

NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS - FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S PLANS

901. Mr M.P. MURRAY to the Premier:

Can the Premier please inform the house what the state government can do to stop the Howard government's plans to build nuclear power plants in Western Australia?

Mr A.J. CARPENTER replied:

I hope that I will never be in a post-government career with so much baggage, waiting for people to peek into when they feel like it. The Leader of the Opposition will get a little taste of that over the next few days. His legacy is quite an interesting one. If the Corruption and Crime Commission had been in place when he was in government, I very much doubt whether many of the people sitting on the opposition benches now would still be in the Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition knows it. If the CCC had been in operation when the opposition was in government, it would have left a trail of politically dead bodies all the way from here to the ballot box.

Clearly, the federal government has pre-ordained that Western Australia and Australia should be driven down the nuclear power pathway, irrespective of whether individual states or communities want to go there. That is a reprehensible position for the federal government to take and, on behalf of the people of Western Australia, I intend to try to resist it. I noticed a very good initiative that was announced yesterday in Queensland; that is, Queensland proposes to introduce legislation to ban the construction of nuclear power stations in that state, irrespective of whether the federal government can use its newly conferred constitutional powers to override that position. We should do the same in Western Australia. We should legislate in Western Australia to ban the construction of nuclear power stations. In that legislation we should include the possibility of a trigger for a referendum to be called if the federal government seeks to override the state's position. The Leader of the Opposition would support me, would he not? It is a very good initiative, and I think that the Western Australian people would agree with me. They would appreciate the fact that they had a state government that was prepared to stand and say that there would not be a nuclear power station in Western Australia. If the federal government tries to do it, we will give the people of Western Australia the opportunity to have a direct say, via a plebiscite, in whether it should happen. By means of a referendum they can speak directly to any federal government that seeks to impose that sort of development on them. I actually think that it is a very strong position for a state to take, and I am certain that the vast bulk of conservative voters in Western Australia will support us. It is the sort of issue that we should give people the opportunity to talk about in elections. It is my intention to do that.