

SOS call to gas chief saves city from dark

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The Indian family building a \$70 million mansion in Peppermint Grove helped save electricity users in Perth and Karratha from rolling power cuts yesterday when they agreed to divert enough gas from their giant industrial plant on the Burrup Peninsula into the Dampier to Bunbury pipeline to keep the lights on.

As gas shortages caused by a fire at Woodside's North-West Shelf plant on Wednesday morning threatened to force residential blackouts in Perth, *The West Australian* has confirmed State Energy Minister Fran Logan made an SOS telephone call at 11am yesterday to see whether 15 terajoules of gas from the Burrup Fertilisers ammonia plant on the Burrup Peninsula could be diverted south for 24 hours to help maintain electricity supplies.

The call was taken by Burrup Fertilisers director Wolfgang Jovanovic, who immediately rang the company's chairman and chief executive Pankaj Oswal in the US.

"I rang him up and got him out of bed and he said without any hesitation if we can help by supplying the gas we should do so as long as we could do it safely," Mr Jovanovic told *The West Australia-*

lian yesterday.

Within two hours of Mr Logan's telephone call, the extra 15 terajoules of gas provided by Mr Oswal's company was being used to generate electricity by Verve Energy in the South-West grid and by the regional arm of the former Western Power Corp, Horizon Power.

Horizon Power spokesman David Martin confirmed last night that the 10 terajoules of gas which Horizon received from the Burrup Fertilisers allocation had saved Karratha and the surrounding areas from rolling power cuts.

Mr Logan said the remaining gas diverted into the Dampier to Bunbury pipeline from the Burrup Fertilisers plant had been sufficient to generate about 70MW of extra capacity for the South-West grid, helping to avert the threat of enforced power cuts as temperatures in Perth soared beyond 40C.

"It (the Burrup Fertilisers gas) was critical to ensuring that the lights stayed on," Mr Logan said.

"Without that, we would have been struggling. It gave us the buffer to ensure that demand met supply."

Western Power Networks chief Doug Aberle confirmed last

night that electricity demand in the grid had come within 150MW of the total generating capacity for a period of about 30 minutes either side of 3pm yesterday after one of Verve's production units at the coal-fired Kwinana power station had tripped.

Burrup Fertilisers was unaffected by the Woodside problems because the company gets its gas from rival supplier Apache Energy, with its ability to deliver the extra capacity into the pipeline underpinning the importance of having a diversity of supply.

Mr Logan said while the extra gas was a significant factor in averting power shortages yesterday, the 24-hour supply source from Burrup Fertilisers would also be critical today given Woodside had advised him that gas from its Karratha plant would not be expected to be flowing into the Dampier to Bunbury pipeline until last night, rather than yesterday afternoon as Woodside had originally indicated to him on Wednesday.

Mr Jovanovic said production at the Burrup Fertilisers plant had been would back to the lowest level possible without jeopardising safety so. He said the issue of how much Verve would pay

Burrup Fertilisers for the gas was still to be sorted out.

Mr Oswal and his wife Radhika are the family planning to build an Indian-styled mansion, with a series of distinctive domes, on a 6600sqm section of Warren Anderson's Peppermint Grove superblock.

At a cost of about \$70 million, the Oswals' house will be one of the most expensive homes in Australia.

'He said without any hesitation if we can help . . . we should do so.'

WOLFGANG JOVANOVIC



Feeding the demand: Gas diverted from Burrup Fertilisers plant helped generate power to meet the needs of Perth and Karratha



Woken by phone call: Burrup Fertilisers chief Pankaj Oswal.