

National Electrical and Communications Association - Submission

Submission to the Australian Energy Regulator regarding Ergon Energy's Ring-Fencing Waiver Application for the Classification of Mareeba and Charters Towers depots as regional offices

April 2025

Introduction

The National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) provide this submission in response to the invitation for submissions regarding Ergon Energy's application for the renewal of Ring Fencing Waiver classifying Mareeba and Charters Towers depots as regional offices.

Overview

NECA is the peak body for Australia's electrical and communications industry, which employs 344,370 people and turns over more than \$82bn annually. NECA represents over 6,500 businesses performing works including the design, installation, and maintenance of electrical and electronic equipment in the construction, mining, air conditioning, refrigeration, manufacturing, communications, security, automation, and renewable energy sectors.

NECA has advocated on behalf of the electrotechnology industry for over 100 years and helps its members and industry operate in an efficient, safe, and regulatorily compliant manner. NECA represents the interests of electrical and communication businesses to all levels of government and in regulatory, legislative and industry development forums.

NECA members make an essential economic contribution – connecting businesses, homes, and infrastructure – encouraging investment, improving reliability and energy security, and delivering affordable, environmentally sustainable outcomes. The safety and reputation of the electrical industry is critical to tradespeople, consumers, and the community.

NECA also plays an integral role in the development of the next generation of Australia's electrical and communications tradespeople and contractors. Through its associated Group Training Organisations (GTOs) and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), NECA offers employment and trade training to some over 2000 apprentices and tradespeople nationally.

Submission

In general terms NECA suggests that the original analysis and decision made by the AER in its Dec 2017 decision¹ with respect to these depots was appropriate and balanced. However, NECA does not support the applicants request that a renewed waiver remove the restrictions about the types of contestable service that may be provided under the waiver.

Energy Queensland (EQ) have recently been updating and improving the framework for authorising and supporting competitors for contestable services in both Energex and Ergon areas. By approving a long term, unrestricted waiver to the ring-fencing waiver simply creates a greater barrier to entry for minor works competitors in those specific areas and an asymmetric advantage to Ergon Energy for works of a considerable size. NECA urges the AER to maintain sensible restrictions to any renewed waiver to maintain the balance between supporting genuine community needs for specific services and fostering an environment where competition and choice are not stifled by the presence of a default monopoly player.

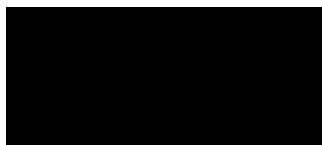
Summary

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this issue and look forward to engaging further with the AER to improve the fairness and appropriateness of the regulatory environment to achieve the National Electricity Objectives.

To arrange NECA's further participation discuss any matter relating to the impact of energy network regulation on the electrotechnology industry, please contact NECA's Head of Government Relations and Regulatory Affairs, Kent Johns, at

██████████ or on ██████████.

Yours sincerely



Oliver Judd

Chief Executive Officer

National Electrical and Communications Association

¹ https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/AER%20Ring-fencing%20waiver%20applications%20final%20decision%20-%20December%202017_13.pdf