



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Hon. Paddy Embry MLC
Member for the South West Region

25 October 2002

Dr Ken Michael
Acting Gas Pipeline Access Regulator
GPO Box 8469
Perth Business Centre
WA 6849

Dear Dr Michael

Epic Energy

I understand you are conducting a further public consultation process in the lead up to finalising a decision for the Dampier to Bunbury Natural Gas Pipeline (DBNGP).

I write in support of Epic Energy and urge your reconsideration of the tariffs set in the Draft Decision to accept an access arrangement based on Schedule 39 of the DBNGP Asset Sale Agreement.

As it stands the Draft Decision not only fails to recognise Epic Energy's legitimate business interests and investment in the DBNGP, it is also contrary to public interest and the medium to long term interests of existing and future users of capacity on the Pipeline.

As a Member of Parliament for the South West Region I am committed to ensuring the price for gas to the consumer is the same in the country as it is in the city. You may be aware that I brought this matter to the attention of the Parliament in my Address In Reply 8th August 2001 and enclose a copy for your information.

No doubt you will take into account the findings of Supreme Court on 23rd August 2002, who unanimously found in favour of Epic Energy.

I am happy to be contacted at any time if you wish to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Paddy Embry JP MLC
MEMBER FOR SOUTH WEST REGION

The proposal to reduce the speed limit on the open road from 110 kilometres an hour will also frustrate many a country driver. I know from my city driving that I too get impatient with the country driver who will not merge his vehicle into the traffic. More aggressive driving is necessary in the city. In the country, because vehicles are travelling at least at 110 kilometres an hour, the situation is that another car seen overtaking on the horizon must be let into the traffic. This is one really dangerous thing that happens with city drivers in the country. Their vehicles are driven in front of large trucks and other vehicles, because the city person is used to vehicles moving at 60 kilometres an hour or less. Quite often when I drive to my business town, which is 100 kilometres away from where I live, I might see only half a dozen vehicles until I reach the outskirts of town, say the last 15 kilometres or so. Often after a night meeting I do not see a single vehicle after leaving the outskirts of the town. It is an absolute nonsense to think of bringing the speed limit down to below 110 kilometres an hour. It would be far more sensible in practice to increase it. Consultation needs to take place with country people as well as city people. Following consultation with country people, legislation needs to be introduced that shows the value the Government places on consultation with country people. Country people know what is best for them. Surprise, surprise! If the Government wants to place a real value on the minority of people who live outside the metropolitan area, it will take notice of the things they want. Mr President, you represent a semi-rural region, and you would be far more aware than most of your colleagues of the problems of country people. Areas outside the metropolitan area generate almost all of the export income required to produce the standard of living that we all enjoy. There is no sound argument for the modern car, on a good wide country road, being restricted to 110 kilometres an hour. Based on my own experience of many years of driving, I believe that the prime cause of accidents in the country is tiredness, although for some people, alcohol and lack of experience prove fatal. Supporting my belief in tiredness being the prime reason for accidents is the fact that so many country fatalities involve only the driver. Many fatal accidents in the country do not involve a second vehicle, and I believe the statistics show that the driver was the sole occupant of the car.

I will briefly raise the subject of the proposed Dampier to Bunbury natural gas pipeline. The proposed charges for gas to the consumer are quite unjust, and present another example of the Government's failure to treat country people in the same fashion as their city cousins. If the Government legislates to bring in one vote, one value, surely it must have the responsibility of ensuring that the price for gas to the consumer is the same in the country as it is in the city. The proposed price is \$1 a kilojoule in Perth, \$1.08 south of Rockingham, and \$1.27 to Bunbury - and God knows what it would be in Albany, should the pipeline ever be extended. Because the price will increase by 67 per cent of the consumer price index, the price difference in the south west will increase dramatically as time passes. Epic Energy believes new customers will start off paying approximately \$1.33 a kilojoule. Proceeding with the proposed one vote, one value legislation places a responsibility on the Government to make sure that things are equal in the country. This is not one vote, one value; it is without doubt one vote, one rip-off.

Consultation is much spoken about in this Chamber. It is a matter that the Government spoke much of during the election, and with a lot of justification. Very little consultation took place under the previous Government. In late May, the Government was taken to task over the lack of consultation about the sale and end use of the Scarborough Senior High School site. If my memory serves me correctly, that was in late May, when we new members of this House started this somewhat terrifying experience. I have received several telephone calls that eventually resulted in the formation of a group of concerned residents, many of whom claimed that they had voted Labor on 10 February because of the promises made by several Labor members of Parliament, including the Premier and a candidate who was subsequently elected. These people now feel totally cheated over the whole episode. Politicians and political parties need to raise their image out in the wider community. Hiding behind the fine print, and using doublespeak, are prime reasons for the public's low esteem for those of us in public office.

Another issue that gives me great concern, and one into which I have put a great deal of time since coming into this House on 22 May, is that of aged care homes. It is not good enough that the federal Government hides behind the smokescreen that aged care is a state responsibility, and it is certainly not good enough that the State Government hides behind the same smokescreen and blames the federal Government. I suggest that there are Western Australians in dire circumstances, and that is primarily the responsibility of our State Government to rectify. A large international company is involved in Western Australian aged care homes. Its brochure states that in Western Australia, the Moran Health Care Group (WA) has control of 114 beds in seven nursing homes. It also has four assisted-living apartments and low facilities with 175 beds, self-care units with 68 beds, as well as three current development projects with 88 beds, including the Bunbury Forrest Lodge, which has 48 beds.

In its brochure, Moran claims quality care throughout its high-care facilities, formerly called nursing homes, which deliver 24-hour nursing and personal care. Its brochure declares that its focus is on residents and their health; that social and support needs are comprehensively identified and assessed on an ongoing basis in consultation with family members and general practitioners; and that experienced nursing staff reinforce this care with clinical expertise, administering medication, wound care, pain management, palliative care and many other services. Moran states that additional services are available, augmenting the excellent nursing and personal services that are standard throughout its facilities. If this is the case, how can the Moran Health Care Group explain why the brand-new facility of Forrest Gardens remains unoccupied and without staff? Moran's brochure continues by stating that its experience in Australia