

ELECTRICITY — OUTAGES

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

I refer to the government's announcement that it will send residents in some suburbs at risk of suffering a blackout text messages telling them to reduce their energy consumption in an attempt to avoid the widespread blackouts that occurred on the minister's watch last Christmas.

- (1) Considering the minister attributed last year's Christmas outages primarily to unusually high temperatures, can he explain why such a measure is necessary when temperatures for December are predicted to be average for that time of year?
- (2) Why did the minister not do more over the last year to ensure the electricity supply would be sufficient for all Western Australians this Christmas?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

- (1)–(2) I have a copy of an extract from Western Power's 2014 annual report. Can the member remember who was in government at the time? It says, "Together we can beat the peak between 4pm and 8pm" and it shows somebody with their air conditioner on 24 degrees. Here is some marketing collateral from when the member's party was in government. It says, "Reduce your energy use between 4pm and 8pm"—with a dead marsupial inside a wheel. I make it clear: I am not going to kill any marsupials! Here we have a running marsupial inside a wheel. This one says, "Make saving energy your new year's resolution".

Ms S.E. Winton: Can you table that?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If the member wants me to. It says, "Make saving energy your new year's resolution"—a different version of the same ad. This one says, "If it is on standby, it is still running" and "Switch your future".

There is absolutely nothing unusual about telling people to save money and reduce their use. That is exactly what Western Power and Synergy did when the Liberal Party was in government. I agree that we did not run that campaign for a few years. That was probably an error on my behalf, and I apologise to the community for not continuing to remind people of these commonsense activities. I will also let the member know that in January this year, after the Christmas outages, Western Power used the facility that it already had available to it to send text messages to customers in an area within which there was a potential for an outage. Do members know what happened? The community responded to those text messages and outages were avoided. We have simply reminded people, through television ads, of what they can do to make the system more sustainable, reduce carbon pollution and reduce costs, exactly as the Liberal Party did when it was in government.