

DOMESTIC GAS — INDUSTRIAL ACTION

**508. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:**

I refer to media reports that union action and strikes are expected in Western Australia that threaten domestic gas supply and exports, and note that the offshore alliance that is driving the industrial dispute is made up of the Australian Workers' Union and the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union, both of which are affiliated to the Labor Party and have current members in the Cook Labor government.

- (1) Has the government modelled the damage these strikes will have on gas availability, prices and costs and state productivity in Western Australia?
- (2) Does the Premier support these unions taking action that will push up gas prices and hurt everyday Western Australians who are already struggling in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis?
- (3) Has anyone in the Cook Labor government met with members of the unions to discuss these strikes, and what is the Premier's government doing to prevent this industrial action?

**Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

- (1)–(3) I am advised that little of what the member just asked in terms of the premise of his question is right. I have spoken to the companies, which assure me that they are continuing to work through the issues associated with it. There is no impact in terms of our domestic gas supply, and if there were, there are actions that we could take. These members are taking action under their federal industrial relations regime and that is the reality of the situation. It is not a question of whether we support or do not support. Obviously, we want them to resolve their issues with their employers amicably. That is always our ambition, and we would hope that they are doing that. But if there were—there is not—any threat to gas supplies, we can take steps to ensure that that does not come to fruition. I am pleased the member mentioned the cost-of-living issues in Western Australia at the moment because it allows me the opportunity to remind the chamber once again of the important steps we have taken through our careful management of finances and the state budget to ensure that we can assist families who are doing it tough with cost-of-living issues. That includes our \$400 household electricity credit scheme that allows us to provide \$200 of support in the July–August billing cycle and another \$200 of support in the November–December billing cycle to assist families to deal with the cost of living.

But do not forget that the other reason Western Australia is not impacted by the cost of electricity in the same way as in other jurisdictions is that we kept Western Power in public hands. Perish the thought if the Liberal–National government had been elected back in 2017, because we know that the plan of its members was to privatise Western Power, and the same would be happening in Western Australia as is happening on the east coast of Australia today; that is, people's power bills are going up by 25 per cent. That is a huge impost on households right across the east coast. Western Australia has the lowest level of unemployment, the highest rate of employment, the lowest level of inflation and one of the lowest costs of living in the country. That is what happens when you work hard and be a good government that makes decisions for the future of Western Australia to ensure that all Western Australians have their affordable energy needs met into the future.