

# Offers of remediation and public apology to AusNet customers affected by the February 2024 power outage

Approximately 255,000 AusNet\* customers in Victoria were impacted by the Victorian storms on 13 February 2024.

At 4.18 pm on 13 February 2024, the AusNet Outage Tracker crashed. It remained unavailable until 9am on 21 February 2024.

We understand the frustration and inconvenience this caused our customers, who were not only left without power, but also without information.

We know we let you down and we are improving our systems, so this won't happen again.

This public notice and apology is offered by AusNet to its customers in accordance with the court enforceable undertaking accepted by the Essential Services Commission. Visit [www.esc.vic.gov.au/AusNetEU](http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/AusNetEU) to read the full court enforceable undertaking.

## Contravention of the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice

As an electricity distributor operating in Victoria, AusNet is subject to the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice.

The Electricity Distribution Code of Practice requires electricity distributors to, as soon as practicable during an unplanned interruption or emergency, provide updates by a 24-hour phone service and on a prominent place on their website. The updates need to be about the nature of the interruption and either:

- an estimate of when supply will be restored
- an estimate of when reliable information on restoration of supply will be available, if reliable information is not available to inform an estimate of when supply will be restored.

We acknowledge the failure to provide these updates to customers was a contravention of the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice and we offer our sincere apologies to all affected customers.

## Our ongoing commitment to supporting communities

In February 2024 we announced a \$10 million Energy Resilience Community Fund, which will be fully funded by AusNet and not customers. The fund recognises the impact of AusNet's customer communications during the storm event, as well as the impact on customers of the outages associated with the storm.

There are three components of the fund:

1. Immediate Relief, including:

- a hardship grant scheme, opened on 13 March 2024 for applications (extended deadline until 30 June 2024), which will make payments to eligible low-income households (\$300) and uninsured small businesses (up to \$5,000) who were without power as a result of severe weather events on 13 and 22 February 2024.
- donations of \$220,000 provided to Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF), Dandenong Ranges Emergency Relief Services (DRERS) and Sale Food Support in the Dandenong Ranges and Gippsland regions.
- agreement to donate \$300,000 to Foodbank Victoria to provide emergency food relief and build community infrastructure and resilience at Foodbank's Morwell Community Food Centre.

2. Community infrastructure resilience:

- We will work with regional councils and community groups to award grants to provide communities with access to powered facilities to charge devices, shower, make phone calls and access support in future outage events.

3. Small business energy resilience:

- We will work with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, regional councils and community groups to identify locations where we can install local generation solutions to keep multiple small businesses on a main street operating during outages.

## Court enforceable undertaking accepted by the Essential Services Commission

In acknowledgment of our contravention of the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice, the Essential Services Commission has accepted a court enforceable undertaking.

In accordance with the terms of the court enforceable undertaking we have, among other requirements, agreed to:

- Issue an additional \$2 million to the Energy Resilience Community Fund (bringing the total to \$12 million) to further support customers experiencing vulnerability through donating, in equal proportion, to the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, St Vincent de Paul and Financial Counselling Australia, by 31 October 2024.
- Clarify the terms of the Energy Resilience Community Fund to:
  - set out the timeframes for the disbursement of funds for immediate relief (by 31 December 2024) and community infrastructure and small business energy resilience (by 31 December 2026).
  - extend the timeframe for the hardship grant scheme to 30 June 2024 so more people can access support.
  - provide assurance that the full fund will be disbursed by 31 December 2026, with any remaining funds donated to charities approved by the Commission within 30 days of Fund expiry.

\*AusNet Electricity Services Pty Ltd

### Find out more

#### Apply for the Energy Resilience Community Fund

Applications for the Energy Resilience Community Fund are open.

If you were an AusNet customer affected by the February 2024 storm event, you can find out more from AusNet.

[www.ausnet.com.au](http://www.ausnet.com.au) 1300 133 300



#### Dispute resolution assistance

If you are unable to resolve an issue directly with AusNet you can contact the Energy and Water Ombudsman of Victoria.

[www.ewov.com.au](http://www.ewov.com.au)

1800 500 509

