

Ergon Energy's Ring-Fencing Waiver Application

Master Electricians Australia (MEA) is the trade association representing electrical contractors recognised by industry, government and the community as the electrical industry's leading business partner, knowledge source and advocate. You can visit our website at www.masterelectricians.com.au

As the representative voice of licenced electrical contractors specialising in the installation and maintenance of solar photovoltaic (solar PV) and battery energy storage systems (BESS), MEA are critical of any DNSP application seeking an exemption from the ring-fencing guideline (electricity distribution) cl 3.1(b).

MEA contend the involvement of DNSPs within the private market is at direct odds with the supplier of last resort principle. We suggest a more effective strategy wherein DNSPs directly engage with the private solar industry to build capacity and to formulate a clear purchasing/supply policy for Electrical Contractors. This approach would facilitate the installation of regulated service access providers (SAP) on private assets if that is deemed the best approach, using a clear and transparent guideline to arrive at that decision.

MEA believes very strongly in the principle of private assets being worked on by the private sector, and DNSPs living up to the promise of "supplier of last resort". In short, if works are to be performed on private property, the default position should be for a licensed electrical contractor in the private sector to perform the electrical works and the DNSP to perform only on the regulated works (metering etc).

Notwithstanding our position in protecting the interests of our members, we appreciate there may be instances where it is not economically viable or there is no private business that can perform the work on private assets. In these instances, the listed location in Ergon Energy's application are in extremely remote areas. It would appear to be financially and logistically appropriate to approve the waiver application, if the market in these regions has been tested and there are no private providers able to undertake the work. However, we stress the importance of upholding the supplier of last resort and encourage Ergon Energy to continue working with the private industry to identify solutions to improving rural and remote areas access to private service providers for ongoing maintenance in the future.

MEA is committed to improving resilience and safety on the industry and making best use of new technologies to achieve safe and efficient community outcomes. We look forward to continued efforts in safeguarding the integrity of the ring-fencing guidelines.

Chris Lehmann & Georgia Holmes
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