



DM ref: 6769252  
22 January 2010

Dear

**Re:Property at**

Over the past few weeks, the power supply to your property has been disrupted on a number of occasions. Western Power recognises the ongoing power issues in Ellenbrook are unacceptable and sincerely apologises.

A number of residents have contacted us directly to express their concern about the recent interruptions, and those of last summer. We too are frustrated at their recurrence and our inability to eliminate the problems causing them.

After each interruption, we repaired or replaced the faulty section of cable, and carried out extensive testing to try and identify the underlying cause of the fault.

As we have not been able to eliminate the recurring problems, we will be undertaking an extensive underground cable replacement project. This will involve underground cable being replaced, section by section, with work commencing in Sunray Circle. We estimate work will commence mid to late February. However, planning and logistics are still being confirmed. The full program of work will take a couple of months to complete.

Power interruptions may continue to occur during this time. However, power reliability will improve as more sections of cable are replaced.

Western Power has established a dedicated hotline for Ellenbrook residents seeking information and updates on this work. The number is 6211 9711 and this service is available on a 24 hour, 7 day a week basis. We will also be providing regular progress updates in your local paper and on our website ([www.westernpower.com.au](http://www.westernpower.com.au)) including when and where each section of cable will be replaced.

If you have suffered damage or losses as a direct result of these outages, we would encourage you to submit a compensation claim form. These can be downloaded directly from our website or requested via the Ellenbrook hotline on 6211 9711.

Please also refer to the enclosed information sheet which has been prepared to assist you with additional information.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Johan Esterhuizen".

**JOHAN ESTERHUIZEN  
MANAGER NETWORK PERFORMANCE**

## **Ellenbrook Information Sheet**

We have compiled this information sheet to help answer any questions you may have about the recent power interruptions in Ellenbrook. However, if you have any further questions, please call our dedicated Ellenbrook hotline on 6211 9711.

### **1) What has caused the Ellenbrook outages?**

The recent outages have been caused by sections of high voltage underground cable failing, causing the circuit breaker to disconnect supply.

### **2) What is being done to improve power reliability in Ellenbrook?**

After the power problems of last summer, Western Power instigated a series of tests to identify the underlying cause of the cable fault. A small number of defects were identified and remedied. However, this has clearly not fixed the overall problem.

Therefore Western Power is embarking on an extensive underground cable replacement program that will see many kilometres of cable replaced.

### **3) How long will it take to fix the problem?**

This project is being given the highest priority. We estimate that work will commence mid to late February. The project will replace the cable section by section, with work commencing in Sunray Circle. The full program of repair works will take a couple of months to complete.

### **4) What is being done to prevent more interruptions in the meantime?**

Power interruptions may continue to occur during the program of work. However, reliability will improve as more sections of cable are replaced. If you do experience an outage, firstly check the switches in your meter box. If these are all in the correct position, then please call the Western Power Faults line on 13 13 51. This service is available 24 hours a day.

During a power interruption, we recommend you turn off your appliances at the wall switch, but leave a light left on to show you when power has been restored. Please be aware that while we are finding and fixing the fault, your power may go on and off several times.

### **5) Why has each interruption lasted so long?**

When there is a fault with an underground cable, it can take a while to repair. First, our crews have to locate the fault and then the cable needs to be dug up and

repaired. We try to 'back feed' as many homes as possible, but sometimes even this cannot be done until the site of the fault has been located.

#### **6) Why does the power always go out during hot weather?**

Most of the recent outages have occurred in hot weather and/or at times of peak use. When there is a weakness in a cable, the weakness often becomes apparent when a lot of electricity is being drawn through it.

#### **7) Can I claim compensation?**

If you have experienced damage or losses as a direct result of these outages, you can submit a claim for compensation. Your claim will be assessed and we will contact you with our findings. Claim forms can be downloaded directly from our website at [www.westernpower.com.au](http://www.westernpower.com.au) or you can call the Ellenbrook hotline on 6211 9711 and we will post you a form.

#### **9) Why has Ellenbrook experienced an outage when neighbouring suburbs or streets had full power?**

Although areas may appear close on a map, their power is often supplied by a different feeder or transformer. In a fault situation, Western Power tries to minimise the number of affected customers by localising the problem area, and back feeding as many customers as possible from a different part of the network.

#### **10) I thought underground power was meant to reduce the number of outages we have? Maybe we would be better off with overhead power lines?**

Underground power is still the more reliable and visually appealing form of distributing power to your homes. From time to time, cable faults may occur due to damage by excavation, a stake being driven into the ground, ingress of water through a crack in the insulated covering, termite damage or even a manufacturing or cable joint fault. While we may encounter fault related problems with underground cables, there is still a much higher risk of faults on overhead powerlines due to their susceptibility to interference from birds, trees, wind-borne debris, high winds and other environmental factors.

#### **11) Is Western Power just trying to fit as many customers as possible onto one transformer? Maybe we need more transformers in our area?**

Summer loads can result in localised overloading of transformers and other equipment – in which case a local fuse will blow. This is not what is happening in Ellenbrook. These outages do not relate to capacity or overloading issues.

**12) Will the 'fix' mean we never have any more power interruptions?**

This cable replacement program will stop the recurring outages of last summer and recent weeks. Together with our regular program of inspection and maintenance, this should rule out many potential problems. However, Western Power cannot guarantee that you will never have another power outage. The Ellenbrook area is supplied via an overhead line, which could be damaged by storms, lightning, vehicles hitting poles, bird strikes and so on. Underground cables can also be damaged by excavators or stakes being driven into the ground etc.