

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mrs Lambley to the Minister for Renewables, Energy and Essential Services:

Cut in electricity supply to Alice Springs - Sunday 13th October 2019

- 1. Is the Owen Springs Power Station currently able to handle the peak demands for electricity in Alice Springs and Central Australia?**

I announced on 14 October 2019 an independent review would be held into the system black event in Alice Springs on 13 October 2019. This review will assess these matters and provide recommendations. It would be premature to comment on them until the independent review is complete. I am happy to provide the Member for Araluen with an update once this matter is complete.

- 2. If yes, then why did was the electricity cut throughout Central Australia on Sunday 13th October 2019 for up to 9 hours in some areas?**

See answer to question 1.

- 3. If no, then what needs to be done to increase the capacity of the Owen Springs Power Station?**

See answer to question 1.

- 4. If no, then why is the Ron Goodin Power Station not kept running on “hot” to act as a back up to the Owen Springs Power Station?**

At the time of the system black event, Ron Goodin Power Station (RGPS) was in a state of “Hot Standby” where a number of machines at RGPS are ready to run at short notice with operators on site 24/7. This is different to the next “Cold Standby” phase where RGPS units will be kept available to run at short notice and manned during the day for the peak demand periods only. The “Cold Standby” phase will commence once Owen Springs Power Station proves its reliability and will continue through till at least next April to ensure security of supply in Alice Springs. Both “Hot” and “Cold” “Standby” phases are as agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding between Territory Generation and the Electrical Trade Union as developed by an agreed independent consultant (Advisian).

5. What is the maximum kilowatt demand for electricity we have seen in Alice Springs?

Based on data sampled from January 2016 through to October 2019, maximum demand for Alice Springs is 51.6 MW (51,600 kW).

6. Does the Owen Springs Power Station have the capacity to supply this demand?

Yes. The Owen Springs Power Station has an installed capacity of 78MW, and has an N-1 (one machine not available) capacity of 67MW and an N-2 (two machines not available) capacity of 56MW. These capacities provide significant redundancy above the maximum demand outlined in question 5.

7. After the blackout on Sunday 13th October 2019, what changes have been made to ensure this does not happen again?

See answer to question 1.

8. During blackouts in Alice Springs and Central Australia, like we had on Sunday 13th October 2019, power is cut to the water bore fields, as this they are a major consumer of electricity in Alice Springs. Did this happen on Sunday 13th October 2019?

The Alice Springs bore fields were without power like the remainder of the town, however water supply was not interrupted – see answer to question 9.

9. What are the implications or ramifications of cutting the power supply to the water bores?

Water from the bores is pumped into a storage tank that can continue to supply water during a power outage when the bores are not operational. Alice Springs for example, has a 60ML storage tank which can meet demand for 24 to 48 hours.

In circumstances where the outage is extended, the bores are capable of being operated by mobile generators.

10. Who will be undertaking the “independent” review or inquiry into what exactly happened on Sunday 13th October 2019?

The Treasurer and I have requested the Utilities Commission, the independent regulator, to conduct this review. The Utilities Commission are using external industry experts to assist with this review.

a. When will the review be completed?

Expected in November 2019.

b. What will be the cost of this review?

This is commercial in confidence between the Utilities Commission and its contractor.

c. Will the review be made public?

The intent will be to make the report public once the government has considered it, subject to potential sensitivities of matters that may be raised (i.e. privacy matters, commercial in confidence etc.).

11. Can you reassure residents that there will be no more blackouts in Alice Springs over the coming summer months due to technical problems like we saw on Sunday 13th October 2019?

See answer to question 1.

- 12. Could you provide a breakdown on the periods of time that areas of Alice Springs and Central Australia were effected by the blackout, providing information of the time that the power was cut and the time the power was restored?**

Feeder Name	Time OFF	Time ON
Gap	14:16:00	15:47:00
Golf	14:16:00	15:45:00
Sadadeen	14:16:00	15:46:00
Hospital	14:18:00	14:43:00
Cbd	14:18:00	14:44:00
Gillen	14:18:00	15:13:00
Farms	14:18:00	16:00:00
Brewer 1	14:18:00	21:15:00
Br-Sd 2	14:18:00	22:49:00
Borefields	14:17:00	22:54:00
Hermannsburg	14:18:00	22:19:00
Bradshaw	17:14:00	19:57:00
Araluen	14:16:00	18:27:00
Ghan Rd	14:17:00	19:33:00
Elder	14:17:00	19:33:00
Larapinta	14:16:00	21:01:00
Braitling	14:17:00	21:18:00
Stokes	14:17:00	21:28:00
Araluen	18:34:00	19:33:00
Araluen	20:03:00	20:31:00
Ghan Rd	20:03:00	20:30:00
Elder	20:03:00	20:31:00
Bradshaw	20:03:00	20:31:00

- 13. What was the cost of the blackout to Territory Generation including cost of labour, materials and expertise required to fix this emergency?**

Territory Generation is not in a position to finalise the cost impost of the blackout at this time, however it is clear that there will be additional costs incurred.

- 14. The Electrical Trade Union is speculating that there will be more cuts to electricity supply in Alice Springs. Is this true?**

See answer to question 1.

- 15. Is it possible that the same thing that happened on Sunday 13th October 2019 causing the cut of electricity across Central Australia could happen again in the coming weeks and months?**

See answer to question 1.