



22nd September 2008

Chris Pattas
General Manager
Network Regulation South Branch
Australian Energy Regulator
GPO Box 520
Melbourne VIC 3001

Dear Mr Pattas,

Re: Inclusion of Public Lighting in NSW Annual Information Reporting Requirements for DNSPs

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Annual Information Reporting Requirements of DNSPs.

The Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (SSROC) established and oversees the Street Lighting Improvement (SLI) Program to implement the recommendations of an extensive review of street lighting undertaken by its members some years ago. There are 34 Councils participating in the SLI Program ranging from southern Sydney through to the Central Coast and Hunter. Collectively the 226,000+ street lights in the participating Councils' jurisdictions constitute over 94% of EnergyAustralia's street lights and over 40% of street lights in NSW.

SSROC commends the AER for moves to set out a nationally consistent framework for annual information reporting by DNSPs. Councils believe it essential that robust reporting on public lighting be part of this framework.

I am writing to request that in establishing the reporting framework, the AER is mindful of:

1. the current reporting deficiencies for NSW DNSPs with respect to public lighting; and
2. important NSW-specific requirements.

1. Current Reporting Deficiencies for NSW DNSPs on Public Lighting

The NSW Dept of Water and Energy (under provisions of the *Electricity Supply Act 1995*) requires that each electricity network operator produce an Annual Electricity Network Performance Report covering major issues concerning the operation of their network. To date, the reports by the three DNSPs have been produced using an outline issued by the Department¹.

¹ <http://www.deus.nsw.gov.au/energy/Electricity/Electricity%20Network%20Performance%20Report.asp>

The initial guidelines for reporting were established by the 2002 Standing Committee on national Regulatory Reporting Requirements (SCONRRR)². The SCONRRR reporting approach is outlined in the National Regulatory Reporting for Electricity Distribution and Retailing Businesses - Utilities Regulators Forum Discussion Paper March 2002³.

At present, public lighting customers are explicitly excluded from the definition of distribution customers⁴ and interruptions to unmetered public lighting supplies are excluded from reliability reporting⁵.

As per Appendix A – Information Guidelines Reporting Template, Worksheet 7.1, Item 2, the AER is proposing to continue this exclusion from reliability reporting (eg “Unmetered Street Lighting supplies are excluded”)

Further, in Table 9: Streetlight Repair, the AER has proposed that reporting on street lighting repairs be optional. Reporting on street lighting faults and performance against reasonable benchmarks is essential. As noted in the AER’s Final Decision Service Target Performance Incentive Arrangements for the ACT and NSW 2009 - Appendix C: Current Mandated GSL Indicators, the ‘Time to Repair Streetlights’ is mandated in NSW under the NSW Public Lighting Code.

Reporting exclusions or voluntary reporting aspects specifically for public lighting are both inappropriate and counter-productive. Public lighting customers are real and important customers of the DNSPs. Indeed, lighting is a vital public service and lighting outages have important safety and security implications for the community. The safety and security risks are even more acute in the case of persistent public lighting outages caused by network supply faults.

Based on the principle that “if you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it”, SSROC believes that it would be appropriate for public lighting outages and repair times to be measured and reported on publicly in the Annual Information Reports required by the AER. Without such data, it is not possible for government or public lighting customers to readily assess network operator performance and identify problems.

The current gaps and lack of clear reporting requirements can only be seen as an important contributor to the current difficulties with public lighting in NSW.

2. Important NSW-specific requirements

Appendix A – Information Guidelines Reporting Template, Worksheet 7.1, Table 9: Streetlight repair appears to be based on the Victorian Public Lighting Code. SSROC notes that the NSW Public Lighting Code differs in material respects including:

- A broader definition of parties who are able to report faults (and who are eligible for GSL payments);
- A different performance standard for average repair times; and
- A different number of days by which a Guaranteed Service Level penalty becomes payable.

2

<http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/public/Energy/Regulation+and+Compliance/Performance+Reports/National+Comparative+Performance+Data+-+Electricity/Energy+Distribution+Businesses+-+National+Comparative+Performance+Data+-+Electricity.htm>

<http://www.accc.gov.au/content/item.phtml?itemId=332190&nodeId=dc4aa2ded45414f0492929936649b125&fn=National%20regulatory%20reporting%20for%20electricity%20distribution%20and%20retailing%20businesses.pdf>

⁴ *Ibid* - Business Description p8

⁵ *Ibid* – Reliability of Supply p6

These differences suggest that amendments to Table 9 are required for NSW DNSPs.

SSROC welcomes further discussion with the AER about any of these items.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DLewis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Lewis
General Manager
Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

Cc: *SLI Program Councils*

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