

Aurizon Network's 2025 review of system rules

30 October 2025

The Queensland Competition Authority has approved Aurizon Network's proposed amendments to the Central Queensland coal network system rules in accordance with cl 7A.7.5(b) of Aurizon Network's 2017 access undertaking (UT5).

The amendments will take effect from 1 February 2026.

On 19 September 2025, Aurizon Network submitted proposed amendments to the Central Queensland coal network (CQCN) system rules for our approval.

Aurizon Network's proposal seeks to embed the daily rolling plan (DRP) and improve or clarify the planning and scheduling processes. This includes removing now redundant drafting (related to the earlier DRP trial), changing how train service entitlement (TSE) consumption is treated in some circumstances and providing transparency over the modelling that underpins the planning and scheduling processes.

Aurizon Network developed the proposed amendments after consulting with stakeholders through stakeholder forums, formal consultation processes and one-on-one engagements. In response to feedback during these processes, Aurizon Network made a number of changes to its initial proposal before submitting the proposed amendments we have considered.

On 22 September 2025, we published Aurizon Network's proposal and supporting documentation for stakeholder comment.¹ We received 2 submissions in response. Both noted that Aurizon Network had responded to the feedback received – but one said that a number of matters remain

¹ The supporting documentation included copies of the submissions Aurizon Network received as part of its formal consultation process, as well as its summary consultation report, which sets out its response to the issues raised, including where it had amended its original proposal to address stakeholder feedback.

outstanding, in particular around the governance and transparency of the scheduling and day of operations processes.²

We have considered whether the proposed amendments are consistent with UT5 and are appropriate having regard to the matters listed in s 138(2) of the QCA Act. Our view is that the amendments improve planning and scheduling processes – promoting flexibility and responsiveness and supporting better utilisation of capacity – and remove redundant provisions. Collectively, these amendments are consistent with UT5 and ultimately support the efficient operation of the CQCN, which is in the interests of access holders, access seekers and Aurizon Network and is also in the broader public interest. It is not evident that the amendments advantage any one access holder (or group of access holders) over others.

Daily rolling plan

The changes to embed the DRP as business as usual and improve clarity around the DRP operation were supported by stakeholders.

Changes to train service entitlements

We consider the changes relating to the consumption of TSEs, on balance, provide greater opportunity and incentives for better utilisation of spare capacity on the network. As with any rule change that modifies incentives, there is inevitably some uncertainty around how behaviour will change in response to the new incentives, and we recognise the concerns expressed regarding the potential for certain stakeholders to gain advantage.

However, while we certainly expect behaviour of stakeholders to change as a result of the amendments (and some behavioural changes could potentially be negative), the changes in behaviour appear likely to result in greater utilisation of spare capacity. We consider there to be adequate oversight to detect, and address, any potential behaviour from stakeholders aiming to gain unfair planning and scheduling advantages and, in particular, the inclusion of systematic monitoring by Aurizon Network is appropriate. The system rules are a living document that is reviewed annually and can be further modified to deal with any unintended behaviours or unexpected outcomes.

Integrated rail plan modelling

Stakeholders raised concerns about the limited visibility into the inputs and assumptions used in the integrated rail planning (IRP) model and suggested a number of matters should be addressed through the system rules.³ We note that Aurizon Network's proposed changes seek to respond to stakeholder feedback, including on its IRP model selection.

We have not required that further changes to the system rules be made at this time, noting that the IRP process is a 'supplemental process', albeit one that is relied upon heavily by parties. We consider that the proposed changes also provide additional transparency around the modelling process and note that Aurizon Network is engaging with stakeholders over additional information to be provided. While the process may benefit from even higher levels of transparency in future, the proposed changes are an improvement over the current arrangements. We accept Aurizon Network's view that publishing every potential daily IRP model (and its metrics) for stakeholder

² Aurizon Network's proposal and supporting documentation and the stakeholder submissions are available on our [website](#).

³ For example, to provide greater transparency, governance and independent review of the model's objectives, scenarios and inputs.

analysis would be inefficient, given the volume of scenarios that can be modelled and the already tight planning timeframes.

Governance

Stakeholders expressed concerns about the proposal to allow Aurizon Network to make temporary changes to the system rules for the purpose of improving systems or processes. We also note that Aurizon Network has undertaken to only use this power for minor changes and only following consultation where there is no objection from stakeholders to the temporary change.

Ultimately, any ongoing rule changes would require our approval during the annual system rules review. The degree to which Aurizon Network has adhered to this undertaking to make only minor changes where there is stakeholder agreement would be a key consideration for us if we were asked to approve any changes made under this provision.

On balance, we consider allowing for minor changes where stakeholders agree is likely to lead to more efficient outcomes, compared to requiring a full system rule change process for minor process matters.

Way forward

We consider the amendments Aurizon Network has proposed to the system rules are appropriate to approve.

We have consulted with Aurizon Network and accept that a commencement date of 1 February 2026 is appropriate given a lead time is necessary to implement the new arrangements.