

ENERGY CRISIS

Matter of Public Interest

THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Today I received a letter from the Leader of the National Party seeking to debate as a matter of public interest the following motion -

That this House condemns the Minister for Energy for failing to address the growing energy crisis in Western Australia.

If sufficient members agree to this motion, I will allow it.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

The ACTING SPEAKER: The matter shall proceed on the usual basis.

MR M.W. TRENORDEN (Avon - Leader of the National Party) [4.10 pm]: I move the motion.

This State is on the brink of a crisis. It is no more of a crisis to see that the minister is not even in the Chamber. In fact, as I move the motion, there are only three Labor Party members in the Chamber. The lack of respect shown for the proceedings of this place is absolutely incredible. At least the Leader of the House is in the Chamber. Will we see the Minister for Energy?

Mr J.C. Kobelke: He is listening. He will be back in a moment.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I am sure that he is listening; that would be right. We are on the brink of a crisis. The entire energy portfolio is in an absolute shambles. Electricity is an essential service in this State. I make no bones about it: this coming summer will be the summer of discontent.

[Quorum formed.]

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Mr Acting Speaker, this -

Mr E.S. Ripper: Where is your support?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister is under attack and he has no-one on that side of the Chamber to support him. He has totally run out of support in this Chamber.

Mr E.S. Ripper: If members on your side think it is so important, where are they?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: During question time all the members on that side of the Chamber were ducking under their seats, thoroughly embarrassed by the position that the minister has put them in. This summer will be the summer of discontent, this summer will be the summer of discomfort, and this summer will be the summer of disgrace, because this minister has been totally unable to manage his portfolio. Black Wednesday was just one day.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I'm devastated by this attack! This is awful! Stop, stop!

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It is just amazing. Will the minister print another one of these T-shirts? This is a Western Power T-shirt showing its record on 10 March 2003. It had a generation record on 10 March 2003 of 2 790 megawatts at 42 degrees. Western Power was so proud of that fact that it printed a T-shirt. I ask the minister where was the T-shirt for 2004. Where was black Wednesday's T-shirt? When next summer rolls around, will another T-shirt be printed? It would have been appropriate had Western Power printed one last February, and it should have been black! All the minister can do is look around the Chamber, see the lack of support for him and just wallow in his disgrace.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You had better present some argument. This is embarrassing.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister is in a process of crisis management.

Mr C.J. Barnett: For you, yes it is, and for the State.

Mr E.S. Ripper: It is embarrassing for your Opposition.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It is an embarrassment. We are talking about one of the essential services in this State, yet this minister could not keep himself under control for one day. Let us look at the minister's record. From the time he became minister he has absolutely refused to act on the pipeline. Time after time he has said that it is inappropriate as minister to get involved in that discussion. Now he is getting involved in decisions as basic as bonuses for employees. Decisions are pouring out of the minister now. Why is it appropriate for decisions to pour out of him now? He will spend \$210 million on the purchase of the pipeline. All these decisions are pouring out now. Why?

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Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Mr E.S. Ripper: You've got that wrong.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: How much is it - \$100 million? Does it really matter?

Mr E.S. Ripper: It does matter. Get your facts straight.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Let us run through the amounts. They include the expenditure of \$3.5 million on advertising, \$100 million on the forthcoming oil bill, \$11 million on rental for the turbines, \$10 million on upgrading the turbines at Kwinana, \$110 million on the pipeline and \$23 million on Bright Telecommunications. A total of \$260 million has been lost this year.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Wait till you see Western Power's financial results.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: We will talk about that in a moment. That will go straight off the minister's bottom line. He will not be making the contribution to the coffers of this State that, as Treasurer, he told us he would when he brought down the budget. That will not be available, and I will talk about that in a little while. What is the typical Labor approach to matters such as this? If there is a problem, it just throws money at it. We saw it in the 1980s and the early 1990s. If there is a problem, it just throws money at it; it shovels money at it as fast as it can. An amount of \$260 million has already gone down the gurgler, and for what benefit? What will Western Australians get out of that \$260 million? They will get absolutely nothing. Let us look at what the Government is throwing money at. It has thrown money at hiring transportable generators, oil to burn throughout the summer and advertising. It has spent \$110 million on the purchase of the pipeline. Costs have also been involved in the failed disaggregation of Western Power, the failed communications initiative in Bright Telecommunications and new peaking plants when base-load capacity is needed. A great announcement was made a few weeks ago about the peaking plants. Where is Cockburn 2? The minister has been knocking back requests from the board about Cockburn 2 since 2002.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Let me get this straight. Is your policy to support a new base-load combined-cycle plant, otherwise known as Cockburn 2? Is that your policy?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister will hear about our policy in a couple of weeks.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Is that your policy?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I will ask the minister a question. Will he turn up to the energy forum on 3 September?

Mr E.S. Ripper: The National Party function?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes.

Mr E.S. Ripper: No.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: There we go. The minister cannot say much about that because that is his process of contributing to the state policy. Every user will be at that forum.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Yes, including the users in the National Party.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: In 2001 Labor's policy stated that it would achieve cheaper electricity without sacrificing reliability or security of supply. It has failed.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You would not answer this in question time, but now that you are on your feet you might suggest whether you support the hiring of the gas turbines?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: We have a crisis in this State because the minister and the Labor Party went to the last election on a failed platform. That platform has absolutely crashed from under him. He does not have a leg to stand on. It is a bit like the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. The majority of people in this State would just like something to happen when they throw the switch. This is the minister who turned the lights out. He is the minister who has caused that failure. The majority of Western Australians want the power to come on when they throw the switch. Sure, industry wants a bit more than that, but Mr and Mrs Average would like the power to come on when they throw the switch. What did the minister do? For three years he denied there was a crisis.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Leader of the National Party, I agree that reliable electricity supply is the top priority of the community. Do you support the hiring of those turbines at Pinjar? That is the issue that is before us at the moment. You are very critical of it.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I wondered what these turbines looked like, so I looked for a picture of them on the Internet and printed it off. The only difference between the turbines in the picture and the ones that the minister has rented is that they are not on the back of a truck. The ones that he is getting are on trailers. The turbines in this print-out are located in Khartoum North in the Sudan. They can also be found in Bangladesh on barges.

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Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you know where else you can find them?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: In Pinjar, Western Australia! They can be found in the Gnangara pine plantation.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you know where else they can be found? They can be found in the place from which Western Power is hiring them - New York.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: That is very true. I would hardly say, though, that the fact that these plants are coming from New York is a big tick for their credibility. Does the minister know the history of the power system in New York? Does he know what has been happening in New York for the past 12 months? It is hardly a reason to support the hiring of these turbines. We have gone through a raft of issues in this State and the minister's report card reads fail, fail, fail. He is failing in one of the essential services. As I have already said, we invited the minister to a meeting in Koorda. He refused to come. We invited him to a meeting in Jerramungup, but he refused to come.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you know where I was?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes; the minister was swanning around on the beach at Cottesloe somewhere. It was a hot day; it was 42 degrees.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I was in fact sealing a native title settlement to allow development to proceed on the Burrup Peninsula. I was in Karratha on the day that the Koorda meeting was held.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister's plane overflowed Koorda on the way up and overflowed Koorda on the way back. He could easily have been in Koorda.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What a lot of rubbish.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: History shows that the minister has failed to keep the lights on and has failed to maintain the Dampier to Perth gas pipeline.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Is it the Government's responsibility to maintain something that the coalition privatised?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister had the opportunity. The regulator has been dealing with that issue for three years. For the first two years the minister refused to comment in this House on that issue. I asked the minister on a number of occasions why he did not have a position and he said it was inappropriate.

Mr E.S. Ripper: How much did Epic Energy pay the National Party?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Not a cent, to my knowledge.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Epic Energy has never paid a cent to the National Party?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: No, not a cent.

Mr E.S. Ripper: That is very interesting. Carry on.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I think Epic Energy is in receivership. Right the way through that process -

Mr E.S. Ripper: You might have to withdraw that comment and apologise.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I have no knowledge of Epic Energy paying the National Party anything.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Don't you read *The West Australian*?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes, I read it. I read about the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

The Minister for Energy has also failed to develop appropriate leadership on Western Power's board and executive. It is absolutely amazing that the chairman said last week that he needed some direction. I wonder what the minister is for. I wonder what the minister's role is in that set of circumstances.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You know what he meant.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The moral standing and whole ethic of Western Power is under pressure right now. The charge against it has been led by the minister. He has taken all credibility away from Western Power. Every time it tries to do something, the minister whips it out from under its feet. He has failed to provide enough electricity generation in this State for the summer. He has had three years to do that.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Two summers.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It will affect the next two summers because it cannot be done in that period. The minister has failed to provide extra generation in this State. He has been in the seat as Minister for Energy for three years.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Three and a half years.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 17 August 2004]

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Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes. Where is the extra generation? What will happen this summer?

Mr E.S. Ripper: There is some at Pinjar, which you oppose. Do you oppose that? Would you have me direct Western Power to not proceed with the hiring of those turbines?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I thought I was looking this morning at a Bill that will be moved in the upper House this week or next to give the minister the power to direct. I thought I read a bit about that today.

The minister has also failed to prevent the cost blow-out at Western Power. As I said, Western Power has had a cost blow-out of \$260 million, but without providing a single benefit to Western Australians. The minister has failed Western Australians; that is his major failure. The minister lives in and has some responsibility for this State. When Western Australians turn on the switch this summer, on many occasions the lights will not come on, as they do not in regional Western Australia day in, day out. I was in Pingelly just a few days ago. The Pingelly school has kept an old dial telephone. Why has it kept that telephone? It is because there is often no power in Pingelly. They have to keep an old dial telephone because the touch telephones do not work without power. On one occasion they pulled out the touch telephone from the line and plugged in the dial telephone to ring Western Power. Of course, when one rings Western Power a computerised voice answers. The computerised voice asked the caller to press the number 1. The caller could not press the number 1 because it was a dial phone, so the caller dialled the number 1. Members can guess the response from the computer; it said that the caller did not understand the question. The minister does not understand the question. He is responsible for giving power to the Pingelly school. He is responsible for giving power to Western Australians. He is responsible for giving power to the regions. He is responsible for giving power to industry. He has failed. We are heading into a minimum of two years of further failure. What has been the minister's response? Absolutely nothing. Four members are supporting him on his side of the House. Where is his support? No-one wants to be here, because no-one can support the minister. He is insupportable.

I turn to generation. Western Power currently has 3 550 megawatts available in name plate generation capacity. It has 3 273 megawatts available in sent out capacity. However, the real derated capacity is about 3 100 megawatts. I ask the minister whether that is correct.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I think you are quoting from a Western Power document.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Exactly. What happened on black Wednesday of last February? At demand of 3 004 megawatts, the lights went out. They tell me that if the lights had not gone out, demand would have gone past 3 100 megawatts. The maximum generation capacity is the maximum demand. There is no reserve capacity in the system.

Mr E.S. Ripper: That is wrong.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: There is no reserve in the system.

Mr E.S. Ripper: That is wrong.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister should tell us how much the reserve capacity is.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I will tell you when I give my speech; you are wrong.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister has spent millions of dollars converting gas back to fuel, after having gone the other way 10 years ago. We are going back to the methods of the 1950s at a time when oil is worth \$US46 a barrel. What are we doing? We will rely on it for peak generation at a time of great world crisis in fossil fuels. The minister's answer to this question is to rely on fossil fuels.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You are the alternative Government; what is your answer?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Let me sit over there, pay me the minister's salary and I will give the minister the answer.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Give the people of Western Australia your answers; be accountable.

Mr C.J. Barnett: We will.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You are being critical in this debate; what is your answer?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister will purchase 75 tonnes of fuel.

Mr E.S. Ripper: We know about that; what is your answer?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Does the minister agree that he will buy 75 tonnes of fuel? Is that correct?

Mr E.S. Ripper: Go on with your speech.

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Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: The minister does not know. He could not answer the question at question time and he cannot answer the question now. The fact is that the Government is buying 8 000 tonnes a month from the BP refinery in Kwinana. They will be doing that every month, because that will be the maximum capacity of Kwinana.

Mr E.S. Ripper: Do you object to that? Is it your policy not to do that?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes. We would have put the power in. Three years ago we would have put the power in. The plan was to put the base capacity in three years ago. We do not wait for crisis management. All the minister has done is use crisis management straight through the process. If we ran through what is available in coal and gas and then take away those fuels, we would find that what the minister is saying is true; that is, around about 75 000 tonnes of oil will have to be purchased this year. What is the member for Collie's view on that? He does not have a view. Seventy-five thousand tonnes of oil will be purchased by this Government. The minister asked us to outline our policy. We would never put the State into that position. It took this minister only three and a half years to put this State into a position in which we have become a Third World country. We are getting generators from Khartoum or Bangladesh because there is no other option. We are down to the floor; we have hit rock bottom. The minister stands condemned. He has totally mismanaged his portfolio. There is no possible place for him to retreat. He is in an absolute state of crisis, as is this State.

MR C.J. BARNETT (Cottesloe - Leader of the Opposition) [4.33 pm]: In this House on 3 March, a no-confidence motion was moved against the Minister for Energy - I have with me the speech notes that I used when that motion was moved - for a number of reasons, including the fact that the minister removed David Eiszele, a 32-year experienced servant of this State, from his position of Chief Executive Officer of Western Power. He replaced him with the self-proclaimed terrorist target, Dr Stephen van der Mye. What a fiasco that was. Dr van der Mye used limousines to get to the airport and he continued to live in Melbourne while he worked in Western Australia. What a fiasco!

We also moved the motion because of a lack planning for future generation. It was obvious then that no long-term plan was in place. We moved it because of the failure of the minister to deal with issues relating to price regulation on the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline. We moved it because of the disaster of black Wednesday, 18 February, when this State, on the south west integrated system, ran out of electricity simply because we had two hot days in a row. Here we are back again.

I now hold in my hands notes on what has happened since. This minister's incompetence has not stopped its march; it has continued. What are we doing? As the Leader of the National Party stated, we are, for the first time, hiring four 25-megawatt generating units from overseas to run on the south west grid. We might hire them for minor backups, for remote communities or for disaster and flood relief and the like. They are back-up emergency plants that are not meant to be a part of the south west integrated grid system, and yet that is happening in this State at a massive cost. It will cost \$10 million just to hire them for four months, over which time they will work for 40 hours. That is a massive cost.

I will refer now to the cost of operating them. Currently the average generating costs of our system is 6c or a little less. These units will cost between 20c and 30c a kilowatt hour for electricity, and electricity will be sold to householders for 12.29c. Hiring these units at massive costs is a fiasco, but it makes the point: equipment should not be hired on that basis.

Mr E.S. Ripper: You build it, do you?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The Minister for Energy can speak later.

We have another issue in this State.

Mr E.S. Ripper interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Order, members!

Mr C.J. BARNETT: For the first since the 1970s, Western Australia is back to importing oil for power generation; not a little bit for a remote community that might run on light distillate, but an amount that will be used on the south west grid for units at Kwinana and Pinjar. It is not a little bit of oil; it will probably amount to between \$95 million and \$100 million over a full financial year. Western Power currently spends about \$1 million a day on fuel; that is, on coal and gas. Because of this decision and the incompetence of this minister, the daily fuel bill for Western Power across a year will rise by 25 per cent. The imported oil will add 25 per cent to the fuel bill for Western Power on an annual basis. What a disgrace and what a massive cost to this community. The Government has spent money on reconverting old units at Kwinana so that they can go back to burning oil, which raises a whole lot of environmental issues. We do not want to be burning oil; indeed, we should not be burning coal at Kwinana; that should be done at base load stations at the Collie facility. Where

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was the Minister for the Environment when that was announced? She was not seen. One of the reasons for building the Cockburn 1 plant was to remove oil and coal burning from Kwinana for environmental benefits. That decision is now being compromised immediately by this Government. Do members know what will happen on the existing units at Pinjar? The Government will spend another \$6 million to \$7 million setting up a sprinkler system that will spray the units with water so they can run flat out over summer. Another \$7 million is being spent so that they do not blow up under the heat and the stress.

There is industrial action at Muja. What is the problem down there? I do not know the intricacies of the industrial dispute, but I can tell members the problem. We are talking about Muja A and B, which have units that are 22-plus years old. The blades come lose. Those machines, like other old power plants, are starting to fall apart. Twenty-five per cent of the generating equipment on the south west grid is now old. It is old and there are blade problems because the units are 22 years old. That is the problem. Maintenance has to be carried out on the old units and we can expect maintenance problems to increase, not decrease, because the Government has failed to make the investment in new and replacement generators.

I will refer now to the pipeline sale. This is the doozey of them all! At least the member for Collie had something to say about this. There are issues about the pipeline. We have debated them, and I have told the Government what it could have done three years ago. Nevertheless, the pipeline is privately owned by Epic Energy and is up for sale. What has this Government and minister done? They have floated out there in the commercial world the proposition that the Government is willing to give up \$100 million of stamp duty. What an amazing proposition! Everyone else in the community has to pay stamp duty. However, in this instance the Government will throw in \$100 million to a private transaction between the pipeline seller, Epic, and the pipeline buyer, whoever that might be. That is unfair to all the other taxpayers in this State and begs the question: who will benefit? Will the pipeline seller benefit by getting a higher price? I do not know about that; I doubt it. Will the pipeline buyer benefit from buying it at a lower price? I doubt that. Who will benefit? The banks. The US banks will be the beneficiaries under the sloppy proposal by the minister not only as Minister for Energy, but also as Treasurer. We are likely to see the vast majority of that \$100 million of Western Australian taxpayer money transferred to US banks. What a brilliant and stunning policy that is! What does that remind us of? As the Leader of the National Party stated, it reminds us of WA Inc. What was WA Inc about? Every time there was a problem - such as the collapse of Rothwells or the failure of the petrochemical project - what did the Labor Government do? It threw money at the issue. The Government thought that that was the way to solve problems. That failed in the 1980s and it will fail in this instance. We should not throw \$100 million to a private commercial transaction. The Government could have done some very sound things, but it did not understand them.

Mr E.S. Ripper: What were they?

Mr C.J. BARNETT: Ask me that question tomorrow and I will answer it.

Several government members interjected.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: I will tell the minister what the Government should have done. It should have regulated the price and gone ahead with Cockburn 2. That would have brought on the stage 4 expansion of the pipeline. That is all it had to do and that would have happened. That is the answer.

The Government's actions are highly improper and reminiscent of WA Inc. Now it has \$100 million to build a new peak plant and generating unit at Pinjar. Did that come from Western Power? Was that its recommendation to Cabinet? I do not think so.

Mr E.S. Ripper: No, it was not.

Mr C.J. BARNETT: No, it was political decision made by a Government. It was made separate from Western Power. If anyone knows about generation issues, it is Western Power. It did not recommend that unit. Has the Government placed an order for it? There is a queue worldwide for generating units. It was a political decision of Cabinet without the recommendation or advice of Western Power to buy a bit of equipment that has to be ordered well in advance. At the same time, the Government made a decision not to proceed with Cockburn 2. Cockburn 2 could have addressed not only the coming summer, but also the 2005-06 and 2006-07 summers. The Government's frame 9 can only address the summer of 2006-07. The Government has put us more at risk. Not only can it not guarantee power supplies for the coming summer because of that incompetent decision, it cannot guarantee power supply for 2005-06.

There is also the other issue of Bright Telecommunications. Western Power lost \$33 million pursuing a communications company role. What the hell is going on? The minister did not know about it. Some \$23 million was lost. Imagine how much could have been done in regional Western Australia to improve power supplies with the \$23 million that was squandered. The Minister for Energy and the Premier then have the gall

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to have Western Power spend over \$1 million of taxpayers' money on an advertising campaign telling the public what a good job it is doing.

I had the privilege of being the minister responsible for Western Power for eight years. I had my disagreements with the organisation from time to time; there is no doubt about that. Western Power has an 80-year or so history in this State as a very proud publicly owned corporation that has provided a reliable power supply for generations of Western Australians. That organisation under this minister is now humiliated to the extent that it cannot guarantee power supplies in this State. It is humiliated to the extent that it is hiring equipment to be barged into Western Australia and operated to provide temporary power backup. That is the point to which the minister has brought Western Power. He should be ashamed and stand aside.

MR B.K. MASTERS (Vasse) [4.42 pm]: Policymaking on the run, a Government in crisis, a government corporation lacking in direction, a minister failing to provide leadership and a Government that refuses to make decisions until the death knock; these are some of the quite valid criticisms that I have been hearing of late that have been directed against this Government, this Minister for Energy and Western Power. It is totally unacceptable for Western Power at the moment to progress without direction from the Government. For that reason, with regret, I support this motion of the Leader of the National Party.

The sad thing is that this lack of leadership has been displayed by the Gallop Government ever since it was elected in February 2001. Until recently the Government was interested in only two things: one was to minimise expenditure because there were all sorts of problems with debt levels, and the other was to maximise payments from Western Power into the state Treasury because Western Power is something of a cash cow. The only reason today that money is coming from Western Power into some rural areas for capital upgrades is that fortunately the Commonwealth Grants Commission decided only a couple of months ago to provide an extra \$231 million each year to the State of Western Australia and that money in a de facto sense is starting to find its way into rural Western Australia.

I agree that Western Australia has an energy crisis. To highlight that crisis one has only to go back to 18 February of this year when people were told not to turn on airconditioning and not to bother starting machinery at work because Western Power wanted as little energy consumption as possible. Pensioners who spoke to me were worried about whether they would survive a very hot spell without airconditioning because of the state of their health, and a number of other issues came my way. Sadly the response of Western Power to the energy crisis has been blinkered. It has looked at the solution to the crisis in only two ways. First, it has attempted to manage the peak demand for electricity by turning off power for some industries. Quite clearly that comes at a significant economic cost, not only to those industries but also to the taxpayers of Western Australia, because Western Power pays taxpayers' money to those industries that are told that they are not allowed to turn on equipment. Second, Western Power has attempted to manage supply demand. That is the focus that the Leader of the National Party has been concentrating on. I am sure that is what the Minister for Energy will talk about during his 30-minute response. In other words, the object will be to produce more electricity and damn the cost; to get more peaking stations built no matter what.

The minister to date has missed one absolutely essential part of this equation; that is, to manage general demand for electricity right across the board. That means he must start paying attention to issues such as energy conservation, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy. Of the current electricity demand per year across Western Australia, around 1 000 megawatts are used by industry as a base load consumption, another approximately 1 000 megawatts are used for commercial and domestic base load consumption and about 1 300 megawatts are used for domestic peaks in the summer. When one looks at evidence from around the world about what energy efficiency can do, one sees that about 40 per cent of the 1 000 megawatts of electricity consumed by commerce and general domestic demand can be saved through energy demand management. Looking at peak domestic demand in the summer, I estimate that at least 10 per cent of it can be saved by using energy efficiently. Energy demand management could reduce this Government's need to produce electricity by at least 500 megawatts a year. All the Government's peak electricity producing stations in combination would produce less than that amount. The State could save hundreds of millions of dollars if it looked at energy demand management.

MR E.S. RIPPER (Belmont - Minister for Energy) [4.47 pm]: It is important that we first of all clear up one issue that I raised by interjection during the debate. That was the question of whether the National Party had ever received any money from Epic Energy. The Leader of the National Party denied that the National Party had ever received any money from Epic Energy. Therefore, I would like him at some later stage to explain the article on page 4 of *The West Australian* of 13 October 2003, which lists the donations that the National Party received in 2001-02. The National Party received a donation of \$10 000 from Epic Energy in 2001-02. Ever since the National Party received that donation, its members have come into this House with questions that read as if they have been drafted by Epic Energy staff.

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Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr C.J. BARNETT: The minister has impugned the reputation of National Party members in this Parliament. What he has implied is that their parliamentary questions have been related to a donation made to a political party. You will recall, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr A.J. Dean), a situation in the United Kingdom House of Commons in which a member, Hon Neil Hamilton, was accused of that and in fact ultimately resigned his seat. It was a major issue of accountability and the use of Parliament. The minister has now implied that questions have been asked in this House in response to a donation by a particular company. He has therefore impugned the Leader of the National Party and every other National Party member in this House. I would ask you, Mr Acting Speaker, either to ask the minister to withdraw or for you to withdraw to consider it because it is such an important question.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: My assertions were as follows: the National Party received a donation in 2001-02 of \$10 000, as reported in *The West Australian*, a donation that the Leader of the National Party earlier denied in debate. I said that ever since then the questions asked by the Leader of the National Party on this matter read as if they were drafted by Epic Energy staff. If one goes back and looks at the questions, I think one will find that is an arguable assertion.

Mr R.F. Johnson: That is a disgraceful assertion.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It is traditional in this place that when a point of order is taken there are no interjections because it disrupts the Chair's ability to hear the point of order. If the member wishes to break with tradition, he may by all means do so, but it is the tradition. I have made nothing other than those two assertions, and neither of them is unparliamentary.

Mrs C.L. EDWARDES: It is quite clear that the minister in linking the two together has impugned National Party members. The premise upon which he has said those questions were asked in this place is the basis of a donation that had been given to that party, and that is unparliamentary. It breaches the code of conduct. Furthermore, it is an absolute disgrace. The minister should either withdraw and apologise, or come into this place and move a substantive motion justifying the comments that he has made.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: There clearly is no point of order. Members opposite may feel that somehow they have done something wrong, because they jump to their feet and accuse the Minister for Energy of saying something that he did not say. The Minister for Energy did not say that the National Party had been bought and that it was asking questions on behalf of a company. If the National Party had done that, the point of order might be evidence of guilt. However, that is not what the Minister for Energy said. The Minister for Energy simply stated two facts. He did not draw a causal relationship. The fact that members opposite jump to such points of order might suggest that there is more to it. However, the Minister for Energy did not suggest that there was more to it. The second reason that there is no point of order is that even if the Minister for Energy had suggested that there was some corruption in the National Party, there are plenty of examples in this place in which that has been said many, many times and it has not been outside the standing orders because it has applied to a group, not an individual. The minister did not say that. He did not even imply that. He simply stated two facts. You can draw your own conclusion, Mr Acting Speaker, as to whether they were coincidental or whether there was some relationship between them. The Minister for Energy did not state that there was a relationship. However, even if he had, the issue is that it would be applied to a group, and on that basis there are ample examples in *Hansard* in which that has happened and it has not been outside the standing orders.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Order! I will rule on the point of order. I think I have heard enough. The Minister for Energy has made two assertions, and at no stage has he linked those two assertions. Therefore, I rule that there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Thank you for that ruling, Mr Acting Speaker.

I will now deal with the substantive issue of the motion. When we think about these matters, we first of all should look at the objective evidence.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: You could parachute out of a snake's backside!

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Avon, please withdraw that comment.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: No, I will not. It is a fair and reasonable statement.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! Member for Avon, please withdraw that comment.

Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Mr M.W. Trenorden: No, I will not withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! It is unparliamentary. Does the member withdraw?

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I will withdraw, reluctantly.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Avon.

Debate Resumed

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It is worth looking at the objective evidence. One objective measure of the reliability of the electricity system is the average outage duration in minutes a year per customer served. In 1996-97 the average outage duration was 207 minutes, in 1997-98 it was 149 minutes, in 1998-99 it was 127 minutes and in 1999-2000 it was 231 minutes. We then come to the years during which this Government has presided over the electricity system in Western Australia. In 2000-01 the average outage was 134 minutes, in 2001-02 it was 110 minutes, in 2002-03 - a bad year - it was 221 minutes and in 2003-04 it was 189 minutes. The first thing I must say about those figures is that they are averages. Individual customers will have experienced much worse than that. Secondly, the figures are not good enough. They need to be improved. I must say also that this Government has not experienced any worse reliability in the electricity system than was experienced in the last full year that the Leader of the Opposition was responsible for the electricity system - 1999-2000 - when the figure was 231 minutes. In other words, we have not had as bad a figure as the Leader of the Opposition and the coalition had in 1999-2000.

Another objective measure of the reliability of the electricity system is the average number of interruptions a year per customer served. In 1999-2000 the average number of interruptions was 3.16. In our four years in government, the figures have been 1.48, 1.6, 1.67 and 1.51. In other words, we have experienced about half the number of interruptions a year per customer served than was experienced in the last full year in which the Leader of the Opposition was responsible for the electricity system. Those figures are not good enough either. There must be a significant improvement in the reliability of our electricity system, and Western Power and the Government are doing something about that.

I now move beyond those objective measures to the unprecedented circumstances that we are facing this year with regard to our electricity supply. One of the elements that constitutes those unprecedented circumstances is the extent of growth in residential airconditioning demand. This element has struck electricity systems in a number of parts of the world. It has also struck another Australian State - Queensland. I was advised earlier this year that one airconditioning installer alone had installed one megawatt a day of additional airconditioning demand throughout the summer. That is an outcome of prosperity. The more prosperous people are, the more likely they are to embark on the purchase of luxury items. One of the luxury items of choice for households with an extra degree of prosperity is airconditioning. We are experiencing one of the problems of prosperity. However, that prosperity creates other electricity demand apart from airconditioning demand. In the past financial year this State experienced growth of 6.75 per cent. The growth forecast for the current financial year is 4.5 per cent. Of course there will be increasing demand and pressure on our electricity system when we are experiencing these phenomenal growth rates. When the Leader of the Opposition was last responsible for the electricity system in Western Australia the economy experienced a contraction of 1.2 per cent. Of course there was not much pressure on the electricity system at that time, because the economy was actually smaller at the end of the year than it had been at the beginning of the year.

The next element is the ageing electricity network in this State. I am not the only person who knows that for a long time our electricity network has required additional infrastructure. The member for Warren-Blackwood is quoted in the *Donnybrook-Bridgetown Mail* of 13 April this year as saying that "The power infrastructure in this State has been in a state of decline for a decade". It has not escaped my attention that the member's own leader presided over that decade of decline as Minister for Energy. The Director of Energy Safety said in his report on the performance of the network in particular areas that the problems that are evident have not developed recently but have developed over quite some time, and they have become more pronounced during the past 10 years approximately as the age of some of the assets such as poles and conductors has increased to the point at which many are nearing the end of their normally expected life.

The next element that is creating the unprecedented circumstances is that the chickens of the ageing network finally coming home to roost.

Another element in our unprecedented circumstances is the constraint on gas transport arising from the lack of expansion of the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline. How did that happen? It happened because the previous Government sold the pipeline to Epic Energy, which went broke. Epic Energy has said for a number of years that it will not, and indeed cannot, financially expand the pipeline to meet the needs of the State.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY - Tuesday, 17 August 2004]

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Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Mr C.J. Barnett: But they have - they've expanded it!

Mr E.S. RIPPER: We find that the Government has no effective legal mechanism to compel Epic to expand that pipeline in the interests of the State.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How come it was expanded in 2002?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The fact that it was expanded some years ago does not detract from the argument that Epic Energy is refusing to expand the pipeline now. Moreover, Epic states that it has absolutely no financial capacity to do so. We find that no effective legal mechanism is available to compel Epic to expand.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Yes, there is.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: "Yes, there is", says the Leader of the Opposition! Five times since May 2002 Western Power has made applications for expansion of the pipeline, and it has been rebuffed each time by Epic Energy - it has refused to deal properly with the applications of Western Power. Western Power has exhausted every legal avenue under the regime left by the Leader of the Opposition for the expansion of the pipeline. Western Power has found that the regime left by the Leader of the Opposition is inadequate for the purpose of compelling an unwilling owner to expand the pipeline. What is the Leader of the Opposition's solution? It is that I break the law that he put through this Parliament, and that I seek to override the regulator. Let us follow that through and see where it would take us. It would take us to an increase in prices on the pipeline. It would take us to an increase in prices for Western Australian householders for the gas they use and for the electricity generated by the gas they buy. Therefore, the Leader of the Opposition's solution to the pipeline issue is to break the law and charge the householders of Western Australia more for the energy they use. Some people might say: if the Leader of the Opposition's law is the problem, why not change the law? The Leader of the Opposition thought of that when he was the Minister for Energy as well. He signed a national agreement on which competition policy payments to the State depend. That national agreement prevents us altering the law without the agreement of every other jurisdiction that has signed the agreement. The problems that we see today go back to that moment that the Leader of the Opposition clinked those champagne glasses and boasted about his success in privatising the Dampier-Bunbury natural gas pipeline.

There is another element to the unprecedented circumstances we face; namely, the Government was elected on a well-considered reform program for the future of Western Power. This reform program secured the support of the member for Kalgoorlie; Hon George Cash; the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia; the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia; the independent power producers; the federal Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, Hon Ian Macfarlane; and the National Competition Council. Despite all that support, and the fact the Government was elected on that plan for the reform of Western Power, this Opposition has seen fit to throw a giant spanner into the reform program.

Mr A.D. McRae: Saboteurs!

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Saboteurs. They come into this place and say, "Where's your plan for Western Power?" I say that we were elected on a plan, which the Opposition sabotaged. That plan was based on securing more investment into our power system and gaining more diversity, more security of supply, better prices, more jobs, more growth and more economic performance in this State. Those opposite threw a giant spanner in the works, yet they now complain about our plan. Our plan is in the upper House. Only after the Cottesloe by-election will the Government have the numbers to proceed with that plan. I am confident that after the state election, a subsequent election will be held - the Cottesloe by-election. The Leader of the Opposition will retire from politics, and, at last, we might get some sense on energy from the other side of politics.

Despite the sabotage of the Leader of the Opposition, some market reform proceeds. For example, we produced a new top up and spill system.

Mrs C.L. Edwardes: It won't happen.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: It has happened. We have a new top up and spill system. We have foreshadowed a modified electricity market from 1 July 2006 - that is, the short-term energy market. Although our energy program has been sabotaged, wrecked and crippled by the Opposition, the private sector has begun to make commitments to new power stations. For example, Alinta has committed to Alinta 1, which is a 140-megawatt co-generation plant. Alinta is making positive statements about the prospects for future Alinta co-generation plants. Also, new wind farms have been proposed at Walkaway and Emu Downs by the private sector. The Government has also made a huge investment in the network. It proposes to spend \$1.8 billion, which is an increase of \$400 million, on the network over the next four years.

Mr C.J. Barnett: It is "proposed".

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Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Mr E.S. RIPPER: We are proposing to do so, and it has started - we are spending money this year. That program includes something that the National Party should support; it is something it never got from the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Energy. I refer to the rural power improvement program. Nearly \$50 million is dedicated to the non-commercial projects that the Leader of the Opposition would never support when he was Minister for Energy to deliver decent power supplies to people in rural areas. The program is beginning immediately.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: Thanks to the National Party!

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The National Party can never do anything in government, though - that is the problem with the National Party. Its members are full of self-righteous anger and even a little energy when in opposition, but they are tame, useless and ineffectual when in government. They never got anything from the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Energy. They have had more luck with me as Minister for Energy than they ever had with their prospective coalition government colleague.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O’Gorman): Order! The level of interjection across the Chamber is reaching an abnormally high level. I ask that members withhold their interjections and let the Minister for Energy continue .

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The program for rural power improvement begins with reclosers and section switches being installed right across the network. Reclosers and section switches will isolate faults to smaller numbers of customers. As a result of the identification of faults through the operation of the reclosers and section switches, faults will be fixed more quickly. Therefore, fewer customers will be affected by a fault, and faults will be rectified more quickly. That will be followed up with specific feeder reinforcements in the second stage of the rural power improvement program.

The Government is also tackling pole-top fires. The way the Opposition carries on, pole-top fires have occurred only under the Gallop Government and were unheard of under previous Governments. In fact, the number of such fires is roughly consistent every year looking back over the past decade. We are tackling the problem with a pole-top fire silicone coating strategy. Silicone coating of insulators will be applied to 40 000 vulnerable poles in the next year, which will make a significant difference to the problem of pole-top fires.

That is something that is happening under this Government; it did not happen under the Government of which the Leader of the National Party and his colleagues were part. We are putting more than 100 extra line crew into Western Power. What did the Leader of the Opposition do when he was Minister for Energy? He took a thousand jobs out of Western Power; he cut Western Power’s work force by 1 000. At least we are putting some more people back into the line crews, so that there will be a better response when there is some problem with a fault on the network.

Members of the Opposition spoke about generation capacity and I want to outline some of what we have done. We have built Cockburn 1, for example.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Who funded it?

Mr E.S. RIPPER: We funded it. From our debt figures, it is ours. The Leader of the Opposition wants to complain about our debt figures; I will say that Cockburn 1 is ours. I certainly signed the papers in August 2001 for that power station. Cockburn 1 was finished in 2003; the Kemerton peaker will be finished in 2005; there will be a new peaker in 2006; and there will be a new base-load power station in 2008. No-one should say that we are not planning for future capacity in the electricity system. We have been planning and implementing ever since we came to government. Of course members might say that this is the wrong plan and that they would prefer this or that etc, but it is a complete falsehood to argue that there has been no planning.

Despite the installation of those new power stations, there have been unprecedented circumstances this year. Those circumstances relate to the large growth in peak-load demand, we think based on the installation of airconditioners. We are not alone in seeing that large growth in peak demand. Western Australia has had a growth of peak on peak of about 10 per cent. Queensland has had a growth of peak on peak of about 14 per cent. In Western Australia and in other places electricity systems have been put under pressure as a result of peak-load demand - not base-load demand - based on airconditioning. There is also the disastrous situation of the privatisation of the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline and the resulting constraint on gas transport. How have the Government and Western Power, with the support of the Government, responded to those issues? Firstly, we are purchasing power from Parkston power station, an independent power producer. We are doing that because we have invested in the interconnection. Why does that interconnection need investment? During the time of the previous Government the now Leader of the Opposition allowed Western Power to frustrate the interconnection of that independent power producer in the network. He allowed Western Power and its bureaucracy to frustrate the operations of that competitor.

Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Mr C.J. Barnett: It was connected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Yes, it was connected, but inadequately. We have rectified that and we will be able to buy power from that independent power producer. Secondly, we have installed inlet cooling sprays at Pinjar because the gas turbines at Pinjar generate less electricity during very hot weather than they do normally. During very hot weather we want them to generate maximum electricity, and inlet cooling sprays are a way of getting the maximum out of them when it is really needed. Thirdly, the Leader of the Opposition referred to some problems with blading on two of the Muja power station units. Last summer two of the Muja units were de-rated from 200 megawatts each down to 175 megawatts because the low pressure turbine blades had failed. Those units are being re-bladed and we will have 50 megawatts more of non-gas generated capacity - coal capacity - as a result of that re-blading. Fourthly, we have adapted the Kwinana units to operate on oil. That has been the source of puerile, self-righteous, feigned anger from the Leader of the Opposition, but it is an essential decision in the interests of the security of electricity supply. Why? Because we cannot use coal for peaking. Coal is very good for base-load power, but it is not suitable for peaking. The preferred fuel for peaking is gas. Guess what? We have a gas problem bequeathed to us by the Leader of the Opposition. Therefore, there is a need to use an alternative fuel. It is not the preferred fuel. I hope that we will use only coal and gas and that we do not have to use oil, because oil is expensive, but I put electricity reliability and the supply of an essential service above those sorts of considerations. Fifthly, we are engaged in a new exercise essentially for Western Power, or at least new in the scale of the exercise, and that is a demand management program with major customers. Many big customers for electricity in this State do not need to consume electricity at every peak period. It may be possible to make commercial arrangements with those big consumers of electricity to not require that electricity on those limited number of hours during summer when there is peak demand.

Finally, we have engaged in significant gas-swap arrangements with firms such as Wesfarmers, so that if there is a constraint on gas transport on the pipeline - and we all know the reasons for that gas constraint - we can use Wesfarmers or Alcoa gas. The underlying problem is, of course, the lack of expansion of the Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline. The Leader of the Opposition and his non-parliamentary, if not parliamentary, deputy want us to break the law, break a national agreement, and put up prices for household consumers of gas and electricity. That is their solution.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You're not telling the truth in this Parliament.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I think there is a better solution, which is to secure the expansion of the pipeline through the sale of the pipeline. This pipeline has been sold; it is owned by the private sector. We cannot run the sales process, because the Leader of the Opposition sold it to someone who has gone broke. The previous Government privatised it. We have to monitor a private sales process.

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Why does the Leader of the National Party not go back to Epic Energy and get some more advice?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O'Gorman): Order, members! It is again getting to the stage when I cannot hear the minister, and he does have a rather loud voice. I ask that members withhold their comments across the Chamber.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The Leader of the National Party probably needs to seek some more advice from Epic Energy. He is off the beam. We have dealt with him and his motivation, so he should let me get on with my argument.

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: We need a sales process that is effective and that is concluded quickly, and then we want the new owner to commit to the expansion of the pipeline. There is no doubt, in my view, that expansion of the pipeline will be profitable for the new owners. This is an excellent State in which to invest, but such are the needs of this State that the Government has taken extraordinary action. It has agreed to assist by making a financial contribution for the extension of the pipeline - not for this summer, because we are thinking ahead, but for 2005, 2006 and the summers beyond that. That expansion is not just for electricity; it is for the entire economic development of the south west, because there are very significant gas-consuming projects that need an expanded gas pipeline in order to go ahead. It is an extraordinary decision. It has been forced upon us by what the Leader of the Opposition left us.

Several members interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: I will not listen to the spokesperson for Epic Energy.

Point of Order

Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl
Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Mr A.D. McRAE: I have not been engaged in the previous debate. I have attempted to listen to the contributions of members from both sides of the Chamber, but there is a continual rabble of interjection and barrage of noise from the other side.

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are not in the Chair, china.

Mr A.D. McRAE: We are looking forward to having you at the Windimurra inquiry; that is what we will ask you about, china.

Several members interjected.

Mr A.D. McRAE: Then we will find out.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.P. O’Gorman): Order, members! The member for Riverton has the call to make a point of order. The point of order is about the level of interjection across the Chamber. It does not help when members continue to interject on his point of order.

Mr A.D. McRAE: I wish to finish by saying -

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I have a point of order, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr A.D. McRAE: I have not finished my point of order.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: I have a different point of order.

Mr A.D. McRAE: I am still making my point of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Riverton still has the call. I sat him down so that I could quieten the Chamber, but he still has the call.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Mr Acting Speaker, I want to raise a separate point of order.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The member for Riverton has the call.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Can I ask for a ruling? The member for Riverton has just threatened a member on this side of the House. When do we deal with that?

The ACTING SPEAKER: We will deal with that straight after the member for Riverton’s point of order.

Mr A.D. McRAE: Mr Acting Speaker, the behaviour of those opposite has fully demonstrated the concern I am raising with you. It is not possible to make a comment in the Chamber without hearing a barrage of noise from the other side. I ask you to ask the members opposite to desist.

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: Further to the same point of order, I think the member for Riverton’s point of order goes very much to Standing Order No 95. The barrage of noise clearly has sought to disturb the proceedings of the Chamber and has tried to prevent the minister from entering the debate in a reasonable way. He has continuously had to raise his voice over the barrage of noise. It is totally disruptive to the proper proceedings of the Chamber and I support the point of order taken by the member for Riverton.

The ACTING SPEAKER: On the member for Riverton’s point of order, I have been endeavouring to quell the level of interjections across the Chamber. I have shown a reasonable amount of leniency by not calling any members to order. From now on I will call members to order if they continue with the barrage of noise across the Chamber. The Leader of the National Party had a point of order.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: It seems to me that the member for Riverton has used information from a parliamentary committee to threaten a member on this side of the Chamber. I understand that it is information that is meant to be privileged to the committee. If that is not the case, I need to be told. My understanding is that it is privileged information within the committee of which he is the chairperson and he used that information a few moments ago against the Leader of the Opposition. That is a serious matter.

Mr R.F. Johnson: By way of threat.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Yes, by way of a threat. That is a very serious matter. Mr Acting Speaker, I ask for a ruling from you before we progress with the motion. It should be a matter that goes further than just a ruling from you. It goes to the core of the operation of any Parliament.

Mr A.D. McRAE: Mr Acting Speaker, while I was making a point of order to you, I responded to an interjection from the Leader of the Opposition about whether I had any knowledge about the energy systems.

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is not true. I made no interjection to you at all.

Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl
Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

Mr A.D. McRAE: As we are hearing now from the Leader of the Opposition, he is wholly incapable of allowing a person to run a point of order directly to you, Mr Acting Speaker. I responded to the Leader of the Opposition's interjection. I inappropriately made reference to an inquiry that a committee of this Chamber has under way under the normal standing orders and procedures, and I withdraw and apologise for any implication -

Mr C.J. Barnett: That is not good enough. You're done, mate. You should resign as chairman of the committee. It is not good enough.

Mr A.D. McRAE: If it assists at all, Mr Acting Speaker -

Ms S.E. Walker: It was just a matter of time before you were gone

Mr A.D. McRAE: If it assists at all, I in no way threatened -

Mr R.F. Johnson: Yes, you did. *Hansard* will prove that.

Mr A.D. McRAE: This is an impossible position. If a member makes a point of order to you, Mr Acting Speaker, and that member is constantly subjected to a constant barrage without being able to complete one sentence, I say that that is the basis on which there will be unruly and unreasonable behaviour, and it must stop now.

The ACTING SPEAKER: First, I will need to clarify the position. The Leader of the National Party has raised a point of order and I would like to clarify whether he raised it under Standing Order No 109, which is a matter of privilege.

Mr M.W. Trenorden: A matter of privilege, yes.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I have to admit that, because there was such a barrage across the Chamber, I did not hear the comment of the member for Riverton. Under Standing Order No 109, I will defer the matter and continue with the business under consideration and will come back to the matter at a later stage.

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: That is the proper procedure, Mr Acting Speaker, and I congratulate you on your ruling.

Debate Resumed

Mr E.S. RIPPER: What have been the Opposition's contributions to the present state of our electricity system when it was in government and in opposition? First, palpably, there was not enough investment in the network when it was in charge of the electricity system. Secondly, the Leader of the Opposition was a weak yes-minister sort of minister. He was captive to the Western Power bureaucracy and he allowed Western Power to keep out its private sector competitors, and he is still at it. Thirdly, the Leader of the Opposition wanted to avoid scrutiny of Western Power's performance. He frustrated for five long years the new technical and safety regulations that were gazetted under this Government that allowed the Director of Energy Safety to examine and report on Western Power's performance. He was a captive of Western Power's bureaucracy, and that was the third element of his lamentable contribution to energy policy in this State. However, he did have one plan, and that was the privatisation plan. Sell the pipeline, clink the champagne glasses, and never mind the future. Sell AlintaGas, clink the champagne glasses, never mind the broken promises, and prepare Western Power for sale. That was the next element. The first step was to do what all privatisers do; that is, get rid of a thousand jobs, and get it ready and fatten it up for privatisation. The second step was to get Western Power to prepare a plan. The third step was to conceal that plan from the public, and he is still at it. He is still a privatiser and he is still dissembling his plans.

Mr M.W. Trenorden interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I have given members fair warning and a pretty reasonable amount of leniency. I call the Leader of the National Party to order for the second time.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Privatisation is not the only energy issue on which the Leader of the Opposition dissembles. He is a coal man in Collie and he is a gas man in Perth, so he does not tell the truth on that issue either.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Sorry?.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: If the Leader of the Opposition wants, I have the quotes to justify that. The Leader of the Opposition is a serial privatiser, a wrecker of reform, a demonstrated captive of the Western Power bureaucracy and a dissembler on all matters related to energy. The motion should be comprehensively thrown out.

MR J.P.D. EDWARDS (Greenough) [5.28 pm]: To illustrate the failure of the Government in addressing some of the issues that we have been talking about this afternoon, I will give an example. Kalbarri has been highlighted many times during the debate on energy. Two weeks ago the Kalbarri golf club was the venue for 300 overseas botanists and geologists, who were plunged into darkness in the middle of dinner. They were

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Acting Speaker; Mr Max Trenorden; Mr Colin Barnett; Mr Bernie Masters; Mr Eric Ripper; Mrs Cheryl Edwardes; Mr John Kobelke; Speaker; Mr Tony McRae; Mr Jeremy Edwards

tourists or businesspeople from overseas. This happened because of the failure of some new equipment - I stress new equipment - that was being installed at the Kalbarri substation. What a farce! Kalbarri is a premier tourism destination, so why does it have a third world power supply? The Government needs to address that issue. These people were certainly not impressed, and neither were the people of Kalbarri. The debate this afternoon has certainly highlighted a lot of the failures. That is a prime example.

Question put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (21)

Mr R.A. Ainsworth	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr R.F. Johnson	Ms S.E. Walker
Mr C.J. Barnett	Mrs C.L. Edwardes	Mr A.D. Marshall	Dr J.M. Woollard
Mr D.F. Barron-Sullivan	Mr J.P.D. Edwards	Mr B.K. Masters	Mr J.L. Bradshaw (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr M.J. Birney	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr P.G. Pandal	
Mr M.F. Board	Ms K. Hodson-Thomas	Mr M.W. Trenorden	
Dr E. Constable	Mr M.G. House	Mr T.K. Waldron	

Noes (27)

Mr P.W. Andrews	Mr S.R. Hill	Ms S.M. McHale	Mr E.S. Ripper
Mr C.M. Brown	Mr J.N. Hyde	Mr A.D. McRae	Mrs M.H. Roberts
Mr A.J. Carpenter	Mr J.C. Kobelke	Mr N.R. Marlborough	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mr A.J. Dean	Mr R.C. Kucera	Mrs C.A. Martin	Mr P.B. Watson
Mr J.B. D'Orazio	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr M.P. Whitely
Dr J.M. Edwards	Ms A.J. MacTiernan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Ms M.M. Quirk (<i>Teller</i>)
Mrs D.J. Guise	Mr M. McGowan	Ms J.A. Radisich	

Pairs

Mr W.J. McNee	Mr J.J.M. Bowler
Mr R.N. Sweetman	Dr G.I. Gallop
Mr P.D. Omodei	Mr J.A. McGinty

Question thus negatived.