

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 20

asked on Tuesday, 6 February 2007

MR KNUTH ASKED THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND ENERGY (MR WILSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the major power outage which occurred in Chermside on 22 January 2007 and which effectively closed the Northern Regional Office Complex in which many State and Commonwealth Government departments lease office space and as businesses and departments within the complex could not obtain any information on likely power restoration times from the Energex hotline number and as the only information available was inaccurate pre-recorded information –

What will the Government do to ensure that the level of resources allocated by Energex to customer information services is improved significantly, particularly to business customers who face the prospect of significant commercial losses due to power outages?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his Question.

ENERGEX has advised that an interruption to supply occurred on 22 January 2007 due to the failure of a joint on one of the 11 kilovolt feeders from the Chermside Zone Substation. Approximately 250 customers were affected by this incident.

From 8.30am on 22 January 2007, ENERGEX received reports from customers of flickering and dim lights. Between 8.30am and 8.52am, all calls were personally answered by ENERGEX's Loss of Supply staff to gather as much information as possible about the incident. At 8.45am a customer reported a possible backhoe 'dig-in' on the cable, but this report later proved to be incorrect. After assessing these calls, it was determined that the most likely reason for the incident was a failed joint on the 11 kilovolt overhead section of the feeder. An ENERGEX crew was dispatched at 8.52am and arrived on-site at 9.14am.

A patrol of the network identified the failure of a joint at an 11 kilovolt air break switch. Full supply was restored to all customers by 9.20am.

At 8.52am, a recorded message was placed on the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system stating that ENERGEX was aware of an interruption affecting parts of Chermside, Kedron and Wavell Heights in Brisbane North, the cause was unknown and that crews were patrolling. Once the crew arrived on-site at 9.14am the reason for the interruption was identified very quickly and full supply was restored within six minutes. Because restoration of supply could be effected in such a short time, updating of the IVR system was considered unnecessary.

Thus, from 8.30am to 8.52am, no information on the fault was available as it was being assessed based on manual answering of telephone queries. From 8.52am to 9.14am there was an accurate message on the IVR system providing all the information that was available, and the fault was repaired and supply restored by 9.20am.

It is of course important to ensure that accurate information is presented to enquirers. This information is frequently unavailable until field crews attend the scene of the fault and can assess it. On this occasion, repairs were effected within six minutes of that assessment and it does not appear that there was any significant shortfall in the provision of information to customers.

ENERGEX has very significantly upgraded its customer connection and fault line response services since the Electricity Distribution and Service Delivery report was provided to the Queensland Government in 2004. These improvements include:

- Staff call handling capacity has improved significantly from 10,000 calls in January 2004 to approximately 20,000 calls now.
- Customers will now not receive a busy tone when calling the Contact Centre.
- Increasing its IVR call handling capacity from approximately 40,000 calls in January 2004 to approximately 400,000 calls now.