



Summary of Meeting: Telecommunications – Energy Pre-Season Preparation

Friday, 30 October, 2020.

This was the first meeting of the Telecommunications – Energy Working Group, which was formally established by Communications Alliance and Energy Networks Australia, and their member companies, following the agreement of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two associations.

The pre-season preparation meeting follows a number of meetings by a similar group of telecommunications and energy providers held during the winter months of 2020. The establishment of this earlier group was the result of discussions that were initiated after the Ministerial Roundtable convened by The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon. Paul Fletcher, in January 2020.

The meeting was characterised by constructive discussion and evidence of a shared desire to build on the stronger engagement already taking place between the two sectors.

Attendance

The meeting was attended by:

- Energy Networks Australia (ENA) and representatives of its members, including Ausgrid, AusNet Services, Electranet, Energy Qld, Essential Energy, SA Power Networks, Powercor UE and Tas Networks;
- Communications Alliance (CA) and representatives of its members, including MNF Group, nbn, Optus, Telstra and TPG Telecom; and
- The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (attending as observers).

Preparations for the 2020-21 Disaster Season

Representatives of the energy and telecommunications companies provided briefings on their pre-season preparations, including their summer preparedness plans, updating of contact information, progress on sharing of infrastructure/asset information, scenario-testing, use of social media, bushfire-specific maintenance and vegetation clearing, changes/upgrades to power back-up arrangements, potential grants for bushfire-related projects under the Federal Government's \$37.1m STAND initiative, and COVID-safe practices and processes.

The discussion also focused on procedures for real-time notifications between energy providers and telecommunications providers relating to the remaining duration of

back-up power supplies at specific infrastructure sites, compared to the forecast timeline for restoration of mains power supplies at those sites.

The meeting also received an update on the latest versions of contact lists for both sectors and the best ways in which to access these.

During the Working Group discussion, action items were agreed as follows:

Action item 1.1: CA and ENA to liaise on the recommendations of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disasters and any public commentary (noting that the recommendations had not been made public by the time the Working Group meeting commenced).

Action item 1.2: CA and ENA to liaise re potential for synergies/reciprocal arrangements for vegetation clearing.

Action item 1.3: CA and carrier members to discuss data sharing positions and options.

Specific areas for cooperation/assistance requests

Tristan Kathage, DITRDC, noted that the Department had undertaken market research (as part of the STAND program) which focuses on public messaging relating to bushfire threats. He agreed to circulate the findings of that research to the group.

Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed to meet again in April 2021, noting that additional meetings may be scheduled to take place during the interim period if circumstances warrant.