

Pearl brings skills mix to energy field

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One year after buying the Integrated Power Services joint venture from Halliburton and Western Power, Anthony Wooles has firmed up plans to turn the local company into a national operator and maintainer of energy assets.

Under its new name of PearlStreet Energy Services, named after Thomas Edison's first commercial power station, the company brings together a rare mix of technical and financial skills.

Mr Wooles has spent the past decade running his corporate advisory firm Trudo, which counted Western Power among its clients.

"You get to a point where you want to apply your thinking in your own business," he said.

His PearlStreet co-directors include former Western Power managing director David Eiszele and former Western Power general manager Garry Gillies.

"We have a fairly unique integration of operations and maintenance capability with transactional and corporate finance and capital raising capability," Mr Wooles said.

"That means we are well placed to grow not just organically, but by acquisition."

PearlStreet currently has long-term operations and maintenance contracts for the Tiwest co-generation plant in Kwinana and the coal-handling infrastructure at the Collie and Muja power stations.

It has also provided maintenance services for companies including Western Power, WMC Resources, Iluka Resources and Wesfarmers CSBP, has worked internationally, and generates annual revenue of more than \$8 million.

Mr Wooles said PearlStreet was currently negotiating an acquisition in the eastern states to support the national expansion of its energy services capability.

In the longer term, he sees a much wider strategic opportunity.

"We certainly have aspirations beyond the O&M side of things."

Mr Wooles predicts there will be increasing "value chain segmentation" as institutional investors take ownership of energy assets, a trend that has already started with groups such as listed investment trust DUET.

He also sees a need for massive investment in infrastructure provision.

"The whole industry is morphing. There is an inevitability that the public and private sectors will have to work together very closely on energy provision for the next 50 years."

In this context, Mr Wooles believes there are plenty of opportunities for an experienced company such as PearlStreet.

An immediate target is the construction of a new 15 megawatt gas-fired power station at Carnarvon.

PearlStreet has lodged an expression of interest with Western Power and plans to bid for the work on a build, own, operate basis.

"Building and owning the assets is well within our zone," Mr Wooles said.

He also sees opportunities for PearlStreet as a service provider to oil and gas, mining and mineral processing companies, which often have their own energy generation capacity.

Provision of energy, while a non-core activity, was critical to the success of these operations, Mr Wooles said.