



What We Do

Working With Us

Contact

Search

Customers

Industry

Outages

Safety

News

Major Projects

myEnergy

Login

Home > News > Media Release: New substation securing power supply in Melbourne CBD

News

Media Release: New substation securing power supply in Melbourne CBD

3 July, 2019

The final stages are underway for an extensive upgrade to Melbourne CBD’s electricity infrastructure and in true Melbourne style, the \$250 million project being run by distribution business CitiPower has a creative side too, with an innovative lighting display illuminating its striking façade.

Victorian Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D’Ambrosio joined CitiPower Chief Executive Officer Tim Rourke for the first official project tour on 2 July.

The Melbourne CBD Security of Supply project is about ensuring that if unexpected events, such as extreme weather, fires, traffic accidents or infrastructure failures, occur on our major supply lines



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then the network has a 'double backup' to provide continuous supply to homes and businesses in the CBD.

CitiPower Chief Executive Officer Tim Rourke said the project was one of the most complex and important electrical upgrades the Melbourne CBD had ever seen.

"CitiPower is Australia's most reliable electricity distribution network so it's not necessarily the risk of outages we're preparing for; it's the impact of how long it takes to restore power," Mr Rourke said.

"Every day, almost 1 million people and businesses generating 25% of the state's economic value depend upon the continuity of electricity supplies to the Melbourne CBD.

"There have been many cases where major cities around the world have been severely impacted by power outages ranging from a number of hours to a number of days.

"We are investing in our networks to do everything we can to prevent this from happening in Australia's most vibrant and rapidly growing city."

The Australian Energy Regulator rates CitiPower reliability at more than 99.99 percent. This equates to customers being without power for an average of 20 of the 525,000 minutes in a year.

Ms D'Ambrosio reinforced the significance of the project during her tour.

"This upgrade will mean a more secure and reliable electricity supply for Melbourne's CBD and highlights the importance of modernising critical delivery infrastructure," Ms D'Ambrosio said.

At the heart of the Security of Supply project is the Waratah Place Zone Substation, which has been rebuilt and is currently being connected to the CBD grid. Once completed, the zone substation

will allow power to be diverted around the grid so the duration of a major power outage is limited to no more than 30 minutes.

At the moment, the CBD's power supply can withstand one major fault on the 66kv network. This project is designed to ensure the city can withstand two major outages, with minimal impact to customers.

While ensuring reliability, the Waratah Place Zone Substation has also been designed to help reinvigorate the heritage of the vibrant laneway culture around Chinatown.

"The new Waratah Place Zone Substation retains the character of the original building down to the circular portal windows on the northern wall, while innovative light displays on the façade are destined to become a feature of the Chinatown landscape," Mr Rourke said.

To connect the zone substation to the surrounding area, CitiPower will soon be digging a four-metre-deep trench in a narrow laneway, replacing and connecting 10.5 kilometres of cables that wind throughout the city. This complex construction involves working with gas, water and sewerage utilities to facilitate multiple asset relocations, and marks the project's final stages.

The deep excavations close to heritage-listed buildings, as well as beneath Little Bourke Street's Chinese monument, have required extensive engineering to minimise the risk to these structures which were built on shallow foundations.

The Melbourne CBD Security of Supply project has also involved upgrades to the Brunswick Terminal Station, Bouverie – Queen Zone Substation and Victoria Market Zone Substation, and the installation of 21km of new electricity cables travelling over 7km from the Brunswick Terminal Station to Carlton.

The project is due to be completed in 2020.



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