

File note - Meeting

Date of meeting: 15 November 2023
Location: Microsoft Teams (online)
Parties: Commerce Commission (TIDR (2024) team), Orion
Subject: TIDR (2024) – EDB/FSP meetings – AM6 Vegetation management reporting

Attendees:

Ali Scholes (Commerce Commission – Senior Analyst)
Sean McCready (Commerce Commission – Principal Advisor, Engineer)
Kaleb Boyce (Commerce Commission – Assistant Analyst)
Rob Tweedie (Orion – Regulatory Manager)
Marc Curd (Orion – Property Works Manager)

Meeting discussion points:

- Workability of the proposed changes to vegetation-related opex reporting.
- Workability of the proposed changes to vegetation-related interruptions reporting.

Workability of the proposed changes to vegetation-related opex reporting:

The proposed changes are detailed in the TIDR (2024) [draft decision](#) (amendments to Schedule 6b(i)).

Vegetation management opex:

1. Orion should be able to report against the proposed requirement but have some concerns about the accuracy of the information.
 - 1.1 Orion runs a maintenance trim program over all HV works once every two years.
 - 1.2 Trim areas are by substation area (the contract area).
 - 1.3 This process starts with scoping, which is completed in-house, by driving the feeder lines and completing a visual assessment to determine areas which require trimming.
 - 1.4 Trimming work by contract area is tendered out.
 - 1.5 Generally, the trimming is done out to notice zone. Often contractors will cut vegetation further (beyond the notice zone, with the consent of the tree owner) if this is better for the health of the tree, or is more appropriate for good asset management (for example, for fast-growing species, trees growing directly under lines).

2. At the scoping stage, staff will also assess whether there are any high-risk trees which are out-of-zone (for example, fall zone trees).
 - 2.1 Once such a tree is identified, Orion staff make contact with the tree owner to outline the risk/concerns with the tree in relation to the network, and to negotiate options for the trimming/removal of the tree. Sometimes this conversation is followed up with a fall distance notice (a special notice type for out-of-zone trees which post a high risk to the network), though this is not often.
 - 2.2 Orion maintains a register of high-risk trees outstanding (field staff use an application which can capture a photo, address, and automatically generate letter).
 - 2.3 Vegetation management work is budget dependent. Orion's priority is managing trees encroaching the notice zone, but it will work to remove other high-risk trees (for example, fall zone trees) where there is risk to a critical feeder. In this case, the cost would come from the same budget as the maintenance trimming of vegetation encroaching the notice zone.

Service interruptions and emergencies (Vegetation-related):

3. This opex line would take a more work to set-up for reporting in ID.
4. The high-level process for fault repair work is:
 - 4.1 An Orion fault operator attends a fault and assesses/identifies the issue (and identifies the fault cause). The fault operator records the fault details, and then passes this information through to the control room, who dispatch the emergency works contractor, via a work-order.
 - 4.2 For a vegetation-caused fault, the emergency works contractor may use an external arborist to clear the vegetation, but they may clear the vegetation debris themselves where it is safe to do so.
 - 4.3 Orion receives an invoice from the emergency works contractor, but expenses are not broken down below the work-order level. Orion would need to work with the emergency works contractor to set up a process where the invoice comes with the detailed breakdown to work-order level so that costs for work on vegetation-caused faults can be seen separately.

Workability of the proposed changes to vegetation-related interruptions reporting:

The proposed changes are detailed in the TIDR (2024) [draft decision](#) (amendments to Schedule 10(ii)).

5. Orion do not currently record whether vegetation interruptions are caused by in-zone or out-of-zone trees, however this is something that they will be able to report (and have been wanting to work towards reporting internally).

- 5.1 There would be some system changes required (in terms of recording the new interruption cause categories) and some additional training required for fault operators to get a more accurate assessment of in-zone/out-of-zone.
- 5.2 The proposed breakdown in relation to storm events (overlaps between in-zone/out-of-zone, inclement weather, wind-borne debris) could be difficult/confusing to report against.