

POWER POLES, RURAL AND REGIONAL AREAS

747. Mr M.G. House to the Minister for Energy

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the poor and deteriorating condition of many of the power poles in rural regional areas?
- (2) Is the Minister aware of the number of fires that have started this season due to the lack of maintenance of poles and power lines in rural and regional areas?
- (3) Are there any plans to upgrade poles in rural and regional areas?
- (4) Has any costing work been undertaken to replace and upgrade poles in rural and regional areas?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

- (1) I have been advised by Western Power that all power poles are inspected and tested for structural integrity on a four-yearly cycle, in accordance with industry standards. The testing methods used by Western Power are the same as those used in other States in Australia. Where necessary poles are reinforced or replaced. Generally, of the poles tested each year, one to 2 per cent are found to be in need of replacement.
- (2) Of the fires which have occurred this season involving Western Power infrastructure, the majority are still under investigation and the cause is not yet determined. Others have started because of lightning, conductors clashing in high winds, pollution or because trees on private property have gone into the mains. It is not safe to assume that, even if the network is involved, the cause is related to lack of maintenance.
- (3) As already outlined, poles are continually replaced as part of Western Power's ongoing maintenance program. In addition a special reinforcement program for poles in the Koorda area is currently being undertaken. Western Power is also embarking on a four-year program of siliconising insulators across the SWIS to mitigate the incidence of pole top fires.
- (4) Western Power will spend \$27.8m maintaining distribution poles, lines and associated infrastructure in country areas on the South West Interconnected System, this financial year. \$3 million will be spent on reinforcing poles in the North Central Wheatbelt over the next three years.