



CENTRAL NSW  
COUNCILS

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# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

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Approved by: Cr Ken Keith, Mayor of Parkes Shire Council, Chair of (Centroc ) Central NSW Councils

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## **Councils across NSW call for common sense in street lighting pricing.**

“Essential Energy is claiming it needs to raise its street lighting maintenance charges by an average of 94% across its footprint,” said Councillor Ken Keith, Chair of Centroc.

“In some communities we are talking over 100% increases in charges,” said Councillor Keith.

With support from Local Government NSW, Councils have banded together and sought specialist advice to try and get some common sense into the pricing review now underway.

“It’s particularly galling when street lights were part of the electricity asset strip in rural NSW. Communities used to own the electricity assets. Now people in regional NSW are being asked to pay even more and the State pockets the profits. It’s not so much about paying an electricity bill as paying an electricity tax,” said Councillor Keith.

“It’s has been very challenging. The claims being made by Essential Energy are part of piece of work filled with technical information and we really needed to get expert help. We only had a few weeks to pull it all together, but what we have found should inspire the Australian Energy Regulator to take a good hard and independent look at what we believe to be unfair and just plain wrong,” said Councillor Keith.

“This mean millions of dollars to regional NSW which is money that could be better spent elsewhere, on a road or a library book,” said Councillor Keith.

The technical review identified a number of substantive reasons to reject Essential Energy’s claims for a price rise. It found evidence suggesting that that Essential Energy is not managing its street lighting maintenance and technology choices efficiently. The utility has also been particularly slow to take up new more reliable, more energy efficient and lower cost lighting options such as LEDs. Essential Energy service levels were also found to be substantially below urban areas and not meeting the basic requirements of the NSW Public Lighting Code more than eight years after it was introduced.



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Councils have called for the Australian Energy Regulator to reject Essential Energy's proposal for dramatic price increases and are calling for a complete review by Essential Energy of how it is managing the street lighting service.

**ENDS**

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**For media enquiry contact:** Jenny Bennett 0428 690 935