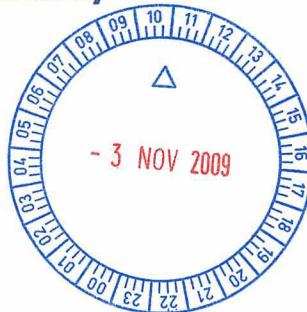


**Inquiry Electricity Transmission and Distribution Management by
Name: Western Power and Horizon Power**

Date; 30th October 2009

Submitted by; Robert Norman McGuinness



PUBLIC

Dear committee Members,

This year we experienced the worst day of our lives. On Saturday the 14th of February 2009 a Western power pole fell over from structural failure, into a nearby Forest Products Commission pine plantation, which then started a bushfire in the area of Ferndale / Balingup in the Southwest of the state. The following day, Sunday the 15th, we stayed & defended our property with volunteer fire fighters from the front of the fire. Unfortunately we lost a large shed, boat, contents, fencing, numerous trees, we had to sell our cattle the next day as all pasture was lost in the fire and very nearly lost our house. The damage cost is approx \$140.000.00.

The pole that had caused the fire had recently passed inspection on the 9th January 2009, even when it had been found to be infested by white ants and only approx 50 mm of solid wood around the pole to keep it upright. There is a full report on this pole by energy safety. Most of these power poles along this spur line are approx 60 years old and are well overdue for replacement and if any fail this will certainly start another bushfire in this area as it is saturated in pine plantations owned by Forest Products Commission.

Western Power Corporation's maintenance program obviously needs overhauling regarding pole integrity and should be monitored by a third party.

Recently I carried out my own inspection along this power line and found the main line caught up in Forest Products Commission pine trees this was witnessed by Mr. Ross Reid from energy safety Bunbury office. The trees were lopped about 3 weeks later and the line was freed.

About 5 weeks later I thought I would check on this line again as it has pine trees growing underneath it. I found the line to be hanging up in the pines again. I then notified Donnybrook / Balingup shire president Mr. Steve Dilley who also witnessed the incident. There are also other areas that have pine trees growing within 2 meters of this power line, which I have reported but they are still standing.

I feel that Forest Products Commission must be made to take responsibility for their trees growing along power lines as obviously nothing is being done to maintain safety from outages and bushfires.

Since Western Power Corporation's privatization power outages have been a common occurrence in this area and over the past 12 years we have made very good use of a generator for up to 26 hours during one particular outage.

I have lived in this area for 20 years and operate 2 businesses. My partner is currently undergoing counseling from the trauma of this bushfire and we are not looking forward this summers fire season, so we have decided to sell the property and close the businesses and move on. We are currently looking at property in Denmark on the South Coast and we are about to sign an offer on a property with underground power and no pine plantations nearby.

I hope this committee can improve the way Western Power Corporation and Forest Products Commission conduct their business in the future, as this would improve the quality of resident's lives in regional areas.

Looking forward to your report on this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert McGuinness