Media Release

Meter reading resumes

Essential Energy today announced that where safe to do so, meter reading will resume for residential and small business customers, after initially pausing meter reading as part of a range of measures to review and manage operations safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The electricity distributor, whose network spans 95 per cent of NSW and parts of Southern Queensland, advised that the return of meter reading services is part of its commitment to supporting customers throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

"Re-starting some meter reading will help customers by providing accurate bills through this period," said Luke Jenner, General Manager Customer and Network Services.

"We have developed specific protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic for meter reading which will ensure the safety of our communities and our teams.

"Together with our meter reading service provider we have completed a comprehensive risk assessment and developed appropriate protocols including critical controls as needed for accessing a customer's property. Where it is safe to do so, and complies with social distancing requirements, our meter readers will obtain meter readings," Mr Jenner said.

Readings will only be taken when:

1. The meter is not located inside a premise, and safe, unhindered access to the meter is available.
2. The meter reading can be taken without contact with residents, and the Meter Reader can maintain a social distance of at least 1.5m at all times.
3. The property is not an aged care facility, hospital, childcare centre or similar location which may house vulnerable customers.

"Customers are reminded to provide clear, safe and unhindered access to meters so that meter reading can occur, including securely restraining dogs and ensuring dogs are unable to access the metering point; as well as respecting social distancing requirements from meter reading employees.

Where a reading is unable to be safely taken, the electricity used will be estimated and provided to the customer's retailer. Alternatively, customers can contact their retailer to arrange a self-read.

Essential Energy is reminding customers that if they do access their meter to take their own meter reading, it is important to be aware of the potential for hazards that can be associated with electricity meters and their locations.

"While electricity meters, their location and the meter box are designed to be very safe, they can deteriorate over time.

"Before accessing look for any potential damage from water or animals, exposed wires or burnt or melted parts. Smell also can be an indicator that something is not right," said Mr Jenner.

"If you have concerns then do not touch the meter or meter box and contact Essential Energy on 13 20 80."

A detailed guide to meter reading is available at www.essentialenergy.com.au/selfread

Customers experiencing financial stress should contact their retailer in the first instance, and then Essential Energy on 13 23 91 to understand if any assistance is available.

For further information and updates on Essential Energy's response to COVID-19, please visit https://www.essentialenergy.com.au/about-us/covid-19-updates

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.**
- **Essential Energy is proud to be the 2019 winner of the Australian Apprentices – Employer Award.**

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