

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 321

asked on Wednesday, 8 March 2006

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

QUESTION:

With reference to the Tully to Innisfail 275kV powerline –

- (1) Why is the proposed transmission line designed to withstand a basic wind speed of only 220 kilometres per hour when wind speeds measured during *Cyclone Winifred* in 1986 exceed 270 kilometres per hour?
- (2) What type of consideration will be given to compensation for property owners affected by the line?
- (3) Once Powerlink legally resumed land to build the line, how long does it have before it must agree on compensation for landholders and when will payment occur?

ANSWER:

Following the extensive cyclone damage to the existing transmission line through the Wet Tropics it is now time Federal Environment Minister, Ian Campbell provided the final approvals urgently so that the people of Innisfail, Mission Beach and other towns in the region can have a safe, secure and reliable bulk power supply to underpin the re-development of the region.

I commend Powerlink and Ergon Energy for their tireless efforts to repair the coastal route which enabled bulk power to be restored to Innisfail just four days after Cyclone Larry struck. However the line through the Wet Tropics area remains largely inaccessible and crews have still not been able to fully assess the extent of the damage, although initial inspections indicate significant problems.

To overcome this lack of a back-up supply, Powerlink and Ergon Energy are currently installing a temporary supply for Innisfail to provide at least some measure of security and reliability. But this can not be considered a long term fix by any stretch of the imagination.

The facts are that the region needs a new transmission line. Without this line, there is limited capability to provide reliable and secure bulk electricity supply to Innisfail, Cairns and other towns in the region, in the event of any other transmission line in the region being out of service due to breakdown or maintenance. Rather than applying more “band-aids” to the aged, and now extensively cyclone damaged line from Kareeya, we need to focus on moving ahead with the new transmission line, which has already been approved along a coastal route.

I understand the Premier met with the Prime Minister on 3 March about the need to expedite urgent approval by the Commonwealth following the impact from the cyclone to enable Powerlink to provide the new Tully to Innisfail powerline to ensure North Queensland has a safe, secure and reliable bulk power supply to underpin the re-development of the region.