

# Essential Energy's Agency Information Guide

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**COMMERCIAL-IN-CONFIDENCE**



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## CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT ESSENTIAL ENERGY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Our executive and regional management structure.....	6
Our major functions .....	7
<b>EFFECTS ON MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Customer Consultation.....	9
Essential Engagement .....	9
Essential People’s Panel.....	9
Regulatory Proposal engagement.....	9
Energy & Water Ombudsman New South Wales.....	9
<b>NATURE OF DOCUMENTS HELD BY ESSENTIAL ENERGY .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS, PROCEDURES AND CONTACT POINTS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Mandatory proactive release.....	11
Authorised proactive release .....	11
Informal request for information .....	11
Access application (formal application) for release of information.....	11
<b>OBTAINING INFORMATION FROM ESSENTIAL ENERGY .....</b>	<b>11</b>
General enquiries .....	11
<b>CONTACTING OUR RIGHT TO INFORMATION OFFICER.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>REVIEW .....</b>	<b>13</b>

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## INTRODUCTION

This information guide has been produced in accordance with section 20 of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, and exists to provide members of the public with an overview of:

- who we are
- our structure and functions
- how those functions affect the community
- the ways we engage with the community
- the types of information we hold, and
- how we make information publicly available

A copy of this document is available free of charge by either downloading it from our website at [www.essentialenergy.com.au](http://www.essentialenergy.com.au) or by contacting our Right to Information Officer.

If you intend to reproduce any part of this document, please contact the Right to Information Officer. We ask you to acknowledge Essential Energy as the source of the information.

Telephone enquiries regarding the GIPA Act can be made on 13 23 91

Written enquiries about the GIPA Act should be directed to:

Right to Information Officer  
Essential Energy  
PO Box 5730  
PORT MACQUARIE NSW 2444

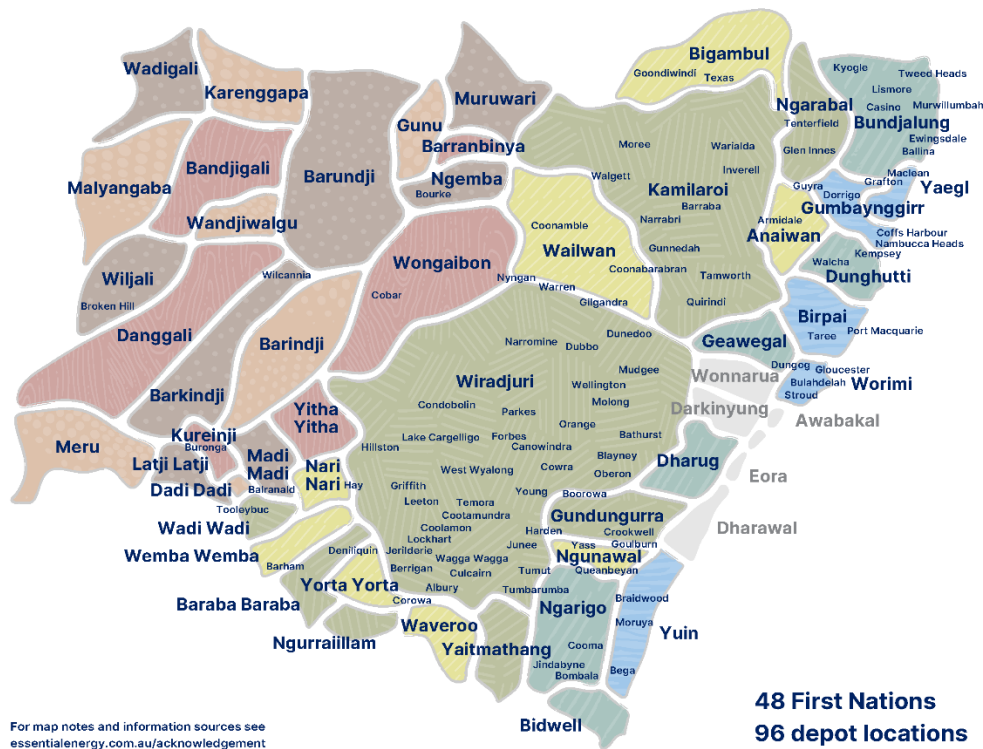
Email enquiries about the GIPA Act should be directed to [gipa@essentialenergy.com.au](mailto:gipa@essentialenergy.com.au)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

Essential Energy acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business and we acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

Essential Energy is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.

### First Nations and Our Network Area



As Aboriginal Country borders fluctuate and more knowledge is being found every day, this map is subject to change. Spellings of Aboriginal countries and locations of depots and offices within Aboriginal countries have been made from desktop research conducted on each site (town and city) and correlation with the AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia by David R Horton (creator), © Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS, and Auslig/Sinclair, Knight, Merz, 1996. This is an estimate only based on desktop research and the AIATSIS map.



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## ABOUT ESSENTIAL ENERGY

Essential Energy builds, operates and maintains the electricity network across 95 per cent of New South Wales and parts of southern Queensland – one of Australia’s largest electricity networks. With more than 890,000 customers – including homes, hospitals, schools, businesses and community services – and 183,000 kms of overhead powerlines, traversing 737,000 square kilometres of landmass, Essential Energy is an economic enabler for regional, rural and remote communities.

Our electricity distribution network is funded through a five-yearly distribution network revenue determination made by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) in accordance with the National Electricity Law and National Electricity Rules economic regulatory framework.

Our priorities are employee, contractor and community safety and the reliability, security and cost efficiency of our network. We keep our customers’ network charges as low as possible while delivering an acceptable Return on Capital Employed.

Essential Energy’s business objectives are:

- continuous improvements in safety culture and performance
- operate at industry best practice for efficiency, delivering best value for customers
- deliver real reductions in customers’ distribution network charges
- deliver a satisfactory Return on Capital Employed
- reduce the environmental impact of Essential Energy where it is efficient to do so.

In the far west of NSW, our operating division, [Essential Water](#), services a population of approximately 18,000 people in the communities of Broken Hill, Sunset Strip, Menindee and Silverton. It delivers a secure water supply to around 10,500 customers and reliable sewerage services to around 9,700 customers in Broken Hill.

Essential Energy operates in accordance with multiple various legislation, including but not limited to:

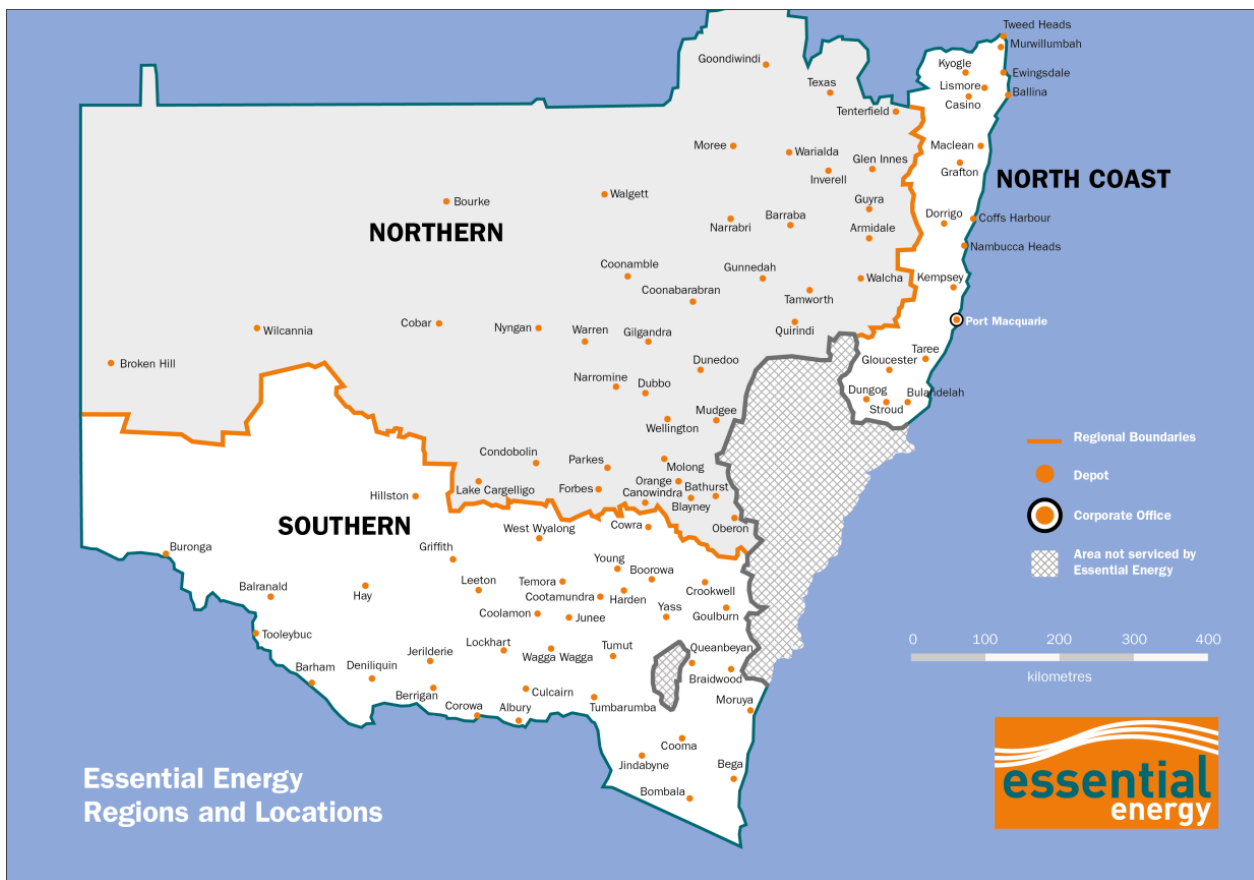
Electricity Supply Act 1995 (NSW)
State Owned Corporations Act 1989 (NSW)
Energy Services Corporations Act 1995 (NSW)
Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2006 (NSW)
National Electricity (New South Wales) Act 1997 (NSW)
Gas Supply Act 1996 (NSW)
Water Act 1912 (NSW)
Water Management Act 2000 (NSW)
Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
State Records Act 1998
Cybercrime Act 2001(Cth)

## Our executive and regional management structure

Members of Essential Energy's Executive comprise of:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Operating Officer
- General Counsel & Company Secretary
- Chief People Officer
- Chief Commercial Officer
- Chief Financial Officer
- Chief Corporate Affairs Officer
- Chief Digital Officer.

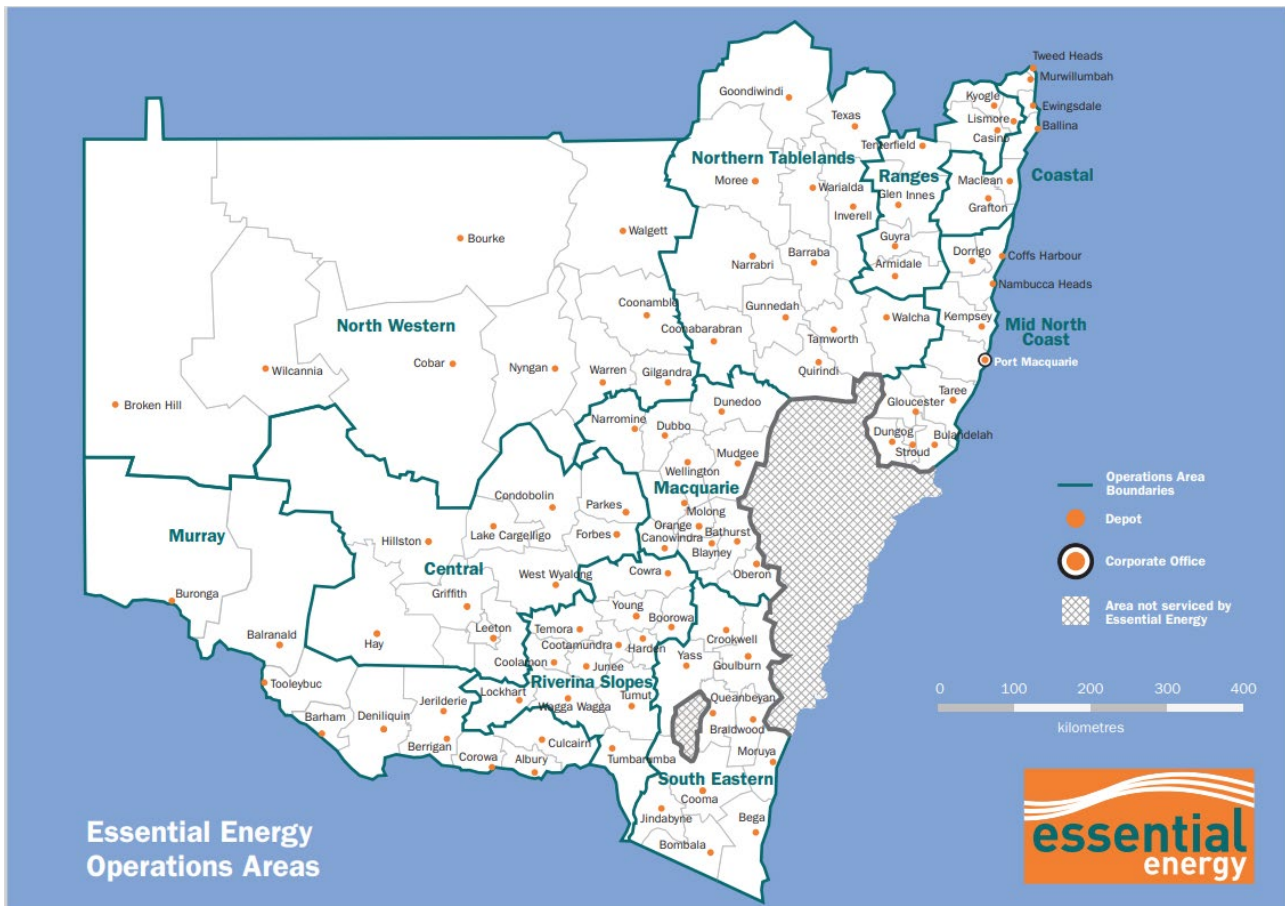
Essential Energy's field operations are divided into three regions, reflecting the environmental and geographic diversity of our network footprint.



We operate under a regional management structure, with ten Operational Area teams focused on responding to local needs and priorities.

Our Operational Area's are:-

Central, Coastal, Macquarie, Mid North Coast, Murray, North Western, Northern Tablelands, Ranges, Riverina Slopes and South Eastern.



### Our major functions

- Essential Energy's core business activities include:
- The safe and reliable transmission and distribution of electricity
- The provision and maintenance of works for the distribution of electricity
- The protection of the public from dangers arising from the transmission, distribution and use of electricity
- Operate a network of dams, water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants, reservoirs, water and sewage pumping stations, mains and related infrastructure
- The promotion of the safe and efficient use of electricity and electrical fittings and appliances

- The promotion of energy conservation and of measures to increase the efficiency of energy transmission and use
- Such other functions as are approved by the Minister on the recommendation of the Corporation.

Additionally, ancillary functions outlined in the Electricity Supply Act 1995. Essential Energy may:

- Conduct any business and for that purpose, use any property or the services of any staff of the distributor
- Acquire and develop land as necessary for the exercise of its functions, and dispose of land
- Acquire or build, and maintain and dispose of, any buildings, plant, machinery, equipment or vehicles
- Make and enter into contracts or arrangements for the carrying out of works or the performance of services or the supply of goods or materials
- Make charges and impose fees for services performed and goods and materials supplied to it
- Appoint agents, and act as agents for other persons.

## **EFFECTS ON MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

In exercising its statutory functions, Essential Energy may affect members of the public in its many operations, including:

- The construction of electricity infrastructure, including substations, poles, conductors, transformers
- Routine repair and/or replacement of existing overhead and underground infrastructure
- Inspection of electricity infrastructure
- Unplanned repair and emergency work on the existing overhead and/or underground network
- Construct, maintain and operate water management works
- The acquisition of land and the redevelopment of buildings and land
- Trimming of trees adjacent to distribution infrastructure
- Inspection of customers' premises to ensure compliance with relevant safety standards
- Repair and replacement of streetlighting
- Essential Water services such as building plan approvals and connections and disconnections
- The issuing of invoices
- Approval and certification of customer funded projects.



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## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK

### Customer Consultation

A diverse cross-section of regional community representatives make up the membership of the [Customer Advocacy Group](#) responsible for providing Essential Energy with insight and advice on electricity network issues.

The [Customer Advocacy Group](#) continues to be a proactive forum for consultation, engagement and insight across Essential Energy's customer base, on any matters relating to the supply of electricity and associated services.

Membership of the Group represents domestic, industrial, commercial, rural and remote customers and primary producers as well as low-income households.

Customers are welcome to contact Customer Advocacy [Group members](#) to provide feedback for discussion at these meetings. Contacts can be found by visiting our website at <https://engage.essentialenergy.com.au/customer-advocacy-group>

### Essential Engagement

We value feedback and input from our customers and look forward to hearing their ideas. Essential Engagement is our online platform for engaging with stakeholders. The platform supports the aim of the Essential Energy [Stakeholder Engagement Framework](#) and complements existing engagement processes. It provides a forum for customers to have their say on Essential Energy's current projects and future plans. More information about Essential Engagement can be found [here](#).

### Essential People's Panel

Essential Energy is establishing the Essential People's Panel (EPP) to enable direct engagement with a representative group of Essential Energy customers. The purpose of the EPP is to provide a forum for Essential Energy to directly engage with customers on issues relevant to residential and small business customers such as pricing and affordability, reliability and resilience, customer service and communication. The inaugural EPP meeting was held in June 2023.

### Regulatory Proposal engagement

Every five years we present a Proposal to the AER which outlines our investment plans, the costs to deliver those plans and the proposed prices that customers will pay. To develop the Proposal we consult directly with customers in a number of ways including Customer Forums, In-depth Interviews and Surveys, to ensure we capture the diversity of residential and business customers across our regional, rural and remote service area.

### Energy & Water Ombudsman New South Wales

The Energy & Water Ombudsman New South Wales ([EWON](#)) provides a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service for all electricity and gas customers in New South Wales, and some water customers. There is no charge to consumers for the service.

**NATURE OF DOCUMENTS HELD BY ESSENTIAL ENERGY**

Essential Energy holds many files, documents and instruction manuals concerning its operations. A number of publications are available free of charge from Essential Energy either by calling 13 23 91 or by visiting our websites at [www.essentialenergy.com.au](http://www.essentialenergy.com.au) or [www.essentialwater.com.au](http://www.essentialwater.com.au).

Essential Energy holds the following documents:

Policy & procedure documents	Customer bulletins
Board business papers	Specifications
Instructions to employees	Reports
Employee newsletters/memos/bulletins	Maps, plans and diagrams
Notices to external organisations	Publications
Contracts and associated documents	Numerous categories of transactional records related to service provision

Essential Energy holds information mainly in a Corporate Records Management system, other line of business electronic applications, on our website or in physical files.

When files become out of date or inactive, they are stored at the premises of Essential Energy’s records archiving contractor. Any costs for the retrieval of these documents from storage will be evaluated with regard to the individual complexity of each request. After a period of time when records have passed their legislated retention date and are no longer deemed useful to the business, they are disposed of according to the *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*. Files are ‘sentenced’ (a minimum amount of time the information needs to be kept before it can be approved for destruction is determined) and retained, destroyed or sent to State Archives in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*.

**ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS, PROCEDURES AND CONTACT POINTS**

In many instances, customer information relating to a person’s own account, or information that is already publicly available may be provided, or access given to documents by simply making a request either in person, by telephone, mail or e-mail. Under the GIPA Act, Essential Energy is required to release information about its operations and activities unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure, or if the information falls within an exemption category of information under the *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*. In accordance with this obligation, Essential Energy has established the following methods for releasing information about its operations:

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## Mandatory proactive release

Certain information must be made available on our website, free of charge. This includes:

- A copy of this information guide
- Policy documents
- [Disclosure log](#)
- [Register of government contracts.](#)
- [Our Privacy Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Complaints and Dispute Resolution Procedure](#)
- [Constitution of Essential Energy](#)
- [Statement of Business Ethics](#)

You can also visit [data.nsw.gov.au](http://data.nsw.gov.au) to help you find NSW Government Data.

## Authorised proactive release

In addition to open access information, Essential Energy will make as much other information as possible publicly available unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure. Such accessible information may include frequently requested information or information of public interest that may already be available.

This includes:

- [Annual reports](#)
- [Electricity Network Maps](#)
- [Water Quality reports](#)
- [Drought Management Plan](#)
- [Regulatory reports](#)

## Informal request for information

Essential Energy welcomes informal requests for government information from the public. Such information could include requests for personal information by the individual concerned.

Specific information can be requested from Essential Energy unless there are good reasons to require a formal application.

## Access application (formal application) for release of information

Specific information that has not otherwise been made available may be formally requested from Essential Energy. In some circumstances, access to information will require a formal access application. Sometimes there is an overriding public interest test against disclosing certain information.

## OBTAINING INFORMATION FROM ESSENTIAL ENERGY

### General enquiries

Essential Energy welcomes enquiries from its customers. If the information you require is not available on our websites, [www.essentialenergy.com.au](http://www.essentialenergy.com.au) or [www.essentialwater.com.au](http://www.essentialwater.com.au) you can make enquiries by phone, email or mail. We will decide whether the information you want:

- is mandatory release or proactive release information that is readily available. If it is, we

will tell you where and how you can obtain the information

- should be made available as part of a 'proactive release' of information
- can be disclosed to you through informal release – for example, where no third party information is involved
- requires a formal access application – for example, because consultation with a third party is required
- should not be made available due to an overriding public interest against disclosure of the information.

Formal applications for access to documents can be made in writing by completing our [application form](#) and forwarding to our Right to Information Officer. You will need to supply all relevant details and pay the application fee. Applications can be lodged in person, emailed or posted to our Right to Information Officer.

### Fees and charges for formal applications

The following fees are applicable for formal applications:

Nature of Application	Application Fee	Processing Charge
Access by individuals to records about their personal affairs	\$30*	\$30* per hour after first 20 hours
All other requests***	\$30*	\$30 per hour*
Internal review	\$40*/**	Nil
Amendment of records	Nil ***	Nil

\* Subject to a 50 per cent reduction for financial hardship and public interest reasons.

\*\* Refunds may apply as a result of successful internal reviews and successful applications for amendment of records.

\*\*\* No application fees may be charged for internal reviews in relation to amendment of records.

Essential Energy may request an advance deposit by advising of the estimated processing charge and giving at least four (4) weeks for payment to be made.

NOTE: If any personal information held by Essential Energy is incomplete, incorrect, misleading or out of date, you have the right to request that it is corrected. Applications for correction of personal information in a document should be made in writing in the form of a letter. Any information to support the request should be included in the application. Once you have received documents under the GIPA Act, there is no charge to have personal information in the documents amended.

### CONTACTING OUR RIGHT TO INFORMATION OFFICER

Essential Energy's Right to Information Officer can be contacted by:

Mail: The Right to Information Officer  
 Essential Energy  
 PO Box 5730  
 PORT MACQUARIE NSW 2444

Telephone: 13 23 91



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Email: [GIPA@essentialenergy.com.au](mailto:GIPA@essentialenergy.com.au)

Telephone enquiries can be made on business days between 9:00am and 4:00pm.

Proof of identity may be required at the time the inquiry is made or the application lodged.

If you would like further information in relation to the GIPA Act, please contact the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner on free call: 1800 472 679 or visit the website at [www.ipc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au).

## **REVIEW**

This Guide will be reviewed at least every twelve months in the absence of any significant changes or more frequently where required taking into account legislative or organisational changes, risk factors and consistency with other policies. The next review is due in June 2025.