

Minister's Woodside link potential conflict of interest: Ripper

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WESTERN Australia Opposition leader Eric Ripper has called on Premier Colin Barnett to remove Environment Minister Donna Faragher as her husband's job with Woodside presented the potential for conflicts of interest on a range of issues.

Ripper said it was not good enough that Barnett had precluded Faragher from dealing with issues related specifically to Woodside. A Cabinet reshuffle to change her portfolio responsibilities would be the easiest way to resolve the issue, he said.

"I don't have any questions about Mrs Faragher's personal integrity but her appointment as environment minister does look unwise because there is so much potential for conflict of interest," the *West Australian* quoted Ripper said.

"Such is Woodside's presence in the economy that there will be a lot of issues involving Woodside's partners, competitors and customers that she can't deal with; therefore there will be a large slab of environmental work and perhaps Cabinet work that she won't be able to participate in."

Barnett rejected Ripper's call for a reshuffle, saying that Faragher had been open and transparent about her husband job at Woodside and that both the company and the state government had taken steps to overcome any perceived conflict of interest.

Woodside had transferred the minister's husband, Scott Faragher, to ensure there was no potential for him to work on any matter related to WA, while the government – on the advice of a solicitor – had put in place a procedure for Planning Minister John Day to deal with any issues related to Woodside and the environment.

"I do not see any conflict at all, in fact what we've done is recognise there could be a conflict of interest and we have taken measures to ensure that that will never ever arise," Barnett said.

Barnett himself also drew some flak after it was revealed that his daughter-in-law Sasha Pental was the director of government relations and sustainability on Woodside's Sunrise LNG project in the Timor Sea.

A Woodside spokesman told the *West Australian* yesterday that Pental dealt with the Australian, East Timorese and Northern Territory governments in her position but not the WA government, while Barnett said his situation was materially different to that of Faragher's and her husband as it did not involve a spouse of direct dependant.

Ripper granted that while the relationship did not have the same direct prospect of a conflict of interest, the premier still had to demonstrate how he was going to manage the situation.



Colin Barnett



Eric Ripper



Western Australia Minister
for Environment Donna
Faragher