

Legislative Assembly

Committee on Environment and Planning

Supplementary questions for witnesses appearing at the hearing on 6 March 2025 – Inquiry into the electricity outages affecting Far West NSW in October 2024

Perilya

1. During the hearing you talked about your communications with Transgrid and Essential Energy to organize Perilya consuming load or shedding load to help support the grid.

- a. How could this communication have been improved?

Communication could have been improved in a number of ways.

Communication, at an appropriate level, should have taken place between key stakeholders. The Perilya General Manager, Maintenance Manager & Electrical Superintendent should have been contacted by Transgrid and Essential Energy counterparts to request assistance, and provide regular updates about the support required.

Allowing direct contact between critical personnel in Transgrid, Essential Energy and Perilya would have overcome the frustration of trying to understand issues and manage the loading or shedding requirements.

During critical times, the only communication was between the Essential Control room and the Electrical Technicians at Perilya. Whilst this communication process was somewhat effective, critical information that was relayed often lacked clarity and was immediately superseded by alternative instruction, cause frustration and confusion. This communication needs to be at a higher level in each of the organisations, either verbally or via email allowing for factual decisions to be made.

- b. Should Government have a role in ensuring communication with major businesses like Perilya?

Once the extent of the damage was established, Government officials should have played a bigger role in coordinating communication with the local council and major businesses, like Perilya mines.

Perilya is one of the town's main employers, employing its own staff as well as many local contractors. Clear, accurate and up to date information was required to manage the wellbeing of these employees. Better information flow was required to allow the organisation to assess options and offer employees access to leave entitlements, so employees could provide for their families during the event.

Perilya also needed to make critical business decisions that include dewatering the mine, so people have a job to come back to and notify Perilya customers that production has ceased until further notice.

If Government officials played a larger role in the dissemination of the critical information, customers may have been made aware earlier of the implications of loss of power to businesses in the region.