

# Media release

17 November 2019



## Essential Energy powers on

More than 300 personnel on the ground have worked over the weekend to replace power poles destroyed by the fires still burning across the north coast. The total number of power poles replaced is 415, 75% of the 565 identified as destroyed in last week's bushfires.

Once given the all-clear by the RFS, and conditions assessed as safe, Essential Energy crews worked through difficult conditions including thick smoke, challenging driving conditions, steep terrain, and hazardous trees to reach impacted areas.

"These challenges are slowing restoration to many areas of our network, as access is still too unsafe for our teams with many areas still off limits due to active fires. At 6pm today Sunday 17 November, we have around 1,133 customers off in fire affected areas," said Brendon Neyland, Essential Energy's Acting GM Network and Customer Services.

Working in locations from Ewingsdale in the north to Taree in the south, the teams have completed repairs to a significant part of the network.

"Our focus is on steady, safe work and we've managed to get a lot of power restored this weekend, with our team remaining injury-free. The safety of our people on our worksites and the surrounding homes and businesses remains our main priority," he said.

The efforts of the teams on the ground have been supported by Essential Energy's in-house Fleet Management team. A critical part of the response, this allows the crews to perform significant maintenance work on the ground resulting in a quicker response as 140 Essential Energy trucks and light vehicles are repaired and prepared overnight ready for the next day's operations.

Operations have also progressed with the conditions improving in some areas. "With RFS clearance we've put our drones up in action to survey the work required, using helicopters to provide air assessment and we also have excavators in operation to assist teams to access challenging sites and replace poles safely" said Mr Neyland.

"Our team is grateful for the community's support as we work through all the areas that need repairs," he finished.

Essential Energy's website [www.essentialenergy.com.au](http://www.essentialenergy.com.au) will have outages and estimated time to restore, where crews have been able to access the network to provide an estimation, and the Essential Energy Facebook page is also providing further updates.

Essential Energy reminds people to stay more than 8 metres away from fallen powerlines and report them on 13 20 80.

### FACT FILE:

- Essential Energy builds, operates and maintains one of Australia's largest electricity distribution networks, servicing 855,000 customers across regional, rural and remote NSW.
- Our footprint covers 95 percent of NSW, traversing 737,000 square kilometres of landmass with 183,612 km of powerline, 163,417 of those in designated bushfire zones.
- The network services more than 855,000 customers with approximately 4.6 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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