



City of Cockburn

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Logan K. Howlett, JP

PUBLIC



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14 October, 2009

Hon Max Trenorden, MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Public Administration
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr Trenorden

INQUIRY INTO WOODEN POWER POLES

I thank you for your invitation requesting comments on any issues the City of Cockburn has had with electricity transmission and distribution management by Western Power, particularly in relation to wooden power poles.

In brief, the following issues and observations can be cited in regard to Western Power's service delivery and their wooden power pole network:-

- There have been and continue to be, particularly long and unpredictable lead times and high costs associated with effecting the re-location of power poles and providing new power poles by Western Power. This has had a detrimental impact on City of Cockburn roadwork programs that have time and budget constraints and expectations from the community in terms of service delivery.
- Western Power's authority to selectively take street lighting installations that have been paid for by local authorities as their own assets and not taking those installations that meet standards, but not their requirements.
- Wooden power and stay poles are not frangible and it is noticeable that they are being placed in potentially hazardous locations for motorists, particularly close to the road edge and at intersections.
- Western Power's requirement that all power and lighting pole installations and relocations required by local authorities be fully paid for by the authority. There is no cost reduction for wooden power poles and

- other associated plant that is appreciably deteriorated/depreciated and newly replaced.
- Western Power's requirement to underground their power cables at full local authority cost whenever the opportunity arises in situations where the local authority needs to modify Western Power plant to safely accommodate roadworks, no matter how minor.
- Western Power's practice of referring all public requests for undergrounding power to the local authority as the responsible authority for this to happen, even for high voltage transmission power lines.
- Where underground power in Rural / Special rural areas has been installed there is a problem with the green domes used on the verge. These melt when fire comes into contact with them, leaving live wires open to water and possible electrocution when fire fighters are trying to suppress verge fires.
- Fire prevention maintenance around the base of timber poles and green domes is of a poor standard in all but residential streets where most have manicured lawns surrounding them.
- The use of treated poles does cause concern as they seem to burn quicker than 'plain' poles.
- Western Power are encouraging residents to install solar power systems that have the capacity to be feed back into the mains grid. Western Power have a process is in place which requires a notice to be installed on the meter box however this is of no use when a wild bushfire occurs and poles or domes are burnt. It is recommended that where solar power is installed in rural or semi rural developments that some form of identification is shown on the front gates/fences; the same as is done with electric fences.

Please accept these comments as a basis for furthering your inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Logan Howlett".

LOGAN K. HOWLETT, JP
MAYOR

LH:VB