

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee —Additional Estimates Hearing—February 2012

Answers to Questions on Notice

Parliamentary departments, Department of Parliamentary Services

Topic: **Power supply**

Question: **46**

Written **Senator Ronaldson**

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 30 March 2012

1. The Department's answer of 2 December 2011 to Question on Notice 11 (Supp Estimates 2011) refers to 'the failure of a temporary power supply device'. Can the Department please elaborate on this point, and answer in particular
 - What is the 'temporary power supply device'?
 - Why the failure occurred?
 - Whether this sort of failure has occurred during previous maintenance works? and
 - What steps are available to bypass the device when failure occurs?
2. In the event that a temporary power supply device fails, what procedures are in-place to ensure the restoration of power? How long would this take?
3. In their response to Question 24 (Supp Estimates 2011), the Department state they have no plans to put control of lighting and air conditioning on the parliamentary computer network. Could this be done? If it were done, could a computer hacker turn off all lighting and air conditioning?

Answer

1. The temporary power supply device was an Uninterruptable Power Supply (**UPS**) that was connected to network equipment as a precautionary measure during planned upgrades to the Basement Computer Room (**BCR**) main power supply.
The failure was within the device.
The use of this type of precautionary measures was a one-off for this upgrade program. Therefore, similar failures had not occurred in previous maintenance upgrades.
2. With the upgrade to the BCR power supply and commissioning of four large UPS systems, there is redundancy in place. On failure of the power, the UPS will take over automatically and there should be no interruption in power to the BCR. On failure of a UPS, there is a redundant¹ one to support the power load. Building management systems will alert operators of the issues so they can respond immediately. UPS power is intended to provide service for only 30 minutes. In the event of a longer power outage, the Business Continuity Plan covering electricity supply would be activated and the diesel generators to support emergency services would start operation.
3. The control for lighting and air conditioning resides in industrial controllers, which are part of the Building Management System (**BMS**). That part of the system that includes these controllers is being replaced as part of a three-year project, which has just commenced.
Theoretically, any network could be vulnerable to "hacking"; consequently, a threat risk assessment will be completed as part of that project.

¹ In an electronics context, *redundant* relates to elements in a system that are not normally used, but come into operation if an active element fails.