

Win for power protest

By **NICOLE HEINRICH**

A GROUP fighting the construction of an electrical switchyard in the Hills is celebrating after Western Power announced it would take the project back to the drawing board.

Western Power customer services general manager Mark de Laeter proposed restarting the process during a deputation to Kalamunda Shire's planning services committee on Monday night.

About 70 Hills residents crowded the council chambers to hear Mr de Laeter's presentation. Many stood with placards and banners protesting the switchyard as Western Power staff arrived.

Mr de Laeter said Western Power acknowledged the controversy surrounding the project. There had been mismanagement and confusion during the project since September last year.

"I acknowledge (that residents) would be happy if I said we'll clear out. We want to work with the community in an open-book style and agree on an engagement style," he said.

"Western Power has committed to a fresh start, reviewing alternative supply options, nominating a new senior project team and working with the community to determine the preferred model.

"Western Power still believes there is a need for the proposed eastern terminal, but understands the need to involve the community and take them on the journey," he said.

The utility received 600 submissions during a public comment period on Western Power's proposed process for site selection. Only 37 of them related to the topic.

Stop the Eastern Terminal Action Group spokesman Alan Lonsdale said the community was heartened by Western Power's admission it had not handled the project well.

"The fact that only 37 submissions were concerned with the process demonstrates both the strength of community opposition to an eastern terminal and the community's rejection of the proposed process," he said.

Dr Lonsdale said the group rejected Western Power's claim that it needed to build a gantry structure at Hacketts Gully and would fight it.