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ENERGY INDUSTRY MANAGING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

With Australia facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 virus, the energy industry has put in place contingency plans to maintain the security of supply to the community.

The Australian Energy Council and Energy Networks Australia confirmed their members have been working to maintain the safety of their people, the security of the energy system and to support customers who are experiencing difficult circumstances.

Australian Energy Council Chief Executive Sarah McNamara and Energy Networks Australia CEO Andrew Dillon said the immediate focus was on ensuring the wellbeing of employees and customers with the implementation of pandemic and contingency plans.

“Safety is always our top priority. Energy companies have undertaken a range of measures in response to this pandemic to ensure its workforce, assets and energy supply are protected,” Ms McNamara said.

“These plans are to ensure the lights stay on and the gas keeps flowing,” Mr Dillon said.

Ms McNamara said that generators and retailers recognised the rapidly evolving nature of the pandemic and would continue to review and assess what further steps may be required as the situation unfolds.

Mr Dillon said that Energy Network Australia was in regular contact with the Commonwealth Energy Minister, Angus Taylor, and regulators to ensure coordination and knowledge sharing.

Members were working closely with the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), as well as other relevant regulators and government.

“There continues to be industry-wide consultation on pandemic preparations and necessary responses with AEMO in regular discussions with generators, network and transmission companies and gas companies,” Ms McNamara said.

“Every part of the energy supply chain will face challenges, which is why we are ensuring we keep communicating between businesses, with government and importantly with customers,” Mr Dillon said.

“If you are under isolation, have been exposed or tested positive for COVID-19 and require a network crew to attend your property, please contact your network provider so appropriate steps can be taken.

“We all have a role to play in limiting infection and protecting the general public and essential personnel.”

Pandemic response measures underway include:

- ensuring essential supplies, including the stockpiling of fuel supplies;
- reviewing any scheduled plant or network outages for maintenance and assessing the need and potential for rescheduling;
- further restricting access to control rooms and limiting access to areas required by critical staff;
- splitting of teams and establishment of multiple, separate teams;
- rostering changes;
- non-contact and social distancing for shift changes;
- implementing new working arrangements, including having staff work remotely when feasible;
- monitoring of essential service providers and;
- maintenance of personal protective equipment stocks.

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About the Australian Energy Council

The Council represents 23 major electricity and downstream natural gas businesses operating in competitive wholesale and retail energy markets. These businesses collectively generate the overwhelming majority of electricity in Australia and sell gas and electricity to over 10 million homes and businesses.

About Energy Networks Australia

Energy Networks Australia is the national industry body representing Australia's electricity transmission and distribution and gas distribution networks. Our members provide more than 16 million electricity and gas connections to almost every home and business across Australia.