Essential Energy

Impact highlights

1. **Transforming outage communications**
   In July 2025, Essential Energy introduced automated SMS notifications and estimated restoration time information for unplanned outages.

2. **Customer facing voice AI capability**
   Essential Energy launched its first customer-facing voice AI capability in June 2026. The June 2026 launch of the outage voice assistant ”CharlEE” supports handling of common enquiries during outages and busy periods, while directing customers with critical or complex needs to a customer service team member.

3. **Practical major event community support**
   The Major Event Response Vehicle “MERV” joined the fleet during FY26 to improve Essential Energy’s ability to mobilise quickly and provide on-the-ground assistance, outage and restoration information, safety advice and temporary power support during emergencies and major network events.

Areas for continuous improvement

1. **Customer influence over future network decisions**
   During FY26, the Essential People’s Panel grew from 18 to 25 participants. Customers helped shape priorities for the 2029-34 Regulatory Proposal, including reliability, affordability, community resilience and future network needs.

2. **Affordability and increasing costs**
   Opportunities to continue to improve efficiency and delivery in line with customer needs are continually being assessed. This includes the decision to strategically pause the proposed Essential Energy Training Academy in response to market conditions and funding uncertainty, as well as ongoing structural and operational model reviews.