



Liberal MPs rue absence of a plan B

NICK BUTTERLY

Federal Liberal politicians have demanded the State Government buy huge quantities of diesel on overseas markets to stabilise prices and ensure power supplies.

The MPs and senators, some of whom have electorates in the hard-hit South-West, complain the disaster could have been avoided if the State Government had had a contingency plan to deal with such an event.

“We need to see some action,” Senator David Johnston said. “I think the State Government should be out there on the spot market and purchasing diesel and getting it on ships and bringing it to Western Australia.

“I think we should be purchasing large generator sets across Australia, bringing them into the South-West to assist businesses so that the 2000 people minimum who are going to be without a job in WA can have some sense of hope.”

He said the Carpenter Government should buy between 250,000 and 500,000 tonnes of diesel for shipping to WA to stabilise skyrocketing prices. Mining companies were grabbing diesel because they had the financial muscle to do so but were pushing up the price for everyone else.

Alan Eggleston said the State Government had pushed everyone to use more gas for years knowing supplies relied on a single pipeline from the North-West.

It was incredible they had no plan to meet a gap in supply should that pipeline be put out of action.

Federal Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin said the Rudd Government was waiting on a needs assessment from the WA Government before deciding on assistance.