

13 August 2021

Supporting students through lockdowns & exams

To minimise impact on students taking part in trial and actual HSC exams, Essential Energy has today confirmed that it will minimise or postpone planned power outages coinciding with exam times, where it is safe to do so.

With lockdowns impacting several areas within the energy distributor's footprint, the additional measure was introduced to support Year 12 students during this critical juncture of their high school education.

Amalie Smith, Acting General Manager of Customer and Network Services confirmed the organisation's focus, "We understand that this is a critical part of a high school student's life that can have a strong impact on their future. We also know that it can be a stressful time for their entire family."

"With students and families already having to manage their studies and these important exams during lockdowns, we're extending our normal processes to reach out to students and giving them a bit of assistance where we can."

"We're already using our risk-based assessment of planned outages to ensure that only urgent outages that will ensure the network's safety and reliability are going ahead. Though we only expect small numbers of students to be impacted, this extra step is to help reduce any further disruptions to exams where a stay-at-home order is in force," Amalie said.

"Students can view our planned outages page by visiting essentialenergy.com.au/outages. If there's an outage planned in their area when they have a trial HSC exam, we're asking them to give us a few details via our short online form essentialenergy.com.au/hsc. With that information, Essential Energy will review the relevant outage and work with the student directly to minimise disruption. We'll continue this process throughout the HSC exam period as well" Amalie said.

The organisation stressed the importance of ensuring reliable electricity supply and acknowledge that power outages during lockdowns were inconvenient. Essential Energy continues to review planned work on a case-by-case basis to assess the risks for the community, employees, and contractors and electricity reliability.

When planned outages are required, Essential Energy is limiting the length of planned outages and the number of customers they impact as best it can.

"To maintain a safe and reliable power supply, we may need to undertake a small number of outages across the network. If we do not complete essential maintenance work, then the number and duration of unplanned outages increases. It is critical that risks to supply are minimised, particularly to facilities involved in the response to COVID-19," Amalie said.

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FACT FILE:

- Essential Energy builds, operates and maintains one of Australia's largest electricity distribution networks, servicing more than 875,000 customers across regional, rural and remote NSW and parts of southern Queensland
- Our footprint covers 95 per cent of NSW, traversing 737,000 square kilometres of landmass with 183,612 kilometres of powerline, including 163,417 kilometres in designated bushfire zones
- The network has approximately 5.1 customers to each kilometre of powerline, which is almost one-tenth the customer density compared with our counterparts in NSW
- Essential Energy's footprint also includes 1.38 million power poles, equating to 1.6 power poles per customer