

8 December 2011

Australian Energy Market Commission
PO Box A2449
Sydney South NSW 1235

Dear Sir

Review of Distribution Reliability Outcomes and Standards

The Customer Council of Essential Energy appreciates the opportunity to provide a response to the Australian Energy Market Commission's (AEMC's) issues paper on the Review of Distribution Reliability Outcomes and Standards ('the paper').

The Customer Council is a stakeholder group of Essential Energy that is made up of 5 members. We act as a direct liaison with local communities in Essential Energy's network area and contribute to Essential Energy's policy planning and decision making.

The Customer Council represents Essential Energy's diverse customer base – from people living in rural and remote areas, industrial and commercial customers and low income households to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, consumer groups, people with disabilities and people from non-english speaking backgrounds.

We liaise with a broad range of community groups and customers from different backgrounds throughout New South Wales to ensure Essential Energy delivers services that reflect local needs. Because we represent such a diverse range of customers we would like to assist the AEMC determine the level of reliability that most effectively balances the costs of incremental investment and ongoing maintenance with the benefits of reliability. This review will affect all customers.

At the most recent meeting of the Customer Council, Essential Energy provided an outline of the paper together with their draft response. The Customer Council agrees with Essential Energy that from a customer's perspective, reliability is the main barometer of service provided by distribution networks. Accordingly we would like to support the Essential Energy's proposition that the scope of the paper be expanded to consider customer service standards from a different perspective to that contained in Essential Energy's current licence conditions.

We agree with Essential Energy that customer service standards and reliability are related. The current review provides the AEMC with the opportunity to investigate how increased customer engagement can reduce overall network costs. Increasing communication with customers during, and at the end of, planned and unplanned outages may reduce the necessity for expensive network upgrades and augmentation resulting in a better overall outcome for all New South Wales customers.

The Customer Council would be pleased to discuss this matter further. Should you require further information please feel free to contact Sharon Cadwallader on 02 66815013 or 0419 973 166.

Yours sincerely

SL Cadwallader

Cr Sharon Lesley Cadwallader JP
Councillor Ballina Shire Council