3 October 2008

Terms of Reference Released for Power Outage Inquiry

The Terms of Reference have been released for the independent, external inquiry into recent power outages in Darwin’s Northern suburbs.

Minister for Essential Services Rob Knight has ordered the inquiry to get at the bottom of the recent blackouts.

“This is a comprehensive investigation and we'll act on its findings - what has to be done – will be done,” Mr Knight said.

The investigation will cover the Casuarina zone substation and the adequacy of our network maintenance program in general.

Power and Water is contacting potential organisations and individuals to undertake the inquiry.

The review will be over-sighted by a steering committee consisting of relevant PWC personnel, and union representation.

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(Terms of Reference attached)
Independent Inquiry into Casuarina substation events and substation maintenance across Darwin.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Following the 11 kV switchgear events which occurred at Casuarina Zone Substation on Friday 19 September 2008 and Thursday 1st October 2008, an independent investigation into the following matters is required:

- Description of the incidents, plus any related subsequent incidents
- History of the performance of bulk oil switchgear and busbars at Casuarina and other substations
- Description of the maintenance regime that has been employed for this switchgear and substations
- An assessment of the causal factors and the contributing factors relating to the incidents
- Make an assessment of the adequacy and speed of the response to the incidents, including external communication.
- Recommendations for actions that may be required to prevent a recurrence of such an incident, including:
  - Critically examine the existing programme to retrofit vacuum circuit breakers in place of oil circuit breakers.
  - Critically examine substation maintenance practices more generally and provide detailed and practical recommendations for improvements.

On broader issues the Inquiry will examine recommendations from existing reviews and progress in implementation as well as barriers to implementation.

The Inquiry will also examine internal communications, discussion and accountability around maintenance issues.

The Inquiry should provide a Preliminary Report with three weeks of commencement, a Draft report within eight weeks and a Final Report within ten weeks.

All results from Power and Water’s internal investigation will made available to the Inquiry.

The Inquiry will be able to draw on such Power and Water and external resources as they see fit.

The Inquiry Chair will be selected on the basis of demonstrated expertise in electricity distribution industry.

Given the importance of these matters, the Inquiry must ensure that any potential conflicts of interest are identified and addressed.