

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY — MULLEWA

8. Hon RICK MAZZA to the minister representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to ongoing power outages in Mullewa, a town without an alternative supply of backup power, which jeopardises the town's vaccines, medications, food and mobile telecommunications.

- (1) Is the minister aware of the ongoing power outages in Mullewa that force the dumping of vaccines, medicines and food?
- (2) If yes to (1), why has this problem persisted for so long?
- (3) How many power outages have there been in Mullewa over the past five years?
- (4) What is being done to address Mullewa's ongoing power outage problem to ensure that it does not keep happening?
- (5) When can Mullewa residents expect to have their ongoing power outage problem solved?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The minister is aware of outages in Mullewa.
- (2) The causes of outages in Mullewa can be attributed largely to lightning, wildlife and vegetation, which are outside Western Power's control. The recent outages can be attributed to strong winds in the area, which are common in the area for this time of year, blowing rubbish and debris into powerlines on the long feeder lines that service the area. Many of these outages were complicated by total fire ban and vehicle movement ban conditions, preventing Western Power from completing repairs and patrols that would have reduced outage times. Although the December period was particularly difficult, it does not reflect the experience throughout the rest of the year in Mullewa. Prior to these outages, only three outages were experienced in 2018, with the longest just over four hours.
- (3) Between 1 February 2014 and 31 January 2019, there were 414 outages in the Mullewa area. It is important to note that not every customer experiences every power outage. Each customer has experienced on average 9.5 interruptions a year.
- (4) Western Power is making a significant \$7 million investment in the Mullewa region between 2017 and 2022, with approximately 500 pole replacements and 800 pole reinforcements, as well as silconing 2 300 poles. This is expected to reduce the risk of faults and improve reliability. Western Power is also reviewing the location of generators to help reduce the length of outages. Western Power also met with stakeholders, including the City of Greater Geraldton, on 7 February to discuss reliability in the region.
- (5) Mullewa's reliability will continue to be monitored and Western Power will continue to evaluate further investment options in this region, including potential opportunities for standalone power systems.