



To: The Board of Directors of AEMO

Independent assurance report to the Board of Directors of the Australian Energy Market Operator Limited (AEMO) for the National Electricity Market

Scope

In accordance with our contract dated 14 January 2022, we were engaged by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) to perform an independent limited assurance engagement in respect of AEMO's internal control procedures in relation to compliance with the National Electricity Rules for the National Electricity Market, for the year ended 30 June 2022, in the following areas:

- the calculations and allocations performed by the metering and settlements system
- the billing and information systems
- the scheduling and dispatch processes
- the processes for software management
- the AEMO procedures and their compliance with the National Electricity Rules.

AEMO Management's responsibilities

AEMO Management is responsible for maintaining an effective internal control structure, including control procedures, to ensure compliance with the National Electricity Rules (NER) for the National Electricity Market. This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal controls relevant to compliance with the NER and the preparation and fair presentation of information that is free from material misstatement.

Our Independence and Quality control

We have complied with relevant ethical requirements related to assurance engagements, which include independence and other requirements founded on fundamental principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behaviour.

In accordance with Auditing Standard ASQC 1 *Quality Control for Firms that Perform Audits and Reviews of Financial Reports and Other Financial Information, Other Assurance Engagements and Related Services Engagements* the firm maintains a comprehensive system of quality control including documented policies and procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards, and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

Our responsibilities

Our responsibility is to express a limited assurance conclusion based on the procedures we have performed and the evidence we have obtained.

Our engagement has been conducted in accordance with the Australian Standard on Assurance Engagements (ASAE 3000) *Assurance Engagements Other Than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information*. That standard requires that we plan and perform this engagement to obtain limited assurance about whether anything has come to our attention to indicate that the AEMO internal control procedures in relation to the areas listed under the Scope section above, have not been, in all material respects, effectively designed and operated, in order to comply with the relevant criteria outlined in:

- National Electricity Rules – Version 167 (July 2021) to Version 182 (June 2022):

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- Chapter 2 - Registered Participants and Registration
- Chapter 3 - Market Rules
- Chapter 4 - Power System Security
- Chapter 7 – Metering
- Chapter 8 - Administrative Functions.

Where the effectiveness of key controls was used to determine compliance with the criteria above, the identification of key controls was performed with reference to applicable AEMO policy or procedure documentation.

The procedures we performed were based on our professional judgement and included:

- inquiry and observation of staff and management to understand the operation of controls
- review of relevant AEMO policies and procedures
- undertaking procedures to evaluate the design effectiveness of key controls
- performing limited sample testing to validate the operating effectiveness of key controls.

The procedures performed in a limited assurance engagement vary in nature and timing from, and are less in extent than for, a reasonable assurance engagement and consequently the level of assurance obtained in a limited assurance engagement is substantially lower than the assurance that would have been obtained had a reasonable assurance engagement been performed. Accordingly, we do not express a reasonable assurance opinion.

We believe that the evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our conclusion.

Other matter

We draw attention to the following market and system event which occurred during the review period:

Market & system event	Matter to which we draw attention
<p>NEM wide market suspension event (10 June – 24 June 2022)</p>	<p>As reported by AEMO in the Market Event report titled “<i>NEM market suspension and operational challenges in June 2022</i>” (dated August 2022), during June 2022 there were a series of events associated with low reserve conditions in the NEM between 10 June and 24 June, which ultimately led to AEMO suspending the spot market in all regions of the NEM from 1400hrs on 15 June 2022 until 1400hrs on 24 June 2022.</p> <p>AEMO have undertaken an investigation of the market suspension event as required by the NER. Full investigation of the event regarding the market suspension pricing schedule payments and related compensation payments is ongoing. Further detail is published in the Market Event report titled “<i>NEM market suspension and operational challenges in June 2022</i>” dated August 2022¹.</p> <p>Management’s investigation has identified two non-compliances to date, which have been subject to AEMO’s compliance breach reporting process and reported to the AEMO Finance Risk & Audit Committee.</p>

¹ Source: NEM market suspension and operational challenges in June 2022 (https://www.aemo.com.au/-/media/files/electricity/nem/market_notices_and_events/market_event_reports/2022/nem-market-suspension-and-operational-challenges-in-june-2022.pdf)



Scope Exclusions

Our review did not include any assessment of compliance or controls by market participants other than AEMO. For example, our procedures didn't consider application and IT controls over systems that are operated by external organisations, the compliance with Service Level Requirements, or the control procedures in place at those agencies not controlled by AEMO, such as:

- Meter Data Providers (MDPs)
- Real time systems
- Retailers
- Distributors

To support AEMO processes, AEMO relies on market participants operating in compliance with the NER or other relevant requirements (the 'market participants' compliance'). There are a number of AEMO's internal control procedures that rely on market participants' compliance, for example, among others:

- Market participants are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) readings, which are used by AEMO to operate the NEM in compliance with the NER.
- Initial administrator user access is granted to key AEMO applications on request from market participants who are then responsible for ongoing access management for the applications. This would include controls for the approval, termination and periodic review of user access for appropriateness.
- Metering data is received by AEMO from meter data providers. It is assumed that the metering data is complete, accurate and valid. Our control procedures are limited to the procedures AEMO performs to validate the reasonableness of this data.

Our procedures did not extend to assessing the market participants' compliance.

It is assumed that automated pricing, dispatch and settlement calculations are consistent with the NER. Our scope did not include certification of electricity market systems, for example the National Electricity Market Dispatch Engine (NEMDE), Electricity Market Management System (EMMS), Project Assessment of System Adequacy (PASA) Solvers, or other market systems.

We accept no responsibility for the adequacy or accuracy of work performed by AEMO or the Independent Certifier in relation to system certification. We accept no liability to AEMO or to any other person for any part of our review report that relies on, or assumes the adequacy of, system certification.

Our work is based primarily on information supplied by management and was carried out on the basis that such information is accurate and complete.

Whilst our engagement may involve the analysis of financial information and accounting records, it does not constitute an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards or a review in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards applicable to review engagements and accordingly no such assurance will be provided in our report or deliverables.

Use of report

We prepared this report solely for AEMO's use and benefit in accordance with and for the purpose set out in our Master Supplies Agreement (MSA) between PricewaterhouseCoopers and AEMO dated 14 January 2022, and Description of Supplies for Market Audit Services dated 14 January 2022. In doing so, we acted exclusively for AEMO and considered no-one else's interests.



We accept no responsibility, duty or liability:

- to anyone other than AEMO in connection with this report
- to AEMO for the consequences of using or relying on it for a purpose other than that referred to above.

We make no representation concerning the appropriateness of this report for anyone other than AEMO. If anyone other than AEMO chooses to use or rely on it they do so at their own risk.

This disclaimer applies:

- to the maximum extent permitted by law and, without limitation, to liability arising in negligence or under statute; and
- even if we consent to anyone other than AEMO receiving or using this report.

Inherent limitations

Because of the inherent limitations of any internal control system, it is possible that fraud, error, or non-compliance may occur and not be detected. Further, the internal compliance and control culture has not been reviewed and no view is expressed as to its effectiveness.

A limited assurance engagement is not designed to detect all instances of non-compliance of the internal compliance and control system, as it is limited primarily to making enquiries, with management and staff, and applying analytical procedures. The limited assurance conclusion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Materiality

We have considered materiality when evaluating the effect of identified control weakness on our conclusion. Materiality is considered in the context of AEMO's objectives relevant to the area of activity being examined. When assessing materiality, we considered qualitative factors as well as quantitative factors, including:

- the purpose of the engagement and specific requirements of the engagement
- the economic, social, political, and environmental impact of control weaknesses
- the importance of an identified control weakness in relation to the area of activities and the entities overall objectives
- the impact of a centralised function on other parts of the entity
- public perception and/or interest in the area of activity
- the cost of alternative controls relative to their likely benefit
- the length of time an identified control weakness was in existence.



Summary of Findings

The table below summarises new findings reported, and findings from prior periods which remained open as at 30 June 2022. This includes findings reported by AEMO management or through our review procedures.

	Critical	High	Medium	Low
Level 1	0	0	10	10
Level 2	0	0	5	4
Level 3	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	15	14

The table below summarises findings from prior periods which have been closed during FY22.

	Critical	High	Medium	Low
Level 1	0	0	3	3
Level 2	0	0	2	1
Level 3	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	5	4

All findings in the table above have been agreed with management and formally reported to AEMO's Finance Risk and Audit Committee.



We have categorised control observations noted according to agreed risk and compliance ratings. The risk ratings applied for each finding are consistent with the likelihood and consequence matrix adopted by AEMO’s Risk and Audit Committee.

The ratings have been tailored to reflect the potential impact on the market as follows:

Risk Rating	Definition
Critical	Findings which may have a catastrophic impact on the market operations if they are not addressed immediately and require executive action with regular reporting at Board level.
High	Findings which may have a major impact on the market operations if they are not addressed as a matter of priority. These findings require senior management attention with regular monitoring and reporting at executive and Board meetings.
Medium	Findings which may have a moderate impact on the market operations if they are not addressed within a reasonable timeframe. These findings require management attention with regular ongoing monitoring.
Low	Findings which may have a minor impact on market operations if they are not addressed in the future. These findings are the responsibility of management with regular monitoring and reporting at staff meetings.

Compliance Rating	Definition
Level 1 (Non-compliance)	Evidence of non-compliance with review criteria. These should be addressed as a matter of high priority.
Level 2 (Gaps in control design or operating effectiveness)	Issues which could possibly result in non-compliance with review criteria but where no evidence of actual non-compliance was found. However, there is considered to be insufficient formal evidence of controls in place or being actioned in relation to these issues.
Level 3 (Control improvement opportunities)	Housekeeping matters and opportunities for improving internal controls and procedures relating to gas market procedures.



Conclusion

Based on our review, which is not an audit, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the Australian Energy Market Operator did not maintain, in all material respects, effective control procedures in relation to compliance with the National Electricity Rules for the National Electricity Market for the year ended 30 June 2022, based on the scope referred to above.

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PricewaterhouseCoopers

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Hunt'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matthew Hunt
Partner

Melbourne
19 December 2022