

Question on Notice
No. 1524
Asked on Friday, 2 December 2022

MR S KNUTH ASKED MINISTER FOR ENERGY, RENEWABLES AND HYDROGEN AND MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS AND PROCUREMENT (HON M DE BRENNI)

With reference to an increase in power outages in the Tinaroo area recently with 15 outages over a two-and-a-half-month period, lasting on average just under 2 hours and this is causing disruption to businesses along with cutting off elderly residents in the area—

Will the Minister outline what strategies are being put in place to eliminate the risk these increased outages cause to those living in the Tinaroo area?

ANSWER

Ergon Energy Network, a subsidiary business of Energy Queensland, is committed to delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity supply to regional Queensland communities, including the Tinaroo area.

Due to a fault with electrical equipment on the distribution network which supplies the Tinaroo area, a temporary reconfiguration of the network was carried out, which contributed to longer duration power outages.

Ergon Energy Network has observed an increase in the number of birds coming into contact with overhead powerlines in this area. When the birds come into contact with the powerlines, this causes the conductors to clash, triggering a power outage due to systems operating to protect the network and ensure the safety of the community.

In the local network's normal state, prior to the temporary reconfiguration, the protection systems operating when these bird related incidents occur would, in most cases, momentarily interrupt the power supply and automatically reconnect supply after a period of around five seconds. During the period the temporary reconfiguration was in place, if the electricity supply was interrupted in these circumstances, power remains off until an Ergon Energy crew attends site, carries out a patrol of the high voltage powerline and completes the required work to restore supply.

Recently, Ergon Energy has completed works to bring back the electricity network configuration to its normal arrangement. Ergon Energy is also progressively installing high visibility flags and markers on the powerlines to increase their visibility to birds, with this work ongoing as affected parts of the network are identified.

In an endeavour to increase the reliability of power supply to the Tinaroo area in the longer term, Ergon Energy is progressing a \$98,000 project to further reduce the number of bird related incidents on the network in the Tinaroo area. This project will involve adjustments to around 42 power poles, raising the height of the centre phase conductor only. This work will increase the separation between conductors, with the aim to reduce the likelihood of conductors clashing due to bird strikes. Ergon Energy is currently reviewing its scheduling of these works and is aiming to fast track the project to ensure improved reliability of supply to the community.

Ergon Energy is also carrying out further investigations on other sections of the electricity network in the area to identify any secondary issues which may be contributing to the reduced level of reliability for Tinaroo.

Ergon Energy Network advises that in 2022, the capital investments made in renewal and replacement of aged assets and in improving the network in Tinaroo and the network that supplies it upstream to Atherton, including the substation, totals \$1.4 million. Maintenance of existing infrastructure including inspection, testing and vegetation management in the greater Atherton area totals \$1.5 million for 2022.