

**Submission
No 26**

THE ELECTRICITY OUTAGES AFFECTING FAR WEST NSW IN OCTOBER 2024

Organisation: Clubs NSW
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THE ELECTRICITY OUTAGES AFFECTING FAR WEST NSW IN OCTOBER 2024 SUBMISSION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ClubsNSW welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Planning regarding the electricity outages that impacted Far West NSW in October 2024.

Clubs are at the heart of regional communities, not just as venues for social connection but as essential service providers in times of crisis. When natural disasters or infrastructure failures occur, clubs become lifelines – offering shelter, food, clean water, electricity, and internet access. The prolonged outages in October 2024, caused by the collapse of transmission towers, left thousands of residents in towns including Broken Hill, Menindee, Tibooburra, White Cliffs, and Wilcannia without access to basic services for over a week.

During this time, clubs in Broken Hill and Wilcannia in particular played a critical role in providing essential support when government agencies and emergency services were unable to respond effectively. Clubs with backup power became essential hubs where residents could escape extreme heat, refrigerate medication, charge mobility devices, and maintain communication with their loved ones. ClubsNSW, along with other clubs and industry suppliers, played a vital role in coordinating and delivering urgent supplies to affected areas. This included securing and transporting emergency diesel generators and fuel for the Broken Hill Musicians Club and Wilcannia Golf Club so that they could continue operating and providing essential services to their communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Clubs as Community Sanctuaries During Crisis

The October 2024 outages left towns without access to essential services, placing immense pressure on residents. The immediate and ongoing needs of the affected communities – particularly vulnerable residents, including the elderly and those with medical conditions - meant that clubs played a pivotal role in supporting their community.

Several clubs, including the Broken Hill Musicians Club and Wilcannia Golf Club, relied on emergency diesel generators to continue operations. These venues quickly became the epicentre of community support, providing a safe and familiar space for locals to seek refuge. Many residents arrived at club doors seeking relief from extreme heat, as air conditioning and refrigeration at home had failed. Others needed access to power to charge essential medical devices, such as CPAP machines and mobility scooters, or to refrigerate insulin and other life-saving medications.

For more than a week, there was uncertainty in the community about when reliable power would be restored. During this time, clubs provided more than just electricity and internet access - they became key support networks. They offered free meals, helped coordinate donations of bottled water and essential goods, and facilitated emergency communications when mobile networks and internet services were compromised.

The role of clubs in crisis response extends beyond their capacity to serve as emergency shelters. Club managers and staff worked tirelessly to maintain operations under extreme conditions, ensuring power supply remained stable and securing additional fuel for generators. Without their intervention, many residents would have struggled to access the most basic necessities for survival.

However, despite this, clubs are not formally recognised as emergency response centres, meaning they do not receive the same level of support or financial assistance as other organisations. Without reimbursement for the significant costs incurred - such as generator



fuel, additional staffing, and food provisions - clubs are left to absorb the financial burden of providing essential community relief.

ClubsNSW recommends that:

- Clubs that serve as crisis support centres be formally recognised in emergency response planning and eligible for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred during disasters.
- The NSW Government provides funding for regional clubs to install and develop necessary infrastructure, such as backup power generators, and satellite internet connectivity, to better equip them for future emergencies.
- A clear protocol be established to ensure local clubs receive timely information and guidance from emergency response agencies during crises.

2. The Need for Reliable Electricity and Internet in Regional Communities

The prolonged outages in Far West NSW demonstrated just how vulnerable regional communities are when essential infrastructure fails. Electricity and internet connectivity are not luxuries - they are fundamental to survival, economic stability, and community well-being. The lack of investment in regional energy infrastructure has left these communities exposed.

For clubs, unreliable electricity and internet access present significant operational challenges, particularly given the strict legislative and regulatory requirements they must meet. Many clubs rely on stable connectivity to:

- Refrigerate food and meet food hygiene standards.
- Maintain self-exclusion registers and ensure compliance with responsible gambling laws.
- Process financial transactions, including EFTPOS payments and gaming machine operations.
- Operate security and surveillance systems.
- Meet reporting obligations under state and federal regulations.

When power and internet services are disrupted, clubs face compliance risks, operational disruptions, and increased financial strain. Many clubs in regional areas already operate on tight margins, and the additional costs associated with prolonged outages - including lost revenue, increased staffing expenses, and post-outage recovery efforts - place them at serious risk of closure. If these challenges persist, some clubs will not survive, leaving communities without social hubs, local employment opportunities, and economic support.

ClubsNSW urges investment in the following areas to strengthen regional infrastructure:

- **Resilient Power Networks** – Strengthening regional energy infrastructure to prevent extended blackouts and ensuring clubs have access to affordable backup power solutions.
- **Improved Internet Connectivity** – Expanding regional broadband and mobile coverage to ensure clubs and their communities can remain connected.
- **Emergency Preparedness Funding** – Providing financial support for clubs to develop and maintain crisis response capabilities, including standby generators and emergency communication systems.

By prioritising these investments, regional communities will be better equipped to withstand future challenges, ensuring they remain connected, secure, and economically stable.

CONCLUSION

The October 2024 electricity outages exposed major weaknesses in regional infrastructure but also reinforced the critical role that local clubs play in disaster response.

ClubsNSW calls on the Committee to:



- Recognise clubs as essential emergency response hubs in regional communities.
- Advocate for improved electricity and internet infrastructure to prevent future outages of this scale.
- Support funding initiatives that strengthen clubs' capacity to provide emergency relief.

Clubs will always stand by their communities in times of need, but they cannot continue to do so without the necessary infrastructure and financial support. Systemic improvements are required to ensure that clubs remain viable so that regional communities have access to the essential services they provide.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss these recommendations and work collaboratively with the NSW Government to enhance regional resilience.

Compensation is crucial for clubs in disaster-prone areas making sacrifices for their community and incurring significant financial losses from “doing the right thing”.

Should you require any further information from ClubsNSW regarding this submission, please do not hesitate to reach out at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

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