

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY — MIDWEST

197. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Energy:

I have a supplementary question. Will the minister apologise to the people of the midwest for his systemic failure to provide power?

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hello, members!

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members! There is only one Minister for Energy in this place and he is about to respond.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

I started my answer by doing that. I also made the point that I understand that when people are without power in modern society, it is never convenient. I will also make the point here that it is important for members of Parliament to be honest with their own constituents. Whether it is the member for Cottesloe who falsely claimed there was an outage in his electorate caused by Western Power when he knew it was a private power pole or whether it is any other member blaming Western Power for problems that were not related to the equipment or systems of Western Power, that is not good enough. The community will get better supply only when Western Power does things like it was doing on 14 and 17 March—trying to spend money on improving the systems, like it has done for the people of that area and is now doing even more in the area. It is interesting that the microgrid in Kalbarri worked, and the people of Kalbarri were able to be kept on. The battery in Mullewa performed properly and the people of Mullewa were able to be supported. However, of course, the battery in Mullewa is not a solution of itself. You still need generation.

Again, when commercial businesses go to the wheatbelt and say, “The solution to your power problems is to put a battery in”, they are being sold a false dawn. Again, we understand how difficult it is to supply electricity to these parts of the state for particular reasons. Every time I go and visit these communities, people say the same thing: “We have never had reliable power.” I understand that. That is why we are investing money in making the system better. We still have more work to do, but the community knows, under the leadership of Mark McGowan, this government is doing what it can to improve Western Australia.