

**Submission  
No 40**

## **THE ELECTRICITY OUTAGES AFFECTING FAR WEST NSW IN OCTOBER 2024**

**Organisation:** NSW Police Force Western Region Office

**Date Received:** 11 February 2025

- a) TransGrid had two gas turbine generators available to deal with any power outage. At the time of this power outage one of these was offline for maintenance and repairs. The timeframe for repairs of this second gas turbine to be completed was uncertain. There was no known continuity plan should the second turbine be required.

A battery energy storage location (BES) was established in Broken Hill to allow for shortcomings if a major power outage were to occur. Information available to the LEMC was this BES could supply power for up to 2 days for the area, dependant on usage rates.

At the time of the power outage, this BES was not online and therefore there was insufficient charge in storage for this to provide the necessary energy required in the outage. In addition, there were several legal implications that were unable to be readily overcome to ensure the commencement of the supply. It took seven (7) days to overcome these issues.

There are solar and wind farms which surround Broken Hill and feed into the main energy grid. Several issues with the cycle of power voltage and timings made it unsuitable for this energy to be diverted in response to the outage.

- b) Power shedding process undertaken during the outage, were effective in managing the load on the power supplies. This however was not able to be tracked efficiently to provide sufficient preparation times for users to be able to prepare for the load shedding.

Co-operation of the mines in the Broken Hill LGA with the limited usage of power was essential in ensuring the safe and effective distribution of the load.

- c) Effective LEMC co-operation enabled the vulnerable and essential services to be maintained safely, albeit at a reduced capacity, owing to the isolation of the communities effected in this outage.

- d) Currently there is no After Action Report (AAR) available from previous power outages in the Far West. It is noted approximately 10 years ago, a power outage occurred causing some level of disruption for several days due to damaged towers.

- e) Broken Hill and surrounds have several power supply sources including BES, solar and wind farms. Implementation of procedures to enable local supply and usage from these sources should be considered in preparation.

Contingency plans should be made for the provision and transportation of generator power into isolated communities at short notice.

- f) Public Information Services Functional Area (PIFAC) usage for consistent messaging was effective. However, the communication of the power shedding timings could be improved should this be encountered again. Consideration for community meetings to provide single source information to all community members as traditional communication strategies were hampered by the loss of power.

Small, isolated communities have proven difficult to reach in these circumstances and therefore development of a strategy to combat this should be explored.

- g) Telecommunication issues arose with the solar battery backups for mobile towers being insufficient. Attendance was required by technicians to manually switch over to petrol

generators. This was then restored to normal when the power supply was reinstated, however short power outages cause ongoing telecommunication issues.

TELCOFAC and the Central Darling LEMC are investigating the idea of adopting a mobile tower for maintenance, where local community members are trained in the necessary skills to change the tower over from solar to generator and then back to mains power. This local initiative is already being used in Western Australia and could be rolled out across the entire network within regional areas due to tyranny of distance and availability of technicians.