

WESTERN POWER — OUTAGES

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

I have a supplementary question. Is the minister confident that we will not experience the frequency and length of outages to the same extent as last year due to the fire ban response procedure, if we experience comparable hot weather conditions this year?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

Again, it was a small number. Of the 37 outages, I think four or five related to bushfire management. The idea that changing bushfire management will change the number of outages is a misunderstanding of the report. The member should go back and read Michelle Shepherd's report. Does the member want a briefing? Michelle Shepherd is no longer engaged by the government, but I am sure she would happily sit down with the member and explain what is in the report, because he does not understand it. This is the problem. It is a very complicated system. The member asked me whether the bushfire procedure would stop the issues that occurred last year. The bushfire procedure was a big issue for the member for Darling Range, but it was not a big issue for the member for Dawesville. This is the problem I keep pointing out to the member.

I understand that the member thinks that it was one outage. It was not. There were 37 separate outages. Each one had its own reason. The report shows that Western Power is addressing the issues of each outage, because it was not one issue. It was a whole series of issues and Western Power is addressing each of them. Bushfire management is an important issue, but let me make it clear: one of the Liberal Party's upper house members is asking us about a bushfire that was apparently started by Western Power infrastructure. Nobody wants to have Western Power infrastructure starting bushfires. We have to be careful in the way we manage these things. Imagine the hue and cry if people had their farms burnt down because Western Power infrastructure was re-energised and it caused a bushfire. That is not actually what the member wants, even though he is asking for it.