

**Submission
No 48**

THE ELECTRICITY OUTAGES AFFECTING FAR WEST NSW IN OCTOBER 2024

Organisation: Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation

Date Received: 14 March 2025

Issues Maari Ma wanted to raise at the Inquiry:

- The biggest stand out was failure of our mobile network during the outages. Mobile towers were down across the area because they didn't have backup generators, only short-term battery backup. (south & west Broken Hill, Ivanhoe, Menindee and Wilcannia were all affected)
- They did deliver generators , but it took a while to get them to site and connected.
- In some cases, they took the generators back thinking there wouldn't be any more outages and had to return them when there was. The delivered generators were also not auto switching , so someone had to manually go and start them (taking up to 8 hours one time).
- With everyone on edge and not knowing when the power would be coming back on, not being able to get on social media for updates or contact family only added to the distress.
- Investment in mobile tower power redundancy is needed. This should be raised with Telstra.

Other major things were:

- Food spoilage in communities
 - A lot of people stock up on food/meat and lost more than a week or fortnights food.
- Wilcannia water treatment plant without power , town ran low on fresh water and ability to manage septic systems.
 - They did receive backup generators, unsure if they remained in place or were returned.
- No air-conditioning on hot days.
- emergency centres with aircon on generators were opened in each location eventually.
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- People relying on home medical aids (cpap , dialyses etc.).
 - This was managed very well with emergency services delivering home generators and Health liaising with at risk clients.

Concerns relating to community and family:

- no way to boil water to make babies and little ones bottles.
- loss of food - community couldn't afford to replace the food that was lost.
- unable to call anyone for emergency if needed
- unable to prepare meals because the power went off randomly for long periods of time.
- children and elderly suffer with no power - there is no TV, no air conditioning and no way to cook meals and do their usual thing. Most of our communities would not have back up meals just sitting there for when the power went out.
- not sure if there was any support for the days that community had no power - in way of paying less on the electricity bill/s.
- no money to buy a generator - generators were sold out in town.
- unable to use sleep apnoea machines during the night.

Fuel was the other stressor with only one service station in town operating, the line-up took up to 1 hour to get fuel or more – if you had the fuel already to keep the vehicle running that long to stay in line.

People needed fuel to travel for medical appointments and to return back and forth if needed from outer communities.