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Australian Energy Regulator

To Whom it May Concern

**LETTER OF SUPPORT - ESSENTIAL ENERGY RING-FENCING WAIVER APPLICATION - ESTABLISHMENT OF TRAINING ACADEMY, TAMWORTH NSW**

Ref: an/PB/2853571

On behalf of Tamworth Regional Council, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Essential Energy's application to the Australian Energy Regulator seeking a waiver from certain provisions of the Ring-fencing Guideline (Electricity Distribution).

The proposed initiative to offer accredited training services to the wider market and establish a dedicated training academy in Tamworth aligns strongly with Council's long-term strategic vision as set out in our Blueprint 100. Our plan recognises the importance of developing a highly skilled, future-ready workforce to meet the emerging needs of our community and the broader New England North West region.

**Alignment with Community and Economic Priorities**

Through extensive community consultation, Council has consistently heard that local access to quality training opportunities is essential to economic growth, job creation, and retaining talent in the region. This proposed academy would directly address these priorities, providing specialised skills in renewable energy integration and electrical network operations—sectors forecast to expand significantly in coming years.

**Education and Training Partnerships**

Our region is fortunate to have strong educational partnerships, with the University of New England and the University of Newcastle (Department of Rural Health), alongside vocational and industry training providers. The addition of Essential Energy's academy would complement, not replace, these institutions, creating a broader, more integrated training ecosystem. Importantly, the academy's focus on niche technical skills such as Certificate IV in Substations and Network Systems fills a gap not currently addressed by local providers.

**Health, Safety and Workforce Capability**

Tamworth has also been recognised as a hub for health training and regional service delivery. The proposed academy will further enhance the region's capacity to attract and retain skilled workers, improve workplace safety standards, and offer economic participation opportunities for First Nations peoples and other under-represented groups.





### **Strategic Regional Impact**

The projected timing of initial course delivery in 2026, leading to a full academy launch in 2027, supports the New England Renewable Energy Zone and NSW's broader transition to a reliable, safe, and affordable energy system. It will help address known skills shortages locally and regionally while positioning Tamworth as a recognised centre for energy industry training.

While Council acknowledges the importance of maintaining a fair and competitive training market, we believe that the scale of current and forecast workforce demand, combined with the specialised nature of the proposed courses, provides a strong case for granting the waiver.

Council fully supports Essential Energy's proposal and recognises the potential for long-term benefits in workforce capability, economic development, and community resilience. We respectfully encourage the AER to give favourable consideration to the application.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback. We would welcome further engagement with the AER on this matter as required.

Yours sincerely



Paul Bennett  
**General Manager**

3 September 2025