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# ACROSS *the* LINES

## Fewer Outages Benefitting OtagoNet Customers



*Balclutha.*

This was proving more challenging on OtagoNet due to the way the network is designed, and because of changing work practices to ensure the highest safety standards are maintained, including the requirement for field teams to spend less time working with live lines, Michelle says.

OtagoNet covers a large area from near St Bathans in the North to the Chaslands in the South and inland from the Blue Mountains in the West to Shag Point on the North-East coast.

PowerNet's leadership and planning teams decided to track and monitor outage metrics more closely in the year 2017-18 year. They continued to actively manage outages throughout the 2018-19 year – with Roy Duffin, PowerNet outage planning manager, starting to reduce the tolerance on how long outage requests could be.

Field teams doing maintenance and new connections started looking for ways they could share shutdowns with other teams, such as technical and major projects.

They also used generators more often where it made sense so that customers outages weren't happening at all, or for short periods only.

Michelle says she is very proud of how her teams knuckled down to solve a new industry headwind, and their ability to work in with system control to produce an impressive solution.

The teams recognised that to future-proof the network – so that outages were shorter in the future – there was a need to move faster on automation and new switch improvements.

These improvements mean power outages can be more targeted, meaning fewer customers are affected.

In early April, the 2018-19 numbers for duration and frequency of power outages rolled in showing the active management and future-proofing of OtagoNet was having a positive impact for network consumers, with fewer outages and shorter durations.

"It was an excellent result that gives us a sense of pride, and confidence that we can continue improving reliability of supply to the network," Michelle says.

Customers notice when the lights go out – but they probably don't notice when the lights stay on for longer.

And that's just fine for PowerNet, who are quietly high-fiving significant improvements for OtagoNet's 14,912 customers, with fewer outages and shorter outage durations during the past year.

PowerNet chief operating officer, Michelle Henderson says the Commerce Commission monitors electricity distribution networks on behalf of customers to ensure power outages aren't happening too often, or for too long, on respective networks.