ETU QLD & NT MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland Families Face Longer Blackouts as LNP Axes Energy Queensland Funding In the Peak of Disaster Season

The Electrical Trades Union (ETU), The Services Union and Professionals Australia were today notified that Energy Queensland Limited (EQL) intends to cut the wages of more than 3,000 workers by reducing their weekly hours under the guise of "efficiencies."

EQL proposes to move affected employees from a 10-day fortnight to a 9-day fortnight — an effective wage cut of between 12% and 22.5%. This would strip thousands of hours from the frontline workforce of an essential public utility and significantly reduce Energy Queensland's capacity to deliver safe, reliable electricity services, including new infrastructure, to Queensland communities.

The funding will be cut, but the work will not disappear. Powerlines still need maintaining, faults still need fixing, and electricity still needs to be restored after storms, natural disasters, accidents and outages. Cutting ordinary hours simply means less workforce capacity to do critical work — resulting in delayed reconnections, reduced maintenance, increased pressure on frontline workers and poorer outcomes for Queensland communities and their families.

Queenslanders rely on energy workers to restore electricity quickly and safely when disaster strikes. By removing thousands of hours from the workforce, Energy Queensland will no longer have the capacity to deliver safe and reliable power restoration during storms and emergencies, particularly during peak disaster periods, which Queensland is currently battling as we speak.

The unions have worked constructively with Energy Queensland to identify genuine efficiencies that improve systems and performance. We do not support so-called efficiencies that cut wages, compromise safety, or undermine service delivery.

The proposal will not deliver real savings. With a substantial pipeline of work already underway, reduced ordinary hours will inevitably lead to increased overtime, driving worker fatigue, increasing safety risks and ultimately costing more.

Assistant Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union Stuart Traill says, "This is only the start, we have seen what happens with LNP Governments in the past, it's not just cuts to the workforce, it's cuts to the essential support of Queensland communities, and we all know what comes next, the privatisation of our energy assets. It's the first round of cuts to our energy future."

"Just last week we saw the LNP-backed decision to sack 150 contractors, directly impacting Energy Queensland's disaster response capability. Now workers are being hit again. Elections have consequences, and this is what they look like when essential services are cut."

"You can't remove thousands of hours from an essential frontline workforce and expect communities not to feel it. Workers lose pay, services decline, and Queensland families pay the price."

“We are talking about an ageing electricity network, that needs more work than ever, in the peak of disaster season, and the State Government’s solution is to cut the wages of the very workforce that is at the heart of maintaining, fixing and improving it. It’s an absolute disgrace.” he said.

Rebecca Girard, Deputy Secretary of The Services Union, said the timing was particularly alarming.

“Just weeks ago, our members were working around the clock to restore power following severe storms and Cyclone Koji. Cutting hours during storm season directly undermines Queensland’s ability to respond to emergencies. These workers keep the lights on when communities need it most.”

“We call on the Crisafulli Government to intervene in this madness and to stop this decision. To protect workers and essential service and to deliver on new housing and Olympics Games infrastructure”

Sean Kelly, Director of Professionals Australia’s Queensland branch, said professional and technical staff were already under significant pressure.

“Cutting hours doesn’t remove the work. It weakens capability, increases risk, and reduces the reliability of essential electricity services Queenslanders depend on every day.

Joint union representatives will hold a **press conference at 10.00 am on Thursday 5 February at the Queensland Parliament Annexe**, calling on the Crisafulli Government to intervene and stop this wage and service cut, and to protect Energy Queensland workers and the essential services they provide.

For more information, please call Stuart Traill 0488 225 625, Rebecca Girard 0438 168 171 or Sean Kelly 0435 273 004

ETU QLD & NT

THE SERVICES UNION By your side

PROFESSIONALS AUSTRALIA

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