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Contact: Gus Riggs 08 9326 4560

13 November 2012



Mr Tony O'Gorman
Chair
Community Development and Justice Standing Committee
Parliament House
GPO Box A11
PERTH WA 6837

Dear Mr O'Gorman

Questions on Notice & Supplementary Information

I refer to the Committee's correspondence of 26 October 2012 regarding Western Power's evidence before the Committee.

Please find attached Western Power's responses to the questions taken on notice during the Corporation's testimony before the Committee.

I have also attached supplementary information to provide further details on a question I answered on the number of bushfires attributed to Western Power.

Yours sincerely

Paul Italiano
Chief Executive Officer

Connecting people with energy

363 Wellington Street Perth WA 6000
GPO Box L921 Perth WA 6842
enquiry@westernpower.com.au

T 13 10 87 | F (08) 9225 2660
TTY 1800 13 13 51 | TIS 13 14 50
westernpower.com.au

Electricity Networks Corporation
ABN 18 540 492 861

Community Development and Justice Standing Committee Questions on Notice

1. In 2006-07 did Western Power pole inspections show problems with poles 42 and 43 and was any action taken to fix them? What was the date of the latest inspection of these poles before the 2009 Toodyay bushfire? (pp 3 & 4)

Answer:

Poles 42 and 43 were inspected on 8 May 2007.

The 2006-07 pole inspections recorded that both poles met Western Power's serviceability criteria at that time which stated that the measured thickness of sound wood must be greater than or equal to 50mm at 100mm above and 100mm below ground level.

Pole 42 measured 120mm at 100mm below ground and 120mm at 100mm above ground. Pole 43 measured 120mm at 100mm below ground and 130mm at 100mm above ground.

No action was required in relation to either pole.

2. How many wooden poles does Western Power currently have in bushfire-prone areas? (p3)

Answer: Across Western Power's network there are currently 41,025 wood poles in extreme fire risk zones and 125,586 wood poles in high fire zones.

3. Subsequent to the 2007 Toodyay bushfire, was there an inspection of the whole Western Power infrastructure in the Toodyay area? (p5)

Answer:

In July 2007 there was an inspection of all infrastructure in the maintenance zone in which the fire occurred. Subsequent inspections occurred over the whole of the Toodyay shire from November 2008 to June 2011 (consistent with our four yearly inspection cycle).

4. How many of Western Power's wooden poles failed during 2011-12? (p5)

Answer: In 2011-12 Western Power experienced a total 868 wood pole failures across its transmission and distribution network. This included:

- 447 assisted wood pole failures
- 421 unassisted wood pole failures

Please note the figures above are based on ongoing investigations and the classifications may change as new information becomes available.

5. How many two-person pole inspection crews does Western Power have? (p6)

Answer: Western Power has engaged three contract companies who (as of October 2012) provide a combined total of 48 x two person crews for bundled distribution and transmission wood pole inspections.

6. After the 2009 Toodyay bushfire, was a power line (T303?) realigned? (p8)

Answer: The damaged sections of T303 feeder were rebuilt and repaired along the original alignment of the T303 feeder. Additional new poles were added as well as relocating some replacement poles to new locations along the same alignment in those damaged sections to comply with the standards of the time.

7. Does Western Power have an alternative version of how the 2009 Toodyay fire might have been started, other than from its own infrastructure? (p13)

Answer: There are other possible causes of the fire, including arson, accidental ignition by a spark from a passing train or vehicle (such as a trail bike) or a discarded cigarette. Western Power has not been able to establish on the balance of probabilities that any of these was the cause of the fire.

8. The current backlog for replacement of distribution wood poles, given that in December 2010, 4,491 poles required replacement [Legislative Council Question on Notice number 43, 17 February 2011]? (p20)

Answer: Over the AA3 period Western Power has committed to reinforcing or replacing more 369,000 poles.

In 2012 Western Power amended its pole inspection criteria to align with the recommendations of EnergySafety. As a result Western Power has committed to treat every pole over 25 years of age with either reinforcement or replacement. Consequently, there were more than 423,000 poles requiring treatment as of 30 June 2012.

This exceeds Western Power's current treatment capacity. To respond to this challenge Western Power prioritises all pole remediation work based on risk. The highest risk poles are addressed first, with an emphasis on poles in high and extreme bushfire zones.

Western Power is on schedule to replace or reinforce more than 62,000 poles in 2012/13 and will continue to increase the rate of treatment over AA3 and beyond.

Supplementary Information – Transcript (Inquiry into the State's Preparedness for This Year's Fire Season)

On page 11 of the transcript for the evidence taken on 24 October 2012, Western Power Chief Executive Officer, Mr Paul Italiano, in reply to a question from the Chairman, said out of the 5800-odd fires recorded in the last bushfire season, 35 were attributed to activities in relation to the Western Power network.

The following supplementary information provides further information on the above-mentioned data.

The 35 bushfires incidents included such things as pole top fires and wires down and are detailed in table below. An additional 26 incidents related to external objects that came into contact with the network such as birds, animals and invalidated events (unknown causes).

Fire cause	Total
Pole top fire	12
Wires down	9
Equipment Failure	6
Clashing conductor	4
Vegetation	2
Lightning	1
Switching	1
Sub total of fires attributed to activities in relation to Western Power Network	35
Bird	11
Tree down	6
Invalidated	8
Animal	1
Sub total of fires involving external objects	26
Total fires attributed to Western Power Network	61