



Hon Stephen Robertson MP
Member for Stretton



Minister for Natural Resources,
Mines and Energy

- 4 MAY 2004

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 19 March 2004 forwarding a copy of a petition lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly requesting the House to rectify the electricity supply problems currently being experienced in the town of Taroom and surrounding area.

The concerns of the petitioners regarding the reliability of electricity supply to Taroom and their request that the supply problems be rectified have been noted.

Electricity is normally supplied to the town of Taroom and Taroom Shire by Ergon Energy's distribution network from the Miles 33/22 kilovolt (kV) Substation via a 33 kV overhead feeder to the Wandoan Substation. The towns of Wandoan and Taroom are then supplied by a 22 kV overhead feeder from the Wandoan Substation. In addition, there are a number of Single Wire Earth Return lines radiating out from the 22 kV feeder to service surrounding areas.

Recently the Miles Substation, which is the normal supply point for the Taroom area, has undergone refurbishment. During the refurbishment the Taroom area was supplied via the northern overhead network from the Theodore Substation. The refurbishment was completed in April 2004 and I am advised Taroom now receives its supply from the refurbished Miles Substation.

Work undertaken to refurbish the Miles substation included an upgrade of the Substation Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) equipment. The SCADA system allows monitoring of voltages within the substation. It also provides warnings of faults within the substation. The SCADA system reduces the length of interruptions and allows for more efficient use of field staff. In addition, remote switching of protection equipment (circuit breakers) located within the substation will be completed by the end of April 2004.

Level 13 Mineral House
41 George Street Brisbane Qld 4000
PO Box 456 Brisbane Albert Street
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3896 3688
Facsimile +61 7 3210 6214
Email NRME@ministerial.qld.gov.au
Website www.nrm.qld.gov.au

Ergon Energy has advised the reliability of supply to Taroom during the 2003-04 summer was affected by storm conditions. Further, it is noted that the feeders servicing the Theodore Substation are of considerable length and consequently are more exposed to storm activity. Ergon Energy has also stated that while supply was being provided from Theodore Substation, consumers had indicated voltage issues in parts of Taroom.

I note petitioners occasionally experienced supply interruptions of more than five hours duration. Ergon Energy has advised weather, terrain and distance are the main causes of delay in restoring power, particularly in rural areas. Ergon Energy has further advised its nearest depot to Taroom is located approximately one hour travelling time away at Wandoan.

In addition to refurbishment of the Miles Substation, Ergon Energy has performed upgrades and maintenance to the network supplying the Taroom area in order to improve reliability of supply. Ergon Energy has completed preventative maintenance to several feeders in the Taroom area through its Asset Inspection and Defect Management Program. Under this program all wires, crossarms, and poles on the feeder are inspected and any defects rectified. These works have included the replacement of a number of crossarms and poles. A further aerial inspection was carried out in November 2003 prior to the storm season to ensure there were no outstanding maintenance issues. After completion of the aerial inspection no defects were identified.

I am further advised that under the 'Feeder Enhancement' project, Ergon Energy installed new circuit breakers at various locations to minimise the number of customers affected by outages in the Taroom area. This work commenced in July 2003 and was completed in August 2003.

Over the last 12 months Ergon Energy has installed and upgraded voltage regulators on the network supplying Taroom. Work on voltage regulators was completed in March 2004.

I note petitioners' request for the electricity supply problems being experienced in the town of Taroom and surrounding areas be rectified. I understand Ergon Energy anticipates the upgrade work at the Miles Substation and to the distribution network supplying Taroom and surrounding areas will greatly improve the quality of supply to the Taroom Shire. Ergon Energy has advised that it briefed the Tara Shire Council on 15 March 2004 and the Council and business customers appear satisfied with Ergon Energy's response to the supply issues experienced by customers in Taroom.

In regard to financial losses due to equipment failure, cost of repairs and loss of goods associated with interruptions to power supply, I am advised that customers seeking to claim compensation should contact Ergon Energy on 13 10 46 in order to lodge a claim form and have the claim assessed by Ergon Energy.

Ergon Energy deals with all requests for compensation in accordance with the provision of the *Electricity Act 1994* (the Act). The Act imposes a liability on all electricity entities where it can be proven that the damage or loss of a customer's goods was caused by something that has been done, or omitted to be done, either in bad faith or negligently by the entity.

Should customers make a compensation claim for lost goods and they are not satisfied with the response from Ergon Energy, they can contact the Energy Consumer Protection Office on telephone 1300 300 993 who will investigate their claim with Ergon Energy.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Robertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP