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More work required to ensure energy system security

Energy Networks Association (ENA) CEO, John Bradley, said the findings of a joint study released today show that the high penetration of renewable energy in Australia is stretching our energy system's resilience.

The study by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and ElectraNet, operator of South Australia's transmission network, sought to identify the limits to the secure operation of the South Australian power system.

"This study places Australia at the frontier of managing large scale system security issues," Mr Bradley said.

"We are seeing an increasing fleet of intermittent, renewable generators, lower levels of conventional generation, and a load profile on distribution networks that is becoming less predictable due to solar panels.

"The study's findings show there is still a lot of analysis required to manage the compound effect of these seismic changes.

"They highlight the importance of a considered and efficient transition to a smarter, more resilient grid."

Mr Bradley said that AEMO and ElectraNet are responding to the South Australian system security issues with an appropriate mix of short term measures and review of long term options.

"The findings of the South Australian study will be relevant to other jurisdictions and to areas that are 'fringe of the grid'," Mr Bradley said.

"We need to better use the new 'tools' of the smart grid to bolster system security.

"Transmission network-connected battery storage and the network of power electronics and smart inverters at consumers' premises could be used to support power supply reliability."

Solutions to support energy system security are currently being explored by the ENA as part of its 18-month Electricity Network Transformation Roadmap project conducted jointly with CSIRO. The project is due to report in late 2016.

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The Energy Networks Association is the peak national body representing Australia's electricity transmission and distribution networks and gas distribution networks on economic, technical, environmental and safety regulation, and national energy policy issues. ENA members provide energy to virtually every household and business in Australia.