

WESTERN POWER, MID WEST AND KALBARRI

1232. Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS to the Minister for Energy:

I refer the minister to my grievance of 20 March and statement of 18 September regarding Western Power facilities in the mid west and the power problems experienced by the township of Kalbarri.

- (1) Given that more than six months have elapsed since my initial grievance, why has no action been taken to investigate the problems?
- (2) Is the minister aware that the last Western Power employee has been withdrawn from Kalbarri and that basic maintenance functions will be performed by Western Power officers who will be required to take a four-hour round trip from Geraldton?
- (3) Will the minister ensure that a qualified, accredited electrician with Western Power expertise will be available in the town to repair and service minor and medium breakdowns in the power supply, and, if not, why not?

Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:

- (1)-(3) This is a vast State with a large electricity network. I shall endeavour to answer the question bearing in mind that I did not receive notice of this matter.

Mr J.P.D. Edwards: I have raised a grievance.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: This Government is spending almost three times as much on the maintenance of the regional electricity system as the previous Government. Furthermore, it will spend \$950 million over the next four years on upgrading the transmission of the distribution system in the south west interconnected system.

If I recall correctly from the briefing I had at the time of the member's grievance, I was advised and I advised him that, due to circumstances regarding one individual, the number of linespeople in Kalbarri was reduced to one. That was not sustainable for conducting operations. Many of the faults that affected Kalbarri were closer to Geraldton on the network. It was therefore more efficient and effective for Western Power to deal with the Kalbarri faults by utilising the services from Geraldton. I have always been advised by Western Power that the number of positions for linespeople in the regions has not been reduced under this Government. Nevertheless, I have received information to the effect that sometimes it is difficult for Western Power to recruit people to positions. I think that is the outcome of insufficient attention to training over many years in the past. I hope that I have answered the member for Greenough's questions. If he would like to follow up any details I have not covered, I will get that information for him from Western Power.