

WESTERN POWER — OUTAGES

786. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Energy:

I refer the minister to the independent review of last Christmas's power outages and Western Power's implementation plan for the recommendations, which contradicts the minister's claim that all recommendations have been addressed.

- (1) Why was Eco Logical Australia, an environmental consultancy, appointed to review the bushfire risk management procedures rather than a local expert with experience in bushfire management?
- (2) As the fire risk and outage repair process is still under review, is the minister satisfied that we will not see extended power outages due to hot weather, as happened last year?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

- (1)–(2) The hairs that get split by the member for Cottesloe! Has he looked at Eco Logical's website? It actually extensively comments on its website about the work it does on bushfire management. The basis of the question is simply reflective of the fact that the member does not do any work. I was the shadow Minister for Energy for five years. There were no circumstances in which I would have come into the chamber and asked a question that was fundamentally not correct. I would have gone and done some work and had a look and known that the basis of the question was wrong. It is just ridiculous.

Eco Logical was chosen by Energy Policy WA through a government procurement process that the Minister for Energy has nothing to do with, and nor should I have anything to do with it. The idea that I should choose which individual companies are hired by government and get taxpayers' money is asking me to be involved in corruption. I know that the member has asked for that before, but I do not do that. I will not breach the purchasing arrangements for government and I will not breach the Public Sector Management Act, and I do not know why the member asks me to do either of those things.

Dr D.J. Honey: Is the process finished?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have said that Western Power is addressing each recommendation, and that is exactly what the member just said was in the report.

Western Power is going through an extensive process of engagement with local governments. It has gone to, I think, six of the local governments in the highest impacted areas in non-metropolitan WA to have one-on-one, face-to-face meetings, and it is having a series of other online engagements with local governments. It is exactly what I have said in the past.

This is the next thing. A couple of weeks ago, 162 000 customers in South Australia were without electricity. Tens of thousands of them were without electricity for over 10 days. The reason for that was lightning strikes. Stuff happens in the electricity system. It is not possible to guarantee it. If the member for Cottesloe were the minister, he would not be able to tell anybody that there would not be a power outage. If he did, he would be telling a lie. I do not understand why the member criticises me for telling the truth. The system in Western Australia, which is one of the most reliable in the world, continues to improve, but that does not mean that there will not be outages. There will be outages because that is the nature of the system. There were 37 outages last Christmas; five or six of those were the result of a car versus a pole. I cannot stop a car hitting a pole. If there is a bushfire, the power will go off. That is just the way the world works, in the same way that when cyclone Seroja hit Kalbarri in the electorate of the member for North West Central, the power went out. That is right; that is what happens. It is time for the member to show some maturity. He has an important job and he is not doing it well.