

## CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND MITIGATION STRATEGY

### *Motion*

**HON SALLY TALBOT (South West)** [3.20 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the government for entering its third year of office without the climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy promised by the Liberals before the 2008 election.

As will be obvious to anybody who has taken the trouble to read the motion, notice was given some time ago—indeed nearly a year ago. We do not resilie from that condemnation of the government for entering its third year of office, but of course I could, with a great deal of justification, amend my own motion to read “for entering its fourth year of office without the climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy promised by the Liberals before the 2008 election”. That is where we find ourselves today. We are entering the fourth year of this government with nothing—not one word, not one gesture and not one action from government to deliver its promise to provide this state with a climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy.

How far back does this promise go? Honourable members will not be surprised to know that it goes back to before the 2008 election, when the Liberal Party went to the polls promising the following. It probably wishes it could find the original document and shred it, but of course unfortunately these things make their way into the public realm and get presented in PowerPoint presentations given by none other than the Office of Climate Change. On 22 October 2009 the Office of Climate Change gave a presentation to the Chamber of Minerals and Energy at a climate change seminar. Of course on slide 1 up went the following under the heading “CCAMS”. I am not sure how the government refers to this; it is obviously “climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy” but on the documentation it comes out as CCAMS. I do not know how to refer to this because I have never heard the government talk about it, so I will call it CCAMS. The very first slide states —

- Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy (CCAMS) is the major work program of OCC —

The Office of Climate Change —

over next 18 months.

- Government’s election platform committed to —

I guess this is a quote from the policy —

“work with industry, scientists, local government and conservation groups to develop a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy”

There we have the government’s own words, uttered before the September 2008 election, to develop that plan for the state.

The government obviously did not walk away from it straightaway. We followed the government’s first budget in 2009–10, which had references to the development of a climate change strategy. At that stage it was a little abbreviated—it was not called CCAMS then; it was called an adaptation strategy. It then followed up in the 2010–11 budget papers with exactly the same promise. I think I remarked at the time that somebody obviously just cut and pasted and changed the financial years to which the promise was supposed to relate. Lo and behold, in May 2011 we saw the same thing in the government’s latest budget—that is, the promise to develop the adaptation and mitigation strategy. As I have already pointed out, this is supposed to be the major work that the Office of Climate Change is undertaking. It was also referred to at the Council of Australian Governments. I have here an extract from “Western Australian Complementary Measures Review: Final Report to COAG” dated December 2009. Back then, spirits were still pretty high that we would have something which the state could look at and which would guide us through the next few years—a document, one would think, of some substance and import. I will quote briefly from this document —

The State Government has committed to the development of a new Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy (CCAMS) which is to be developed in 2009–10. The CCAMS will be developed to ensure that State action on climate change effectively targets those areas where a carbon price may not be sufficient to achieve efficient abatement ... The complementarity principles will provide a guide for the development of this policy.

That could have been written today. There is nothing that we read in that that suggests to members, surely, that somehow the wheels were going to fall off this cart, and that suddenly the project would, with some justification, assume a lesser priority in the government’s thinking.

We saw a succession of annual reports from the Department of Environment and Conservation. Here again we see the cut and paste facility that Bill Gates so thoughtfully provided us with in an extract from DEC’s 2010–11

annual report. I refer to pages 31 to 33, in case anybody wants to check my research, under the heading “Service 6: Coordinate the response to climate change”. I will not go through each of these because, as I say, they are exactly the same. Under service 6 it is stated —

This service provides leadership in the development and implementation of strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation initiatives to reduce the impact of climate change for Western Australia.

Then we go down to number six —

**6. Climate change adaptation advice**

DEC provides advice to state agencies, local governments and other stakeholders on undertaking climate change risk and vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning, and integrating adaptation considerations into existing policies, programs and decision making.

This is new. In case anybody was getting immersed in their laptops and papers for reading and signing, a new item this year is “Performance highlights” —

- A working draft of the *Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy for Western Australia* was developed and consultation with state agencies commenced.

Here we have evidence that it took us three whole years to get to the stage at which we have something that is called a working draft. Have any of us seen this document? No, of course we have not. We have no way of judging the quality of the work done. We have no way of assessing whether the document will be the document that was promised all those long years ago when the Liberal Party was preparing its policies for the 2008 election. So, we have the election promise, three budgets, three annual reports, and we have the report to COAG—all of which refer to this magical document.

It has been a growing cause of concern on this side of the house, as members can see from the date of the notice of motion, about exactly what the government is doing. It certainly appears from where we sit that the government has been doing exactly nothing. In June of this year my colleague in the other place the member for Gosnells asked the environment minister the following question —

From 2004 to 2008, Western Australia had a comprehensive Greenhouse Strategy as a response to climate change. What strategy or plan has this government used for the past two and a half years to reduce Western Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions?

Just before I proceed to the answer, which is basically a non-answer anyway that gives me a beautiful segue into answering a question about what Labor did, I will refer very briefly to an answer that I in fact gave in this place to a question from Hon Giz Watson on 18 March 2008 when I was asked about plans to mitigate the impact of climate change on WA’s conservation reserve system. In that answer, which I will not go into in detail, I referred to \$8.625 million over five years to help WA industries—this was all announced by the Premier in March 2007—and people in the environment adapt to the unavoidable impact of climate change; and then it goes into detail about stage 3 of the Indian Ocean climate initiative and many other measures that the Labor government was actively pursuing during those years.

Let me return to question on notice 5311 in the other place on 14 June of this year about what strategy or plan the Barnett government had in place. Guess what the opening line was, Mr Deputy President, (Hon Jon Ford)? I do not think anybody will be surprised to know that it says —

The Government is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the development of the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy (CCAMS) and the Energy2031 Strategic Energy Initiative.

CCAMS will assess the likely impacts and risks of climate change —

We all know what CCAMS was supposed to do, because the government has told us about 950 times what it thinks the strategy is going to do! The big problem is that it does not have a strategy. Going into its fourth and final—thank goodness—year of government, it still does not have a climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy. A couple of months later I took up that line of questioning in this place. On 16 August of this year, I asked through the minister representing the Minister for Environment whether the minister was aware of the Climate Commission’s report titled “Western Australia Climate Change Impacts”. I put that in the question very deliberately, because I wanted to completely dispel once and for all the assertion that there is more work to be done; that somehow what has held up this process, what has turned it into something that for this government is clearly a task that is bigger than *Ben-Hur*, is that it is still looking for evidence or it has to commission a few more reports or it needs a couple more inquiries. We had the Climate Commission’s report, and I will just remind members of the title, “The Critical Decade: Western Australia climate change impacts”. I asked whether the minister was aware of that report and the findings in that report that climate change had contributed to the

marked drying trend in the south west of the state and that the sea levels along the WA coast had been rising at more than the double the global average. Yes, the minister was aware! Thank goodness for that! Part (2) of my question is —

Does the minister agree that with the Climate Commission's statement that this is the critical decade for action and that to minimise climate change risks we must begin to decarbonise our economy and move to cleaner energy sources during this decade?

In part (3) of my question I ask —

Does the minister support the view that the longer we wait, the more difficult and costly it will be?

The answer is —

The minister agrees that action to address climate change is necessary.

Then we get the cut and paste from every other answer! They probably have a macro; they must use it so often. It states —

The government is developing a climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy so that Western Australia can play its part.

The final part of my question in August this year to the minister reads —

If the minister does support the views of the Climate Commission, why, after three years of Barnett government budget promises, does Western Australia still not have a climate strategy?

The answer is —

The government is committed to developing climate change policies for the future through the climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy and the strategic energy initiative. Delays and uncertainty around national parameters are a key reason that work on CCAMS has not yet been completed. Consultation with state agencies on a draft strategy has occurred, and public consultation will follow.

I will come back to that point about uncertainty in a moment. I want to draw attention to one other question I asked a couple of days after that following up on that point about the draft having been completed. I asked which agencies had been consulted; what the deadline was for the agencies to comment; whether changes would be made to the draft after comments had been received; and when the draft strategy will be released publicly. That is what we have been waiting for ever since 8 September 2008: we want to see the strategy! This is bad news, because the minister responded by listing the agencies. The answer reads —

The following agencies were consulted: The Department of Agriculture and Food; the Department of Commerce; the Department of Culture and the Arts; the Department of Education —

I will not read them all out because I can basically tell members that every single department in the entire public service was clearly consulted. Then we got some good news that the deadline for the agencies to comment was 17 June 2011. But remember I asked this question on 18 August 2011, so the deadline was two months past when I asked that question; and, of course, we still have seen nothing. The minister went on to say that comments from agencies would be considered and amendments made as appropriate to develop a draft strategy suitable for public consultation. I wonder what on earth that means. It sounds to me like the minister wants to use the red pen on this draft report. It has a sinister ring to it when I read that Minister Marmion wants to make sure we develop a draft strategy "suitable for public consultation". I would just like to know what the strategy says; it does not need to be sanitised or doctored before it goes out for public comment. We have any number of people in this state who are more than qualified to make highly informed comment on a draft strategy, and they should be allowed to do that without any further delay. However, that is clearly not the intention of the government.

I noted in one of those answers that Minister Marmion refers to "Delays and uncertainty around national parameters". I know that this is complicated. Every member in this house knows that it is complicated. Everybody involved in climate-change politics in this country knows that it is complicated. But it seems to have completely defeated this government. The fact that it is complicated is something that the government is not embracing as a challenge; it is something it is running away from at a million miles an hour. Thank goodness that has not been the response of other sectors of government in this country. I hope I will have time a little later to refer to some of the things that the commonwealth has now done, because what we have in front of us in the climate change legislation that has just been passed by the lower house of the commonwealth Parliament is the kind of package of measures that will prove as significant in the course of Australian history as many of the other great measures that Labor governments have been responsible for. In that context, I refer to things like Medicare and some of the other great social-change legislation that Labor governments have driven through, both at state and federal levels. I think that is what we are looking at; it is of that dimension and I am very impressed,

as are many other people who want to see Australia adopt a sensible approach to climate change, at what the federal government has been able to get through the House of Representatives against all the odds.

It is not that sector of government I particularly wanted to refer to in this context; it is the area of local government. I do not have time to go through all the various achievements of the 139 local governments across Western Australia, but I need go no further than the local government in the town in which I worked, which is the City of Mandurah. Honourable members know, because we have talked about it often enough and I take every opportunity to pay great tribute to the City of Mandurah for the work that it has done, not just on climate change but on a range of environmental measures, and I will take this opportunity to give it a little plug; it has been selected as a finalist in an international award on sustainability. The decision about who the winner is will be made within the next couple of weeks in Korea, and I have everything crossed hoping that Mandurah wins because it richly deserves that award.

It cannot be that hard! In preparing to speak on this motion, I went through the City of Mandurah's website to see what it has done. There is more substantive information, research and planning material about climate change on the website of the City of Mandurah to provide people in the community with certainty than there is on the whole of the state government's website. That is an absolute disgrace. The City of Mandurah is one local government authority, and it has been able to achieve more than the state government, with all the resources of the state public sector, in over three years. That is an absolute disgrace.

I have a document here that has not printed out very well in black and white from an electronic version, but I just draw honourable members' attention—I urge them to look at what the City of Mandurah is doing on its website—to this brochure called "Reducing greenhouse gas emissions to protect Mandurah's future", because it must be remembered that that is what we are talking about here. This is not an abstract debate about an obtuse scientific principle; this is about the future of our community. It is not about just our economic prosperity; it is about our social and environmental wellbeing. For the state government to have sat there for over three years doing precisely nothing is an absolute disgrace. It is a scandal that will come back to haunt this government when the history of the last four years is written.

This great little brochure to which I am referring is not a scientific document. What we are talking about is connecting with ordinary people in the community to give those people a sense of agency in their own lives. The brochure is subtitled "Taking Action", and it goes through all the measures that the City of Mandurah has put in place. It has a bushland protection strategy and a solar library. It has done a wind study. It has, which I hope all honourable members know about, the famous Mandurah sustainable home. It has set in place a process called "Days of Change". The brochure states —

The City of Mandurah is an Ambassador Organisation and CEO Mark Newman a Champion, for [daysofchange.org](http://daysofchange.org), a new social networking program which aims to help people take simple steps in their homes, schools and workplaces to tread more lightly on the planet.

It goes into the Living Smart program, which of course was started by the Labor government. It has a chart about emissions prevented, both corporate and community. It is a fantastic little document that is circulating in the community.

The City of Mandurah has also done more substantive work, and I want to draw the attention of honourable members to this, because, for goodness sake, if government members find themselves incapable of being able to produce an original document, even with all the resources of government, they should look no further than the summary document dated December 2009 which was put out by the City of Mandurah and which is titled "Coastal Zone Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan". I have only replicated the executive summary. These are very, very substantial documents. They are all available on the City of Mandurah website.

They are all very comprehensive. They do in fact exactly what the state government said it wanted to do with its own climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy. It is just that whereas the City of Mandurah has been able to produce substantial documents to give the community, local businesses and planners advice, information and guidance, the state government has been able to produce precisely nothing.

Why are people concerned? Could this just be the Labor opposition jumping up and down, trying to score points on the government? The government does make it very easy for us to do that. Somebody said to me recently that it is a bit like shooting fish in a barrel sometimes. To go to an election with a promise such as that to not even modify the stated objective over the next three years just shows the degree of arrogance that the community finds very, very difficult to tolerate. The fact that we have gone now for three years and all we have is a secret draft strategy that is somehow being doctored by the minister before it sees the light of day is just not good enough. It is not just people on this side of the house who are talking about the environment and climate change. Everywhere I go people throughout our community, all the major stakeholders and all the community environmental groups are totally baffled by the fact that the government has been silent on this issue.

What is driving their concern, of course, is a deep confusion that, I think it is probably fair to say, besets the entire Liberal Party about the issue of climate change. After all, the previous state Minister for Water, Graham Jacobs, a member in the other place, actually banned the use of the term “climate change” in all the official documentation put out by the Department of Water. He actually banned the use of the term; he did not believe in it. He apparently issued some sort of directive or edict, saying that the words “climate change” were no longer to be used and that the department was in all its official communications from that time on to refer to “our drying climate”. I remember the debate about that in the other place, and I remember that it caused some exquisite embarrassment for the former minister’s colleagues in that house, who perhaps were taking a slightly more informed and enlightened view about climate change. They tried to wiggle out of that one by saying, “Well, you know, climate change does involve a drying climate, so what the minister has actually done wasn’t that bad.” But the fact is that we had a minister who could not even bring himself to use the term “climate change”.

Anxiety only increased when we got to August this year. This is October. So we were talking then about exactly three years of inaction on the part of the Barnett Liberal government. In August, at the Liberal state conference, I suppose it is called, a motion was put calling for a royal commission into climate change science—a royal commission no less into climate change science! I saw that listed as one of the motions for consideration, and there were also a number of very wacky ones. My advice to my colleagues was, “Well, everybody has interesting branches around the state that are perhaps a little less focused on the practical reality of being in government or being in opposition, and I would imagine that something as lunatical as calling for a royal commission into climate change science wouldn’t even see the light of day.” Indeed, that was the case with a couple of those motions, but it was a bit sad to see that a lot of them in fact got up. I have to say that it was more than concerning; it was horrifying to see that this motion about a royal commission into climate change was accepted by “an overwhelming majority”. So an overwhelming majority of Liberal Party activists—that is a bit of an oxymoron, is it not; I do not know how you have Liberal Party activists—or an overwhelming majority of members of the Western Australian Liberal Party obviously think that climate change science is not real. What an extraordinary thing. That puts into context, I think, the previous minister’s elimination of the words “climate change” from the official documentation.

Of course, the Liberal Party in Western Australia is not alone. I will come to Tony Abbott a bit later.

**Hon Robin Chapple:** Everybody comes to Tony Abbott a bit later.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Yes. All roads in discussions about climate change lead to Tony Abbott, because, of course, Tony Abbott is famous for saying that climate change is crap. That is what the Liberal Party’s federal leader said: climate change is crap. I guess members opposite listen to their national leader, and obviously all the Liberal state Premiers have taken up that cry, because in August, only a couple of months ago, the Baillieu Liberal government in Victoria put in place new laws that will make further wind power development an extremely difficult thing. The New South Wales Premier, Barry O’Farrell, said, “if I had my way, we wouldn’t [approve any applications for wind farms in NSW]”. Members can see what the community concern is predicated on. We heard some very strange sounds from the Liberal Party in South Australia. I do not really quite know what to make of those, but I think that the leader in South Australia has said something such as that they were considering introducing laws like those in Victoria. That does not bode well for South Australians. Right across the country very odd noises are being made by parliamentary representatives of the Liberal Party.

I said that I would get to Tony Abbott, and I think I have now got to Tony Abbott.

**Hon Robin Chapple:** Oh!

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** I know it is a painful subject for all of us, Hon Robin Chapple, not least for those on the government benches. But it is worth going through some of the statements that Tony Abbott has put on the public record. Basically, Mr Abbott opposes everything and, on the big calls, he almost always gets it wrong. Let us look at what he said about the science of climate change. Mr Abbott has been walking both sides of the street on climate change for years. I will go through a couple of things he said about climate change. First of all, he said —

We can’t conclusively say whether man-made carbon dioxide emissions are contributing to climate change.

I would have thought he would have the sense to use inclusive language. That was on 27 July 2009. On the same day, he said —

I am, as you know, hugely unconvinced by the so-called settled science on climate change. Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide have significantly increased since the spread of industrialisation, but it seems that noticeable warming has only taken place between the 1970s and 1990s.

He was a little surer then than he was when he made the first comment, but then he went back to being unsure about climate change. On 16 August 2010, he said —

I certainly think that there is a credible scientific counterpoint, but, in the end, I'm not going to win an argument over the science, I'll leave that to the scientists ...

On 3 March 2011, he went back to saying that climate change is real. He said —

I think that climate change is real. I think that mankind makes a contribution and I think that we should put in place reasonable policies to deal with credible threats.

A couple of days later, on 14 March 2011, he was back to being unsure about climate change. He said —

I don't think we can say that the science is settled here ...

I think that those Liberal Party branches that put that motion to their conference in August must have used this as their source document. They must have thought, "Let's work out what our leader thinks about climate change." Here he is—flip, flop and then flip again on 14 March. He went on to say —

There is no doubt that we should do our best to rest lightly on the planet and there is no doubt that we should do our best to emit as few waste products as possible, but having said that, whether carbon dioxide is quite the environmental villain that some people make it out to be is not yet proven.

I think we ended up with a "no" there. I think that was conclusively a "no" on 14 March this year. What about the carbon price? He certainly did support an emissions trading scheme. On 18 December 2008, he said —

An emissions trading scheme probably is the best way to put a price on carbon.

He went on a little later to support an ETS or a carbon tax. All these comments are on the public record, so if anybody thinks I am making them up, I am happy to provide the documents, or they can look them up themselves. On 10 July 2009, he said —

There are respectable arguments for an ETS but the one Labor has in mind could easily be expensive and futile. I am wary of a system which creates new vested interests—which an ETS will do. I suspect that a straight carbon tax or charge could be more transparent and easier to change if conditions change or our understanding of the science changes.

Get ready for a flop back to supporting an ETS. On 27 July 2009, he said —

There is much to be said for an emissions trading scheme. It was, after all, the mechanism for emission reduction ultimately chosen by the Howard government. It enables an increasing market price to be set for carbon through capping volumes of emissions.

While I was going through this material, I did note that somebody had left a comment on the internet that said that it might be worth working out whether he wrote some of this down or whether it was just verbal advice, because Mr Abbott has clearly distinguished between the kinds of promises he makes verbally and the kinds he thinks are important enough to write down. That is a very important point. Here comes another flip. He has flipped and then he has flopped and now he is flipping again. On 27 July 2009, he went on to support a carbon tax. This is the quote —

... a new tax would be the intelligent skeptic's way to deal with minimising emissions because it would be much easier than a property right to reduce or to abolish should the justification for it change.

Honourable members opposite will be glad to know that we had no flip or flop for two days, because two days later, on 29 July 2009, he still supported a carbon tax. He said —

I also think that if you want to put a price on carbon, why not just do it with a simple tax?

Then he was back to supporting an ETS. No wonder the Liberal Party is confused about this. On 15 January 2010, he said —

The Howard Government proposed an emissions trading scheme because this seemed the best way to obtain the highest emissions reductions at the lowest cost.

He then said —

In January of 2007 John Howard and Malcolm Turnbull announced what I think was a historic package of reforms. It was an excellent package of reforms.

On 9 December 2010, he was against an ETS and a carbon tax. In an interview he said —

Well one of the reasons why the Coalition is so much against carbon taxes and emissions trading schemes is because they're not going to help the environment but by gee they'll be a huge whack on everyone's cost of living.

Then on 1 March 2011 he was still against an ETS. He said —

A vote for us is a vote against an emissions trading scheme.

No wonder the Liberal Party is confused. On a lighter note, if honourable members opposite want to distract themselves or, indeed, if people on this side of the house want a good laugh, there is a piece by Bernard Keane on Crikey in which he has set up all the comments that I have just quoted as a conversation between opposition leader Tony Abbott and his most formidable opponent on the issue, Tony Abbott. Members can read the whole thing set up as a debate. It makes really fantastic reading. Of course, this is far from being amusing.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Jon Ford):** Order, members! The member is clearly not taking interjections. All members will get a chance to have their say.

**Hon SALLY TALBOT:** Of course, this was quite amusing when I went through it in the way that I have just done. But, in fact, there are very serious consequences of this flip-flopping that the Liberal Party has been doing. The only thing it has done consistently is to be inconsistent. It is injecting a kind of poison into the heart of the public policy debate about how Australia responds to the challenges of climate change. To relate that directly to the motion that I am discussing, that is why the government is now entering its fourth year in office, its fourth year of being responsible for the direction in which this state goes, and its fourth year of having all the resources of government at its command, yet it is still failing to provide any direction to the people in this state. Of course, what the Liberals are doing is ensuring that this debate crumbles from the inside. They will not succeed of course, because, ultimately, their position will be seen by the electorate as completely inauthentic and bordering on the incompetent. It has become quite difficult to have the kind of constructive debate that we should be having about climate change because Mr Abbott's comments inject a great deal of uncertainty among business. Some of the free marketeers sitting on the government benches must have gone cold inside to hear Mr Abbott advocating that certain decisions should be made by private enterprise and they must be uneasy about what their Liberal leaders are doing to hijack this debate. There has been a lot of commentary about this in the last couple of days. An article in *The Australian* today by Dennis Shanahan titled "Abbott slogan needs a tweak" states —

Tony Abbott is falling into a trap of his own rhetoric on the repeal of the carbon tax.

The Opposition leader is in danger of creating long-term investment uncertainty for power generators, defying the "law of the land" and the democratic processes of parliament and making a blood oath he can't keep.

A second article by Sid Maher and Siobhan Ryan states —

... that the uncertainty caused by the climate change standoff could cost consumers as much as \$5 billion a year.

This is very bad news for our community and provides a neat summary of why the Labor Party is representing the concerns of the community in this place about the government's failure to take action.

In the time remaining to me I will refer to a couple of other sources of concern and then perhaps give the government a little ray of hope. On 12 February 2010, the Western Australian law firm Freehills put out a paper called "Climate Change Mitigation to Flood Planning and Development in Coastal Areas". As we all know, this is a subject of great concern to people providing legal advice in Western Australia. It is another aspect of the work that people such as those in the City of Mandurah have done that is so vitally important to provide planners and legal advisers with the kind of certainty they crave. On page 3 of that report, under the heading "Western Australia"—there is a state-by-state survey about action—we find the following —

... the EPA prepared a 'Draft Environmental Assessment Policy – Climate Change' in late 2009. However, the EPA has returned to the drawing board on this policy and another draft policy is expected to be released later in 2010. The Office of Climate Change is also currently developing a 'WA Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy' (CCAMS) but its release date is unclear. As a result, there is considerable uncertainty and a lack of guidance in Western Australian government policy in relation to coastal planning and development.

That is a very serious indictment of this government. I do not expect government members to take what I am saying seriously. They live in their own silo where government members talk only to each other and they think the world is hunky-dory. I do not expect them to listen to me, but I expect them to listen to other stakeholders in the community who are expressing concern with the kind of vehemence that Freehills expresses in the report to which I just referred.

When I was going through some material for this debate today, I came across a document dated February 2010 put out by the Department of Agriculture and Food. I have already said that if the government would only admit

that it was totally bereft of ideas and energy in getting something of substance into the public arena on climate change, it could look at the City of Mandurah's website. However, I found another source of inspiration for the government that is much closer to home. This 26-page report was put out by the Department of Agriculture and Food and is called "Climate change response strategy". It is a very substantial document and a fantastic piece of work. Clearly, it was done because the Department of Agriculture and Food decided that it could not wait for the government's infamous climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy. The Department of Agriculture and Food had to do its own work, and a fine piece of work it is. But what is the status of this work? Why must government departments do their own climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies when the Liberal Party went to the election promising a state strategy? This is not the state strategy it promised. Does the government not know that one of its departments has done this work? I would have thought that the people in the Department of Agriculture and Food must have laughed their heads off when they got the draft strategy from the Minister for Environment, Bill Marmion. They must have thought it was a return to the past and that they had woken up in the 1950s. The department has already done this work, which is a great piece of work, and I commend the department for doing it. What an indictment it is of the government dropping the ball that sections of its own bureaucracy have to write their own statements. I commend this report to members. I do not know whether anyone on the government benches even knows it exists, but it is a very comprehensive summary of all the main issues. I conclude by saying that this is not too hard. This should never have been put at the bottom of the list of the government's priorities. It is absolutely urgent that we see something from this government.

**HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral)** [4.05 pm]: I rise to support the motion, although not necessarily in the same way as my colleague Hon Sally Talbot. I congratulate the Liberal Party on going to the election with the policy titled "Liberal Plan for Environmental Sustainability and Water Management", which was on its website on 4 September 2008. That policy clearly states, contrary to the position of Mr Abbott —

Human activity is having a discernible influence on the planet's climate patterns.

The Liberal Party believes that we should be taking prudent but sensible actions to control our greenhouse emissions.

That is a great statement. Unfortunately, that is all it remains—a statement. I will outline most of the reasons why. With reference to the climate change adaptation strategy, the Liberal Party's policy states —

A Liberal Government will;

- Work with industry, scientists, local government and conservation groups to develop a **Climate Change Adaptation Strategy** covering each major sector of Western Australian industry as well as urban planning agencies and state water and energy utilities. The strategy will assess the likely impacts and risks of climate change to various sectors of the economy and to communities and make recommendations of mitigation and adaptation actions;

I will turn to those issues. The climate change unit was set up and its mission statement states —

The Western Australian Government and community is fully enabled to undertake the most effective action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change through national and international representation, key State climate change programs and coordinated Government initiatives.

I repeat —

... to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change ...

I will move away from that slightly. On Monday, 17 October, I was very privileged to be invited by Ian Ashby, the president of BHP Billiton Iron Ore, and vice-chancellor Professor Alan Robson of the University of Western Australia to attend a breakfast talk as part of the breakfast club's sustainability speaker series. I must note also that Hon Michael Mischin attended the event. The speaker for this presentation was the eminent Paul Hawken, who is an environmentalist and entrepreneur from America and the author of *Natural Capitalism*. His talk was titled "The Red Queen Dilemma", in which he discussed the dynamics between energy prices and commodity scarcity and how it will affect productivity, capital formation, demand for metals and minerals and the future of conventional and renewable energy technologies. It was important, and acknowledged by Hawken, that BHP Billiton Iron Ore was asking those questions of itself as well as of other Western Australian mineral organisations. To that end he was talking to them. What can we do to ensure growth whilst looking after environmental and social resilience? The speech was an interesting mix of doom and optimism—quite like Hawken himself. He spoke about his "doomer" tendencies and said that it was not always easy to get up in the morning knowing what he did. "I usually head straight for the garden; the plants have always got good news for me", he said. But he praised "doomers" for creating conditions in which designers and engineers thrive. Brilliant



designers, engineers and physicists are what we need to solve the complex physical challenges we are facing. He then proceeded to explain these in a series of understandable parables and metaphors.

The key issue that I think he brought to that meeting was the issue of how much energy we are now using to track down ever-decreasing amounts of energy. He got the title of his talk, “The Red Queen Dilemma”, from *Alice in Wonderland* in which Alice herself says, “The Red Queen is plainly crazy”, because she is talking about running faster and faster to get nowhere. The key issue for Hawken is that our economic system of supply and demand is just not working and, as such, we need to go beyond that and take on board a completely new paradigm—something that is very difficult. Something I found very interesting was that leaders of big business at that meeting understood what he was saying. I am reminded also of some of the comments made by Jeroen van der Veer, the former head of Shell, in an email to all his colleagues in which he talked about the unsustainability of chasing dwindling reserves. He questioned where Shell should be positioning itself into the future in this new marketplace that we need to merge into.

Paul Hawken wrote a book with Amory Lovins, and Amory’s wife, whose name I cannot remember at the moment, called *Natural Capitalism*, in which he talks about the whole issue of how we increasingly create extra systems to hunt down dwindling resources. For example, there are more ships plying the oceans to catch fish now than there has ever been before, but the total catch is about the same as it was prior to all those ships going onto the ocean. Our catch level is the same, but the resources we are now deploying to get that resource are sixfold. He said it is also the case with mining and hunting for oil and gas. We now use an immense amount of energy just pursuing dwindling resources. He says that there has to come a time when we have to take stock of that as good capitalists and ask when is enough enough, in that broader context.

I found the talk he gave to be very, very useful. It was interesting that the talk occurred on Monday this week in the lead-up to this debate.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to temporary orders.

*Sitting suspended from 4.15 to 4.30 pm*