

WESTERN POWER — OUTAGES — MIDWEST

**333. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:**

I refer to the major power blackout in the midwest on 14 March for over five hours.

- (1) Can the minister please explain the cause of the power outage that affected around 60 000 people in Geraldton, Dongara, Northampton, Mullewa and surrounding communities?
- (2) Can the minister please advise the current status of Mungarra power station and whether the facility was utilised during the power outage?

**Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:**

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

- (1) Western Power was undertaking planned work on the transmission network that supplies some communities and industry in the midwest region on Tuesday, 14 March. To safely complete this essential maintenance, it required the region north of Three Springs to be “islanded” from the main network and supplied via Synergy’s gas generator located at Mungarra. Western Power has used this island approach regularly to manage outages and it involves significant planning and collaboration with the Australian Energy Market Operator, Synergy and transmission customers to maintain power supply. During the islanding operation, a protection device tripped at the Walkaway substation, which isolated part of the network at 4.50 am. This fault caused the generators at Mungarra to become unstable and trip, resulting in the power outage experienced by communities in the midwest region. Western Power took a multi-pronged approach to progressively restore power, including recalling transmission lines that had been de-energised to enable planned maintenance and collaborating with Synergy to restart the generators at Mungarra. Areas of the network that are supported locally by microgrid and battery energy storage systems had minimal disruptions.
- (2) The Mungarra generators are currently operational and the midwest is again islanded from the main network to enable the planned maintenance to resume. The planned works are expected to be completed by the end of next week. Yes, the facility was used in the restoration strategy for the midwest.

I note that this answer was correct as at Thursday, 16 March 2023.