

WESTERN POWER — SOLAR INSTALLATIONS — REGIONS

589. Hon JAMES HAYWARD to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the installation of solar systems at rural and remote residential properties.

- (1) Is the minister aware of regulations introduced by Western Power in February 2022 that require solar installers to reduce the capacity of grid connections in certain circumstances in rural and remote locations?
- (2) How many complaints has Western Power received in relation to those regulations since they have been introduced?
- (3) What is the real-life impact of a residential property being limited to a 20-ampere circuit breaker in terms of the ability to use multiple appliances simultaneously?
- (4) Is the minister concerned that rural and remote customers are being disincentivised to install solar systems as a result of system capacity limitations that do not exist in urban areas?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Energy.

- (1) Western Power has not changed the supply allocation or grid capacity.
- (2) Western Power has received seven complaints related to 2022 technical rule changes that have introduced a requirement for the installation of main switch circuit-breakers in certain circumstances.
- (3) The standard electrical supply allocation for rural connections is 32 amperes, single phase. Some rural customers have a total of 40 amperes, split over two phases. This is substantially more than the actual maximum demand used for most homes, particularly given that there is usually some diversity of usage of household appliances at any given time.

Consumers wanting to increase their load should firstly make an assessment against the standard connection service capability and the electrical infrastructure installed for their home. If the set-up is inadequate, the Australian Standard Wiring Rules (AS/NZS 3000) specify how to manage site maximum demand, including the use of a circuit-breaker main switch.

- (4) Although the supply allocation has not changed, the requirement for a main switch circuit-breaker is triggered when a new circuit is added, such as when solar panels are installed. The Minister for Energy has asked Western Power to assess the opportunities, risks and consequences of alternative options to adapt to the changing energy needs of customers and is expecting an update later this year.