

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

# NSW Government response

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## The electricity outages affecting Far West NSW in October 2024

December 2025



OFFICIAL

# Acknowledgement of Country



Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency – Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

NSW Government response

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# Executive Summary

The Minister for Energy referred the inquiry to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Planning on 18 November 2024. The committee handed down its report on 5 June 2025.

The NSW Government thanks the committee for inquiring into this matter and for its detailed examination of the issues.

Over the 7 months of the inquiry, the committee heard from impacted community members, emergency and support personnel, organisations, local councils and government agencies. The NSW Government appreciates all those who have shared their experiences to inform the recommendations. We are committed to learning from these events.

Out of the 20 recommendations made by the committee, the NSW Government supports 7 recommendations in full, 8 recommendations in principle and 1 recommendation in part. The responses below outline action the NSW Government is committed to undertaking in response to the recommendations.

Recommendations 2 and 14 are not matters for the NSW Government to respond to and for this reason, we have noted them. We referred these recommendations to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW and the NSW Privacy Commissioner, respectively, as indicated in the responses below.

The NSW Government notes that there are two investigations into the related power system event resulting in the collapse of transmission towers and power outages currently underway by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW and the Australian Energy Regulator. The NSW Government awaits the outcomes of the current inquiries.

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## NSW Government response to recommendations

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### Recommendation 1

That the NSW Government consider amending the *Electricity Supply Act 1995* to provide the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW (IPART) the enforcement power to order a network operator to compensate affected downstream customers, where IPART is satisfied the operator has contravened a condition of its licence.

#### Response

Supported in principle.

The NSW Government will investigate the most appropriate way to give effect to this recommendation.

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### Recommendation 2

That the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal NSW (IPART) update the *Incident Reporting – Electricity Networks Reporting Manual* to require network operators to:

- Give notification of a 'major incident' to, in addition to the Minister's office, any relevant Emergency Management Committees for the area affected by the incident, and

- Impose requirements to report to IPART and any relevant Emergency Management Committees of any business or operational decision that may impact the effective implementation of the operator's 'safety management system', even if that impact is temporary.

## Response

Noted.

The NSW Government has referred this recommendation to IPART.

IPART has advised that it supports this recommendation in principle. IPART will consider the most effective approach to enhancing reporting requirements for electricity network operators, in consultation with relevant NSW Government agencies.

## Recommendation 3

That the NSW Minister for Energy, through the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council, advocate to the Australian Energy Market Operator to consider possible changes to the Generator Performance Standards for the AGL and Tilt Renewable assets in the Far West region which would permit the operation of those assets when in islanded mode.

## Response

Supported in principle.

This recommendation aligns with the NSW Government's objective to improve regional energy resilience and leverage local renewable generation and storage assets during emergencies. However, this is not a matter to raise through the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council.

The NSW Government will ask Transgrid and the Australian Energy Market Operator to consider what changes are required.

## Recommendation 4

That the NSW Government continue to investigate options for facilitating and supporting the establishment of 'microgrids' for the towns in the Central Darling Shire and Unincorporated Area. This could include supporting applications or applying to the Australian Renewable Energy Agency's Regional Microgrids Program for funding to establish renewable energy-powered microgrids in the remote towns in the Central Darling Shire and Unincorporated Area, particularly to support the Aboriginal communities in the region.

## Response

Supported.

The NSW Government is scoping projects that could be extended to support this recommendation, including assessing the viability of distribution-connected batteries and an electric vehicle grants program to fund charging stations and community batteries in remote communities.

Essential Energy's Stand Alone Power Systems program supports communities in remote and bushfire prone areas through regulated power systems that are installed in lieu of powerlines. The NSW Government will consider whether this program could be expanded and accelerated through additional alternative funding mechanisms.

## Recommendation 5

That the NSW Government consider incorporating guidance in the State Emergency Management Plan and the NSW Recovery Plan which addresses the unique characteristics of geographically isolated and sparsely populated regions like Far West NSW in coordinating and managing any emergency response and recovery.

## Response

Supported in part.

The local emergency management committees and regional emergency management committees can incorporate this guidance in the supporting local and regional plans to the NSW State Emergency Management Plan and the NSW Recovery Plan using the NSW Government's local and regional emergency management planning guidelines and templates.

Taking this into consideration, the NSW Government will consider if there is a need to strengthen guidance in the NSW Recovery Plan when the plan is next reviewed.

## Recommendation 6

That the NSW Government, led by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water, support the development or update of Local and Regional Emergency Management Plans for Broken Hill, Central Darling Shire and the Unincorporated Area, which:

- sets out an emergency management plan for each population centre outside Broken Hill,
- identifies an electricity supply emergency and its resulting impact on telecommunications as a relevant hazard, and
- outlines relevant risk controls and Consequence Management Guides to deal with an electricity supply emergency and its impacts on telecommunications.

## Response

Supported in principle.

The local emergency management committees and regional emergency management committees are responsible for developing and updating local and regional emergency management plans for Broken Hill, Central Darling Shire and the Unincorporated Area.

The NSW Government will support the committees to develop and update the plans with consideration of the issues raised in this recommendation.

## Recommendation 7

That the NSW Government, as a matter of priority, implement recommendation 3 of the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer's report entitled 'Independent Review into the 2023 Mass Fish Deaths in the Darling-Baaka River at Menindee' to cover a broader range of hazards for the Far West region of NSW, particularly electricity and telecommunication outages.

## Response

Supported in principle.

The NSW Government has implemented its response to recommendation 3 of the Independent Review into the 2023 Mass Fish Deaths in the Darling-Baaka River at Menindee. Further detail and updates are available in the [Restoring the Darling-Baaka Program report](#).

As part of implementation, the NSW Government has updated the Local Emergency Management Committee Information Guide (now 'Local Emergency Management Committee Handbook') and completed a capability assessment of the emergency services functions and resources

(assets/equipment) in Menindee, the Central Darling Shire local government area and the Far West Emergency Management Region.

The NSW Government has also recently updated Local Emergency Management Planning Guidelines, Local Emergency Management Planning Template, Regional Emergency Management Planning Guidelines and Regional Emergency Management Plan Template and continues to refine these resources as needed.

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## Recommendation 8

That the NSW Government consider issuing guidelines on the operation and membership of Regional and Local Emergency Management Committees and include specific guidance on ensuring appropriate local representation on these committees that reflects the unique characteristics of each distinct population centre in a region or local government area. In particular, for committees in communities with high representation of Aboriginal people such as Wilcannia and Menindee, these guidelines should set out requirements for ensuring the committee's permanent membership has appropriate levels of local Aboriginal representation.

### Response

Supported in principle.

Local emergency management committees provide the most appropriate forum for ensuring the unique characteristics of an area are represented. Provisions to enable this exist under section 28 of the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* (the SERM Act) and the Local Emergency Management Planning Guidelines and Local Emergency Management Plan Template.

Under section 28 of the SERM Act, the Minister for Emergency Services has determined that local Aboriginal land councils are entitled to be voting members of local emergency management committees. The Minister communicated this to local Aboriginal land councils in early 2025.

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## Recommendation 9

That the NSW Government work with the Commonwealth Government to consider introducing regulatory requirements on carriers to ensure critical telecommunications infrastructure installations have backup power reserves that can provide a prescribed minimum backup power period. The minimum backup power period prescribed should be tailored based on the characteristics of the local government area or region and should factor in the geographical distance and context for the area.

### Response

Supported.

The NSW Telco Authority will continue to advocate to the Commonwealth Government and relevant regulators about the importance of the establishment of resilience standards for commercial telecommunications network infrastructure.

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## Recommendation 10

That the NSW Telco Authority continue to support the roll out of the Critical Communications Enhancement Program and to ensure that, once completed, the Public Safety Network's full coverage includes coverage for the significant population centres in the Unincorporated Area and Central Darling Shire.

## Response

Supported.

NSW Telco Authority continues to roll-out the Critical Communications Enhancement Program to expand the Public Safety Network to ensure availability for emergency and essential services. This includes fixed radio towers as well as the availability for deployment of mobile radio assets to support coverage if needed.

The Critical Communications Enhancement Program will expand Public Safety Network coverage to the Central Darling Shire including the Unincorporated Area.

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## Recommendation 11

That the NSW Government consider reviewing all local emergency service organisations and key Aboriginal and essential services agencies in the Far West region to determine whether they have adequate backup arrangements in the event of an electricity outage and its related impacts on telecommunications, and provide support to implement appropriate backup arrangements as needed.

## Response

Supported in principle.

Consistent with the Far West Emergency Management Plan, this is a matter for the Far West Regional Emergency Management Committee and local emergency management committees to consider.

The NSW Government will continue to work with committee representatives (including Aboriginal and essential services agencies), energy providers, and critical infrastructure owners to improve systemic resilience and secure systemic contingency arrangements.

This will be informed by a series of State Emergency Risk and Capability Assessments, including an assessment for power outages, that the NSW Government is currently coordinating.

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## Recommendation 12

That the NSW Government provide support to the relevant Local and Regional Emergency Management Committees in the Far West region of NSW to conduct exercises for electricity outages and its related impacts on telecommunications.

## Response

Supported.

The State Emergency Management Committee has identified energy outage as an exercise priority for the 2025-26 financial year through its Capability Development Sub-Committee.

The NSW Government is developing ready-to-use exercise resources for energy outage. Once developed, these resources and funding support will be available to local emergency management committees and regional emergency management committees, including those within the Far West region, to conduct exercises and test and refine their capabilities.

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## Recommendation 13

That the NSW Government explore potential legislative amendments to health information protection laws to clarify when critical health information can be shared during an emergency without first seeking consent of the relevant patient. These amendments should make clear that this



information should be shared with relevant government and non-government organisations involved in the emergency response, where that information is needed to protect the health, safety or life of individuals.

## Response

Supported.

The State Emergency Management Committee will consider whether existing emergency exemptions under the the *NSW Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002* and *NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* are fit for purpose as part of its annual State Lessons process.

## Recommendation 14

That, in addition to recommendation 13, the NSW Privacy Commissioner publish guidance as a matter of urgency clarifying when, under existing NSW laws, healthcare and service providers can share with energy providers the health information of patients dependent on life support machines and other medical electrical devices during a significant electricity outage.

## Response

Noted.

The NSW Government referred this recommendation to the NSW Privacy Commissioner.

The NSW Privacy Commissioner advises that there is benefit in assisting health care providers and the wider community to understand how the existing relevant legislation allows for the disclosure of health information to energy providers, such as the health information of patients dependent on life support machines and other electrical devices during a significant electricity outage.

The NSW Privacy Commissioner will consider preparing guidance.

## Recommendation 15

That the NSW Government consider supporting the Far West Regional Emergency Management Committee to establish a register identifying vulnerable local residents in the Central Darling Shire and Unincorporated Area and setting out their contact details. This register should be developed and maintained through consultation with local service providers and employees of NSW Health, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Aboriginal Affairs NSW and the NSW Police Force.

## Response

Noted.

The establishment of a register with names and contact details of vulnerable residents poses significant risks around privacy. The definition of vulnerable cohorts can be broad and dynamic, depending on the emergency or situation.

The Premier's Department provides training and resources on the Emergency Management Capability Hub to support local emergency management committees and regional emergency management committees to undertake person-centred emergency management practices.

## Recommendation 16

That the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water publish the report on the After Action Review of the electricity supply emergency from October 2024. This report should include a review of the communication strategies by government agencies,

emergency services organisations and local government to deliver information to the community during the emergency.

## Response

Supported.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will publish the report on the After Action Review of the electricity supply emergency from October 2024 on its website.

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## Recommendation 17

That the NSW State Emergency Management Committee consider amending the Public Information Services Functional Area Supporting Plan or developing a Regional Public Information Sub Plan which provides guidance for developing local communication protocols to inform and update remote, rural and regional communities during an emergency while ensuring that any protocol is tailored for their local community, involves local expertise, and factors in strategies for communicating during a telecommunications outage.

## Response

Supported in principle.

The recently updated Local Emergency Management Planning Guidelines, Local Emergency Management Planning Template, Regional Emergency Management Planning Guidelines and Regional Emergency Management Plan Template provide guidance on community engagement.

The NSW State Emergency Management Committee will task the Far West Region Emergency Management Committee to work with its local emergency management committees to include engagement and communication plans in local emergency management plans using these guidelines and templates. This will capture how the committees and combat agencies engage their local community during an emergency.

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## Recommendation 18

That the NSW Government support the Local and Regional Emergency Management Committees for the Far West region to develop a protocol for communicating emergency response and management information with affected communities, which takes into account the distinct context and characteristics of each town in the region. This protocol should be developed in consultation with local representatives from key government agencies and emergency services organisations, local government, key community representative bodies and locally-based non-government organisations, local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and local media outlets.

## Response

Supported.

The recently updated Local Emergency Management Planning Guidelines, Local Emergency Management Planning Template, Regional Emergency Management Planning Guidelines and Regional Emergency Management Plan Template provide guidance on community engagement.

The NSW State Emergency Management Committee will task the Far West region's local emergency management committees with including engagement and communication plans in local emergency management plans using these guidelines and templates. This will capture how the committees and combat agencies engage their local community during an emergency.

The NSW Government will support local emergency management committees to make these updates.

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## Recommendation 19

That the NSW Government review any applicable Emergency Management Plans and Recovery Plans for the Broken Hill and Far West region of NSW and consider including explicit recognition of the role of local community hubs, particularly local clubs and businesses, in emergency response and recovery.

### Response

Supported in principle.

The NSW State Emergency Management Committee will task the Far West Regional Emergency Management Committee to work with the region's local emergency management committees to review and update local emergency management plans and recovery plans to consider the role of local community hubs, clubs and businesses in emergency response and recovery.

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## Recommendation 20

That the NSW Government consider utilising any unclaimed grant funding administered by Service NSW for residents of Far West NSW to provide additional financial support for vulnerable communities affected by the 2024 electricity outages emergency to aid their recovery and improve resilience.

### Response

Not supported.

Financial support provided to residents of Far West NSW via hardship support grants was intended to meet immediate needs following this event.

NSW has numerous recovery priorities across the state following multiple years of catastrophic and compounding disasters. Funding is prioritised to target those areas of greatest need.