

Affordable and sustainable access to gas



with JAMES DONNELLY

YOU have to wonder sometimes where multi-national companies believe their power and influence ends.

This week Premier Alan Carpenter tabled the notion that a percentage of our gas reserves should be quarantined for domestic use.

In other words we, the people of WA, should have a guarantee of affordable and sustainable access to gas.

This is a highly-commendable platform and one that receives backing from all sides of politics.

The sale of vast quantities of LNG to many Asian countries and China in particular, was heralded as a great success, bringing vast sums of money into the country.

Of this there is little doubt but surely we would be foolish to allow all our reserves to be

exported and leave WA with nothing.

People should be aware of the price differential these countries pay for that gas and what we are

forced to pay.

A cylinder of domestic gas can now cost in excess of \$90 here in Kalgoorlie. The export price is not one-tenth of that amount.

This is where these companies wheel out their usual scaremongering claptrap.

They spuriously claim this proposal could jeopardise future investment in this State and undermine the possible economic viability of such projects.

This is clearly nonsense. They make billions of dollars profit from our resources but as usual that never seems to be enough.

What is particularly worrying and indeed unacceptable in this case is that they have used very unveiled threats towards a democratically-elected Government.

Woodside's chief executive, a certain Mr Don Voelte, was quoted as saying: "Alan Carpenter's going to want to do the right thing and he's going to realise he does not want to take on Woodside because we've got remarkable resources on an issue like this".

How can he get away with those comments and indeed more pointedly who does he think he is and where does he think he is? WA is not some fledgling third world country, we do not need to go cap in hand to these people and give them our resources for a pittance.

The ex-leader of the State Liberal Party, Colin Barnett, has come out in support of the Premier on this issue.

Mr Barnett said: "The gas resource belongs to the people of this nation; it does not belong to the companies".

Good on you Colin and good on Premier Alan Carpenter for saying he had a responsibility to protect the interests of West Australians.

Bring it on Mr Voelte, because we have remarkable resources on an issue like this, it's called the people of WA.

● James Donnelly is president of the Kalgoorlie branch of the ALP. These views are his own.