



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 5 August 2019

Essential Energy document reveals plans for deeper job cuts, with one in five regional workers to be axed

An internal Essential Energy document (see attached) has revealed that the NSW Government-owned company that operates the electricity poles and wires across 95 per cent of NSW is planning to slash one in five regional positions by 2024.

The cuts will see an additional 500 workers lose their jobs on top of the 182 that Essential Energy last month announced would be cut from their workforce this year.

The Electrical Trades Union said the latest revelation highlighted the importance of urgent political action to develop a practical plan to save these jobs across regional NSW.

Since 2012, the workforce at Essential Energy has nearly halved as more than 2,000 jobs have been lost, drastically reducing the number of skilled front-line workers available to respond to blackouts, storm damage, or other major incidents.

ETU Secretary Justin Page said the union was alarmed by the revelation that the current round of job cuts were just the beginning, with one in five workers at risk of losing their jobs in the coming years.

“Essential Energy has already been cut to the bone, we’ve seen the workforce almost halved in recent years and dozens of depots shut, so to discover that hundreds more jobs are on the line is alarming,” Mr Page said.

“With one in every five workers facing the chop, there is no question that regional communities will be devastated and service delivery will be greatly impacted.

“For towns already struggling with drought, the loss of these skilled jobs — forcing many families to move away — will have devastating flow-on effects on the local economy.”

The union has written to Essential Energy CEO John Cleland outlining a series of proposals that provide alternatives to job losses. These include:

- The insourcing of work currently contracted out — as other NSW electricity distributors have done — including pole replacements, service wire replacements, street lighting maintenance, vegetation management, yard maintenance, and information and communications technology (ICT) functions;
- Entry into the contestable metering market, given Essential Energy workers already possess the required skill sets; and
- Entry into the renewable energy market, given the significant amount of renewable projects being constructed across regional NSW.

The ETU has also provided a written briefing to NSW Deputy Premier John Barilaro outlining alternatives to job cuts.

“Our members have been extremely grateful for the supportive comments made by Mr Barilaro and many of his National Party colleagues, but those words need to be followed up with tangible actions if we’re going to save these jobs,” Mr Page said.

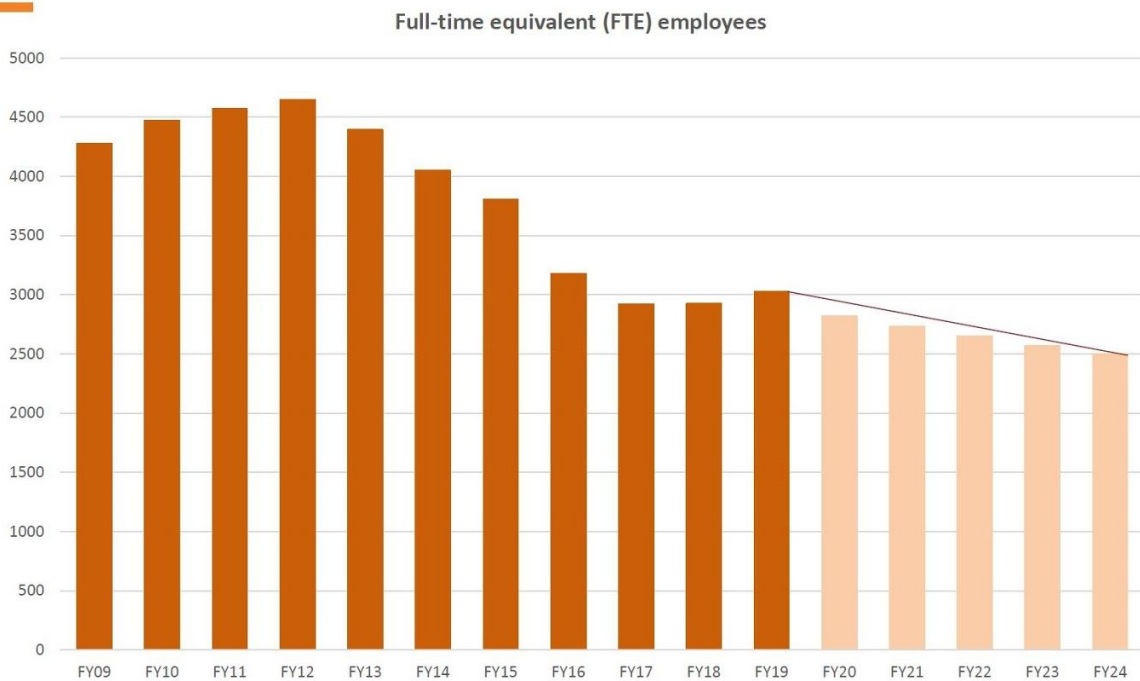
“We believe there are viable options available to Essential Energy that can avoid these cuts, but they will require a united effort from the company, workers, their unions, the broader community, and elected representatives if we are going to save these jobs.

“We also want to work with the NSW Government to find a longer-term solution to the current system where the Australian Energy Regulator imposes arbitrary and draconian budget cuts, with little regard for the impacts on workers or their local communities.”

Essential Energy employees or their family members who require crisis support are urged to contact Lifeline (13 11 14 and lifeline.org.au) or beyondblue (1300 22 4636 and beyondblue.org.au).

Media contacts: George Houssos 0418 655 682 or Tim Vollmer 0404 273 313

Workforce actuals and forecast



- We have previously operated effectively with a workforce of around 2,500 employees.
- FTE numbers peaked in 2012 and have remained stable over the last three years.
- Increase in FY19 of approximately 100 FTE due to Transformation resourcing and increased capability needs.
- FY20 - 24 forecast FTE phasing subject to further detailed planning and timing of initiatives and benefits delivered through Transformation.

