

Far West at forefront of trial for steel power poles

COUNTRY Energy is trialling the use of steel poles in the far west region in an effort to combat the constant damage caused to timber poles by termites.

Regional general manager, Guy Chick said, "Country Energy has chosen to begin the trial of steel poles in the Far West as powerlines in the Wentworth and Balranald district have always been very susceptible to termites, due to the type of soil and environment surrounding the network."

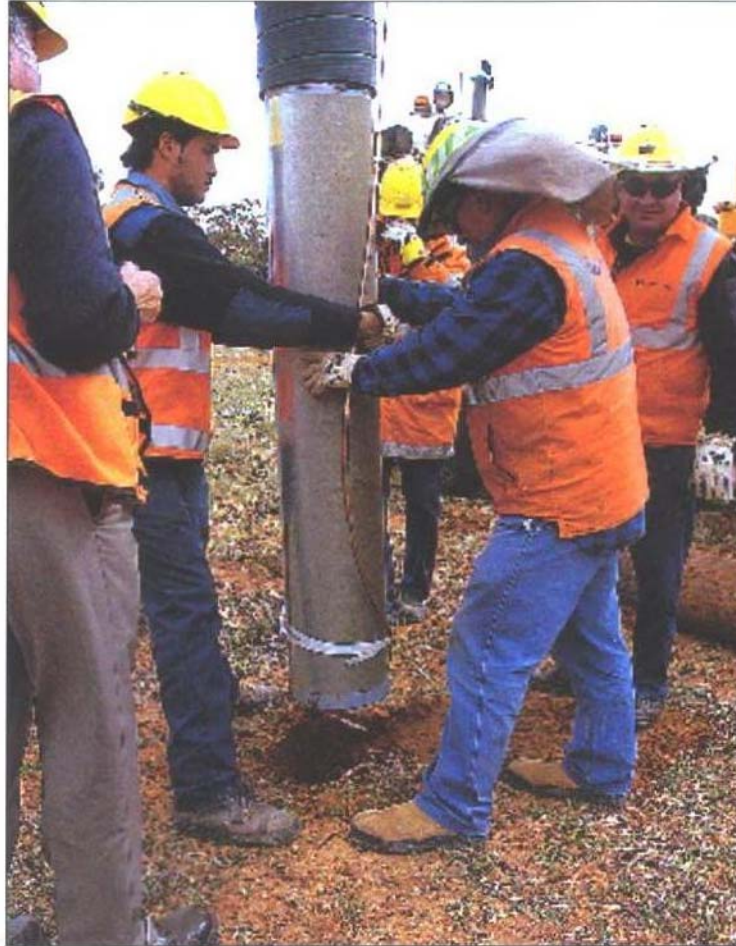
Around 14 timber poles will be replaced with steel poles over the coming months in the Wentworth and Balranald area and on one of the major powerlines north of Coombah, where termites have been found to have a severe effect.

Mr Chick explained that steel has the potential to bring significant benefits to the far west electricity network.

"Combating termites is a priority of this trial, though addressing our reliance on a scarce resource like timber is an issue that is being addressed industry wide.

"We currently use concrete poles in our network, but these can weigh up to four tonnes each making the transport and handling process a lot more intensive," he said.

Country Energy has a strict asset inspection program that follows a four and half year cycle, and ensures that the 30,000 poles



in the southern region of the far west are well maintained.

"Like painting the Harbour Bridge, just as we finish inspecting and repairing them we start the process all over again.

"Steel poles have the potential of reducing this cycle, and making the electricity network more secure for our customers," Mr Chick said.

Country Energy has already

● LEFT: Country Energy workers installing the steel power poles throughout the Far West.

● RIGHT: The completed power poles will hopefully deter termites from attacking the poles.



replaced 10 poles on the Coombah line with steel, and plan to start trialling steel poles in the northern area of the far west region within the next six months.

"We will monitor the use of

steel poles over the year or so, and combined with results from other trials that Country Energy is running, we will then make a decision on utilising steel poles across our network area."