

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 503

asked on Wednesday, 20 April 2005

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

QUESTION:

What programs is Energex undertaking to wildlife-proof its overhead network?

ANSWER:

Overhead powerlines form part of the landscape and provide convenient resting spots for wildlife such as birds and bats, and pathways for possums. While this is not a problem most of the time, in some situations the animals can contact two wires simultaneously creating a short circuit, resulting in an interruption to electricity supply to customers. ENERGEX advises wildlife accounts for around 6% of interruptions to supply.

ENERGEX advises that a program of wildlife proofing of overhead powerlines initially concentrated on insulating approximately 3,000 cable terminations to prevent possum related faults in the greater Brisbane, North Coast and South Coast parts of the network. The sites were identified on a zone substation area basis, and prioritised based on the frequency of previous faults. The cost of the program to date is around \$2.3 million. This program is continuing and a further 2,000 sites are scheduled to be insulated. Recent works have occurred on the Gold Coast.

ENERGEX is using a number of strategies to prevent occurrences of wildlife events at specific sites:

- increasing the spacing between overhead wires through change of construction so bats and birds cannot contact two wires simultaneously;
- insulating existing overhead wires with products that can be attached using live line procedures to minimise planned interruptions to customers;
- replacing spans of bare, multiple overhead wires with covered insulated conductor;
- removing specific vegetation adjacent to powerlines which attracts bird or bats; and
- installing deterrents such as orange coloured plastic on overhead wires to make powerlines more visible to birds and bats.

ENERGEX is also about to introduce a new program to wildlife proof major substations to minimise incidents of wildlife (e.g possums, birds and bats) contacting the electricity network. This program will benefit customers by reducing supply interruptions.

ENERGEX will use a new product known as an electrostatic guard. The electrostatic guard is designed to be fitted to exposed electrical components where wildlife could potentially cause insulation failure, resulting in widespread supply interruptions. As well as providing a physical barrier, the guard imparts a low-level electric shock similar to an electric fence to deter the animal away from the electrical equipment without injury.

The program to wildlife proof zone substations will commence in July 2005 with 11 substations initially chosen based on priority and a further 10 under consideration. The budget for this program is just over \$400,000. The initial 11 substations are: Hamilton, Geebung, Lawnton, Redland Bay, Bulimba, Calamvale, Black Mountain, Hope Island, Woodridge, Booval and Kalbar.

ENERGEX's wildlife proofing program on overhead powerlines is being progressively applied to areas where known problems have emerged. To date the program has been very successful, with a 50 percent reduction in possum related outages over the last two years. There has also been a significant reduction in bat and bird problems at those sites that have been wildlife proofed.