High fuel charges may cost spell in slammer

Christopher Walsh

FUEL companies will be forced to disclose their profits and how they arrive at the price at the pump – or face jail time – under tough new legislation expected to be brought forward in Parliament this week.

Chief Minister Adam Giles told the NT News he was unhappy with fuel companies over their inflated prices in the Territory and would introduce the Fuel Price Disclosure Act to price the pressures down.

“Like many Territorians, I’ve lost patience and this legislation will force fuel companies to show their hand,” Mr Giles said.

“Territorians deserve to have confidence that the price they are paying for fuel is fair and reasonable.”

Mr Giles had called for a “please explain” from fuel companies last month after the price of diesel and unleaded began to creep back up after falling substantially in 2014.

The responses were not adequate, he said.

“We are not kidding – fix your prices or answer to us,” he said.

“I am concerned about a return to historic behaviour by fuel companies, particularly in relation to diesel and gas.”

The Bill was first conceived in October 2014. The Act includes heavy penalties for fuel companies that fail to disclose their pricing information, including fines of close to $60,000 or two years in jail.

It would also give the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs wideranging investigative powers to search premises.

“This will help the Commissioner get a clear picture of what profits are being made and drive competition by allowing motorists to make informed choices about where they fill up,” Mr Giles said.

Michael Gorye

THE contract to upgrade electricity generation capacity at Owen Springs power station in Brewer Estate went live yesterday and on-site works will begin in May.

Clarence Energy, the company awarded a $5.5 million tender to supply and install 10 high-efficiency gas engines, expects 49 full-time equivalent jobs will be created over the next 12 months before the ageing Ron Goodin power station is decommissioned.

“Typical trades used in this style of project will be civil, mechanical and electrical tradespeople,” managing director Greg Columbus said.

“There will be opportunities for local people to be involved in many stages during the contract, both as tradespersons supporting the delivery and construction, along other supportive administration type roles.”

New York-based GE Power issued a statement on Friday, welcoming the deployment of its Jenbacher engines.

“The low fuel consumption rates will help to mitigate the price of power and reduce carbon emissions in the Northern Territory.”

The statement said Clarence Energy would execute a carefully planned program ensuring that integration of the works with the existing power station infrastructure is delivered safely and on time.

“GE’s Jenbacher B624 gas engines feature high electrical efficiency and are capable of providing seamless power delivery, even when operating on varying fuel gas compositions such as those delivered to the Owen Springs power station,” GE spokesman Bart Simes said.

“We look forward to providing safe, on-time and on-cost project delivery for Territory Generation.”

PLANNERS have anticipated the closure of Ron Goodin power station and potential residential development will be considered.

Chief Minister Adam Giles last week flagged housing could go ahead on the current industrial site after it’s fully rehabilitated.

NT Planning Commissioner chairman Gary Nairn said the draft Alice Springs Regional Land Use Plan foresees this, saying the site “may become available for alternate use” subject to investigation of land capability.

Following the completion of the Alice Springs RLUP, the next most likely planning documents that may be prepared would be area plans, which are more detailed, Mr Nairn said. “It would be at that stage that investigations such as land capability studies would be carried out on potential sites such as the Ron Goodin site.”

Meanwhile, the Electrical Trades Union has called for a transparent investigation into the January 31 blackout.

The union’s NT organiser Paul Kirby said there shouldn’t be a knee-jerk reaction to the outages.

“Families in Central Australia deserve to have a reliable power supply, but they also deserve to have secure ongoing employment for workers at Ron Goodin power station and other essential facilities throughout the Territory,” he said.

Mr Kirby commended Territory Generation and Power and Water workers who were on shift, or volunteered to work the previous weekend.

Labor candidate for Braitling, Dale Wakefield, welcomed the investment in new generating capacity, but echoed the call for an inquiry into the blackout and said the findings should be communicated to residents.

“People are worried there’s no plan in place to stop that happening again before the work is completed,” she said.

Arafura MP Robyn Lambley also welcomed the promised upgrade of Owen Springs, adding: “It is truly remarkable that they found this enormous amount of funding so quickly, just days after the big blackout of January 31.”

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Power upgrade all go

Closure offers opportunity

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