

EAST PERTH POWER STATION SITE, MINISTERIAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

1. Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure:

Some notice of this question has been given. I refer the minister to the ministerial council formed to consider options for the East Perth Power Station, as announced by her press release of 9 August 2001, now nearly two years ago.

- (1) How many meetings of the ministerial council have been held, and on what dates?
- (2) Which ministers attended at each of these meetings?
- (3) Which groups and organisations were consulted, and when
- (4) Were minutes of the ministerial council kept as a record of discussions and decisions; and, if so, will the minister table these minutes? If not, why not?

Ms A.J. MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. Unfortunately, the Chief Executive Officer of the East Perth Redevelopment Authority is not available today, so I am not able to answer all of the member's question, but I will give him the information I have and then make some general comments.

- (1)-(4) There have been seven meetings scheduled for the ministerial council - on 23 August 2001, 25 October 2001, 29 November 2001, 7 March 2002, 26 June 2002, 10 February 2003 and 18 March 2003. They were formally scheduled meetings, but there have been numerous informal meetings as well.

The organisations that have been consulted are obviously the Natural Trust of Australia, which has a big interest in this project; the East Perth Redevelopment Authority board; the project steering committee, which is made up of officers of the agencies of the members on the ministerial council; the Western Australian Museum; LandCorp; Scitech; and Western Power Corporation. The ministers who variously attended these meetings include me, the Treasurer, the Minister for Culture and the Arts, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Minister for Housing and Works. The ministerial council is a subcommittee of Cabinet and, as such, the written record of its deliberations is not to be made available. However, a proposal is currently under consideration and I hope that the Government is in a position to make a decision on that in the next month.

I realise that it is taking a long time. I can appreciate that the National Trust would like us to act more speedily. The issue is that the cost of restoring this building, even the exterior of the building, is of such a high order that we must ensure that we have a project that is feasible. We must balance the needs of heritage and the conservation of this important building against all the other needs in health, education and policing. It has not been an easy task. An enormous amount of work has been put into revisiting the issue and seeing how the viability of the project can be improved. I am hopeful that we now have something that is capable of taking us forward on this matter.

I appreciate that there has been a delay. However, it is an enormous amount of money. As I have said in this House before, even a very basic refit of the exterior could cost \$13 million to \$15 million, and that is without touching to any significant extent the interior of the building. I know that the National Trust wants to take it over and develop it. We believe that the financial case that it has put forward will not work. However, we have said that we want the National Trust actively involved. We are more than happy to have it involved as the eventual managers and custodians of this site, if we can put together a funding package that will secure the exterior of the building.