

Friday 4 November 2022

Ausgrid proposes Merriwa for new microgrid trial

Merriwa has been selected for a trial of a small network of power generation, storage and technologies to deliver more resilient, reliable local power supply.

The Merriwa community will be invited to shape the \$3 million microgrid trial, a first for Ausgrid and the Upper Hunter region. The microgrid operates during planned and unplanned power interruptions, maintaining supply quickly and easily without the need for a back-up generator.

The trial could include an innovative “community hub” which could provide power for washing and phone charging during extended outages.

Ausgrid’s Chief Executive Officer, Richard Gross said the trial was part of a commitment to building a more resilient energy system across the network.

“This microgrid trial is all about supporting local communities and businesses during severe weather events,” Mr Gross said.

“Our climate is changing, so we are changing too. We’re thinking differently about how we can continue to provide for our customers in rural and remote areas.

“Increasing temperatures mean more extreme weather events, and this in turn increases the risk of unplanned power disruptions – the proposed microgrid will be able to supply parts of the Merriwa town centre, allowing business to continue as normal in these situations.”

Community members can influence the design of the microgrid and the proposed community hub, which will be a resource for the community during severe weather events like floods and storms

“A community hub is a place where the community can come together and access essential services during an emergency – things like device charging, refrigeration and food preparation.”

“As part of this engagement, we will be asking the community to help us decide what’s included in the community hub, as well as to give us feedback about what services and businesses they would most like to see supplied by the microgrid.”

“We’re excited to work with our customers and stakeholders to design and deliver a community hub that meets their needs – and we’re asking community members to get involved by registering for our upcoming workshops,” Mr Gross said.

Member for Upper Hunter, Dave Layzell, welcomed the initiative and the increased network resilience it will bring to the region.

“When severe weather hits, projects like the Ausgrid Merriwa microgrid keep the lights on when families need them most,” Mr Layzell said.

“I commend Ausgrid on this resilience initiative, and their dedication to improving electricity reliability in the Hunter.”

Mayor of Upper Hunter Shire Council, Maurice Collison said, “I am delighted to partner with Ausgrid in the Upper Hunter first. This is exciting and a great coup for the community of Merriwa. We look forward to watching the trial of the microgrid evolve in the coming weeks and months.”

Workshops will take place in Merriwa and online in late November. Customers can register by visiting the project’s engagement website at ausgrid.engagementhub.com.au/merriwamicrogrid.

The microgrid trial is in its planning stages and is expected to be up and running by early 2024.