

## **Proposed written questions for witnesses in lieu of appearing at a hearing for the Inquiry into the electricity outages Affecting Far West NSW in October 2024**

### **NSW State Emergency Service**

#### **QUESTION**

##### **1. What is the role of the SES during electricity emergencies?**

- a) Could you please outline what actions or support the SES provided in the outlying towns from Broken Hill, including Tibooburra, Wilcannia, White Cliffs and Menindee?

#### **ANSWER**

In NSW under the State Emergency Management Plan combat agencies lead the response operations. Supporting Agencies, in this case such as the NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) perform key roles that allow the Combat Agency to manage its core role of dealing with the hazard.

##### **Local and Regional Emergency Operation Centres**

NSW SES was represented at local and regional levels, with a dedicated liaison officer positioned at the centres and committees that were led by the designated combat agency for this event.

During the electricity outages affecting Far West NSW in October 2024, NSW SES provided support to Broken Hill, Tibooburra, Wilcannia, White Cliffs and Menindee and outlying towns as detailed below:

##### **Local Unit Support**

- NSW SES Broken Hill Unit supplied two portable generators to NSW Ambulance Broken Hill to power radio chargers, the radio tower and fridge.
- NSW SES Broken Hill Unit was activated to “cellar pump out” tasks due to lack of power to existing pumps.
- NSW SES Broken Hill Unit provided logistical support to NSW Reconstruction Authority (NSWRA) including:
  - The delivery and storage of 30 pallets of food hampers and water.
  - Daily delivery of two pallets of food hampers and water to the Salvation Army, Broken Hill.
  - Four NSW SES members with general purpose vehicles (GPV), general purpose trucks (GPT) and forklift capability supported distribution of hampers and water to the community.
- NSW SES members transported food hampers across the region including:
  - Two pallets transported from Wilcannia to White Cliffs.
  - Two pallets transported from Broken Hill to Wilcannia.
  - One pallet transported from Broken Hill to Menindee.

- NSW SES Broken Hill Unit members completed several welfare visits to neighbouring units, including Menindee and Tibooburra, until communication was established via Telco Cell on Wheels (CoWs).
- NSW SES Menindee and Wilcannia Units provided community access to portable generators for hot water and to charge their devices.

#### **NSW SES Zone and State Level Support**

- NSW SES Mid-West Units deployed seven portable generators to Broken Hill to assist affected communities.
- A portable radio cache was provided to NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- The NSW SES Mobile Incident Command Centre (MICC) was deployed to Broken Hill from 23 October - 8 November 2024. It operated fully independently from the strained power and phone network and served as a business-as-usual office for Western Zone staff while power/internet supply was unstable.
- The MICC was also available for NSWRA personnel during this period.
- A Forward Command Vehicle was deployed to Broken Hill and available for regional deployment.
- NSW SES State Operations Centre established a dedicated Public Safety Network radio channel for communications with units in Far West NSW via, Vehicle as a Node where other communication sources such as cellular networks were affected by the outage.
- Total hampers/water delivered: 25,650 kilograms.
- Total member involvement: 64 volunteers.

#### ***b) How was the SES formally directed by the lead combat agency to undertake response and support activities?***

The NSW SES was directed through the local emergency operations committee (LEOC) and regional emergency operations committee (REOC) where dedicated NSW SES Liaison Officers were based.

#### ***c) Was the SES part of either the Local or Regional Emergency Management Committees? If so, what role did the SES play in the Committee(s)?***

NSW SES had dedicated NSW SES Liaison Officers based within the LEOC and REOC and were tasked by the lead agency through the LEOC and REOC. The NSW SES carried out the following tasks:

- a. Local emergency power supply in the form of generators.
- b. Comfort and wellbeing support for geographically isolated communities, with the provision of phone power and hot water.
- c. Pumping of cellars.
- d. Delivery of essentials including food hampers and water.
- e. Provision of communication assets and support services for emergency services and recovery agencies.

## **QUESTION**

**2. *We heard from people in Tibooburra during our hearings that the SES provided generators that were being used in Tibooburra.***

***a) How many generators does SES have that can be used in Tibooburra?***

## **ANSWER**

Tibooburra Unit has five portable generators assigned to the Unit. The SES has many generators across the state that could be deployed to any area requiring assistance.

***b) How did SES coordinate the use of these generators?***

The NSW SES Tibooburra Unit locally coordinated the provision of generators; three generators were provided to the community and two were used at the Unit Headquarters to maintain functionality operations. Due to limited communications, community members directly engaged with NSW SES volunteers to advise their need for assistance.