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WA: Transcontinental pipeline can supply east with gas

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A transcontinental pipeline could be built from the North-West Cape to link the eastern states with Australia's largest natural gas field, West Australian Premier Colin Barnett says.

Barnett on Monday told a petroleum engineers conference that Australia should embrace natural gas for its energy needs and cut carbon emissions from coal, which accounts for 85 per cent of its energy needs.

Emissions could be cut by five per cent, and probably more, if the nation set a target to use natural gas for half of its energy by 2030, Barnett told the Asia Pacific Oil and Gas Conference and Exhibition (APOGCE) in Perth.

The re-elected Liberal leader, who proposed a Kimberley to Perth water canal before losing the 2005 state election to the Labor government, later said it struck him as "a bit odd" that Australia did not use more of its abundant gas supplies.

"Obviously the way to do that is to have a transcontinental pipeline constructed," he told reporters.

"Pipelines basically are used from Siberia to Europe. They have criss-crossed the American continent for decades.

"Why in Australia can't we make some big decisions, some supply and engineering-based solutions to greenhouse emissions?"

Barnett, a former mines and energy minister and state development minister in the new cabinet, said the pipeline needed only to run from the north-west coast into the Cooper basin in central Australia, where existing pipelines would connect it to the east coast.

"That might seem a long way but remember in the early 1990s, the Goldfields gas pipeline was built," he said.

"(That was) 1,500km and I think it was built in 10 weeks ... it's not hard to build pipelines."

Barnett said scientific and engineering measures would produce more certain outcomes than "a complex carbon emissions trading scheme".

“What the federal government is proposing is extraordinarily complicated,” Barnett said.

“It is not understood by industry, let alone the community. The biggest loser out of that scheme looks like being WA because we are energy intensive and we are export focused.”

Barnett said the pipeline would attract private funding if the federal and eastern state governments adopted a policy of using more natural gas in power production.

“The point I’m making is why wouldn’t we do the easy things either first or concurrently, and the easiest thing Australia could do is to use some of its natural gas, or all of its natural gas, within Australia.

“Why is the world buying our natural gas? Because it’s clean, that’s why it’s in such great demand.”

Source: Industry Search Daily News Wire