

Barnett starts as WA Premier with a warning to Rudd

Alana Buckley-Carr | *September 24, 2008*

NEW West Australian Premier Colin Barnett believes Kevin Rudd's emissions trading scheme will stifle investment in the booming resources state and will be high on the agenda at next week's COAG meeting.

After being sworn in as the state's 29th premier yesterday, Mr Barnett said: "There are some big issues on the national agenda that have, I think, major implications for Western Australia."

The ETS, which the Prime Minister hopes to have implemented by 2010, was "extraordinarily complicated and has the ability to discourage a lot of investment, particularly in this state", the Premier said.

Mr Barnett said he would make a case at COAG for greater use of Western Australia's natural gas across Australia.

"I'll be urging (Mr Rudd) to look more broadly at the energy situation," he said. "Australia is one of the few countries in the world that has a simple option of using more of its natural gas right across this nation. Bear in mind that, if you use natural gas for power generation, the emissions are around one-third of those of coal, so why wouldn't we, as a nation, do the commonsense, simple thing first?"

Mr Barnett, the country's only state or territory Liberal leader, will host COAG in Perth next week. But yesterday he was looking forward to getting on with his new job. "We will stand for good government and government with honesty and integrity," the Premier said.

"I'm excited now about the prospect of getting on with the job and delivering the promises that we made during the election campaign and hopefully setting up Western Australia for a very prosperous, very successful future.

"The priorities will be to reintroduce the surrogacy laws, to fix up the problems with truth in sentencing, a bill to protect Royal Perth Hospital, also a bill to deal with assaults on police officers."

Mr Barnett will also meet Japanese company Inpex this week, in a last-ditch attempt to convince the company to build a \$15 billion gas project in Western Australia.

He conceded there was only a slim chance the project could be salvaged, as he believed Inpex had already decided to build the gas plant in Darwin. "I can't offer them anything other than common sense," Mr Barnett said.

"To pipe gas around the north of Western Australia to Darwin is adding substantially, billions of dollars to the cost of the project, it increases greenhouse emissions by 10 per cent and it prevents the most orderly and less synchronised development of other gas fields in the Browse Basin."