

WESTERN POWER — OUTAGES — REVIEW

Statement by Minister for Energy

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Energy) [2.09 pm]: I would like to update the house on the independent review into the Christmas 2021 power outages. As members know, the four-day heatwave from 24 December to 28 December triggered a cluster of power outages across the south west interconnected system. The outages peaked on Boxing Day when approximately 34 000 households and business were without power. As the Minister for Energy, I commissioned this review so that we could get to the heart of what caused these outages and the lessons to be learnt.

The review commenced on 31 January and is led by Michelle Shepherd. Ms Shepherd is a commissioner of the Australian Energy Market Commission with more than 20 years' experience with our state's unique energy system. The review is examining the lead-up to the outages, including Western Power's planning and preventive measures, and it is assessing Western Power's response against industry best practice. The scope of the review includes Western Power's network and operational planning, network design, load forecasting, asset management and maintenance. Areas that were hit by repeat outages or have had a history of power issues will be closely examined. To be very clear, this review is not limited to the metropolitan area; it is considering the entire Western Power network. The review will run for six weeks with the review team working full time. The duration balances the technical nature of the subject matter and the community's desire for answers. I will receive the final report by Monday, 14 March 2022. The report will contain key findings and recommendations, including definitive answers on what caused each outage. The review is totally independent. It is independent of Western Power, independent of Energy Policy WA and independent of the state government. Ms Shepherd has never worked for Western Power, Horizon Power, Synergy or the state government. Ms Shepherd's extensive experience with the SWIS will enable her to promptly get to the heart of the issues at play.

What we do know is that over the Christmas period, the heat affected the network from multiple angles. The extreme hot weather during the days and continued heat in the evening placed considerable stress on mechanical components of the network, then total fire bans and vehicle movement bans delayed restoration. The review will help us to fully understand the lead-up to the outages, Western Power's response and any lessons to be learnt.

I thank Ms Shepherd and her team for agreeing to conduct this review and I look forward to reading the report. I table the terms of reference of the review.

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