

WESTERN POWER — SOLAR INSTALLATIONS — REGIONS

750. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to Western Power's supply allocation of 32 amps for single-phase rural residential properties in WA versus 63 amps for cities and towns in WA.

- (1) Prior to and up to February 2022, what direct communication did Western Power undertake with regional solar and renewable energy suppliers regarding the application of compulsory circuit-breakers on rural properties for any switchboard upgrade, or new installation of household solar panels?
- (2) Noting that the minister has stated that rural properties can apply for upgraded supply allocations, what costs are applicable to these applications?
- (3) Does that minister concede that rural customers are now being asked to pay Western Power a supply upgrade charge in order to receive the same supply allocation that is available to city customers at no cost?

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) Communications regarding the changes in rules included direct emails to approximately 5 000 electrical contractors, industry workshops for electrical contractors, and articles in industry publications. Prior to this, electrical contractors had been required to apply to Western Power or Horizon Power when a customer sought to increase their load above the existing supply allocation. This requirement has been regularly reiterated in communications. In addition, industry bodies and publications provide significant coverage of changes to the Australian Standards that impact the industry such as the 2018 AS/NZS 3000 wiring rules changes, which included the introduction of requirements for circuit-breakers on new or altered sub-main circuits.
- (2) Customers can engage an electrical contractor to assess their existing load and usage. In most household cases, electrical contractors can rebalance load across phases correctly, to ensure the service draws at or under the supply allocation. If necessary, electrical contractors can apply to increase the supply allocation. The cost of this is individualised and is dependent on factors such as the existing arrangement and the supply needs of the customer. As the supply allocation has not changed, this would be necessary only when a customer was adding new load or had previously added load exceeding their supply allocation without applying to the network operator per the requirements.
- (3) No. City customers in the south west interconnected system have paid for the supply allocation they receive.