

WEL Networks Media Release

11 August 2021

How WEL Networks responded to the Nationwide Power Emergency

WEL Networks is a 100% community owned network company with a mission 'to enable our communities to thrive'. Unfortunately the nationwide power emergency that happened on Monday night was completely out of WEL's control.

"We are extremely sorry for the inconvenience it caused," says WEL Networks CE, Garth Dibley.

"We were dealing with a rapidly evolving emergency situation and communicated with customers as soon as we accurately understood the extent of the situation.

"We do wish to clarify our role and actions to help bring the emergency situation to an end as soon as possible. The emergency was triggered by the Government owned national grid operator Transpower that controls the power delivered to every network company. As the System Operator it was Transpower's place to initially explain how the nationwide emergency situation occurred and the errors they made in the allocation of load control. We would now like to clarify the actions we undertook to help resolve this nationwide emergency as quickly as possible.

"Under Government regulation we must adhere to instruction from the System Operator in an emergency and that is exactly what we did. It should be noted that we were instructed to act with immediate effect and did not have visibility of the deficit in generation that Transpower was trying to manage or what has been requested of others. We did repeatedly question Transpower regarding the volume of load they instructed us to drop, however Transpower was insistent on the volume. WEL was asked to reduce load by more than 20%, well above the national average. It should be noted there is regulation that requires Transpower to undertake best endeavours to reduce load evenly across all its customers. Transpower subsequently confirmed they had miscalculated the load on our network which contributed to the excessive load reduction requirement.

The selection of customers was as per our 'Rolling Outage Plan', which is approved by Transpower and is available on our [website](#). We simply acted in accordance with our published plan.

The timeline below clarifies the actions that WEL undertook during this unplanned nationwide emergency.

Notice Received	Type	What we were asked	Our action
06:42	Customer Advice Notice (CAN)	Advised low generation expected from 17:30 until 20:00	As this was a call for additional generation there was no action required by network companies
13:02	Warning notice (WRN)	Risk of insufficient generation and reserves from 17:30 to 20:00 so MAY need to manage demand	WEL planned to control hot water load during the notice periods - this would result in a reduction of 15-25MW – approx. 7% of demand
16:24	WEL Action		WEL started hot water load controlling and had full load control on by 17:48 (20MW).
17:10	Grid Emergency Notice (GEN)	There are insufficient generation offers to meet demand from 18:00 to 19:00	Continuation of hot water load control
18:47	Grid Emergency Notice (GEN)	All network companies instructed to reduce load by 1%	WEL commenced rolling outages at 18:59 - we took full load from 1,372 customers (2.8MW). This load was removed to meet the instruction as no further hot water load was available. All hot water load had been actioned as per the 17:10 GEN notice
19:09	Grid Emergency Notice (GEN)	Transpower instructed WEL to reduce load to below a total network cap of 224.7MW	As WEL was operating at approx. 263MW, at 19:37 we started load reductions from a further 16,379

			customers (additional 40.5MW) to achieve the target
19:48	WEL Action		First Facebook post by WEL advising customers of outages
19:59	Phone call from WEL to Transpower	WEL makes sure Transpower knows we're turning off a lot of customers. Transpower confirms the requirement to be below 224.7MW. There was confusion between the load that Transpower believed we were operating at and what we reported	Discussion about requirement and discrepancy between our load and Transpower's assessment of our load. The requirement was still to remain under 224.7MW cap
20:08	Phone call from Transpower	Transpower advises that WEL can increase load by 5% - they ask if that will bring us up to full load. WEL answered 'no' it won't bring us to full load	
20:10	WEL Action		WEL started restoring customers
20:20	Grid Emergency Notice (GEN)	Advised that all network companies can increase load by 5% on current load	This had already been actioned as per the 20:08 phone call from Transpower
20:23	Phone call from Transpower	Transpower advised that we could restore any load we took off except hot water.	By 20:32 all customers were restored
21:01	Grid Emergency Notice (GEN)	Advised that grid emergency had ended	

Note: There were a number of additional calls between WEL and Transpower but the critical decision points are captured in the above timeline.

“WEL Networks’ response was in direct accordance with the industry rule which is to avoid total loss of power to our country and we acknowledge and apologise to those customers who experienced an outage. I would also ask that people understand that we acted in good faith with Transpower’s instructions and for people to please be considerate towards WEL staff, who were doing what they were directed to in order to help avoid a much more severe outcome for the country.”

Ends