

Terry Effeney: contribution to the electricity industry

Few people have made a greater contribution to Australia's - and specifically Queensland's - energy industry than Terry. As a director on the Energex and Energy Queensland boards, I have had the pleasure of working closely with Terry over the past decade and I am honoured to speak today about a transformational leader, and a thoroughly decent bloke - truly respected by people from all aspects of his working life.

As we heard from Mark, Terry started as a 17-year-old cadet engineer at Capricornia Electricity Board, and a 40 year career in energy followed.

Terry, more so than any other individual in the state's recent history, has been steadfast in ensuring reliable power supply for Queensland communities.

Over his career Terry held:

- ...many and varied operational roles across regional and rural Queensland with Ergon Energy and its predecessor entities, culminating in being Ergon's Chief Operations Officer.
- Then, as CEO of Energex, Terry was responsible for powering all of South-East Queensland.
- He subsequently brought Ergon and Energex together as interim CEO of the state-wide company, Energy Queensland: To give you an idea of the scale of the roles Terry held, as a combined entity, Energy Queensland has some 7000 employees, \$5B in annual revenue and an asset base of \$25B serving customers from Tweed Heads, to Thargomindah to the Torres Strait.
- And, more recently, Terry proved himself a strategic policy and thought leader, contributing to Australia's future energy agenda.

Terry's success in the industry was predicted at an early age. In a moment of prescience some 30 years ago a young graduate engineer left the Personnel office at the Capricornia Electricity Board. The then Head of Personnel, Brian O'Brien, remarked to others also waiting outside the office: 'that young man will be your boss one day'. That young man was, of course, Terry.

Hearing about Terry's upbringing, it is of little surprise that the values imbued in Terry from his childhood became hallmarks of his professional life and leadership style.

Indeed, what made Terry so successful in his career was not just what he did but the way he did it. So rather than just list his remarkable achievements, I'd like to focus on the qualities of Terry Effeney.

Let's start with his: **Intellect, immense capability, and work ethic.**

There is no doubt that Terry had a fierce intellect and was an immensely capable person.

Building on his qualifications in engineering and economics, in his formative years at Ergon, Terry worked in field roles across the state gaining hands-on experience in electricity distribution.

Later, as COO Terry conducted the first full audit of Ergon's assets, which involved logging every power pole, transformer, substation and the like. This comprehensive asset database became the foundation of Ergon's funding submissions to the regulator.

Terry's responsibilities at Ergon also included heading the policy and regulatory functions. Negotiating the intricacies of regulatory requirements was made more complex in Ergon by the amalgam of different geographic component entities and different network specifications.

A key part of Terry's professional development was an Ergon sponsored stint in the United States where Terry combined executive development programs with placements in leading advisory, utility and industrial companies. This plan almost backfired for Ergon when one of these companies saw Terry's talent and made overtures to keep him.

This foundational experience at Ergon – maximised by Terry's relentless work ethic – formed the basis of his immense knowledge of the industry and the organisations he worked in.

Later, as CEO of Energex, Terry's ability to be across all facets of the business was outstanding.

However, more remarkable than his knowledge alone was Terry's ability to synthesize vast amounts of information, distil the key issues and underlying problems, and develop solutions. Moreover, in a bandwidth that few possess, Terry was able to flex from the operational detail on the one hand to the strategic perspective and implications on the other.

It's not surprising therefore that Terry became not only a trusted advisor, leader and thinker at state level but was extremely well regarded by his peers nationally.

As a member and then chair of the board of Energy Networks Australia, the peak body representing gas and electricity companies, Terry made an outstanding contribution to the Australian energy industry. He led thinking around the transformation of the electricity network, including the national future smart grid, and best practice in asset management.

As an acknowledgment of Terry's capability, in 2016 he was appointed a member of the expert panel to review the future security and reliability of the national electricity market in light of rapid technological and other changes. Led by Australia's chief scientist, Dr Alan Finkel AO, Terry was one of five industry leaders tasked to develop a 'once in generation' national reform blueprint.

Terry's contribution to shaping the future of energy policy for the betterment of Australia's economic prosperity and its people, has been acknowledged by many at the highest levels of Australia's policy making, especially over the past few days.

Of course, Terry's intellect and capability was complemented by many other traits. He was resolutely **reliable and unshakeable**.

When Terry came to Energex in 2007, a safe pair of hands at the helm was required following a series of earlier events including: storm-induced blackouts in 2004, a subsequent review recommending network investment for improving electricity reliability, and a succession of CEOs in a short period.

What was needed was someone who not only knew the industry but someone who was calm and from whom others could take their measure. Terry was able to do this and more.

Drawing on his early years at Ergon, Terry had the respect of the field crews from his time 'baking in the sun' working on SWER lines in regional Queensland. From his commercial roles at Ergon, Terry had the confidence of the office-based teams in his ability to lead the corporate functions of a large and complex organisation.

Not only did Terry stabilise the Energex business but he took it from a low point to be a leading government-owned entity in network reliability, customer service, financial performance, technology, safety and people engagement.

In nearly a decade as CEO of Energex, Terry also led the business through some key events including:

- full retail contestability
- a period of rapid growth in energy demand, only to be followed by the post GFC decline in energy demand necessitating reshaping of a billion dollar capital works program
- successful regulatory determination outcomes which set the company's revenue for a five year period
- the rapid uptake of solar PV onto the network to record levels on a global scale
- and, interspersed through all of this, contending with various natural disasters.

Being the person with ultimate management responsibility for ensuring power to our homes and businesses was a 24/7 job. Although Terry never showed it, no doubt, at times, the role was a stressful one.

In particular, when the business was most under pressure – dealing with events such as super-cell storms and floods - Terry's leadership skills came to the fore. And he was at the fore – on the ground and completely focused on keeping our people and communities safe while restoring power.

Cycling was one of the ways in which Terry sought to de-stress – although perhaps this just gave him a different lens through which to look for issues with power poles. Terry was a regular member of the early morning Energex cycling team. Each year this team would do a Christmas ride after which Terry would shout breakfast for everyone – apparently riders never seen before would make it to this event!

Humility and a focus on people were another two of Terry's defining attributes.

While Terry was an over-achiever, he was not a self-promotor. He rarely appeared in, and indeed avoided, publicity. His achievements were however recognised.

Apart from broad recognition of his successes at Energex, in November 2016 Terry was only the second person to be awarded life membership of Energy Networks Australia.

His appointment to the Finkel Review panel is a testament to his national, if not international, standing.

Yet Terry would always attribute successes to the team – whether it be our field crews, planners, engineers, the call centre, or teams in finance and administration, customer engagement, and others. Rather than seeking accolades for himself, Terry's focus was on empowering others – he set a vision and supported and motivated others to achieve their potential, and hence together achieve that vision.

Terry also recognised that everyone had a part to play in an organisation's success and that it takes more than engineers to keep the lights on. Our functions may have started with Terry greeting the distinguished guests but they always ended with him stopping by the kitchen to thank the caterers.

When he joined Energex as CEO, Terry vowed to meet every employee. Considering there were some 3000 people in the business at the time, this was no mean feat. However, that is what Terry did – over a three month period he visited every hub and sought to learn everyone's name.

Invariably Terry was accompanied on visits and to meetings by another Terry; community and stakeholder manager Terry Nodwell. The common Christian name caused confusion at times. On one occasion in George Street Terry Nodwell received a stiff dressing down from a senior official who thought he was addressing the Energex CEO. Meanwhile, Terry Effeney was parking the car.

As part of his focus on people, Terry's first priority was the safety and welfare of our people and the community coming into contact with the network. He took each and every safety incident very personally. The impact of rare but significant workplace injuries would be etched on his face – as if it was a member of his own family that had been injured.

In 2014 when Prince Edward attended an event at Energex's Newstead office, the accompanying security officer reinforced to Terry the need for safety of the visiting regal guests: to which Terry replied, 'we're going to get on well then because I've got 3000 people here and, when it comes to safety, we treat them all like royalty'.

Terry's dedication was more than just about the organisations he led - his commitment extended beyond the job of delivering safe, secure and reliable electricity **to the community**. His attitude was that: 'We are part **of the community**'.

Under Terry's leadership, Energex supported an array of community organisations from the large such as the State Emergency Service, to cultural institutions, and to those more grass-roots in nature.

In addition, Terry reflected on social and well-being issues in broader society and how these must also be issues for people under his leadership. Quietly, Terry went out of his way to ensure support was offered to a number of our people at a time of personal crisis.

As Energex CEO, Terry chaired the Diversity and Inclusion Council, and was behind successes in supporting female engineers within Energex, and more broadly through the UQ Women in Engineering program. Terry was especially proud of his achievements in supporting women and Indigenous apprentices within the business, and personally drove diversity initiatives – long before the importance of 'diversity' gained the recognition that it has today.

With all this being said, the quality that most captures the essence of Terry for me is **integrity**.

Terry led various government-owned organisations through numerous governments of different political persuasions. Each government he would treat with the same courtesy and respect – providing frank and fearless advice and, unfailingly within a short time, earning their confidence.

Similarly, Terry treated each board he reported to with utmost courtesy and respect: providing clear, unbiased, and considered counsel. Perhaps the most important role for any board is to appoint the right CEO, and one in which they have trust. In Terry we had a pearler.

While Terry was an immensely patient, emotionally intelligent and restrained person, from sitting around the board room table with Terry for almost a decade, I did come to learn some of his body language. His knee jiggling indicated frustration – the rate of knee jiggling correlated to his degree of frustration. I often found myself watching for the knee – had the board strayed into operations, were we going down a burrow, was it time to wind up?

But whether it was inside or outside the board room, Terry was a man of his word; ethical to the core and he had an unwavering commitment to doing what was right. These were the qualities

that attracted people to work with him and that Terry sought in people, particularly those who surrounded him closely in his executive management and support teams.

There are many here today who Terry worked with and who he valued and, in turn, valued him. There are too many to name and I run the risk of missing an important few. The tributes that have flowed through from all parts of the Energy Queensland group, the industry and community demonstrate the high regard Terry was held in.

However, I must make one exception, Sue Rose. Throughout his tenure at Energex, Terry and Sue worked together as team within a larger team. Terry was deeply appreciative of Sue's professionalism and commitment in running his busy office where she corralled, organised, intercepted, deflected and responded for, and on behalf of, Terry. Sue's support, loyalty and friendship were qualities that Terry treasured and viewed as key to his ability to do his job well.

Terry leaves a legacy which reaches far beyond leaving the lights on in Queensland.

As a transformational strategic thinker, Terry leaves us with the benefit of his vast knowledge and insights into the future of Australia's energy network.

As a leader of people, Terry leaves us with a shining example of what not good - but great - leaders are made of: commitment, humility and integrity.

As a much-respected colleague and friend, Terry leaves us with a sense of immense loss, but also a sense of inspiration and privilege for the opportunity to have known and worked with him.

Kerryn Newton

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