

# **Country Energy**

## **Statement of Affairs for the period ending 30 June 2008**

Prepared in accordance with Section 14 of the *Freedom of Information Act* 1989

## **COUNTRY ENERGY'S STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS**

Country Energy is a leading Australian energy business owned by the New South Wales Government, with around 4,000 employees serving around 870,000 customers.

We operate Australia's largest electricity spanning 95 per cent of New South Wales. We provide reticulated natural gas to around 25,000 customers in southern New South Wales, and water and sewerage services to 10,000 customers in far western New South Wales.

We offer retail electricity in six states and territories. Our product range includes natural and bottled gas, internet services and energy and water management solutions.

We manage around 200,000 kilometres of powerlines, 1.4 million power poles, 113,000 distribution substations and 120,000 street lights.

Country Energy is one of regional New South Wales' largest employer of apprentices. We have created more than 670 new apprenticeships since 2001 and are the largest direct employer of indigenous apprentices in New South Wales.

Country Energy operates in accordance with multiple legislative instruments, including but not limited to:

- Electricity Supply Act 1995 (NSW)
- State Owned Corporations Act 1989 (NSW)
- Energy Services Corporations Act 1995 (NSW)
- Electricity Safety Act 1945 (NSW)
- National Electricity (New South Wales) Act 1997 (NSW)
- Gas Supply Act 1996 (NSW)
- Water Act 1912 (NSW)
- Water Management Act 2000 (NSW)

## **Our Executive and Regional Management**

Country Energy's Executive is made up of the following officers:

- Managing Director
- Company Secretary
- Group General Manager External Relations
- Group General Manager Corporate Services
- Group General Manager Finance Risk and Operations
- Group General Manager Networks & Infrastructure
- Group General Manager Retail
- Group General Manager Service Delivery

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Country Energy also has nine Regional General Managers in each of the following regions:

- Mid North Coast (Port Macquarie)
- Far North Coast (Grafton)
- Northern (Tamworth)
- North Western (Dubbo)
- Central Western (Bathurst)
- Riverina (Wagga Wagga)
- South Eastern (Queanbeyan)
- South Western (Albury)
- Far West (Broken Hill)

### **Major Functions**

Whilst Country Energy does supply services in relation to water and sewerage and gas, our principal functions are those relating to electricity. These are outlined in the Electricity Supply Act 1995 (NSW) (the Act):

- The purchase, transmission and distribution of electricity.
- The provision and maintenance of works for the distribution of electricity.
- The protection of the public from dangers arising from the transmission, distribution and use of electricity.
- The promotion of the safe and efficient use of electricity and electrical fittings and appliances.
- The promotion of energy conservation and of measures to increase the efficiency of energy transmission and use.
- Such other functions as are approved by the Minister on the recommendation of the Corporation.

Additionally, ancillary functions are outlined in the Act. Country Energy may:

- Conduct any business and for that purpose, use any property or the services of any staff of the distributor.
- Generate electricity.
- Acquire and develop land as necessary for the exercise of its functions, and dispose of land.
- Acquire or build, and maintain and dispose of, any buildings, plant, machinery, equipment or vehicles.
- Make and enter into contracts or arrangements for the carrying out of works or the performance of services or the supply of goods or materials.
- Make charges and impose fees for services performed and goods and materials supplied to it.
- Appoint agents, and act as agents for other persons.

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## **AFFECTS ON MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

In exercising its statutory functions, Country Energy may affect members of the public in its many operations including but not restricted to:

- The construction of electricity infrastructure, including substations, poles, conductors, transformers.
- Routine repair and/or replacement of existing overhead and underground infrastructure.
- The acquisition of land and the redevelopment of buildings and land.
- Trimming of trees adjacent to distribution infrastructure.
- Inspection of customers premises to ensure compliance with relevant safety standards.
- Repair and replacement of street lighting.
- The issuing of accounts and related services.

## **PARTICIPATION BY THE PUBLIC IN POLICY MAKING DECISIONS**

### **Customer consultative groups**

Country Energy has an established Customer Council, Rural Advisory Group and eight Regional Advisory Boards, and prides itself on keeping in touch with customers.

#### *Customer Council*

The Customer Council acts as a forum for consultation between Country Energy and its customers. The Council meets four times per year, or such other number as the Council and Country Energy agree so long as at least two meetings are held each year. They contribute to planning and service decision making relevant to small retail customers.

#### *The Rural Advisory Group*

The Rural Advisory Group consists of members specifically representing rural customer segments, throughout rural New South Wales. The group is voluntary and an avenue for Country Energy to discuss issues related to rural specific topics. The group meets on a quarterly basis throughout our area.

#### *Regional Advisory Boards*

The Regional Advisory Boards include members representative of the customer base of Country Energy and the diversity of the community Country Energy serves. They are the regional component of Country Energy's Customer Representative Structure giving each of the nine Country Energy regions a presence within the structure. The Boards meet four times per year, or such other number as the Boards and Country Energy agree so long as at least two meetings are held each year.

### **Ministerial and Departmental correspondence**

Members of the public are able to provide input on issues relating to the electricity supply industry through contact or correspondence with the Minister of Energy and Water or the Department of Water and Energy.

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## Energy and Water Ombudsman New South Wales

The Energy and Water Ombudsman New South Wales (EWON) provides an independent way of resolving some types of customer complaints about electricity and gas suppliers in New South Wales and Sydney Water.

EWON is independent and able to make decisions without any interference, based on what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of each complaint.

The scheme is available for all electricity, gas and water consumers in New South Wales, with a special focus on domestic and small business customers. There is no charge to consumers for the service.

### KINDS OF DOCUMENTS HELD

Country Energy holds many files, documents and instruction manuals concerning its operations. A number of publications are available free of charge from Country Energy either by calling 13 2356 visiting our website [www.countryenergy.com.au](http://www.countryenergy.com.au)

Country Energy holds the following documents:

- Policy documents
- Board business papers
- Instructions to staff
- Staff Newsletters/memos/bulletins
- Notices to external organisations
- Customer bulletins
- Procedure manuals
- Specifications
- Reports
- Maps, Plans and Diagrams
- Publications, and
- Documents stored off site.

When files are out of date or inactive, they are stored at the premises of Country Energy's records archiving contractor. Any costs for the retrieval of these documents from storage will be evaluated depending on the individual complexity of each request. After a period they are disposed of according to the State Records Act 1998 (NSW). Files are sentenced and retained, destroyed or sent to State Archives in accordance with the requirements of this Act.

## ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS, PROCEDURES AND CONTACT POINTS

In many instances, customer information relating to a person's own account, or information that is already publicly available information may be provided or access given to documents by simply making a request either in person, by telephone, fax, mail or e-mail. Should Country Energy decline to provide information or give access to documents in response to a request of this nature, the applicant may consider making a formal application for access under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 1989 (NSW). Under this Act, Country Energy is required to make information available where possible.

Access to documents can be obtained by making a request in writing to the Freedom of Information Officer, supplying all details required accompanied with the application fee. Applications may be lodged in person, faxed or posted to the FOI Officer. The FOI Officer is available during business hours of 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

The FOI Officer may be contacted by writing to:

FOI Officer  
Country Energy  
PO Box 718  
QUEANBEYAN NSW 2620  
Telephone: 13 23 56  
Facsimile: 02 6214 9860  
Email: info@countryenergy.com.au

Proof of identity may be required at the time the inquiry is made or the application lodged.

### Fees and charges for FOI Applications

The following application fees are applicable:

Nature of Application	Application Fee	Processing Charge
Access to records by natural person about their personal affairs	\$30*	\$30* per hour after first 20 hours
All other requests***	\$30*	\$30 per hour*
Internal review	\$40*/**	Nil
Amendment of records	Nil ***	Nil

\* Subject to a 50 per cent reduction for financial hardship and public interest reasons.

\*\* Refunds may apply as a result of successful internal reviews and successful applications for amendment of records.

\*\*\* No application fees may be charged for internal reviews in relation to amendment of records.

If any personal information held by Country Energy is incomplete, incorrect, misleading or out of date, you have the right to request that it is corrected. Applications for correction of personal information in a document should be made using a Freedom of Information amendment request form or in a letter. Any information to support the request should be included in the application. Once you have received documents under Freedom of Information, there is no charge to have personal information in them amended.