GOVERNMENT TO BLAME FOR NOVEMBER BLACK-OUT

John Elferink MLA

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Pressure applied by the Henderson Government to PowerWater and NT Gas appears to have caused November’s disastrous city-wide blackout.

Shadow Minister for Essential Services, John Elferink, said evidence provided to the Council of Territory Co-operation yesterday points the finger for the blackout directly at the Labor Government.

“PowerWater was clearly pressured by Labor to bring gas on-line even though it had the potential to damage the system.” Mr Elferink said.

“Government was expecting Eni to have gas flowing through the pipeline to the Weddell power station by January 1st, 2009, but had been advised it was going to be a year late.

“Without the gas, Power Water would have had to burn tens-of-millions of dollars worth of diesel.

“Instead, the Government chose to get ‘off specification gas’ from NT Gas. This had the potential to damage the infrastructure as it wasn’t designed to take that form of gas.

“The gas contained too much fluid and to protect the Weddell Generators the gas had to be shut down without warning on November 23rd last year, putting 14,000 customers off line.

“This was a desperate act by the Henderson Government because it didn’t want to pay for more diesel.

“NT Gas confirmed to the Council of Co-operation yesterday that a sense of urgency to get the pipeline operating was driving the issue.

“Similarly, we’re still waiting to hear the relationship between this debacle and the melted Weddell generator, which has cost taxpayers hundreds-of-thousands of dollars.

“After slugging Territorians with 25% increases in their power bills, this is hardly a good outcome.

“Once again Rob Knight has some explaining to do.”

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