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**Energy security vital for Australian jobs and families**

The Energy Networks Association (ENA) welcomes the commitment of the COAG Energy Council to an independent assessment of energy security in Australia.

ENA Chief Executive John Bradley said an independent and evidence based review may assist in reducing the political conflict that is itself undermining the stability and affordability of energy decarbonisation.

“If this independent review can be a political circuit-breaker and provide robust evidence, then it’s good news for Australian energy customers,” Mr Bradley said.

“However, we don’t need to wait for a review to know that new State and Federal initiatives should be assessed for their impact on the NEM, including an energy security assessment.

“Energy security and a reliable power supply are vital to Australian jobs and quality of life – they should always have been at the centre of nationally integrated policies agreed by governments.

“Australian energy networks are committed to enabling a clean energy transition, while protecting the reliable, high quality supply that customers value.”

Mr Bradley said the independent review should recognise the importance of stronger interconnectors to energy security and the role of Australia’s gas infrastructure, which secures a significant portion of Australia’s domestic energy consumption.

“As we introduce cleaner, more intermittent generation sources, Australia’s reliable energy supply will depend on both the timely development of interconnectors and the gas networks serving over 4 million Australian customers,” Mr Bradley said.

“Australia’s electricity grid cannot avoid exposure to weather events or operational risks, but governments can certainly take the political risk out of the system and avoid nationally inconsistent renewable energy targets.

“Energy Ministers must deliver a national carbon policy for a national energy market.

“Customers will save significantly if we focus on abatement, rather than particular technologies beyond the current 2020 RET target.

“Outcome-focussed policy measures allow markets to work and that can reduce customer bills by over \$216 per year with economic benefits of up to \$1.5 billion.

“If we focus on abatement, each technology finds its efficient role and the power system is in a stronger position to support more renewable energy, while avoiding reliability and security risks for customers,” Mr Bradley said.

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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.