

Energy Charter Disclosure Statement 2024-25



Introduction

We are pleased to present Essential Energy's Energy Charter Disclosure Statement, summarising our focus on customer-centricity for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

During our seventh year as an Energy Charter signatory, we've continued steady progress towards embedding a customer-driven culture throughout the business and delivering our Corporate Strategy, which clearly defines a path to empower communities to share and use energy for a better tomorrow.

To support regional decarbonisation, we're leveraging our existing distribution network to identify new, cost-effective pathways for connecting large-scale renewable generators. This approach reduces reliance on greenfield transmission builds, helping minimise community disruption while accelerating access to clean energy. We're also advancing opportunities to partner with battery energy storage system developers to utilise surplus land around our zone substations. This enables rapid deployment of storage solutions without the need for significant infrastructure upgrades.

As more localised generation comes into the network, we're trialling energy storage at all levels: from utility-scale systems to pole-mounted neighbourhood systems that enable communities to generate, store and consume locally-produced solar energy – and, importantly, share energy with customers without renewable generation systems.

We're also continuing to facilitate the roll out of electric vehicles (EVs). This year, our collaboration with [Wagners CFT](#) and [EVX](#) on Australia's first fully integrated streetlight EV charger won a Financial Review Future Ready Award, and partnership with CSIRO, Sigenenergy, and AUSEV has successfully demonstrated the viability of vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology in the Australian market.

These new connections and asset classes are supported by our integrative asset management system that is helping us enhance our performance insights, identify development opportunities and reduce operational costs. At the same time, our membership of the [Infrastructure Sustainability Council](#) is helping us evolve more sustainable infrastructure systems through training, education and access to a directory of sustainable products and services.

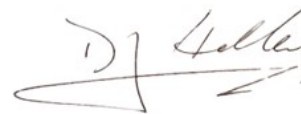
We are proud that Essential Energy continues to be recognised as a national leader for our Apprenticeship Program, winning an Australian Training Award for innovative, cutting-edge training, higher education partnerships and a focus on future skills.

We also know that skills shortages in areas like renewable energy and grid infrastructure development pose a significant challenge to the energy transition, and we've identified where Essential Energy can help. We've commenced exploring the expansion of our training capabilities to future-proof internal workforce sustainability and, through commercial partnerships and course offerings, address skills shortages across the broader energy sector.

Communication with our customers, communities and stakeholders is one of our most critical assets. This year, we've utilised artificial intelligence to boost the depth of insights we obtain from customer sentiment surveys, help streamline analysis and tailor our responses. Customer perceptions of the value exchange around service delivery, affordability, overall experience and social licence show that, of more than 73,234 surveys completed in 2024-2025, some 60% of customers were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with their experience across a range of service areas.

Our economic focus is to support a transition that is equitable, inclusive and at least cost. Our efforts to maintain downward pressure on distribution charges continue to face headwinds from increasing frequency of natural disasters, rising inflation and implementing new mandatory regulatory requirements. In this first year of our 2024-29 revenue determination period, typical residential and small business customers have experienced average nominal increases in our network charges of \$113 and \$213 a year respectively. This continues to be an area of focus for Essential Energy.

Insights from our [Customer Advocacy Group](#) and Essential People's Panel continue to guide our strategic direction and help us maintain a customer focus on our operations. We welcome their review of our 2024-25 disclosure statement.



Doug Halley
Chair



John Cleland
Chief Executive Officer



Acknowledgement of Country: Our depots and offices are located on the country of 29 First Nations. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these lands and their continuing connection to land, waters and community, and pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

For enquiries about Essential Energy's Energy Charter Disclosure Statement, please contact:
Mike Cole, Head of Customer **E: mike.cole@essentialenergy.com.au M: 0408 094 719**

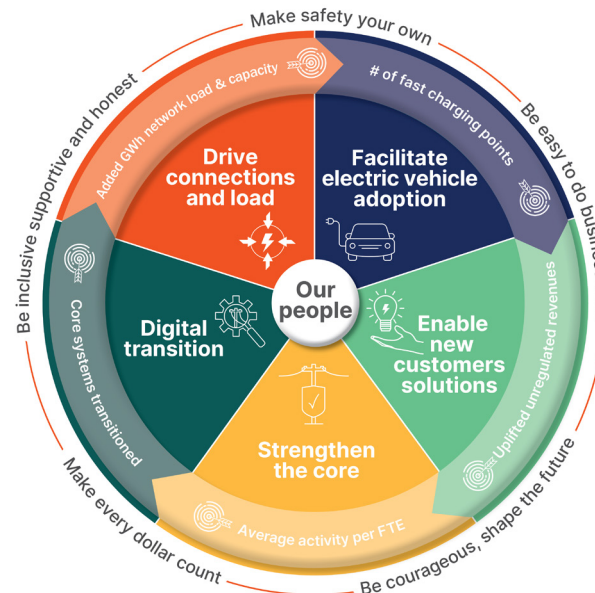
Essential Energy distributes electricity to over 900,000 customer and business premises located within over 1500 regional, rural and remote communities across 95 per cent of NSW and parts of Southern Queensland.



Our vision is to empower communities to share and use energy for a better tomorrow...

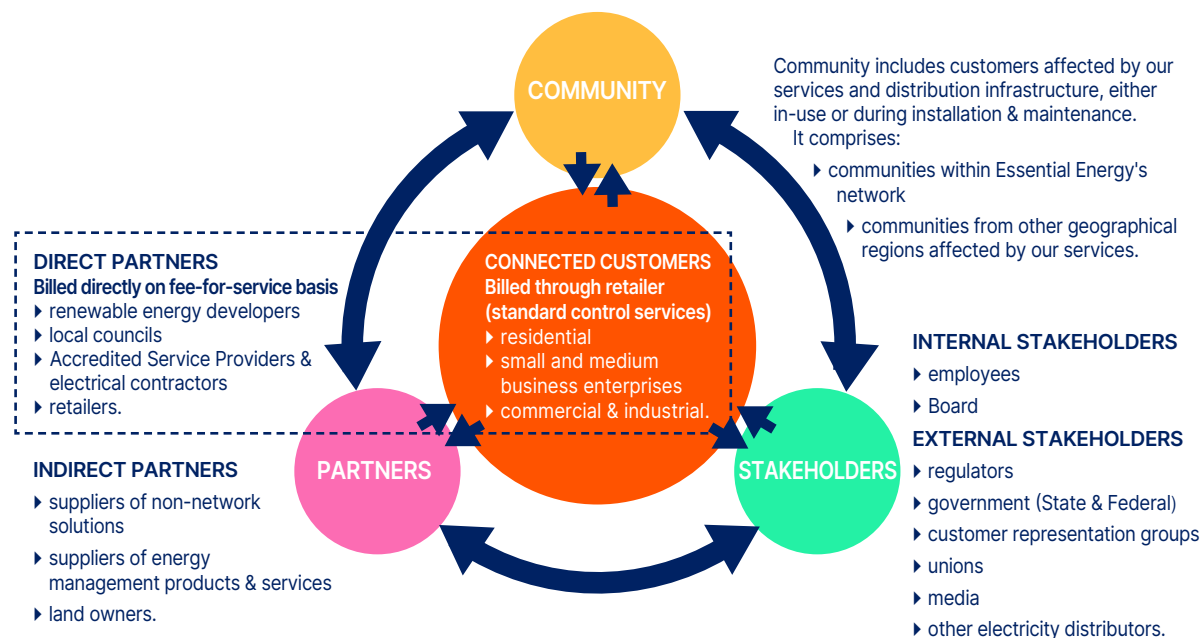
Our corporate drivers

Our values, targets and strategic pillars



... and deliver for our customers and our shareholders.

Our customers



2024-25 Key highlights

Our customers

Listening and responding to our customers' voices

We've pro-actively updated our bushfire risk modelling and associated risk classifications to reduce the potential for network-initiated fires. This means we'll need more vegetation clearing than we've historically undertaken in newly classified high-risk areas.

To help us build awareness of the reasons and potential impacts of this change among local customers and communities, we asked our Essential People's Panel to provide insights into preferred vegetation management options and our engagement strategy. Their input has directly informed our approach, ensuring that engagement in areas of greatest impact – particularly where there are environmental or cultural heritage considerations – is undertaken well before management solutions are decided, is viewed as two-way interaction and incorporates secondary engagement with, and feedback from, landholders on preferred solutions.

The People's Panel also directly influenced selection of preferred vegetation management solutions, which now considers Stand Alone Power Systems (SAPS) installation as an alternative to standard vegetation trimming where appropriate.

Incorporating customer, community and impacted landholder voices into our decision-making fosters a collaborative approach that builds trust and supports shared-value outcomes.

Our communities

Understanding and planning for future needs

As the renewable energy transition continues, it's important we develop a greater understanding of our customers' energy usage to allow better planning for future energy services. Over the past two years, we've engaged with customers in Ivanhoe, Tea Gardens and Tiboburra to collect and share energy usage data and insights through Wattwatchers smart energy monitoring devices installed at participating households and businesses. During that time, we've gained a deeper understanding of the emerging needs and options for affordable and reliable electricity supply and services.

These significant learnings are helping us plan future energy services and secure ongoing sustainable, safe and reliable power supply for all customers and communities.

Investing in our regional communities

We've refreshed our Procurement Sustainability Strategy to embed a risk-based approach to Environmental, Social and Governance criteria for sourcing requirements and established a working group to explore supplier diversity, initially focusing on First Nations and regional small to medium business enterprises.

This will help us facilitate positive, equitable economic activity and outcomes for the communities we serve.

Our partners

Improving outcomes through a network information hub

Our new technical information hub is providing our Accredited Service Providers (ASPs), electrical contractors and solar installers with self-service and supported-service options tailored to their specific requirements. A dedicated team of technical specialists and subject matter experts offer advice and help resolve enquiries at first point of contact.

The new support service is driving timely and consistent outcomes for our partners and their customers.

Our stakeholders

Collaborating to improve natural disaster preparedness and recovery

Essential Energy is working collaboratively to promote co-ordinated approaches to natural disaster preparedness and recovery through participation in:

- the Joint Telco Power Resilience Forum, a cross-sector partnership aimed at strengthening relationships, services and infrastructure within the electricity and telecommunications sectors during and after natural disasters, and
- the CSIRO-led Telecommunications Resilience Investment Pilot, through which key stakeholders in the telecommunications sector are building a shared understanding of natural hazard vulnerabilities and identifying the interventions and associated responsibilities, funding, and finance pathways needed to mitigate risk and enhance resilience.

By sharing insights and exploring innovative solutions, Essential Energy is contributing to national and State efforts to help strengthen electricity and telecommunications networks that communities rely on during emergency events.

Our operating environment

Award-winning asset management system delivers business-wide efficiencies

We've implemented a new Enterprise Asset Management solution that provides significant improvements in asset data integrity, facilitates redesigning network asset management to optimise maintenance, increases workforce productivity and strengthens power supply reliability through better asset insights.

The end-to-end solution comprises process, system and technology uplifts that create a centralised, common data model for asset and financial management, delivering new insights into strengthening our existing business operations and supporting future opportunities. It won the Initiative of the Year Award at the USA Oracle Customer Edge Summit for implementing a cloud-based system managing over 10 million assets.

The system maximises asset value and drives operational cost efficiencies that benefit our customers.



Principle 1: We will put customers & communities at the centre of our business & the energy system

Objective: Be customer-centric

Smarter, more meaningful and timely customer feedback capture and analysis is promoting a business-wide shared understanding of customer satisfaction drivers, helping us to effectively prioritise and adapt response to customer needs.

Customer Satisfaction Index: 60% of all customers satisfied with experience or interaction.

Maturity assessment



Metrics

Customer Satisfaction Index by segment	Percent satisfied with experience or interaction
Life support customers	75
Non-CER owning residential and small business customers	59
CER owning residential and small business customers	59
Commercial and industrial	57

Key achievements

Elevating connected customer outcomes

We're expanding our Elevate customer service continuous improvement program, now with teams in 15 specific operational areas using customer insights to improve service outcomes.

'We've been able to identify our customers' needs and develop inventive ways to improve the customer experience. This partnership has allowed us to better understand our customers and deliver solutions that truly meet their expectations.'

Essential Energy's Public Lighting and Unmetered Supply Manager

Elevating internal customer service

We're progressively rolling out an internal Elevate Voice of Team program to measure employee internal experience when interacting with service areas within the business.

Feedback is informing cross-functional collaboration and uplifting focus on customer service.

'Elevate has been the perfect tool for our Network Assurance team to understand how our actions and processes are viewed and experienced by internal and external customers. We've been able to identify key items that can benefit both, and bring our ideas to life.'

Justin Groatz, Essential Energy's Network Assurance Supervisor

FY25 Employee engagement survey results

Q: In the past 30 days, I have heard a story about how we impacted a customer to improve their business or life

Company average: 3.74 out of 5 (↑0.33)

Intelligent customer insight analysis and response

We've incorporated artificial intelligence (AI) to help personalise customer enquiries to improve the depth of insights we obtain from customer sentiment surveys and streamline analysis.

AI is helping us optimise and tailor customer response, support and service delivery.

Tools for de-escalating challenging customer interactions

We've aligned with Lifeline and other training organisations to help employees in our Contact Centre, Customer Resolutions and Private Asset Defect Rectification teams better understand, assist and support customers during challenging interactions and build their own emotional resilience through vicarious trauma training. A separate series of Soft Skills sessions are equipping the Contact Centre team with additional skills to minimise customer conflict.

By acknowledging the emotional toll this work can have on our frontline teams and promoting resilience through self-care strategies, we're facilitating more positive outcomes for employees and customers.

FY25 Employee engagement survey results

Q: I have grown in my ability to positively impact our customers

Company average: 4.08 out of 5 (↑0.10)

Public policy consultation

Essential Energy is advocating with NSW Government and electricity market bodies to enable distribution businesses to own and maintain EV charging infrastructure. The proposal includes allowing open access for retail parties on any distributor-owned charging infrastructure.

If approved, this will facilitate charging station expansion, particularly in regional and rural areas where EV users are underserved, and offer EV drivers choice in their charging service retail provider.

Australian Service Excellence Awards

Essential Energy was named as a finalist in the Customer Service Institute of Australia's service excellence awards for our Voice of Customer and organisational customer improvement programs.

'Recognition for Essential Energy is pleasing but the real rewards are the customer experience improvements we can achieve through gaining better understanding of our customers and communities.'

Mike Cole, Head of Customer

In the next reporting period

We will continue to explore different uses of generative AI in our Contact Centre to better support our customers and employees, with a focus on managing significant increases in call volumes during major network events.

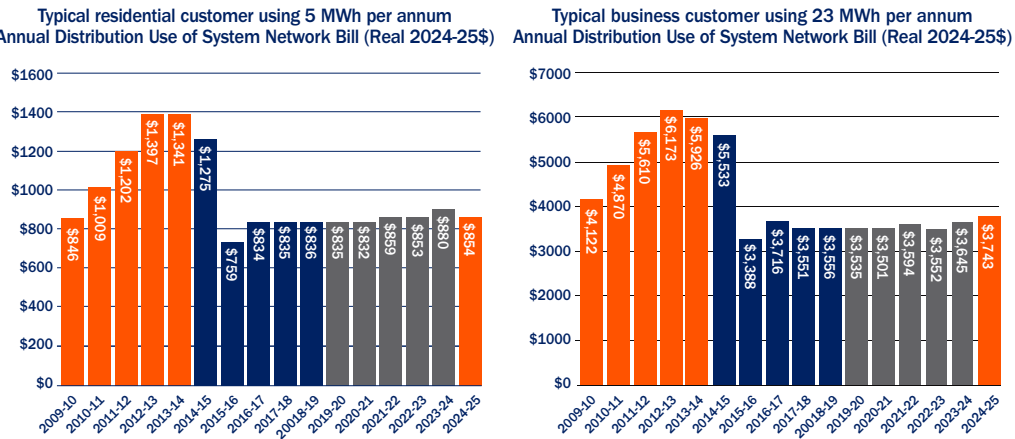
Objective: Deliver value

We're transitioning our tariffs to encourage customers to shift their energy usage away from times when demand is highest, helping to maintain network stability, improve integration of consumer energy resources and defer or avoid network upgrades to help reduce costs for all customers.

Target: Achieve a real reduction in the distribution component of electricity charges for our average residential and small business customers over the 2024-29 regulatory period.

Actual outcome:

While we have continued to maintain downward pressure on the network component of electricity bills through efficiency and capability uplifts, externalities outside our control such as unfunded costs of licence condition changes, natural disasters such as floods and bushfires and increasing inflation have contributed to increases in our distribution charges.



In real \$FY25 terms, from their peak in 2012-13 of \$1,397 per annum, a typical residential customer's annual distribution network charge reduced to \$854 in 2024-25 – a saving of \$543 per annum, or 39%.

Over the same period, a typical small business customer achieved an annual saving of \$2,430, or 39%.

Maturity assessment



Metrics

Our Corporate Strategy is designed to help achieve energy decarbonisation and support economic growth in regional, rural and remote New South Wales while securing long-term market sustainability and energy affordability. Lower costs directly contribute to lower network charges for customers across regional NSW. Our performance this year is evidenced in productivity graphs in Appendix 1.

Key achievements

Staged transition to electricity export pricing

From 1 July 2024, our Sun Soaker tariff is the default tariff for new residential and small business connections, as well as anyone with meter or energy resource changes. In this year, only the consumption component has been applied.

From 1 July 2025, we will apply an export tariff and rebate structure for Sun Soaker solar-generating customers that aims to encourage greater self-consumption between 10am and 3pm and increased exports between 5pm and 8pm. Existing customers may choose to opt in early to this two-way tariff, or stay on their current network tariff until 1 July 2028.

Export charges will be used to offset export rebates to customers and supplement the costs of upgrading the network to support increasing levels of solar export.

Two-way pricing tariffs aim to encourage customers with rooftop solar panels or household batteries to self-consume generation when it is least needed by the grid and export power into the grid when it is needed during peak demand periods.

Digital Twin Visualisation tool

We're progressively rolling out a Visual Spatial Platform to internal business units across the organisation. This easy-to-navigate tool brings together in one screen a 3D representation of the entire network and its surroundings, with network assets, customers, risk factors, aerial imagery, asset attributes, third-party information, works history and over 16 million asset images.

Clear desktop visualisation of the network, its surroundings and how customers connect is helping to deliver operational efficiencies and reducing the need for field travel. Similarly, it enables modelling to help understand impacts of natural disasters such as flooding, so that we can better target and prepare for crisis response.

Bushfire Priority Zone Transition Project

Essential Energy's Bushfire Priority Zone Transition project won the Asset Management Council's 2025 [Asset Management Cost, Risk, Performance Award](#) for projects demonstrating balance between elements of cost, risk and performance to obtain a valuable solution for an asset.

The Bushfire Priority Zone Transition project was established in late 2023 to define, plan, design, estimate, obtain funding and commence delivery of a plan to better manage the risk of vegetation in the vicinity of powerline assets, delivering network safety and value outcomes for customers.

In the next reporting period

We'll commence two tariffs trials from 1 July 2025: a Storage Tariff trial aimed at better aligning timing and pricing parameters of our existing high voltage and low voltage storage tariff with conditions and optimal battery operations; and a Flexible Load Tariff trial aimed at encouraging customers with highly flexible loads guided by a dynamic operating envelope to optimise efficient network use.

'Having this new tool will streamline our data gathering and concept approval processes and enable us to quickly and seamlessly visualise line routes and network crossings.'

Glen Leman, Contestable Design



Principle 3: We will provide energy safely, sustainably & reliably

Objective: Be safe, sustainable and reliable

We're evolving a robust, adaptive network that secures power supply delivery while minimising environmental impact and enhancing the system's ability to safely withstand and recover from disruptions – one that supports accessible two-way renewable energy flows, leverages distributed generation capabilities to enhance reliability and maximises energy efficiency to manage overall demand.

Target: Achieve overall network availability of 99.95%.

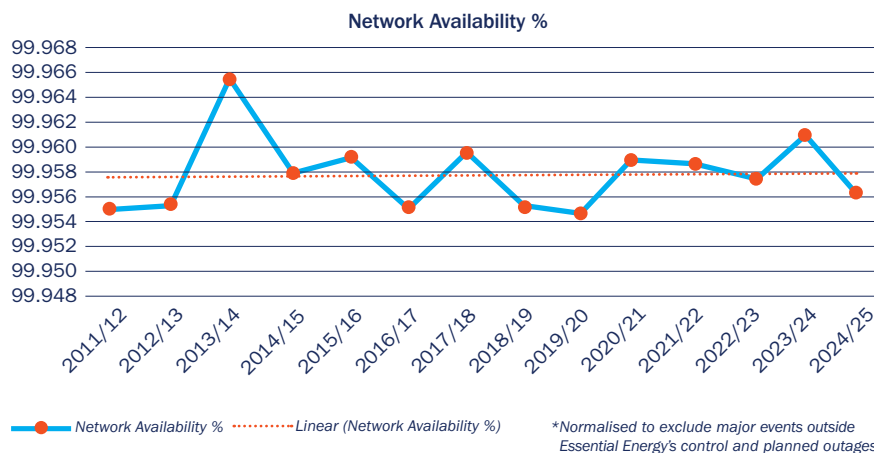
Customer Satisfaction Index: On target at 99.95% and exceeding independently audited reliability requirements.

Maturity assessment



Metrics

Internal benchmark outcomes



Key achievements

EXTERNAL

Safety

Public safety webinars

We regularly analyse safety incident data and implement targeted campaigns for key at-risk groups to improve public safety. In addition to our annual multi-channel campaigns, during National Safe Work Month in October 2024 we offered free, targeted webinars covering agribusiness safety, emergency services first responder safety and building and construction safety.

The webinars were well received by the target audiences, and we are planning more in the future.

Sustainability

Improving streetlighting efficiency and sustainability

Essential Energy has partnered with Albury City Council and smart infrastructure company Felicity to investigate how traffic sensors on streetlights could enhance energy efficiency. During a six-month virtual trial commencing in December 2024, three data-collecting sensors on streetlight poles in Albury captured traffic volumes and types, then overlayed this real-time data onto Australian Road Safety Standards and aligned streetlight luminosity with optimum levels for road safety.

Trial results are helping inform how street lighting technology can create a more efficient lighting network, lower light emissions and conserve energy.

Vehicle to Grid (V2G) trial

Essential Energy and CSIRO are partnering to trial V2G technology to better understand how to integrate it as part of customers home energy management systems.

A bidirectional charger allows two-way exchange of energy between an electric vehicle (EV), a home and the electricity grid. This enables an EV to become a mobile energy storage system that can capture excess renewable energy when rooftop solar panels are generating surplus power, and supply energy back to the home or the grid when electricity demand is high.

The trial, based in a simulated 'residential house of the future' in Essential Energy's Innovation Hub at Port Macquarie, utilises solar panels and batteries with real but fully controllable household appliances including a fridge, dishwasher, dryer, lights, television, pool pump, hot water system and air-conditioning. Work at this facility has resulted in announcement of [Australia's first CCS2 V2G network ready solution](#).

This aims to help customers gain better value from their rooftop solar and electric vehicle batteries. It also has the potential to lower costs for all customers by helping to optimise energy flows, offsetting the need for additional investment in the network.

Innovation awards

Essential Energy has been named in the Agriculture, Mining, Energy & Utilities Future Ready Award category in the 2024 Financial Review BOSS Most Innovative Companies list, which recognises Australian businesses challenging the status quo.

We also received a special Future Ready Award for our work on Australia's first fully integrated streetlight EV charger.

The accolades recognise Essential Energy's collaboration with Wagners CFT and EVX in a four-week trial of a streetlight-mounted EV charger in Port Macquarie in June 2024.

In a post-trial survey, 97% of people said the concept of EV chargers in streetlights was positive, and 86% found the charger easy to use. Respondents also noted that they would like to see many more installed.

Combining innovative technologies with public infrastructure can facilitate rollout of low-impact, publicly accessible EV chargers cost-effectively at scale across regional, rural, and remote communities.

'To be able to dim the lights according to traffic volumes aligns with our strategic sustainability objectives and reduces carbon emissions. Albury City is excited to be part of a trial that can help make that a reality.'

Albury City Mayor, Kevin Mack



Principle 3: We will provide energy safely, sustainably & reliably

Reliability

Community battery deployment

Supported by \$1.5M grant funding through the Federal Government's Community Battery for Household Solar Program, we've deployed ground-mounted community batteries in Goulburn, Leeton and Maloneys Beach to support greater levels of rooftop solar exports.

Commissioned in December 2024, these three batteries are owned and operated by Essential Energy, forming part of our local distribution networks. Participating customers can store excess solar-generated energy that can be discharged later in the day when demand is high and solar systems are no longer generating.

The batteries support the balance of energy generation and usage within local communities. Additionally, from mid-2025, around 250 customers in each community located near local batteries will begin receiving an annual rebate from profits generated by the energy being traded in the National Electricity Market.

Pole top battery deployment

In partnership with Origin Energy, we have installed a total of 35 pole top batteries in Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, Dubbo, Port Macquarie and Armidale to better understand how shared storage can improve customer outcomes.

Residents in the vicinity of a battery can sign with Origin Energy to rent a portion of its capacity – up to 4kWh per day – to virtually store and access neighbourhood solar energy, helping to reduce their household energy costs when they take part. This service can be shared across the local community with non-solar neighbours, helping local communities use renewable energy during the day and reducing pressure on the electricity grid in the evening.

The trial aims to allow residents to access battery storage without the upfront costs of buying and installing their own battery and allow apartment owners and renters to reap some of the benefits from the energy transition.

'To capture and store the energy for when it's needed later in the day makes a lot of sense. It will give residents in the Armidale trial area the chance to take a bigger role in shaping the energy future for regional communities.'

Heidi McElnea, renewables advocate working with not-for-profit Community Power Agency

In the next reporting period

We will review our Public Safety Strategy, which expires on 30 June 2025, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

INTERNAL

Safety

Site Safety Interaction program uplift

We've enhanced our critical controls and verification checks to improve risk management and embedded line two safety assurance to build capability in frontline leaders around our safety management system.

We're working to improve work practices, reduce hazards, empower employees to contribute to a safer workplace and foster a positive safety culture.

New Health and Wellbeing Strategy

We're encouraging employees to maintain a healthy lifestyle that has meaning and purpose through a targeted program of awareness and education, physical and psychosocial risk management, capability building, utilising escalation pathways and support systems and supporting recovery from injury and illness through evidence-based practices.

The new program aims to holistically promote employee physical and mental well-being.

Sustainability

Working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Efforts to decarbonise our operations have resulted in combined Scope 1 (direct) and Scope 2 (indirect) greenhouse gas emissions of 488,294 tCO₂-e for 2024-25, a reduction of 18.3% compared to 2020-21, the baseline year for our target to reduce combined emissions by 50% by 2030.

The vast majority (92.4%) of these emissions were due to distribution network losses, from energy that is generated but then lost to heat as it travels through the network to customers. Facilitating renewable generation connections will help decrease distribution loss emissions.

In 2024-25, renewable connections to the Essential Energy network generated 36.5% of total network load, up from 24.5% in 2020-21.

Fleet electrification

We've replaced our northern NSW diesel-fuelled stores truck with a fully electric model. Based in Grafton, the new Volvo FH Electric Truck has a range of up to 300km and is supported by a fast-charging network we've installed in Tweed Heads, Ballina, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie, Taree and Dungog.

We're also evaluating individual depot operations to support optimised renewables integration, beginning with installation of EV chargers that will support future expansion of fleet electrification.

These are first steps towards converting 30% of our heavy vehicles to electric by 2032.

Reliability

Portable community resilience assets

Essential Energy has matched funding obtained through the Federal Government's Telecommunications Disaster Resilience Innovation Program to invest a total of \$1,890,000 in acquiring six portable SAPS that can be rapidly deployed to restore power to telecommunications towers when natural disaster events impact the electricity network. Twelve telecommunication sites have been scoped for electrical works to allow for fast, safe connection of the portable SAPS, with project completion planned for December 2025.

This will support Essential Energy's crews and emergency services teams who rely on radio communications while they work to protect disaster-impacted communities.

In the next reporting period

We'll commence a two-year pilot of early fault detection (EFD) technology in five key locations across our network, aimed at helping to prevent potential unplanned outages and mitigate risks associated with equipment failure.



Principle 4: We will improve the customer & community experience

Objective: Be easy to do business with

We're fostering innovation, refining and realigning systems and processes and personalising communications to ease service delivery pain points and enhance customer and community value outcomes.

Customer ease: 60% say we are easy or extremely easy to do business with.

Maturity assessment

PREVIOUS & CURRENT
(2023-24)

ASPIRING TO
(2026-27)



Metrics

A total of 314 complaints relating to Essential Energy were referred to the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON). This is an increase from the previous year (2.4 per 10,000 customers in FY24), driven by a significant rise in storm activity claims and complaints to EWON over the FY25 January-June period.

Enquiries	Number per 10,000 customers
Enquiry / General Enquiry	0.0
Complaint Enquiry / Refer to Member / Refer to Customer Service / Unassisted Referral / Referral / Refer Back	1.8
Refer Higher Level / Assisted Referral	1.1
Complaints	0.4
• Level 1 / Conciliation / Stage 1	0.2
• Level 2 / Conciliation / Stage 2	0.1
• Level 3 / Investigation / Stage 3	0.1
TOTAL	3.3↑

Customer ease scores

Customer ease by segment	Percent satisfied with experience or interaction
Life support customers	66
Non-CER owning residential and small business customers	48
CER owning residential and small business customers	44
Commercial and industrial	48

Key achievements

Local Councils

Over the past four years, regular meetings with council General Managers, CEOs and Mayors from each of the 86 local government areas within our footprint have enabled us to discuss potential issues, opportunities for improvement and ways we can better work together to benefit our communities.

This has helped reduce the level of complaints and enquiries we receive from Councils by more than 95% since meetings were initiated, with a current average of three calls per month.

We're collaborating to promote shared understanding and an allied approach to customer and community service delivery.

Helping customers transition away from fossil fuels through electrification

We're supporting key commercial and industrial customers on a least-cost path to decarbonise, offering access to network capacity data, participating in educational webinars, feasibility studies and electrification technology trials, and exploring innovative network tariffs and capacity access.

We're also supporting small to medium business customers with electrification roadmaps, guides and decision tools, including an electrification value calculator.

Electrification can facilitate a cleaner, more efficient and sustainable future.

Strengthening understanding with Level 3 ASPs

We're developing a framework that promotes clear understanding between Essential Energy and Level 3 ASP companies around our network design quality and safety expectations.

Created in consultation with ASPs through a series of focus groups, our new Authorisation and underpinning legal Agreement will define competency and performance measurement for Level 3 design service work.

This aims to drive consistency and quality improvement in contestable design for the benefit of our connecting customers.

Leveraging our network infrastructure to address key telecommunications challenges

'I recognise Essential Energy's strategic business unit for looking into how electricity infrastructure providers can work with mobile telecommunications providers to improve digital connectivity for community benefit.'

Hansard, Justin Clancy, Member for Albury

In the next reporting period

We're undertaking a review of critical customer sites such as water treatment plants, hospitals and communications towers to enable more informed decision making when managing the network and prioritising restoration during natural disasters.



Principle 5: We will support customers & communities facing vulnerable circumstances

Objective: Be trusted and supportive

We're looking beyond traditional definitions of network resilience towards environmental and social dimensions, aiming to build and maintain systems that are not only robust but also socially equitable and responsible.

Target: Flexible response to meet the needs of customers in vulnerable circumstances.

Response during the reporting period: Pro-active support provided to customers in vulnerable circumstances, tailored to their needs.

Maturity assessment

PREVIOUS & CURRENT
(2023-24) (2024-25) ASPIRING TO
(2026-27)



Metrics

Customer Support Policy access

Of 205 customer support applications submitted during the reporting period, customers pursued a total of \$548,423.83 through the assessment process and were deemed eligible for financial support under the policy, with a total amount of \$292,340.92 paid. Additionally, we provided support through waiving network damage debt and recoverable works payments on compassionate grounds.

Key achievements

Improving unplanned outage communications for Life Support customers

We aim to notify Life Support customers impacted by an unplanned outage via SMS to their mobile number within 30 seconds of:

- becoming aware that an unplanned outage is affecting their premises
- estimated power restoration times and any updates being determined
- power supply restoration being confirmed.

Unfortunately, a known SMS operational issue which had minimal impact during single outage and restoration processes impacted customers adversely during a Broken Hill power outage incident in October 2024 that comprised multiple outage and restoration events.

Of 12,700 customers impacted by power loss in Broken Hill, 560 were registered Life Support customers. Every time one of those Life Support customer's supply was lost or restored, or their individual estimated time for restoration status changed, they and all other Life Support customers received an SMS. This created confusion and the number of messages received unnecessarily drained customers' mobile phone batteries.

A scope of remedial works was undertaken and the issue was resolved in early June 2025.

Lessons learned from the issues identified during the Broken Hill incident are driving improvement in SMS communication for all customers.

Hot water pathways for social housing

We're participating in a [Race for 2030 project](#) to address the challenge of upgrading domestic hot water systems in social housing to improve efficiency and flexibility. The project combines a market scan with pilot testing of heat pump hot water units, performance modelling and detailed analysis.

Outcomes will be used to develop guidelines that can assist decision-making for housing providers.

Uniting energy advice and support case study: March 2025

Since October 2021, Essential Energy has partnered with Uniting Financial Counselling to support customers in vulnerable circumstances.

The support program includes energy efficiency and literacy information, free financial advice, assistance with concessions, payment plans and NSW Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) vouchers, better energy deals and referral to other local community support services where required.

Jessica* is an elderly lady on a disability support pension, living in an old and poorly maintained public housing unit in a small regional town with limited services. She has to drive long distances to buy groceries, attend medical appointments and visit family and friends.

Cost of living increases over the last two years – particularly for energy, food and fuel – were stretching her finances, her health was deteriorating and she was feeling increasingly isolated. She tried to stay on top of her bills by selling household items, but couldn't afford to replace her fridge when it broke down.

When her energy bill debt grew out of control, Jessica worried that her power would be disconnected. She stopped talking to her retailer, or taking their calls.

Uniting contacted her electricity retailer's customer support team and arranged for Jessica to access the company's hardship program, apply for EAPA vouchers to reduce her debt by \$500 and move to a cheaper electricity plan that will save her more than \$400 per year.

Uniting also helped Jessica obtain a new fridge through her retailer's appliance replacement program. Appliance and other energy efficiency advice and referrals to other local community programs, including financial counselling, are helping Jessica feel more confident and able to cope.

**Not her real name*

In the next reporting period

We aim to develop capability to provide SMS updates to all customers impacted by an unplanned outage for whom we have mobile phone numbers and mobile phone coverage.

We will focus on building First Nations cultural competence and confidence training, developing a sense of community for First Nations colleagues through our Yarning Circle and aligning with the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy to establish a framework for community participation in energy initiatives.



Appendix 1: Productivity outcomes

Workforce efficiency data – completed tasks per FTE

During FY25, Essential Energy has focused on maintaining activities to minimise network risk. This has resulted in delivery of a capital program that included \$270.9M in regulated capital and \$55.8M in non-contestable capital – an overall increase of \$31.4M compared with FY24. This generated 10.39 activities delivered per month per employee in FY25. While this is a reduction from the FY24 result of 12.62, it is an increase of 13% compared with the start of the previous regulatory period in FY15 of 9.2.

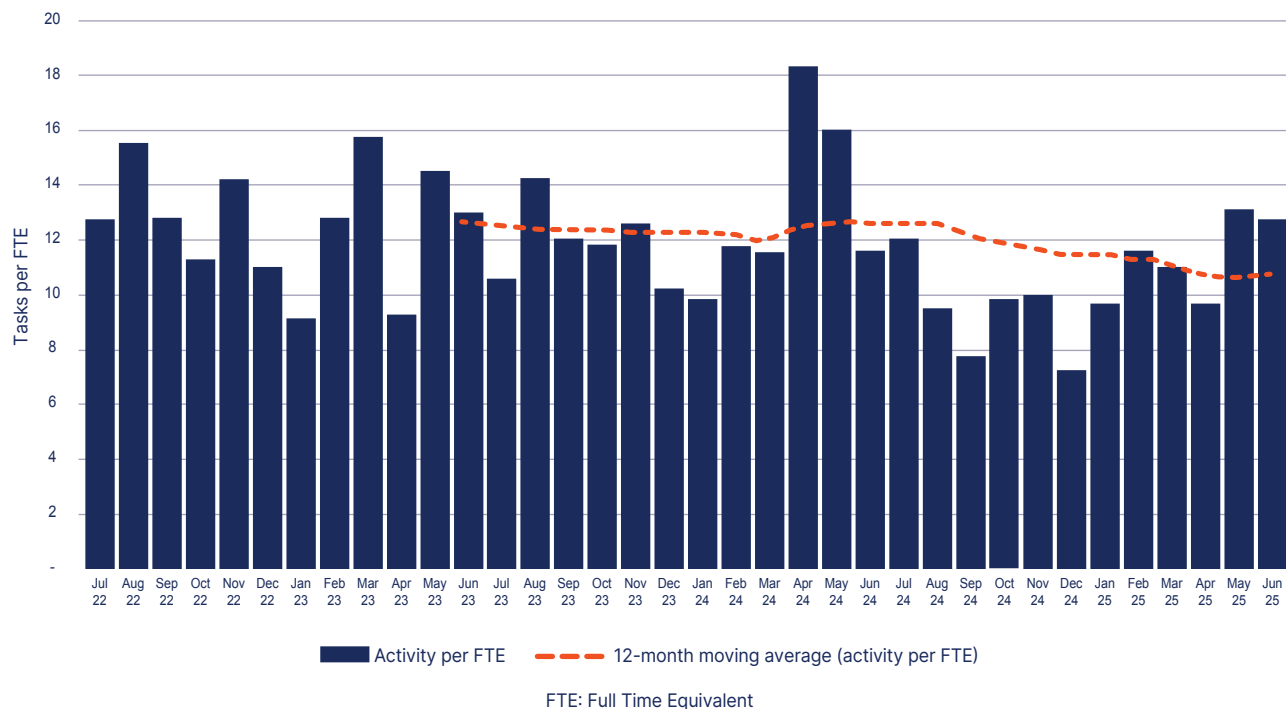
Decrease in delivery is due to a complex industrial environment and response to storm events between November 2024 and May 2025, with a total of 17 Major Event Days being reported – a record for Essential Energy.

During FY25, labour efforts were focused on individual maintenance backlog activities in the order of 10-30 labour hours, whereas capital activities may include several thousand, or even tens of thousands, of labour hours per activity (project).

Significant weather events impacted deliverability in FY25. Rainfall was above average across NSW, with notably high falls during Summer and Autumn seasons (132.7mm and 192.3mm).^{*} Seasonal variations, peaks and troughs in summer holiday periods, also impacted activity completion rates.

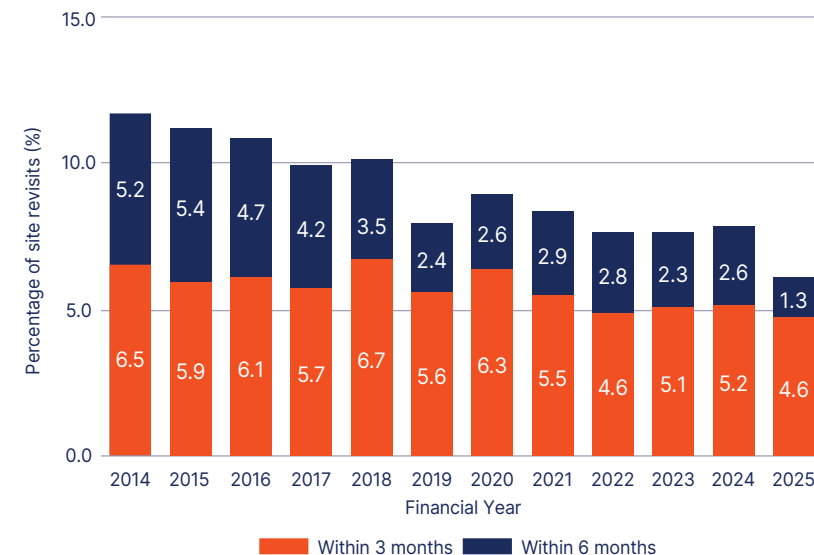
^{*}Source: Bureau of Meteorology

Completed Activities per full time equivalent (FTE) (Monthly)



Operational efficiency

Operational efficiency - return visits to poles





Appendix 2: Fulfilment of commitments made in 2024-25

Principle	Commitment	Outcome
Principle 1: We will put customers & community at the centre of our business & the energy system	We will expand our Voice of Customer surveys to include customer interactions around vegetation management, meter reading and asset inspections. We also plan to measure employee internal service experience across the business and introduce internal Elevate teams to as part of our continuous improvement program.	Inclusion of customer interactions around vegetation management, meter reading and asset inspections did not proceed this financial year due to unforeseen operational complexities. Surveys across New Connections, Private Assets and Public Lighting were introduced instead. We're progressively rolling out Voice of Team internal service area surveys – see <i>Principle 1, Elevating internal customer service</i>.
Principle 2: We will improve energy affordability for customers & communities	In the second phase of the Queue, to be delivered over the next two financial years, we'll digitise and optimise scheduling for network-related tasks and incorporate planning and scoping modules into the application. We'll also work to digitise our Access Permit – the authorisation that must be obtained from Essential Energy prior to working on, or near, our network – and link this to our digital Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Control tool. We estimate this will remove over 50,000 paper forms annually.	Work is progressing over this and next financial year. In this financial year, we implemented the planning and scoping project, which replaced Access Permit digitisation as a higher priority. We plan to implement Access Permit digitisation in the future.
Principle 3: We will provide energy safely, sustainably & reliably	Supported by \$1.5M grant funding through the Federal Government's Community Battery for Household Solar Program, we'll deploy ground-mounted community batteries in Goulburn, Leeton and Maloneys Beach to support greater levels of rooftop solar. Participating customers will be able to store excess solar-generated energy into a local battery that Essential Energy owns and operates. In partnership with Origin Energy, we'll trial a total of 35 pole top batteries in Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, Dubbo, Port Macquarie, and Armidale to better understand how shared storage can improve customer outcomes. We plan to commence transition of vegetation treatment to revised bushfire risk priority zones in 2025 (subject to funding approval from the AER).	Batteries were commissioned in December 2024 – see <i>Principle 3, External reliability, Community battery deployment</i>. Installation is complete – see <i>Principle 3, External reliability, Pole top battery deployment</i>. Transition is complete – see <i>2024-25 Key highlights, Our customers</i>.
Principle 4: We will improve the customer & community experience	We plan to roll out dynamic connection agreements in Ivanhoe and Tibooburra Smart Energy Communities trial locations between June and September 2024.	Our Smart Energy Communities trial has concluded – see <i>2024-25 Key highlights, Our communities: Understanding and planning for future needs</i>.
Principle 5: We will support customers & communities facing vulnerable circumstances	Essential Energy has secured \$1 million in funding under the Federal Government's Telecommunications Disaster Resilience Innovation Program to acquire six portable SAPS that can be rapidly deployed to restore power to telecommunications towers when natural disaster events impact the electricity network. This will support Essential Energy's crews and emergency services teams who rely on radio communications while they work to protect impacted communities. SAPS delivery and enabling work is expected to be completed by June 2025.	Work is progressing – see <i>Principle 3, Internal reliability, Portable community resilience assets</i>.