

23 February 2018

Energy networks deploy emergency team to restore Tonga's power

Australian energy networks have sent a team of experts to help restore Tonga's devastated electricity network after last week's Tropical Cyclone Gita.

Energy Networks Australia CEO, Andrew Dillon, said a team of experts from across the nation's networks has partnered with the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to repair the extensive damage across Tonga's mainland.

"Cyclone Gita has devastated the Tongan power infrastructure, leaving homes, businesses and critical service providers such as Vaiola hospital and the capital's water supply without electricity," he said.

"We understand that around half of the low voltage power poles are damaged and powerlines down.

"Without external assistance it could take months to reinstate the network across the country."

Mr Dillon said the energy networks had swiftly responded to support the Australian Government humanitarian response.

"Communities worldwide depend on safe and reliable power supply to function.

"When we learned about the scale of damage in Tonga, we recognised an opportunity for us to contribute," he said.

"Working with the Australian Government, we quickly coordinated a team to work alongside Tongan crews to restore electricity on the ground."

The consortium of energy networks contributing to the restoration effort includes Essential Energy, (NSW); Evoenergy (ACT); TransGrid (NSW); and NJ Constructions with additional offers of assistance from SA Power Networks, Jemena, and Endeavour Energy.

Essential Energy CEO, John Cleland said:

"Essential Energy is incredibly proud of our crews who were quick to offer a helping hand and partner with industry colleagues to assist in the Tongan power restoration efforts following the devastation of Tropical Cyclone Gita."

Evoenergy Chief Executive Officer, Michael Costello said:

"Tonga's electricity network suffered extensive damage from Tropical Cycle Gita. To support repair efforts two Evoenergy Lineworkers are being deployed to Tonga and we are very proud to be a part of the Australian response effort to restore the island's electricity infrastructure."

NJ Construction President, Dion Jones said:

"NJ Construction is pleased to respond to a call for assistance from ElectraNet (SA), by providing specialist lineworkers for the repair of Tonga's electrical infrastructure. I am immensely proud of my team's flexibility and willingness to assist the Tongan community and our ability to rapidly deploy staff and equipment.

TransGrid Chief Executive Officer, Paul Italiano said:

“Around 35% of Tonga’s high voltage electricity transmission network was damaged during Tropical Cyclone Gita and we feel it’s important to help our neighbours in times of need. We are proud to be able to deploy trained staff to assist in rebuilding the nation’s electricity network and helping the country recover.”

The emergency response teams are likely to spend several weeks in Tonga.

Mr Dillon said he was grateful to the Australian networks for their timely response to the call for assistance.

“This is what our network businesses do best: work together to get the power up and running and keep the lights on for our communities.

“We are glad to be able to help our neighbours with our expertise.”

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Energy Networks Australia represents Australia’s electricity transmission and distribution networks and gas distribution networks. Our members provide energy to virtually every household and business in Australia.