WESTERN POWER — SUPPLY ALLOCATION

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

I will try again. 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, and to public comments by the minister saying that the action is due to safety concerns.

(1) How many regional and rural properties in Western Australia have had their higher circuit breakers replaced with 32-amp circuit breakers since February 2022?

(2) How many regional and rural properties in Western Australia still have circuit breakers that allow for a current above 32 amps to be received?

(3) If the reason for the change is safety, how quickly will the government change all regional and rural households to the restricted 32-amps limit?

(4) What is the exact risk to regional households of receiving 63 amps rather than 32 amps, and what is the measure of damage that has occurred over the many decades that regional households have been receiving more than 32 amps?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I provide the following response based on information provided to me by the Minister for Energy.

Customers who have opted to maintain the default 32-amp connection are now required to install a circuit breaker for protection at their main circuit board. Customers who wish to upgrade their connection can do so, which has always been the case.

(1)–(2) Western Power does not collect information on the exact construction of a customer's main switchboard and expects electrical contractors and their customers to follow the Australian Standards and the requirements of the WA Electrical Requirements and the Western Australian Service and Installation Requirements.

(3) The requirement is triggered for new connections to the grid, and when a new circuit is added to already connected premises, including when solar systems or electric vehicle charging equipment is connected. Installation of 32-amp circuit breakers is dependent on the customer choosing to upgrade their systems.

(4) A mains switch circuit breaker is designed to provide overload protection if the connection service capacity on a phase is exceeded for an extended period. This prevents customers' equipment and distribution transformers from overloading, which can risk longer outages and equipment damage.