

CORONAVIRUS — SMALL BUSINESS — ELECTRICITY TARIFF CREDIT

247. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Energy:

I have a supplementary question. Would the state government consider introducing a measure for landlords with a contractual relationship with Synergy or Horizon to apply for the credit for businesses that qualify on their submeter; and, if so, when would that be done?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Nationals WA for the question. No, we will not be looking at that. People who are competing in the contestable market have a range of options available to them. We are not going to single out customers of Synergy in a competitive market because that would be to the disadvantage of other competitors in that situation and might lead to unintended consequences, with those retailers being undermined by direct government assistance. In crafting this assistance, we have been very, very careful not to disturb the existing competitive market. When there was discussion in the media about whether the government would assist small business through the electricity system, one of the first things that happened was that large competitors to Synergy—indeed, also some small competitors—approached the government to seek reassurance that we would not provide assistance to Synergy that would disturb the market and undermine the broader activity of the market. However, I can say that as we expect good corporate behaviour from banks and other institutions in society, I have also spoken personally with the leadership of Western Power to make sure that it is a good corporate citizen by supporting those small retailers that compete with Synergy, so that they are not left in a very bad cash flow position. There is support for those small retailers to make sure that we can get through this difficult time, but we will not be disturbing the market in any other way by providing direct government subsidies in a competitive market.