

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 478

asked on Tuesday, 19 April 2005

MS STONE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POLICY (MR MICKEL)—

QUESTION:

Will he give an update on the work undertaken by Energex to improve the availability of information about supply status?

ANSWER:

Following the storms of January 2004, ENERGEX carried out a major review of the way the public is kept informed about the extent and expected restoration time on power outages.

Technology at the ENERGEX customer contact centre has been upgraded. This included the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system which now has capacity to handle up to 25,000 callers per hour. This provides callers with useful information about power outages in their local area quickly. Should additional capacity be required, the ENERGEX telephone network has an overflow facility through Telstra's IVR system which is able to receive an additional 75,000 customer calls. The callers are then provided with information from the contact centre advising them to listen to the radio for updates, or call ENERGEX's new priority number for emergencies.

ENERGEX advises that the improvements to the IVR system in the customer contact centre, as reported in the Summer Report Card, has seen;

- 84% of calls answered within the target of 30 seconds with 79% of calls answered within 20 seconds on general enquiries.
- during normal times the average speed of answer for loss of supply queries is below the target of 40 seconds.
- during normal times the average speed of answer for emergency line calls is also below the target of 30 seconds.

ENERGEX established an information centre at the main network control centre, which is staffed during all storms and major power outages, in order to provide detailed and up-to-date information to the media, predominantly the radio stations. The contracting of a local radio station, FM96.5 by ENERGEX was undertaken to ensure that supply interruption details were broadcast, as required, at any time of the year.

Automatic information messages regarding the extent and expected restoration time of major power outages are reported by way of a message which scrolls across the bottom of the television screen on Channel 7 Queensland.

A new information service was developed to ensure that contact centre operators have the most accurate and timely information about power outages. ENERGEX has invested in a wide-ranging training program and provision of specialist communication facilities which allow field staff to provide up-to-date information, such as arrival time to the fault, repair progress, cause and expected time of repair.

The importance of an accurate flow of information from the field as work progresses reinforces ENERGEX's commitment to improving the detail that can be passed onto customers about restoration activities as they happen.

Included in this work was the provision of power outage information on ENERGEX's Internet website, providing immediate feedback regarding power restoration to customers, the media and service providers such as councils.

A new priority telephone number for reporting downed wires and other emergencies was introduced. This number is 13 19 62.

The stand-by and after-hours contact arrangements for contact centre staff were enhanced to increase the speed in which the call centre can utilise its capability should a major event occur out-of-hours. This service is augmented by mutual assistance agreements with Ergon Energy and a private contact centre to reduce the reaction time and immediate emergency call capability.

These initiatives resulted in a major increase in the quantity, detail, accuracy and timeliness of information provided to customers.