

TELECOMMUNICATION OUTAGES

13. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I refer to widespread power blackouts in my electorate of Central Wheatbelt, the goldfields and Perth hills in January, which resulted in the complete loss of power and, in some cases, water, fuel supply and telecommunications for multiple days.

- (1) Has the Minister for Emergency Services briefed the Premier on the unacceptable risk to lives and communities as a result of telecommunications failures and lack of access to 000 that occurred during this prolonged outage?
- (2) When will this government deploy more standalone power systems to the wheatbelt to ensure that our communities are not faced with another summer of sweltering heat, with no power, fuel, water or mobile connection?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question. As I said in my earlier comment, we will obviously review the situation with respect to those outages and continue to learn from them. Over the last seven years, under the guidance of the former Minister for Energy, Western Power has been bringing to bear many microgrids and standalone systems as part of the overall effort to build resilience into the system and to help those, as I said, who are edge-of-grid and experiencing unreliable power as a result of that. In addition to that, I note that the member mentioned the impact on telecommunications. That is fundamentally a question for the federal government to resolve, although I note that it has engaged Hon Alannah MacTiernan to review the Optus outage and the impact that had on communities. I am sure that will be considered as part of that review.

We will certainly stand ready to work with the commonwealth to make sure that we have much more resilient telecommunication systems. In particular, we want to work with Telstra to understand why it did not have backup systems for its transmission towers and why its systems were not more resilient in the face of a catastrophic loss of power, as we saw in that particular situation, but we will continue to make sure that we work with the commonwealth and work with Telstra to ensure, to the best we can, that the telecommunications in those regional areas in these situations is much more resilient.