

**ELECTRICITY — UNDERGROUND POWER**

*Statement by Minister for Energy*

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Energy)** [12.13 pm]: I am pleased to inform the house of another milestone in the Cook government's work to deliver underground power to Western Australians. The final two projects of the state underground power program are now underway, signalling the imminent conclusion of that program after more than 25 years in operation. The state underground power program has seen 100 000 properties benefit from over 100 undergrounding projects. The final two projects are Maylands Central and South Lake East. Construction is well underway. The program is one of four undergrounding programs in existence and Western Power is consolidating these down to two programs. The state underground power program and the network renewal undergrounding program pilot are being replaced by the targeted underground power program, or TUPP. This new program will continue the work of the state underground power program, with some important improvements. The TUPP will target projects in the oldest areas of the network, where the above-ground infrastructure is most in need of replacement. This will maximise the reliability benefit of underground projects, but it also helps maximise the financial contribution that Western Power can make. It also will increase Western Power's capacity for undergrounding, from an average of 4 000 to 12 000 properties a year across the first four years. The TUPP will change the way the state government funds undergrounding projects. State government funding will be offered on a tiered basis, informed by socio-economic indicators. That means the state government will provide greater support where it is needed most. Western Power has secured agreement from nine local governments to participate in the TUPP. Construction of the first project in Bassendean north is set to begin in May 2024. The new TUPP means we can offer underground power to more Western Australian households at a lower cost. The network-driven approach of the TUPP will be complemented by retrospective undergrounding projects. This will allow areas, outside of the network priority list, to receive underground power via a proposal from their local government. This dual-pronged approach allows us to offer underground power to more Western Australian households, all the while getting better value for taxpayers and property owners.