

ENERGY REFORMS, BENEFITS TO SMALL BUSINESS

1254. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Minister for Small Business:

Can the minister please inform the House about the benefits to small businesses in my electorate of Joondalup that will result from the Government's proposed energy reforms?

Mr R.C. KUCERA replied:

I thank the member for some notice of this question and particularly for his interest in small business in his electorate. There is no doubt, from what I have been told by people from within small business, that the current structure of the electricity industry in Western Australia is a barrier to future investment, growth and jobs in this State. Unless we change it and push these changes through, the young people -

Mr C.J. Barnett interjected.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Mr Speaker, following these changes, the young people from Busselton Primary School can look forward to having jobs and a future. I also thank the member for Vasse for entertaining these young people -

Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call to order for the second time the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I thank the member for Vasse for entertaining these young people this morning and giving me the opportunity, as minister, to meet them.

At the moment the small businesses in the electorate of the member for Joondalup are paying approximately 17 per cent more for electricity than their counterparts in other States.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How much will you save them?

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I will get to that in a moment. The Leader of the Opposition is opposing these changes and that is unacceptable for small business in this State. There is an independent cost benefit study -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Hillarys to order for the first time.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Rather than listen to a failed economist -

Mr R.F. Johnson: Are you going to blame it on SARS?.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Hillarys to order for the second time.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: Rather than listen to a failed economist, an independent cost benefit study by the Allen Consulting Group found that the Gallop Government's plan to restructure Western Power -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the member for Warren-Blackwood and the member for Nedlands.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: My apologies, Mr Speaker. Members opposite obviously do not want to hear it, but it is so important.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Tell us the price cut for small business.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: This is so important to the small business people of this State. An independent cost benefit study shows that the power bills for small businesses in the electorate of Joondalup will be up to 8.5 per cent cheaper under the restructure.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How long for that - 20 years?

The SPEAKER: I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: One of the joys of this portfolio is being the minister for Rottnest. I have spoken earlier in this House about the noise that the crows make at Rottnest. We are seeing a definite repeat of that in the House today. Let me finally say -

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: I call to order the member for Darling Range, and the member for Hillarys for the third time.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: The Gallop Government's plan to restructure Western Power is essential for lower electricity prices. At the end of the day, it will mean cheaper electricity for the small business sector, but more importantly for the young people from Busselton Primary School it will mean jobs and a future.

