

Media Release



07 March 2018

Essential Energy helps restore Tongan power

Essential Energy powerline workers are part of an Australian aid effort helping to restore power to Tongan villages after the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Gita last month.

Partnering with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other industry colleagues, 11 Essential Energy powerline workers from Cootamundra, Young, Goulburn, Cooma, Nambucca Heads, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga have been assisting in the Tongan power restoration efforts.

General Manager Network Services, Luke Jenner, said Essential Energy crews were quick to offer their services to help restore a safe and reliable electricity supply to the local villages affected.

“Essential Energy is incredibly proud of the employees who are working to repair the extensive damage caused to the electricity network on Tonga’s mainland,” Luke said.

“In the first week, our team had helped to connect five generators flown in by the RAAF, restoring supply to 1,189 households who have been without power for a fortnight.”

The category four storm and cyclone destroyed almost half of Tonga’s low voltage power poles and powerlines, leaving homes, businesses and hospitals without electricity.

Without outside assistance, it was estimated it could take Tongan Power up to three months to reinstate the electricity network. Power is now expected be restored to Tongatapu island within four weeks.

“In this difficult time for Tonga, these Essential Energy powerline workers have stepped up to get the power back on quickly and safely,” Luke said. “Their efforts, alongside industry colleagues, will help to rebuild these communities devastated by the loss of their essential services.”

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Powerline workers Matt Tozer (Goulburn), Matt Leoflath (Young), Ian Armstrong (Cootamundra) and Darren Basterfield (Goulburn) aboard a Royal Australian Air Force plane headed to Tonga.



Powerline workers Matt Tozer (Goulburn) and Matt Leoflath (Young) restoring electricity supply in Tonga following Cyclone Gita.

Essential Energy is the operator of one of Australia's largest electricity networks spanning 95 per cent of New South Wales' land mass. Owned by the New South Wales Government, Essential Energy also provides water and sewerage services to customers in far western New South Wales.

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Powerline workers Matt Leoflath (Young), Ian Armstrong (Cootamundra), Darren Basterfield (Goulburn), Shawn Eade (Wagga Wagga), Robbie Wilson (Port Macquarie), Matt Tozer (Goulburn), Callum Madden (Wagga Wagga), Craig Sharpe (Cooma), Gary Roughley (Port Macquarie), Matt Bowen (Nambucca) and Damien Jackson (Port Macquarie) are supporting restoration of electricity supply in Tonga following Cyclone Gita.

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