

Media Release

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Grants up for grab for community champions

Electricity distributor Essential Energy has this week launched its third annual Community Choices program, which supports local groups across its footprint by offering funds up to \$2,500 for successful candidates.

A total funding pool of \$175,000 is up for grabs, with funding available in 20 zones across the network's footprint incorporating rural, regional and remote New South Wales and parts of southern Queensland. The electricity distributor hopes to support as many as 140 community organisations who give so much to their communities.

Operations Manager Macquarie, Jamie Warren, said "From 12 April, eligible groups such as charities, not-for-profit and community groups like CWAs, community centres, school P&Cs and sporting clubs can nominate to take part in the community-led voting for a share of the \$175,000. Once verified, they can rally their supporters to take part in the public voting online for two weeks from 18 May."

"Essential Energy's people live and work across the communities we serve, and we know the impacts from the last 12 months, including bushfires and COVID-19 restrictions have made it very difficult for charities and community groups across our footprint to raise funds."

"The entire process can be completed online – from community groups and charities nominating to the community voting. It's a great and COVID-safe way to raise funds," Jamie said.

"There are many groups across our footprint that are really in need of this funding – which is why Essential Energy is asking the community to choose the groups they think should receive a boost." Jamie said.

This year, Essential Energy has introduced an additional Small Communities category. Local groups within our footprint who are in towns with populations of less than 20,000 people can nominate for this additional category by simply ticking a box during the nomination process. The Small Communities category provides an additional opportunity for groups whose voting base may be smaller than groups in larger communities to be awarded funding.

The Community Choices program includes \$175,000 in funding across 20 zones in our network area, with funding packages ranging from \$500 to \$2,500 available depending on votes.

Nominees must be able to receive payments by electronic funds transfer (EFT), and provide photos and stories about their organisations and the work they do.

Nominations for Community Choices are open from 12 April until 10 May, and voting will be open from 18 May to 31 May. Visit essentialenergy.com.au/choices to learn more or make a nomination.

FACT FILE:

- Essential Energy builds, operates and maintains one of Australia's largest electricity distribution networks, servicing more than 870,000 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

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