Preparing for the Emergency Backstop Mechanism in NSW: Industry webinar questions and answers (Q&As)

This document responds to questions asked in the Q&A session from the *Preparing for the Emergency Backstop Mechanism in NSW* industry webinar that took place on 26 November 2025.

Implementation timeframe and approach

Question	Response
Why have you chosen a phased implementation? What will that mean for installers? Where can we find information on the phased implementation of local government areas (LGAs)/postcodes?	A phased implementation minimises disruption for installers, allows any early issues to be resolved in a controlled way and ensures industry is best supported as NSW transitions to the portal and mandatory emergency backstop enablement. This approach draws on lessons learned from other states. More information will be published on the NSW Government's NSW Consumer Energy Resources Installer Portal webpage and NSW distribution networks' websites in the new year.
How will the ramp up and testing phase ensure mutual readiness is established?	All three NSW distribution networks are proposing to launch their Common Smart Inverter Profile - Australia (CSIP-AUS) requirements at the same time through a coordinated staged approach, that will gradually increase the number of connection applications that will be required to comply with the requirements.
Will there be development or testing environments in addition to the live version (for training and/or internal development)?	Testing environments will be established as part of the build of the NSW CER Installer Portal (the Portal). These will be tested by dedicated staff in the first instance. We are considering how we may make a test environment available for the industry to access, so you can try the Portal prior to the go live date.
What is the process for migrating previous jobs and handling changes after Permission to Connect (PTC) is issued?	Any new connection application submitted after 1 January 2026 must be commissioned before 31 December 2026. If the installation has not been commissioned by this date, then a new application will be required, and emergency backstop requirements will apply.

Technology, design and functionality

Question	Response
How do we know what is CSIP-AUS compliant equipment? Will a compatible list of the inverters be made available or does the emergency backstop work with every inverter model listed at Clean Energy Council (CEC)?	NSW distribution networks aim to use a live feed from the CEC Inverter listing to populate the options within their respective Connection Application Portals.
What cyber security requirements are you placing on Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) / CSIP-AUS client organisations?	OEMs will have a defined set of cyber requirements. We have been co-developing these with our OEM Working Group, building on the requirements already in place in South Australia.
Internet connectivity can be an issue on the sites I work on. Why is this important and if there isn't reliable internet, what can I do to ensure compliance?	The customer's inverter needs to be connected to the Internet, not only to allow OEMs to perform updates but to also allow connection to distribution networks' servers. If a reliable internet connection isn't available, you can still install a compliant solar system through the CER Portal. While the system is offline, a lower export limit may be applied to the energy being feed into the grid. You will still need to install a CSIP-AUS compliant inverter and complete the capability test which ensures that when internet connectivity becomes available in the future, it is emergency backstop enabled and have higher energy export limits.
How will the portal integrate with existing Virtual Power Plant (VPP) providers, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, design software and other applications? Will application programming interfaces (APIs) be available for integration with third-party tools?	The Portal will only have integrations with distribution network systems and other government systems such as the Distributed Energy Resources (DER) Register. APIs for third-party tools will not be made available for the initial launch of the portal. The portal and distribution network systems' do not require any direct integrations with VPPs (except where the VPP is providing the CSIP-AUS software communication client). Typically, integrations with VPPs will be managed by inverter/device manufacturer's software platform. The inverters/devices will be required to operate within the dynamic limits that are provided by the distribution networks whether or not participating in a VPP.

Question	Response
How will the portal interact with the Australian Energy Market Operator's (AEMO) DER Register and NSW Building Commission's Certificate of Compliance for Electrical Work (CCEW)?	The Portal will complete the DER Register submission and Building Commission-endorsed CCEW on your behalf by pre-populating information from the distribution network's connection applications and commissioning information entered into the portal. Installers will no longer need to log into the DER Register.
How will the platform evolve to incorporate new features?	The Portal will be delivered in stages, with the first mandatory release in mid-2026 focused on the core functions needed to support the Emergency Backstop Mechanism and to ensure compliant registration and testing of new or upgraded CER installations. This minimum viable product forms the foundation for a broader platform that will continue to expand after launch. The Portal is intended to develop over time through planned enhancement cycles. Its evolution will be guided by regulatory requirements, industry and installer feedback, emerging technologies and the need to support a growing CER ecosystem while maintaining safety, reliability and compliance across NSW's electricity system.
Will the portal require any additional hardware to be installed?	To implement the emergency backstop requirements, a CSIP-AUS capable device needs to be registered through the inverter/device manufacturer to the distribution network's utility server (control system). Many inverters offer an integrated system with the CSIP-AUS protocol built in, whilst other sites may require a separate controller. As the emergency backstop system needs to limit exports when required, current transformers and/or some form of energy meter will need to be installed within the main switchboard of the site.

Policy, regulation and lessons learned

Question	Response
What are flexible exports and when will they be available?	Flexible exports are delivered through the same technology that enables the Emergency Backstop Mechanism. In networks with low, fixed export limits, flexible exports will allow customers to export more of their excess solar when the network can accommodate it. Where they are available, flexible exports will not be mandatory, and customers can opt out of this service. Offers and timeframes will be specific to each NSW distribution network: Endeavour Energy has launched a trial service for existing, export limited customers with complying inverters and Essential Energy will commence a trial this year. Demands on Ausgrid's network have not required it to apply a low fixed limit to solar exports.
How does the Emergency Backstop Mechanism interact with existing programs such as flexible exports?	They are different things that use the same technology. NSW distribution networks use flexible exports to manage normal variations in network capacity at a local area. The Backstop is an emergency measure activated by AEMO in rare and extreme circumstances where the whole state system is at risk. It will take precedence.
What are the requirements for system size thresholds and exemptions?	From mid-2026, new and upgraded solar systems in NSW that are 200kW or less will need to be emergency backstop enabled and registered in the portal. Existing solar systems are not affected.
What are the intentions for larger systems (>200kW) and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system requirements?	NSW distribution networks are intending to require either CSIP-AUS compliance or a SCADA based solution for >200kVA sites. It is expected the CSIP-AUS will be the preferred choice for systems up to about 1.5MVA in size.
How will the compliance of existing systems be treated when installing new systems alongside them?	Whilst new or altered inverters on a site will need to meet the new requirement, pre-backstop existing inverter systems, which have not been modified, will not need to be upgraded to the CSIP-AUS backstop requirements. Existing inverters that are not required to be backstop-enabled will likely need to be turned off during the capability testing process of the new inverter/s.
If AC-coupled batteries are added to an existing system how will the site be impacted?	The changes will be for new or upgraded solar photovoltaic (PV) systems. Adding an AC-coupled battery won't require the Emergency Backstop Mechanism.

Question	Response
What have you learned from other jurisdictions? What do you want to do differently?	The NSW Government and NSW distribution networks are benchmarking and learning from earlier rollouts in other jurisdictions to improve the implementation and support processes for the portal in NSW. Lessons learned from other states are being incorporated to improve the installer and customer experience.
Will the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) be included in the same portal and processes?	ACT distribution network representatives have been participating in discussions with the NSW Government and the NSW distribution networks to help build their own knowledge for the implementation of their own portal and processes.
Who is responsible for declaring Minimum System Load (MSL) or emergency backstop events?	In emergency grid conditions, if required by AEMO, distribution networks must temporarily reduce rooftop solar exports or pause generation. Distribution networks will only activate the emergency backstop when directed to by AEMO, in a critical MSL event.

Commissioning, testing and compliance

Question	Response
Are there specific requirements for Inverter Power Sharing Device (IPSD) installations?	Further information will be required from IPSD manufacturers on what configurations are available to use during the commissioning process. In the first instance we will require the inverter to export 0.5kW in order successfully complete the test.
How will capability testing be managed for sites with high loads or multiple DERs?	For rooftop systems up to 30kVA, NSW distribution networks have agreed to lower the threshold for capability testing on site in low light conditions to 500W of export. Testing procedures for installations larger than 30kVA will have the option of completing a generation test instead of an export test, for sites that are unable to export. Testing requirements are still being considered. Exempt systems (such as batteries and legacy solar) that are capable of export may need to be switched off during the testing process.

Question	Response
What is the expected timeframe to complete capability testing?	Development and testing of NSW distribution networks' emergency backstop utility servers are still in progress, however we expect the test will typically take 5–10 minutes.

Industry communications, training and support

Question	Response
What training, information and support will be available for industry?	A comprehensive suite of training and support resources will be available to help industry prepare for the launch of the portal. Some of the existing resources include: • Free, 20-CPD points online training module on the NSW portal and emergency backstop available via the CEC LearnLAB • NSW Government webpages and FAQs on the NSW CER Installer Portal and Emergency Backstop Mechanism • NSW distribution network-specific customer fact sheets for Ausgrid, Endeavour Energy and Essential Energy. We are also currently developing and/or planning on developing additional industry resources including portal user training, troubleshooting guidelines, customer scripts and FAQs, commissioning checklists and awareness training videos.
How will feedback and support be provided to installers through the portal on any issues they encounter during commissioning and testing? Will there be a call centre I can ring if I get stuck?	The NSW Government and NSW distribution networks are collaboratively designing live operational support models and will engage installers in their development.
Were there Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points available for this webinar? Will there be CPD points for participating in future training opportunities?	Unfortunately, no CPD points were available for the industry webinar on 26 November. However, CPD points for other future training opportunities are being considered and will be sought wherever possible.

Other

Question	Response
How will customers be notified where emergency backstop activation is required?	Instructions to activate emergency backstop capabilities may be given by AEMO at short notice and for only short periods of time, making real-time notifications impractical. To stay informed, you can subscribe to post-event notifications from AEMO at aemo.com.au/subscribe and visit your NSW distribution network's website for updates after the event.
How will CER installer and retailer queries and issues be handled, especially in cases of technical problems?	The portal will provide guidance and direct technical issues to the right organisation – the NSW Government, your distribution network or the OEM. Network and device-related problems will be handled by DNSPs or OEMs, while portal-related issues will be supported by the NSW Government. A shared knowledge base will ensure consistent answers and clear troubleshooting information.