

CORONAVIRUS — SMALL BUSINESS — ELECTRICITY TARIFF CREDIT

**246. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Energy:**

I refer to small businesses that are unable to access the \$2 500 WA small business tariff credit as they are on a submeter and therefore ineligible for this payment.

- (1) Has the state government received representation from these businesses or their landlords asking for them to be included in the scheme?
- (2) What will the state government do to ensure these small businesses can access much-needed relief during these difficult times?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:**

- (1)–(2) In respect of the second part of the question, a range of relief is available for businesses in Western Australia. Some of that comes from the commonwealth government, including grants and the massive JobKeeper payments. The state government has not been idle either, and in addition has provided payroll tax and other support to small businesses in this state, and will continue to do so. Over \$1.7 billion will be spent by the government of Western Australia in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

In respect of the first part of the question, people who buy their energy from embedded networks, also called microgrids, receive a range of benefits from purchasing their electricity from somebody other than Synergy. We do not have any visibility of the cost structure for those businesses, and of course those businesses do not have all the distribution costs that are borne by customers of Synergy. Because we have no visibility of those arrangements, we cannot provide any direct assistance to them. Because Synergy is owned by the people of Western Australia, one of the great opportunities we have is that we are able to directly support Synergy customers. However, there is good news. Well in advance of the COVID-19 outbreak, I asked Energy Policy WA to examine options for customers with embedded networks to give them choice of retailer, because at the moment they do not have that choice. Naturally, that piece of work has been set aside as it is not directly related to COVID-19, but it is quite well advanced. I expect that once the COVID-19 situation is sufficiently resolved, we will get Energy Policy WA back to its core duties. I would expect it to complete that piece of work and come forward with options for people in embedded networks to give them more flexibility in the future.