

7 MAY 2010

Mr Ninos Khoshaba MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Public Works  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Khoshaba

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Public Work's Committee's inquiry into the effects of graffiti on public infrastructure.

Integral Energy's network spans 24,500 square kilometres across Greater Western Sydney, the Illawarra, the Blue Mountains and the Southern Highlands servicing more than 2.1 million people. Our network comprises of approximately 28,400 transmission, zone and distribution substations and 312,650 power poles bound together by 33,000 kilometres of underground and overhead cable. Nineteen field support centres are strategically located throughout the network to provide network design, construction and maintenance services to ensure our customers continue to receive a safe and reliable electricity supply.

While major network assets are protected from graffiti by measures such as fences, CCTV, lighting, security patrols and routine maintenance, much of our network is spread across a large area where it is not possible to efficiently use preventative measures to deter graffiti.

Integral Energy recognises that addressing graffiti vandalism is a high priority for the community and is expending significant resources on graffiti removal across our network. This level of expenditure continues to grow as the incidence of graffiti vandalism on our assets has also increased over the past decade.

To discourage graffiti and remove the recognition vandals are looking for, Integral Energy has a target to remove graffiti from our assets within five days of it being reported by customers, or 48 hours if the graffiti is offensive in nature. We have also trialled with mixed success graffiti resistant materials and protective coatings in areas that are repeatedly vandalised so graffiti can be easily removed from our assets.

In addition to these preventative measures, Integral Energy is looking at new ways to manage graffiti in the longer term. The most significant of these is our involvement in a number of coordinated projects within our franchise to tackle graffiti vandalism in specific locations. These are led by the respective local council which include other stakeholders such as the NSW Police, Department of Housing and other utilities. In one of the more innovative prevention projects undertaken with Blacktown City Council called the Electric Art Project, Integral Energy donated padmount substation kiosks for painting by local artists to discourage graffiti vandals in areas regularly targeted in the Blacktown CBD.

Going further for you is what we do

Integral Energy is aware of a joint prevention program co-ordinated by the Warner Group. Their Graffiti Education Awareness Program will be rolled out into primary and secondary schools throughout Macquarie Fields in August this year, with the aim of preventing graffiti and vandalism in the area. This program is funded by the Department of Human Services and Housing NSW, and supported by Campbelltown City Council and the Department of Education and Training. We are encouraged by the efficiencies achieved by this program over time which saw a decrease in the incidence of new graffiti vandalism from the second year of the program.

Integral Energy welcomes the establishment of the Anti-Graffiti Action Team led by the Department of Justice and Attorney General and supports the development of a comprehensive strategy to address graffiti vandalism in a more comprehensive and coordinated manner.

There may be potential for a more efficient and effective collaborative approach to manage graffiti prevention and removal through a scheme funded by asset and property owners and administered by local government. Integral Energy would encourage the consideration of the following factors in developing such a scheme.

#### Safety

Electricity can kill and even non-fatal shocks can cause severe and permanent injury. Given this inherent danger, Integral Energy is committed to the highest standard of electrical safety and requires those working on or in close proximity to our network to understand and assess these risks and take appropriate preventative measures to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Our employees and contractors engaged in the removal of graffiti are trained to understand and apply minimum safety clearances when working near our network and be aware of the dangers of using certain techniques, particularly the use of aerosol cans to paint out graffiti near vented electrical assets or painting over locks that could prevent or delay access to an asset during an emergency situation. Any coordinated strategy for the removal of graffiti would need to include similar training in electrical safety and the proper techniques to be used on specific electricity network assets.

#### Efficient cost

Integral Energy will continue to fund the removal of graffiti vandalism from its assets and support other worthwhile and targeted prevention initiatives in line with our policies and the reasonable expectations of stakeholders and the community. We are however mindful that the cost of managing the growing incidence of graffiti vandalism is ultimately borne by our network customers through their electricity prices. Our current resources are therefore targeted at the areas of greatest need to efficiently manage this expenditure.

In adopting a collaborative approach, Integral Energy would not support making financial contributions to a scheme above what is required to reasonably prevent or manage the impact of graffiti on our assets. This would build cross subsidies into electricity prices and remove incentives for other utilities and property owners to prevent and remove graffiti on their own assets in a least cost manner.

#### Monitoring and reporting

Effective graffiti management requires measurement and monitoring to measure the success of specific strategies. Our current arrangements require contractors to keep auditable and verifiable records to enable Integral Energy to track the number of assets refurbished and measure the value of our expenditure.

If a centralised approach were to be considered, it would require a well managed and transparent approach with suitable monitoring and reporting to ensure that efficiencies from pooling resources were achieved and contributors were receiving value for money.

I trust the above will assist the Committee in its deliberation into the effects of graffiti on public infrastructure. Should you require further information on this matter from Integral Energy, please contact Mr Steven Baker, Manager Transmission North on (02) 9853 7101.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rod Howard', with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rod Howard

**Acting Chief Executive Officer**