

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 789

asked on Wednesday 25 May 2005

MR LAWLOR ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POLICY (MR MICHEL)—

QUESTION:

What steps are being taken to upgrade Energex infrastructure on the Gold Coast in readiness for the 2005-06 storm season?

ANSWER:

I am advised that as part of its ongoing maintenance program and in readiness for the storm season, ENERGEX has spent \$28.9 million to date in the 2004-05 financial year on vegetation works across its entire network. ENERGEX advises that vegetation works commenced in January 2005 in the Gold Coast area and that approximately 750 kilometers of the network have been completed. ENERGEX has spent over \$2.2 million in 2005 on wildlife proofing controls across its entire network. Recent wildlife proofing works have occurred on the Gold Coast. ENERGEX is using a number of strategies to prevent occurrences of wildlife events at specific sites, including:

- 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 has been working closely with the local Gold Coast branch of Bat Rescue Inc. to modify the overhead power network where flying foxes are most at risk. Over the past two years ENERGEX has undertaken modifications at a number of sites on the Gold Coast, with additional sites identified to be done over the next 12 months or so. ENERGEX advises a number of modifications were made at strategic locations to reduce flying fox contacts, with a corresponding significant drop in power interruptions at those sites.

ENERGEX is commencing a program to wildlife proof zone substations 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 located in the Gold Coast area, Redlands, Sunshine Coast – Gympie, Ipswich and Boonah areas and locations in Brisbane and Pine Rivers.

To enable faster fault location after supply interruptions, line fault indicators have also been installed along 11 kilovolt feeders throughout the network.

ENERGEX advises to cater for growth in electricity demand in the Gold Coast region, ENERGEX has a number of major infrastructure upgrade projects at an estimated cost of around \$51.8 million scheduled for completion before the 2005-06 storm season. I am advised as well as catering for load growth, the upgraded network will provide increased flexibility for faster restoration of supply during storms and provide improved reliability to customers. Works include:

- new substation at Arundel (Stage 1) - anticipated completion by December 2005;
- new substation at Varsity Lakes - anticipated completion by November 2005;
- installation of a new 110/33 kilovolt transformer and a new 33/11 kilovolt transformer at Coomera Substation (Stage 2 works) - anticipated completion by December 2005;
- establish a modular substation at Hope Island and associated feeder works - anticipated completion by December 2005;
- upgrade the Nerang Substation (Stage 1) - anticipated completion by July 2005;
- upgrade of the 33,000 volt feeders at Currumbin - anticipated completion by October 2005.