

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 735

asked on Tuesday, 24 May 2005

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

QUESTION:

With reference to power connections in the electorate of Gladstone—

- (1) How many domestic connections are waiting to be completed and what is the waiting time?
- (2) How many commercial connections are waiting to be completed and what is the waiting time?

ANSWER:

Queensland's booming population and sustained economic growth has led to an unprecedented demand for Ergon Energy's services throughout regional Queensland, including the Gladstone area.

As the Honourable Member would be aware there is also a national shortage of designers/engineers and skills shortages in many specialised trades and professional callings.

I am advised by Ergon Energy that as of 27 May 2005, there were eight domestic customer connections and seven commercial customer connections waiting to be completed, following acceptance by the respective customers of offers from Ergon Energy to connect supply. For the 2004-05 Financial Year to date Ergon Energy advises approximately 110 customer connections have been completed. The current average time taken by Ergon Energy to complete a domestic and commercial connection is 20 weeks.

Ergon Energy advises that these figures relate to customers in the Gladstone area seeking connection to the network where low voltage infrastructure **is not in place** (i.e. an extension to the network). Ergon Energy advises another electrical contracting firm has been engaged to commence work to reduce customer-work timeframes.

To meet these challenges, Ergon Energy has budgeted for a record \$673 million in capital expenditure in the 2005/06 financial year. This figure includes \$324 million for corporation-initiated works and \$187.6 million specifically for customer-initiated works.

Ergon Energy advises that it has also implemented several initiatives to further improve customer connection time in the central region. These include:

- employing additional design staff in Rockhampton to assist with the current demand being experienced in the Central Region, which includes Gladstone;
- a recently introduced Customer Connections Group in all regions. Its key focus is to respond to customers in a timely manner with a formal offer of connection;
- employing additional trainee designers in the Central region (commencing next month);
- allowing subdividers to undertake their own design and construction works (as of June 2005); and
- improved quoting processes for customers to improve the turn around time for quotes (as of June 2005).