

To the Australian Energy Regulator,

I am writing to throw my support behind Essential Energy's ring-fencing waiver application to establish a training academy based in regional NSW.

As a zone substation electrical apprentice working in the Central East of NSW, I have experienced firsthand the challenges of accessing high-quality, accredited technical training without having to travel long distances or relocate. Essential Energy's proposed Training Academy would be a transformative initiative for apprentices like myself.

Currently, many of us must travel to metropolitan centres to complete required training, which means time away from our families, friends, communities, and critical infrastructure responsibilities. This adds financial pressure and disrupts our work schedules, especially when we're needed on-site to maintain network reliability and respond to faults.

The Tamworth Training Academy would allow us to train on the actual equipment and systems used by Essential Energy. This is incredibly valuable because it means we're learning in the same environment we will be working in—on the same switchgear, protection systems, and safety protocols we use every day. It helps us become job-ready faster and ensures we are confident and competent in the field.

Training locally also strengthens workforce retention and community resilience. When we train in the regions we serve, we are more likely to stay and work locally. This helps address the growing skills shortage in regional NSW and ensures that our communities have access to skilled technicians who understand the local network and terrain.

Essential Energy's proposal is not just about training—it's about building a skilled, safe, and sustainable workforce that can support the future of energy in NSW. It's about giving regional apprentices and technicians the opportunity to grow their careers without leaving their communities behind.

I respectfully urge the AER to approve this waiver and support the establishment of the Training Academy. It will make a meaningful difference in the lives of regional apprentices and technicians like me and help ensure the success of our state's energy transition.

Sincerely,

Ronny Onggo

4th Year Zone Substation Electrical Apprentice with Essential Energy