

Media Release



14 April 2011

Essential Energy targets Bega for energy smarts

Essential Energy today announced the establishment of a major Intelligent Network project in the south east New South Wales town of Bega.

The project will see the marriage of information technology to the electricity network and the integration of customer-enhanced IN-home displays and meters and small scale renewables.

Trialling a system of technologies that includes power line sensors, remote switches, Intelligent Network Meters and other automated equipment, Bega residents will help inform national approaches to the eventual creation of an automated and intuitive electricity system.

Essential Energy's Executive General Manager Infrastructure Strategy, Col Ussher, said, "The trial will provide a live test bed for Intelligent Network (IN) concepts and technologies, delivering valuable feedback about working with and informing customers to use the transformed grid."

"Through our Bega trial we hope to get a greater insight into the health of our electricity infrastructure – improving reliability and power restoration – while giving customers more control over their energy consumption."

Involving around 2,000 homes in and around Bega, the IN Community trial will work with customers to determine the best way for Essential Energy to roll out intelligent equipment while improving the local network.

This will include the use of free in-home equipment such as IN Meters and IN-Home Displays which will allow customers to keep track of household energy usage – experiencing the Intelligent Network first hand.

General Manager Intelligent Network and Innovation, Michael Lysaght, said, "We're working with the CSIRO to establish what the right mix of technology and advice for customers is – we appreciate that the average person understands that energy is important and wants to better understand how it works."

Energy efficiency advice and an online portal will feature in the IN Communities trial, giving customers greater power over their energy use.

The trial will also road test new technologies such as smart inverters and their use on a regionally-based community solar installation, planned for the Bega area.

"With energy consumption on the rise, power networks need to transform into intelligent systems that will save energy, accommodate increasing amounts of renewable energy, and ensure supply security," Michael said.

Essential Energy is the new name for the operator of Australia's largest electricity network spanning 95 per cent of New South Wales' land mass. Owned by the New South Wales Government, Essential Energy employs around 4,600 people and also provides water and sewerage services to customers in far western New South Wales.

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"Without intelligent infrastructure in place, large-scale integration of renewables will be a challenge.

"Including the community solar installation in the IN Communities trial will allow us to monitor the impact of such developments on our equipment, helping us to fine-tune the technology and its application," Michael said.

Households eligible to be involved in the live IN Community trial will be invited to attend an information day to be held this Saturday, 16 April between 11am and 3pm at Tathra Bowling Club, Indoor Bowls Centre, Dilkeria Road, where they can learn more about this ground-breaking regional project.

This is the first of a number of information days to be held throughout the trial and the community are welcome to come along.

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