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ENERGY AUSTRALIA DOUBLES STREET LIGHT BILLS FOR COUNCILS

Northern Sydney councils are angered at the Australian Energy Regulator's (AER) Draft Decision to increase the charges for street lighting capital and maintenance to councils.

On average, costs charged by Energy Australia for these services could increase by 54 percent from 1 July 2010, the draft decision reveals.

The exact amount of the increase will only be known after AER hands down its Final Determination around 15 April.

The expected cost hike means councils will have to divert funds away from other programs such as drainage, road and footpath improvements, community centre upgrades and park and playground improvement projects.

"It is extremely frustrating for councils when this happens. We cannot lift rates to raise funds for these increases so that means taking money from other programs. To make things worse, Energy Australia has a monopoly on these services to councils so we can't go elsewhere for a competitive price" said President of the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, Hornsby Mayor Nick Berman.

Councils have also been very unsatisfied with the service provided by Energy Australia.

Energy Australia does not offer value for money. Our member councils have been frustrated by delays in repairing of street lights and, despite our requests, Energy Australia has been dragging the chain in upgrading to environmentally appropriate technologies. The contracts offered by Energy Australia to councils are not serving the best interests of the community" said Mayor Berman.

NSROC (which represents the Councils of North Sydney, Lane Cove, Hunter's Hill, Ryde, Willoughby, Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai), along with other Sydney area councils are currently lobbying the State Government to introduce mandatory performance and stronger contract obligations for energy providers delivering public lighting to councils.

End : www.nsroc.org

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