

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1731

asked on Wednesday 12 November 2008

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

QUESTION:

- (1) For each year since 2004-05 (separated by region) how many power poles administered by Ergon and/or Energex have been identified as requiring repair and/or replacement?
 - (2) How many power poles in (1) have been repaired and/or replaced?
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ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the Question and draw his attention to statements I recently made in State Parliament after some of the most violent, consecutive storms on record hit south east Queensland and other parts of the state.

The response from Energex and Ergon Energy was magnificent and I publicly acknowledged the professionalism and dedication of the field crews, the staff in contact centres taking calls for help, in control centres and out in the hubs – planning and delivering what can only be described as an unbelievable recovery effort.

As a resident of the north-western suburbs, I personally witnessed many Energex workers working on for many hours, knowing that their own families and homes were without power or flooded. Words cannot convey my admiration for what they did. They put the needs of others above their own.

The massive size of the task they achieved is hard to comprehend. Around 365,000 homes and businesses had lost power since the first storm struck on Sunday. By Friday morning, just 60 homes were awaiting reconnection.

An Energex worker best summed up the extreme nature of Sunday's storm when he said: it was the worst storm he'd encountered in over a quarter of a century.

More than 6,000 lightning strikes were recorded at the height of the storm with wind gusts up to 130 km/h, heavy rain and hail.

It was a potent mix and it cut a devastating path of destruction, bringing down hundreds of power lines.

Ergon Energy crews also worked around the clock repairing power lines and restoring power on the Darling Downs, the South Burnett, the Fraser Coast, and Central Queensland.

It's not a nine to five job, it can be hazardous and for that alone, we owe them our thanks.

We've all learnt a lesson that when summer storms strike, it's not a matter of if we lose power but when, and it was good to know that Energex and Ergon were ready for action, ready to tackle whatever nature threw at the state's electricity network.

That's simply because good governments, responsible governments, plan for the future.

In relation to the Member's Question, Energex conducts inspections of its power poles over a five year cycle. Ergon Energy inspects its power poles over a four year cycle. And that's no mean feat when you consider the combined networks have around 1.6 million power poles that carry electricity to homes, businesses and industry across a vast distance of more than one million square kilometres.

Numbers of poles inspected by both electricity networks over the years in question are publicly available on the organisations' websites and I encourage the Member to visit both websites for timely information on the networks' summer preparedness plans.

In relation to replacement, I can advise that significant investment in our electricity network has resulted in 21,841 poles being replaced across the State's 190,000 kilometres of electricity network in the past four years alone.