

STATE BUDGET 2023–24 — WESTERN POWER CONNECTIONS

314. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Energy:

I have a supplementary question.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members! It is an entitlement of a member to ask a supplementary question. I would like it heard in silence.

Ms L. METTAM: What is the minister doing to address the significant backlog of work and blowouts associated with these Western Power connection delays?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

If the member goes back and reads the answer I gave when she asked me the identical question, she will see exactly what has been laid out. I do not understand. The member has asked the same question two weeks in a row and expected a different answer, so I will explain to the member exactly what I said last week. The reason that there are more delays than we would like is that the number of applications has gone from an average of 3 000 a year to 7 000 a year. That is the cause of the problem. We are trying to staff up. As I explained to the member last week, we are hiring a range of additional staffing resources. Western Power has been to the United Kingdom to recruit additional workers. It was able to recruit a number of technical staff, but it was not able to recruit additional engineers. It continues to seek additional engineers because that is the key occupation that is required to resolve this issue. It continues to recruit externally to whatever it can to find additional engineers to execute the projects that are in front of it.

At the same time, as I explained to the member last week, it has reallocated internal resourcing to make sure projects are dealt with as quickly as possible given that the number of applications have more than doubled. In addition to that, I also reminded the member that unlike the former government that stopped training at Western Power, we have not only been training apprentices, which the former government stopped, we have also been providing opportunities for graduate programs, for engineers and others, so that we also build up the local talent. They are the answers that I gave last week. It is not a surprise that the answer I gave today is the same as the one I gave last week. I apologise if the member does not understand the answers that I give but that is not my fault, because everybody else in this chamber understands what I am saying.