

NSW injects \$18 billion into state energy program

The New South Wales Government is delivering a five-point plan to further secure Sydney's power supply, State Energy Minister Ian Macdonald has announced. The Government plans to spend almost \$18 billion and over the next five years one third of the state's electricity infrastructure will be replaced, renewed or upgraded. "We are delivering the biggest energy program in the state's history, with a series of projects underway right across NSW to put in place the infrastructure needed for major economic growth in the future," Macdonald says. As part of its five-point plan to secure the state's power supply, the NSW Government will toughen penalties for damaging electricity cables. Under the plan, laws allowing cost recovery for damage will be strengthened and anyone who damages a cable will be required to prove they carried out checks on cable locations before starting work. Dial-Before-You-Dig and mandatory notification of damage will also be compulsory. It follows an outage in Sydney's CBD on 30 March caused by a main supply cable failing after being damaged by a backhoe several years ago. The \$18 billion investment on electricity infrastructure over the next five years includes a five-fold increase in 132 kV and 11 kV underground cable replacements on EnergyAustralia's network – totalling \$1.2 billion and \$960 million respectively. There will be an \$800 million investment in the CityGrid project, which includes work to complete the City West Cable Tunnel and City North Zone substation, as well as the construction of three other major zone substations and 50 kilometres of high voltage cables. The Government is also planning a multi-million dollar project to install next generation protection equipment for the four major transmission cables into the northern part of the city. This involves the installation of 10 kilometres of fibreoptic cable from Lane Cove to the CBD. A requirement for government buildings and infrastructure to regularly test and prove back-up power systems are working and sufficient will be introduced along with a best practice program for private sector CBD landlords. Macdonald says other plans include building an extra level of back-up supply into the CBD electricity network by 2014 "to make Sydney the first CBD in Australia to achieve that standard, matching major international cities like New York". Macdonald says the \$18 billion expansion of the electricity network is expected to generate 3,700 jobs. "For example, EnergyAustralia's proposed \$8.5 billion expansion of the network is expected to generate 2,500 long-term jobs including 1,000 apprentices and engineering graduates over the next five years," Macdonald says.

"For Integral Energy, a proposed \$2.8 billion expansion of its network is expected to generate approximately 600 jobs, including 300 new apprenticeships over the next five years," he adds. "For Country Energy, a proposed \$4 billion expansion of the electricity network is expected to generate 600 jobs including 300 apprentices, trainees and engineering graduates over the next five years."

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