is the most recent matter being brought into the public arena, but there is an ongoing conversation that will take place with the federal government. They are monitoring it very carefully.

Senator Birmingham as minister for Trade, David Littleproud I communicate with, and his office. The impact is there and it is being monitored very carefully by the Government working closely with the key stakeholders.

CHAIR - Has the board discussed it and the implications of that?

Prof O'KANE - No, we have not discussed it in detail. Beyond banter, we haven't had a formal discussion.

CHAIR - On page 48, in the annual report, under note C2, there is some contrary around the LGCs and the STCs which are the small-scale technology certificates, do they have the same value? Are they interchangeable? We are talking about two different things here.

Ms KARDOS - There are two distinct markets and prices for LGCs to STCs and the arrangements for STCs are quite distinct because there is a clearing house from which you can purchase them at a set price. From recollection I think that is \$40. Grant, is that \$40?

Mr RUSSELL - Yes, \$40.

Ms KARDOS - Yes, so there is a ceiling on the price to STCs. However, the market can sometimes be less for STCs and we will then buy them from the market if we can get them at a better price.

CHAIR - The note here says that \$78.3 million-worth of renewable energy credits were expensed during the year. How many RECs did that relate to?

Ms KARDOS - Let me just get the numbers for you. Apologies.

Mr BARNETT - Chair, through you, just while the CEO is getting those numbers for you, I want to make it very clear on behalf of the state Government that we welcome foreign investment, and foreign investment is managed and monitored at a federal level. I have every confidence they will continue to manage and monitor it carefully, but as a government, it is across not just energy, but across all our industries so we have foreign investment. We welcome that on the terms and conditions set by the federal government, but that helps create jobs and development opportunity in Tasmania, particularly in our rural and regional areas, which we strongly support.

PUBLIC

Ms KARDOS - We acquired approximately 306 000 Small Scale Certificates. The liability increased significantly. We had a higher small-scale technology percentage for 2020. As a result of that, we are forecasting our Small-Scale Technology Certificate liability for 2020 to be approximately 970 000 certificates. As I said before, our large-scale generated certificate liability for 2020 is forecast to be approximately 800 000 certificates.

CHAIR - On the same note there, it says that at the end of the year there was effectively \$11.2 million-worth of RECs on hand. How many RECs does that relate to?

Mr INGHAM - I don't know how many RECs on hand it relates to, but probably the interesting point there is that you surrender the RECs on a calendar year basis so at 30 June we often have RECs on hand. Equally, there is a liability on the other side. I don't have the number.

Mr VALENTINE - We often hear we're producing green energy, 100 per cent renewables, and yet when I dig down a little bit we see that Tariff 31 - that is 26.587 cents a kilowatt hour, we have to pay an extra 6.0273 cents extra on top of the standard tariff to get 100 per cent green energy. Is that correct?

Mr BARNETT - Sorry?

Mr VALENTINE - Tariff 31, 26.587 cents a kilowatt hour. To get 100 per cent green energy we have to pay an extra 6.023 cents a kilowatt hour. Can you confirm that?

Mr BARNETT - Let us check whether the CEO might be able to assist on that question.

Ms KARDOS - You're talking about our green energy product.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes.

Ms KARDOS - Yes. That's to have accredited green energy. So you pay that additional amount to have that accredited. We have a very low uptake in Tasmania of that product because our underlying product is already predominantly green. However, the green energy product means that you have sourced that energy through using an accredited 100 per cent renewable product whereas, obviously, at any given point in time the energy you get, say, through tariff 31 to power your lights and your household and your premise, whilst Tasmania is now at 100 per cent renewable at any given point, that energy may be coming from a non-renewable source depending on how we're meeting the energy demand at that point in time.

Mr VALENTINE - If Basslink didn't exist, we would be pretty well 100 per cent. Occasionally the Tamar Valley power station was switched on and developed energy for us, but if we didn't have Basslink it would be virtually 100 per cent green. Yet Basslink is in place and we've got to pay 6 cents extra on the tariff to get 100 per cent renewable. It seems a bit odd, doesn't it? Do you want to comment on that?

Mr BARNETT - The CEO has already responded in terms of the 6 cents. Did you want to add -

Ms KARDOS - That's our accredited green power product. I'm pretty confident that's what you're referring to.

Mr VALENTINE - I am, and it's 23 per cent more, and on tariff 41 it's an extra 34 per cent.

Ms KARDOS - That's for the accredited but, like I said, we've had a very low uptake on that product because admittedly the energy the majority of customers are using on tariff 31, on tariff 41, is renewable. However, if you want to guarantee that it is 100 per cent and that it's accredited, you then have to pay that additional amount, so we can buy an accredited green product.

Mr VALENTINE - Wouldn't you think Tasmanians have actually been paying for the development of the dams and the maintenance of those dams and the renewable energy infrastructure that we've got in place, that Tasmanians wouldn't actually have to pay that extra. Maybe, yes, if you're selling power to the mainland. Wouldn't that seem reasonable?

Mr BARNETT - Perhaps if I can talk about that a little bit. We've announced that - I think it was 27 November, a few weeks ago, the 100 per cent fully self-sufficient renewable energy at Granville Harbour that you might recall. But, in coming weeks and months, we will be going through a process with the federal government in terms of certification so, you're right, there is a certification process. I can just give you a heads-up that we're already progressing down that track to ensure that that is certified as accredited renewable generation.

It's fair to say there's more work to do and with respect to announcements around that, we will have to wait and see. But we're working that through pretty positively. My understanding in terms of what you're referring to - and the CEO can clarify this, if you possibly could - but in terms of that subscription to that product it's sort of minimal subscription levels. Would that be right, CEO?

Ms KARDOS - We have a very low uptake of Aurora Green which is the product you're referencing. I haven't got the specific customer number. I can get those numbers for you but it's a very small number of customers. To be honest, we don't promote it because in reality we're already investing in renewable energy to meet our mandated renewable energy target.

CHAIR - By purchasing the LGCs and the -

Ms KARDOS - Yes, exactly, which is already in the price that customers pay. We're already largely renewable and, as you're making the point, the energy we produce - however, Aurora Green was developed some time ago. I think it was developed prior to me starting as CEO. It is there for those customers who want accredited green power. The base energy that we sell, and I think this is the point that you may be referring to, is not accredited green power.

Mr VALENTINE - I can appreciate that because I know that brown coal-fired power comes across Basslink. The point I am making is that Tasmanians have basically helped build the system, yet they are being charged to get renewable energy out of it. That is the point I am making. Anyway, I have made my point.

Mr BARNETT - That is right. You have made the point and I have sort of responded on the wonderful achievement, which is globally significant, that we have fully self-sufficient in renewable energy, 100 per cent, but it will take some time, weeks and months, working through the federal government to have that accredited. To your point, yes, we all want to be in that position where it is accredited. You can stamp it, using 100 per cent Tasmanian clean

electricity, whether you are making a widget, providing a service, whatever it is, it will be part of a Tasmania brand for which I am a big advocate as you know and the Government is. It is clean, it is fresh, it is pure, it is natural, it is 100 per cent clean electricity. That is why we can be so proud in Tasmania with this globally significant initiative.

Ms KARDOS - If I can further add to that. I am reminding myself because I have not thought about the green power product for quite some time for obvious reasons, but one of the challenges with the accreditation of green power is that renewable energy sources built prior to 1997 cannot be accredited. That is part of the challenge with accrediting 100 per cent renewable energy because a large percentage of our hydro fleet was built long before 1997. You make a really valid point. But Tasmanians can know that the large majority of the energy that they are using, we are using right at this moment, is predominantly renewable. We are in a very fortunate place in Tasmania in that the energy we have is not producing CO₂ and is not polluting the atmosphere.

Mr VALENTINE - I think many Tasmanians would think that they were getting fully renewable though.

Ms WEBB - I would like to ask more about the financial support provided during COVID-19. My understanding is household electricity consumption across the COVID-19 time increased by about 20 per cent in this state and, at the same time, business use decreased by about 20 per cent. So there was that transfer from business use into home use. Is that a correct approximation of what has happened across that first six months of the COVID-19 time?

Ms KARDOS - Let me get the exact numbers for you. You can tell I am getting old as I peer into my screen. I do apologise.

Ms WEBB - We can come back to that. Someone can find it for you.

Ms KARDOS - Here we go, I have got it. Apologies. What we saw is that -

Ms WEBB - I am really looking for a broad brush. How much household went up, how much business went down, so I understand what that transfer looked like as people were at home.

Ms KARDOS - During April and May, when we were during the peak period where significant restrictions were in place, average residential usage peaked at around 25 per cent above our forecast. It is really important to note it is against forecast. We make forecasts depending on how many customers we have and the key variant in energy usage is weather. We use more when it is really cold and we use less on days like today.

CHAIR - Not that we would ever know being in here all day, but there you go.

Ms WEBB - So 25 per cent up on expected and business was?

Ms KARDOS - Small business usage decreased by around 15 per cent.

Ms WEBB - We had that sort of transfer into the households from the businesses. Then we provided bill waivers to 19 000 small businesses to the tune of just over \$17 million.

PUBLIC

Mr BARNETT - Correct. This is Aurora Energy.

Ms WEBB - Then \$5 million was put up to support households of which \$1 million has been spent

Mr BARNETT - A little more.

Ms WEBB - Slightly over \$1 million. We are virtually the only state or territory, the only other one being Northern Territory that didn't provide a direct payment of assistance to concession card holders in this state during this time. Western Australia, \$305 plus \$600 credit; South Australia, \$500 once off; Queensland, \$200 rebate plus \$250 asset payments; ACT, \$200; New South Wales, \$50; Victoria, \$250, \$650 for utility relief grants. We chose not to relieve households even though we know they went up 25 per cent but we relieved small business that went down 15 per cent. If we had invested the same amount, the \$17 million, to households we could have given every concession holder in this state a \$200 rebate. Was that considered and, if not, why not?

Mr BARNETT - Every other state is different from Tasmania. Tasmania is in a position where we are fortunate to have either the lowest, or amongst the lowest, regulated electricity prices for both residential and small business. Since we have been in government there has been a 2.2 per cent increase in nominal terms but in real terms a 19 per cent reduction for small business and a 12 per cent reduction for residential regulated prices. On top of that you have just seen a reduction of 1.38 per cent from 1 July 2020. On top of that you have the ongoing concessions to our concession card holders in Tasmania which is amounts the most generous in Australia - we can flesh that out for you, if required. On top of that, as a government, we have also expended some \$1 billion to provide community support during the COVID-19 pandemic, a very difficult time.

So, as a government, we have supported households' individuals, communities, small businesses and the like as a result of that. I wouldn't describe it or characterise it as you have. I think the support provided has been quite substantial.

Ms WEBB - I didn't characterise it in that way. I asked you a very straightforward question. That was, did you consider providing a direct rebate to Tasmanian concession card holders like every other state and territory virtually did given we know that household consumption is the area that went up and we gave a rebate to small business through the bill waivers, essentially gave them cash to cover that bill, \$17 million, and we didn't do the same for households; \$1million has been provided in support. I asked the question, did you consider providing a direct rebate to concession card holders and if not why not? Your answer appears to be they are getting enough support as it is.

CHAIR - I think the question is, did you consider that as an option.

Mr BARNETT - I answered it and I will provide a further answer to the member. That is, we provided support to concession card holders in different ways. We had a targeted approach to provide assistance to a range of customers. I should note that the quantum of support is in fact very substantial. I have noted that they are a very important group in the community. Of course some of those concession card holders were impacted in different ways to other concession card holders. The federal government had its own support measures in place through the JobKeeper and JobSeeker arrangements, which was gratefully appreciated.

PUBLIC

It should be noted that support was not only ongoing but increased and that was certainly appreciated by the feedback that we had as a government.

We wanted a very focused and targeted approach. We have delivered that in a very appropriate way and the feedback that we have had its been appreciated.

Ms WEBB - Can I ask then about the \$5 million of which just over \$1 million has been spent to provide this targeted support to concession card holders or people experiencing hardship. How has the utilisation of that funding differed from the business as usual hardship programs that you offer? How is that being spent in providing assistance?

Mr BARNETT - I will pass to the CEO.

Ms KARDOS - We quickly mobilised because we recognised as a result of the global pandemic our customers would require support. We established the \$5 million COVID-19 Support Fund and made that available, alongside a program with a dedicated phone number and a range of support. That is in addition to our Your Energy Support program which is our vulnerable customer program. It is a targeted program, so if customers contacted us who had been either directly or indirectly impacted by COVID-19, we could waive any fees or charges. We may contribute in terms of a bill waiver, payment extensions. It is quite an extensive program underpinned by this \$5 million COVID-19 Support Fund.

However, as the COVID-19 has extended, what we have also recognised is not every customer is contacting us who needs support. The team has now taken a different approach where we are proactively now contacting customers who we believe may have been impacted by COVID-19. I would like to invite Kane who has been leading this proactive customer support, to explain what and how we have done and what impact that has had.

Mr INGHAM - One of the things we have been able to do is look back on the customer data and their history in being able to pay their bills and look at customers who have found themselves 'newly vulnerable'. Customers that have had a history of being able pay their bills and then all of a sudden with COVID-19 hitting, clearly something has happened and they have been impacted, we have proactively contacted those customers to talk to them, among other customers. Those customers we can clearly see have been impacted to have a conversation with them about whether someone within the household has lost a job or there have been other circumstances that COVID-19 has impacted their ability to pay. We have had a conversation with them about the fund and what assistance we can provide with them.

Like Bec said, sometimes that is not the \$5 million. Maybe it is payment arrangements or other support measure we can provide. It might be assistance through our YES program. As Bec mentioned, when the fund was initially made available, not all customers were contacting us so we looked at ways of being able to reach them.

Ms WEBB - Is the proactive contact as a result of non-payment, delayed payment of bills or is it you have actually assessed here is somebody whose bill has gone up more than 25 per cent or whatever it might be, let's contact them and see if they need assistance.

Mr INGHAM - A bit of both. First, non-payment. If a customer historically has been able to pay and we look at the history in the current context.

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - Is this after they have come to you to say I cannot pay, I am going to be late?

Mr INGHAM - Not necessarily. Obviously if a customer has come to us and said, 'I cannot pay, I have been impacted by COVID-19', the fund has been available for them and we have had a conversation with them about what we can do for them. We have called these customers when we have been able to see that. The calls in many respects have been well received from the customers and other stakeholders, recognising that some of them are doing it tough.

Ms WEBB - In what sense have people had to demonstrate negative impact from COVID-19, specifically in order to access some of this support, whether it is waiving of fees, or assistance with paying the bill?

Mr INGHAM - It is a conversation about impacts in the household. It might be one of the household has lost their job. It might be family circumstances have changed as a result of COVID-19.

Ms WEBB - People have to explain themselves in some sense, and you have a threshold that has to be reached, for you to determine that, yes, they are impacted by COVID-19.

Mr INGHAM - Yes.

Ms WEBB - Is that a formalised threshold we could understand?

Mr INGHAM - It is just a judgment of the person taking the call. The person from Aurora having a conversation with the customer about the impact from the customer.

Ms WEBB - Who decides what element of support is provided, whether it is a waiving of that fee or charge, or whether it is actually providing assistance with the bill?

Mr INGHAM - Our agents are trained to make that assessment based on the customer's circumstances. As you can imagine, there are lots of different circumstances that our people -

Ms WEBB - How many people have been assisted with payment of actual bills, beyond just waiving of fees or charges?

Mr INGHAM - Over 1000.

Ms WEBB - What proportion of the \$1 million and a bit would that represent?

Mr INGHAM - Sorry, I do not understand the question.

Ms WEBB - I understand that a little over \$1 million has been provided in assistance of some form through this effort. What proportion of that is directly assisting the payment of the bill, rather than waiving of fees or charges, reducing bills?

Ms KARDOS - We do not have that specifically broken down. Would you like us to get that?

PUBLIC

Ms WEBB - I think that would be interesting to see, so we understand in the household context what element of assistance for actual payment of bills has been provided. I would also like to know in how many cases that is to a concession customer.

Mr BARNETT - We will take that on notice. I wonder if an overview of the \$5 million COVID-19 support would be helpful, because this came through the board to the management, so you understand what is behind it.

Prof. O'KANE - Thank you, minister. We were very keen to do something, so we got out quite fast with the \$5 million, and we were anxious about exactly the points that have been raised in questioning. Is it actually going? How badly are people going to be affected? What will provide the greatest help? How long will this go on?

We put a lot of training into frontline staff. Luckily, we had done a lot of work with the staff about this customer assistance. That came out of staff consultation. There was a lot of discretion given to people who answering at home, but we didn't know how long we would have to continue with what we were doing. We didn't know whether Tasmania was going to be locked down for 2, 3, 4 or 5 months, so there was a balancing act between working out how much to give, and whether we would need to cut in again. We were already looking at making a loss. There was a lot of judgment in there.

I think the management and the frontline staff did a tremendous job of balancing. We were a bit surprised. We had only spent a bit over \$1 million, but we had expected to spend more.

Tasmania - and I come from the mainland - did a fantastic job of coming through COVID-19 so well that we ended up where we are. It is one of those things that is very hard to give a very precise answer. If COVID-19 hits again, we will know a lot better.

Ms WEBB - In terms of the additional \$3.7 million that might be left in that fund, where is that now? Is it still going to be provided to people? I am cognisant we have spent one-fifth, or just over, of what had been made available. The whole \$5 million could have been spent, and from my assessment we probably could've given every concession card holder a \$60 refund or rebate, just like that, and no-one would've had to come forward and ask for it, and prove they needed it - and yet we have close to \$4 million still sitting there, not helping anyone.

What is happening with that leftover? What is the plan?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you. The first part of that answer is that it is a targeted approach, as I indicated earlier.

Prof. O'KANE - The money is still there, and the program is still technically there. The pandemic could wind up again. The principle Aurora tends to follow is that we try to be quite targeted on those who are most vulnerable. We are very conscious that Tasmania has a high number of vulnerable people, so we were trying to be targeted rather than give a general amount to everybody.

Ms WEBB - Why was that?

Prof. O'KANE - Because those most vulnerable could be in really dire circumstances if we are locked down for a long time.

Ms WEBB - You will cover them if you go to everybody.

Prof. O'KANE - Yes, you cover them, but you also maybe could give them more, too, if you stay with the targeting. In retrospect, it looks like maybe we were too conservative, but as I said, Tasmania came out of it remarkably well. It might not have, and it might not again. We only have to look at Europe to see that it can blow up, and we still have that program there.

I definitely hear what is being said. I think we need to review our programs, as we always do, and we need to think about: did we do the right thing? I think we need to do that exercise. I hear what you are saying very clearly.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, I have some questions about employment. In last year's hearings there was a discussion around permanency and a recognition of the fact that job security is very important to people and, I would argue, now more than ever. At that stage, as I understand, a review into employment contracts was underway, with the aim of converting people to permanent employment, and that was expected to be completed by March this year.

Can you provide us with an update on how that work has progressed, particularly the numbers of permanent employees now compared to last year, and compared to labour hire or third party, or employees of Aurora who are on fixed term or maximum contracts?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. There are a number of parts to that question, which are clearly operational, and I will pass to the CEO.

Ms KARDOS - You are correct. We were asked and we made a commitment and we did deliver to that. As a result of that change, 15 per cent of our employees are now employed on a maximum-term basis, 14 per cent are via a third-party provider that we use to assist us in meeting our fluctuating call volumes, and 69 per cent are on a permanent basis.

Ms LOVELL - So, still 31 per cent on some form of insecure work. Is there further work to be done in terms of converting those people to permanent?

Ms KARDOS - In the process we went through at the beginning of this year, we looked at the role, and whether it had an ongoing nature. In determining that, we found 69 per cent of our roles had an ongoing nature. If it does not have an ongoing nature - say they have been employed to do a project for a period of time - they were offered a maximum-term contract.

For our third party arrangement, we obviously get more than 300 000 calls a year, and we have fluctuating call volumes, so we supplement our permanent workforce to meet that.

Going back to the changes we have made, there was a 152 per cent increase in permanency as a result of that review.

Ms LOVELL - Of the 15 per cent of employees who are now on maximum-term contracts, how many have had a rolling contract? Have they had contracts renewed, or has that been one contract that they are still in process of completing?

PUBLIC

M KARDOS - I do not have that information at my fingertips. Kane, do you know?

Mr INGHAM - No, I don't, but one thing we did take into account in making that assessment was those people who may have had one contract extended multiple times that would go onto the consideration of whether they were made permanent or not. As Bec said, we've had 51 permanents go up to 136 so you can see there is quite a big jump in permanents as a result of that review, so, yes.

Ms LOVELL - Would you be willing to take that question on notice?

Ms KARDOS - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you.

Mr BARNETT - It is fair to say it may be difficult to get the exact details, but we will do the best we can to respond to that.

Ms LOVELL - I will put it in writing and you can see how you go.

I also had some questions about returning to onsite work after COVID-19. I understand in the call centre in particular, there is a requirement for hot-desking.

Mr BARNETT - Is that a question?

Ms LOVELL - Well, that is the first question. Is there a requirement for hot-desking?

Mr BARNETT - If that is the question, I will pass to the CEO.

Ms KARDOS - So I understand the question, what do you mean by hot-desking?

Ms LOVELL - Where people do not have a fixed workstation. They might come in one day and work at one workstation; they come in the next day and work somewhere else.

Ms KARDOS - Thank you for the clarification. During COVID-19, everyone worked from home and we were also in the process of moving office. We have relocated to a new office. In moving into that new office, we have moved to an activity-based working model where no-one has a specified allocated desk, whereas on any given day they can come in and choose what desk they have.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, so that is known as hot-desking.

Ms KARDOS - I have not known it as hot-desking.

We have also ensured we have put into place COVID-19 safety protections to ensure there is no risk of infection or contamination, but, obviously, with multiple people being able to use that we have a full cleaning regime.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, that was going to be my follow-up question. Can you elaborate on that regime and particularly where people do not have an allocated workstation and they are sharing workstations and, presumably, equipment? What is the process to ensure they are safe?

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Ms KARDOS - In moving into this new office, we have put into place a whole COVID-19 safety plan in line with the Health and Safety Guidelines by Tasmania WorkSafe. That plan includes how we ensure the ongoing safety. The safety of our people has been our key and priority one focus through the COVID-19. With actual desks, every night they are fully cleaned and we have more sanitiser and the bacterial wipes than probably on this table, as I look around. We encourage employees to clean down the desk and wipe any equipment on that desk before they commence work and also when they finish work.

Ms LOVELL - Okay.

Ms KARDOS - We also have a series of controls; we have also taken activity-based working to its fullest extent where if it makes sense for them to work from home that day, then they can work from home. Probably our best COVID-19 control is if they have any flu-like symptoms and are feeling unwell, they are to work from home or to take the day off in personal leave.

Ms LOVELL - Okay.

Ms KARDOS - We are really encouraging employees - because they have the ability to work from home - that if they have any reason to have a suspicion they may have any form of COVID-19 symptoms, please not to come into the office because that is elimination.

Ms LOVELL - What we should all be doing, anyway.

Ms KARDOS - Elimination is the best prevention.

CHAIR - If people do not have the message by now on that, we really have to worry about them.

Ms KARDOS - It is but, it is one of those things you need to keep top of mind. We do regular messages on this. We make sure there is a significant number of antibacterial wipes, cleanser, cleanse the stations, really encouraging. We really ensure the cleaning regime in our new building is to a very high standard because keeping our employees safe is our number one priority.

Ms LOVELL - Understanding that you have full clean overnight, does the shift pattern mean that two people might use the same desk in between those overnight cleans? Could it happen that in one day somebody comes in and works and then they go home and someone else comes in and uses that same station?

Ms KARDOS - That's why we have put in the additional control that you wipe down the work station before you commence work, just in case someone has used that desk previously. It is probably unlikely because we are finding that a large percentage of our employees really appreciate the flexibility of being able to work from home, especially our contact centre agents.

A large bulk of our workforce are female; they have school-aged children and they really appreciated the ability to be able to work from home and have greater connection with their family. We are finding that our office occupancy is nowhere near our maximum occupancy level, but we put in that additional control so that if you do go to a desk, you give it a thorough wipe down, and then when you finish work, you clean it down as well.

Ms LOVELL - In terms of occupancy and capacity, understanding that at the moment you have a large number of staff working at home, that might not be suitable forever or into the future, and particularly on an individual basis that might not be suitable for people on an ongoing basis. Is there the capacity in the office for the full workforce to come back and work in that new office space? Has that been taken into account, given that move happened throughout COVID-19 when people were working at home?

Mr BARNETT - When COVID-19 kicked in, Aurora Energy through the board and the management responded incredibly swiftly regarding working from home - protecting their staff safety is of top priority. The Premier said that a hundred thousand times but Aurora Energy implemented it really quickly, and I commend the chair and the CEO on responding so swiftly to get people working from home and keeping their employees safe.

Ms KARDOS - Apologies, can you repeat the question?

Ms LOVELL - My question was in regard to the capacity of the new office space and whether it has the capacity to accommodate the full workforce if it was determined at some point in the future that people either wouldn't want to, or wouldn't be required to, work at home any longer.

Ms KARDOS - We have done a lot of staff engagement around their preferences going forward and what would they like to do. The strong preference we have from our people is they want some flexibility between working in the office and from working from home, and Aurora Energy is fully supportive of that. We have seen our staff engagement increase significantly with our most recent staff engagement being 77 per cent, which is a significant improvement on previous years. What we are finding is our staff are really enjoying the greater autonomy about where they can choose to do their best work, and as a business we are seeing that our productivity is fantastic and we are achieving our business and customer outcomes to the same standard, if not greater, than we did prior to COVID-19.

On your first point - are we ever going to force our employees to all come back into the office? Not if they don't want to.

Ms LOVELL - It's not really a question whether you are going to force them to come back or require them to come back in, but if at some point, and it could be that they decide that working from home doesn't suit them, is there a limit to the number of your employees that you can accommodate in the office?

Ms KARDOS - We have a maximum occupancy level which, from memory, is that we can accommodate all of our employees in the office.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you

Mr BARNETT - Sorry, Chair, I think there was a question from the member for Hobart on green energy and we have an answer for you on that.

Ms KARDOS - Yes. We have 25 residential and eight business customers who are 100 per cent accredited. They will be on a level of accreditation - 100 per cent accredited is the one you were referring to at 6 cents. Obviously lower levels of accreditation have a lower price.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you for that.

CHAIR - I want to just have a look at on page 72, your related party disclosures. I note F4 - 'that the company purchases electricity derivatives from Hydro Tasmania'. I note Hydro Tasmania has also suffered equity losses in value over the last two years of almost \$500 million. If Aurora Energy suffered losses from its electricity derivatives over the year and Hydro Tasmania is the party on the other side of the deal, does that mean that Hydro Tasmania made gains on its electricity derivatives? I am trying to understand the connection between the two here, being both government businesses.

Mr BARNETT - It is a bit technical for me on that one. I will pass to the operational team on my right.

Ms KARDOS - Kane, would you like to explain how that all flows through the accounts?

Mr INGHAM - The accounting standards require us to value all our derivatives at market value and, as we mentioned before, the forward mark curve is declining, which has meant - in the statements - the valuations have come down. The thing that the accounting standards don't require is recognising the value you then pass on to customers. In effect, we are passing the valuation of those contracts through to customers at a lower price. That is the flow-on impact of lower wholesale prices that doesn't necessarily get picked up in the financial statements.

CHAIR - To go back to the relationship between Hydro and Aurora, they are both government businesses - one sells electricity and one buys it. That's how it works. Isn't that a natural hedge already? Whichever direction the price moves, one party will benefit and the other party will lose effectively. That is how I see it. I'm happy to be told I am incorrect in that. Do the companies hedge when dealing with themselves and, if so, why do they do that? Do you hedge when you are dealing Hydro buying derivatives?

Mr INGHAM - We don't look at it that way. We operate in a market as a half-hourly spot price with AEMO, we are potentially liable for and the spot price can exceed \$10 000 per half hour. We obviously then enter into arrangements with market participants to make sure that we can secure a price for a lot less than that. In our instance one of our biggest counterparties is Hydro Tasmania. We have a lot of strategies around how we do that to make sure we can deliver energy at the lowest price. I am not sure I have answered your question, Ruth.

CHAIR - It is an odd one that you have your hedging with Hydro and the Government owns both so ultimately there is a winner and a loser in that. If Aurora wins, customers benefit. If Hydro wins, customers lose?

Ms KARDOS - We have a wholesale strategy with border-proof limits in terms of the level of exposure we have to the spot prices as Kane mentioned there. We operate within a market and we are constantly transacting in that market. How much we want to hedge that position at any given time is the thing. You are right. There will be times when potentially our hedging strategy will be more beneficial to us and our customers. You have to have a buyer and you have to have a seller, and both parties have to be happy with that strike price.

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CHAIR - I was going to suggest, if I might, minister, that if Aurora ends up in the position where it has taken a hit - because we know how volatile the sector can be - you cannot actually pass that hit on to your customers, can you? You cannot increase their prices to make up for the loss you made in trading?

Ms KARDOS - No, typically we enter into multi-year contracts with customers with a guaranteed price to remove their exposure to the volatility of the market. That is effectively what we do and the service we offer our customers. I am not sure though the relation of that question.

CHAIR - When there are winners and losers - Aurora takes a financial hit there, if you like, because it will hit your bottom line. You cannot just ramp up prices for your customers because they are locked in and the wholesale energy price is set by the Government at the moment effectively.

Mr BARNETT - We have regulated prices.

CHAIR - Yes, but you are still capping it.

Ms KARDOS - That is for residential.

CHAIR - I am talking about residential, yes.

Mr BARNETT - Regulated customers, residential or small businesses?

CHAIR - I am talking about residential.

Mr BARNETT - Regulated customers - residential or small businesses are regulated. My point would be as a responsible state Government-owned entity and as a retailer they have to do what is responsible in the best interested of the entity.

CHAIR - Where does Aurora take measures to deal with a loss, should that occur? Hydro had a big loss this last year and the losses are on that side this time, but it could swing.

Mr BARNETT - To clarify, Hydro made a big profit this year - I am clarifying for the record, for *Hansard*, and for other listeners - a 56 per cent increase on budget, a very healthy profit. I think the Chair was wanting to make a comment.

Prof. O'KANE - Only to say it is a very good point, but it is about being a national market. At the moment, there is a big review on again as to how the market is designed. It is whether as a state, we face the market or is it as a commercial entity, as we are at the moment, in which case we cannot really think of Hydro as in a particular case. The design of the electricity market is one of those endlessly fascinating things, like a board game.

CHAIR - Oh, it is - you get sucked down to a big vortex trying to understand it.

Mr BARNETT - Now there is a review going on by the Energy Security Board for the post-2025 National Electricity Market currently underway.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Has Aurora looked at the likely impact of increased solar and battery technology on your future profitability and has this been modelled?

Prof. O'KANE - Yes, it has been one of those things we have been looking at in very considerable detail as part of our strategy on the board's point of view and detailed through management. Interface modelling is one of the things we are finding frustrating at the moment, because it is very hard to know when batteries and what prices they come on. It will probably be like the iPhone.

CHAIR - Everyone will have one sooner.

Prof. O'KANE - Everyone will have one eventually, but there will be quite a wait, then suddenly you will get a real drop. It is hard to model, but our whole strategy in recent years has been to look at the ultimate situation which, of course, is the retailer is the connector of last resort and what are we - a business in time? That is one of the reasons we are looking at new products, and the work Andrew and Rebecca has done has led quite a remarkable series of transformations as we look at what we can do.

CHAIR - Do you have any idea of what we are looking at, particularly once batteries increase? They are still fairly expensive at the moment. I have them at our place and they do save quite a bit of money, but you have got to pay up-front.

Prof. O'KANE - You have got to pay a lot up-front.

CHAIR - I am hoping they will last longer than me.

Prof. O'KANE - It is very hard to estimate, as you know, in an international sense as to what is going to happen.

CHAIR - There is certainly a desire and an interest in this area.

Prof O'KANE - A big desire and particularly in Tasmania because it sets the renewable energy target and it is going for a larger one being something of an exemplar. Batteries at a domestic scale would be transformative anywhere but in a state like Tasmania particularly. It is hard to know but we do spend a lot of time thinking at some point our future changes dramatically.

CHAIR - Can I take it you are alert to it and looking at it, but you do not actually have any formal modelling on it.

Prof O'KANE - We do not have any formal quantitative models on it, no.

Mr VALENTINE - The number of customers in the last financial year that have joined up with solar? It goes around 2000 new customers a year. What has been the experience over the last?

Mr BARNETT - In terms of solar? That is an operational question. I will see if the CEO or Professor O'Kane have any feedback.

Ms KARDOS - I was trying to think whether we have the uplift in solar customers just in this financial year. I think we have a total. In the last financial year solar installations increased by 5.1 per cent which, based on these numbers here, was roughly 1500.

Mr VALENTINE - In a sense, it is slowing a little, given it was 2000 new customers a year.

Ms KARDOS - The year before, between June 2018 and June 2019, yes, it was roughly 2000, so we saw a reduction. However, it is also important to note, we do not have 100 per cent market share. We operate in a fully competitive environment. We would not necessarily have every solar customer. These are our customer numbers.

CHAIR - There is also a risk, I would have thought with COVID-19, people might not be willing to make that investment just at the minute, they might be holding off.

Ms KARDOS - I am assuming solar installers were probably impacted during the shutdown period as well. That might have had a bearing on it as well.

Mr BARNETT - We also had the Tasmanian Energy Efficiency Loans Scheme for a while, which ended the year before last. That certainly boosted it a bit.

Mr VALENTINE - Last year you said, in 10 years' time, 50 per cent of cars are going to be electric. Have you changed your thinking on that yet?

Mr BARNETT - I was quoting Arena last year and I am still quoting Arena. That is the CEO of Arena's advice or feedback to me 12 months or more ago. That has been demonstrated by the Premier's statement in the Budget in terms of government car fleets through to 2030 - that the transition for government car fleets to be 100 per cent electric -

Mr VALENTINE - Truly electric or hybrid?

Mr BARNETT - At the moment it is both. We are heading that way. Obviously hybrid is a key part of that. That is the target: electric by 2030. I would like to think that renewable hydrogen could be in there.

Mr VALENTINE - Certainly for trucks.

Mr BARNETT - For heavy vehicles, for trucks, is a very good example. Obviously, industry, big opportunities for renewable hydrogen and on-island value adding and processing. I know we are a little bit outside the scope of Aurora Energy but it is a very exciting place to be. Capitalising on that renewable energy advantage that we have and we want to have the bells and whistles around it but we need the substance as well. That is why we are on that track. The Premier has been very clear, he has that target and it is a very good one to have.

Mr VALENTINE - The reason for the question is to find out whether the board has given any further consideration as to the sorts of incentives that you might offer to get people into electric cars, or subsidising charging units on walls on domestic premises. Has there been any consideration of those sorts of things?

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Mr BARNETT - I will pass to the Chair and/or the CEO but certainly a lot of those questions you ask about Government policy and we are acting with the Premier in particular leading in this space in terms of climate initiatives to respond to climate.

In terms of a state-wide charging network, we have some 14 fast chargers and 23 workplace and destination chargers, and increasing the number of electric vehicles, as I have mentioned. So there has already been some progress but with our plans going forward I suspect you can see that increase and improve.

We haven't touched on buses but Metro Tasmania is looking at electric or hydrogen buses in terms of a pilot program for a number of those. Minister Ferguson is leading the charge there with Metro Tasmania.

Mr VALENTINE - Forgive the pun.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, leading the charge. He would laugh at that as well. Metro Tasmania has been tasked to trial zero emission buses or hydrogen with both a northern and southern trial under way within the next two years.

Mr VALENTINE - And Aurora?

Mr BARNETT - That is through Metro Tasmania.

Mr VALENTINE - But has Aurora considered what it might do to assist?

Mr BARNETT - I think Aurora is working side by side with the state Government on these measures but I will pass to the chair and/or CEO if you would like to respond.

Prof O'KANE - I was going to say the same thing, that we are working closely with the state Government. Obviously we would love electric trucks, vehicles, buses, the whole thing. Within Aurora we would welcome it as a way to sell more electricity and experiment in this space. Tasmania is the natural place to do the experiment so we are looking to the state Government to lead and we are ready to jump in.

Ms KARDOS - We're looking at how we can support customers choosing electric vehicles. It is an interesting space for Aurora Energy to participate in. I know Andrew has started looking at some of those product options. We are getting to that point. We have been talking about electric vehicles for a long time. I am eager to get an electric vehicle but the supply of electric vehicles is still a developing space. We are seriously looking at what we can do to encourage uptake and support customers in choosing electric vehicles.

Mr VALENTINE - Any further discussion with TasNetworks with regard to the possible surges though that might occur as the result of people plugging in?

Ms KARDOS - One of the considerations with electric vehicles is when customers choose to charge. One of the well-known concepts is that if we all choose to plug our electric vehicles in all at the same time it could potentially have network issues. They would be a key stakeholder that we would consult with around that to ensure we don't put any undue stress on the network. We are only in the initial stages at this stage around electric vehicles but that would be definitely a consideration in the design of a product.

Mr VALENTINE - It might be the opportunity to offer the charging units and you could fix that problem by scheduling them.

Ms KARDOS - There is a lot of opportunity for us to explore this, consider how we would want to play with that. How we would may potentially partner with other parties as well and how can we support Tasmanians in choosing an electric vehicle. There is real opportunity for Aurora Energy to look at that.

Mr VALENTINE - It seems to be that it is going to happen reasonably quickly as soon as the electric vehicles are there out on the market. So it is better to be dealing with it now than having to deal with it in a hurry, is my observation.

Mr BARNETT - It is a fair observation. We are actively considering these sorts of issues at a policy level via state Government and Aurora Energy, not to mention TasNetworks and Hydro Tasmania. We are very focused on how we take advantage of our renewable energy success and the added natural advantages we have in Tasmania with the natural water resource, natural wind resource. That is why we are very active in this space. Some of the comments you make will certainly be taken on board, Rob, and I really appreciate your feedback.

Chair, through you, I have been informed that the CEO has a further response to the member for Nelson, if that is okay.

Ms KARDOS - I have those concession numbers for you. You asked what percentage are concession customers of the 25 000 customers we have on Aurora+. It is 40 per cent. Of the total concession customers, what percentage are signed up to Aurora+ was the other question you asked, and that is 11 per cent.

Ms WEBB - Thank you. Can I put one that maybe will become one to take away and come back to us on. It follows up on concessions.

CHAIR - Let us just see if we are clear and if they can answer it right here, right now.

Mr BARNETT - We will try to answer it. We normally try to answer these questions at the table.

Ms WEBB - It does not appear in the annual report that you report on the number of total residential customers and the number of concessions within that. One of the things I am interested in is what has changed this year during COVID-19 in terms of the number of concession customers from March, knowing that many people did lose their jobs, some of which have been regained but many have not. I am interested to know what the number of concession customers prior to COVID-19 and then now where we find ourselves with that.

Mr BARNETT - I will just check that the CEO is clear on that question.

Ms KARDOS - I think so. We administer the concession scheme on behalf of the State Revenue Officer. We are not the only energy retailer who has concession customers. I thought I should clarify that because that is probably something that has changed in recent times. In terms of concession numbers, we have seen a 3 per cent increase in concession numbers

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between the same time last year at the end of 30 September 2020. Same time, 30 September 2019, we have seen a 3.6 per cent increase in concession numbers.

Ms WEBB - Do you have the numbers?

Ms KARDOS - At 30 September 2020, we have a total of 91 918 concession customers.

Ms WEBB - That is 3.6 per cent up on 30 September last year?

Ms KARDOS - It is, 88 694.

CHAIR - Thank you. Thanks, minister, and your team for attending. It was a longer day for us than it has for you possibly.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you to the Chair and CEO and the team at Aurora both here at the table and elsewhere for all the support to be here today to support the committee. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Committee adjourned at 5.18 p.m.