

GREENHOUSE EMISSIONS REDUCTION STRATEGIES

Urgency Motion

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Nick Griffiths): Members, I am in receipt of a letter in these terms —

Dear Mr. President,

Urgency Motion

I give notice that pursuant to SO72 I intend to move that the House, as a matter of urgency consider the need for all levels of government, and all political parties, to have in place strategies to reduce national greenhouse emissions, such that by 2020 these emissions are at least 25% below 1990 levels (and at least 40% below 1990 emissions, if agreement is reached for that stronger target at this year's international climate change conference in Copenhagen).

The letter is from Hon Paul Llewellyn. In order for Hon Paul Llewellyn to move his motion, at least four members should rise in their places.

[At least four members rose in their places.]

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am speaking.

I invite Hon Paul Llewellyn to move his motion.

HON PAUL LLEWELLYN (South West) [3.42 pm]: I move the motion.

It is important to move a climate motion in this Parliament at this moment, and it is important to have very well structured conversation or debate on this issue. For that reason, I will talk about reaching safe carbon emissions levels across the globe, firstly with regard to climate science; secondly, in respect of Western Australia's emissions profile—where we are going with it and how we are to tackle it; thirdly, in the context of the emissions trading scheme, for which the title “carbon pollution reduction scheme” has been coined, but which is based on the European model; and fourthly, with regard to the opportunities that climate technologies will provide for us into the future.

In spite of the controversy surrounding global warming and emissions trading, I want to reiterate that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has clearly come to the conclusion that in order to avoid dangerous climate change—that is, climate change that exceeds an average global change in temperature of two degree Celsius—we will have to stabilise global emissions at 450 parts per million. There are many people around the world who think that 450 parts per million will actually overshoot what is needed to stabilise global climatic systems. If we are to reach a target of anywhere near 450 parts per million, wealthier nations will have to reduce their emissions and make significant cuts. If we are to believe the science, we will have to make those cuts very soon. In many reports, particularly the Garnaut Climate Change Review and other international reports, when people talk about the impacts of global warming across Australia, they mention two things: impacts on the Great Barrier Reef in the north east of Australia, and impacts on vulnerable biodiverse forest ecosystems in south western Australia. They always get a mention in any of the documentation. There is a clear benefit for Western Australia to actually take some responsibility in this matter.

Climate science modelling suggests that if we are to tackle greenhouse gas emissions in a reasonably equitable manner, wealthy nations will have to make the deepest cuts first. The Greens (WA) believe that we can make deep cuts to our carbon emissions unilaterally without compromising our economic principles and prosperity. This is another key principle in the concept of reducing global emissions and it works like this: it is the wealthier nations that have increased emissions and have caused these problems in the first place; therefore, it is wealthy nations who will have to contract their emissions, but at the same time allow some of the Third World countries to slightly increase their emissions. We will actually arrive at a point at which we will contract and converge on a stable point. The concept of contraction and convergence is one of the design principles for a fair global greenhouse gas emissions management system.

I have said in this place before—I will say it again, for the record—that on certain days of the week, I am a climate sceptic. It might be on Wednesday and Thursday, or Tuesday and Thursday; it does not matter. The reason that I am a climate sceptic and that I do not believe that climate change is happening on those days is that it clouds my thinking. On those days, I think about all the opportunities and capacities to build a new economy. On the other days, I am persuaded by the science.

Hon Sally Talbot: Which day is it today?

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Today it feels like I am not a climate sceptic! Today I am fully convinced by the science, which tells us that there is compelling scientific evidence to say that we should be doing something, and we should be doing it now.

I will also briefly mention some of the climate sceptics, because this will come up in our debate. There are people who say that climate change is a natural part of the natural variability of the planet. That is absolutely true: carbon emissions have varied over millions of years. The facts are that 2 000 years ago, our modern Christian society was emerging, and 5 000 years ago there were civilised societies in China and India. When people such as Ian Plimer and other genuine climate sceptics say that climate variation is natural, they are talking about geological time. It does not make much sense for us as a species to consider whether ferns that existed 20 000 years ago were happier or less happy in a high carbon environment; what matters for today's society is that the world that we have evolved in, the world in which we have developed our civilised society, requires these climatic conditions with this level of carbon dioxide. Any speculation about other things is totally and utterly academic in the context of whether we have a viable society and economy.

I said that we would need to talk about climate science. I am persuaded that we should be reducing emissions, and we should aim for a target of fewer than 400 parts per million. The level in the atmosphere before the Industrial Revolution was 200 parts per million or thereabouts. We are now heading towards 380 or 400 parts per million; we are on a very bad trajectory.

I turn now to greenhouse gas emissions in Australia. It is true that Australia is a relatively small player in the global scene. Australia produces about 1.4 per cent to 1.6 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Some people would argue, therefore, that whatever we may do in Australia will not make a great deal of difference. That is like arguing that because we earn only a small amount of income in a global sense, we should not be required to pay tax. We need to accept that we have a national responsibility to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the global context. A few years ago, the greenhouse gas emissions of Australia, a country with a population of 20 million, were equal to the total emissions of Indonesia, a country with a population of 200 million. Australia is certainly not a small player when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions. Australians are, in fact, the largest greenhouse gas emitters on the planet, at 27.5 tonnes per person. Western Australia loves to claim that it is the most advanced and best state in Australia. Western Australia is certainly the best when it comes to emitting greenhouse gases. In 1990, Western Australia's greenhouse gas emissions were 52 megatonnes a year. By 1995 they were 58.2 megatonnes a year, and by 2000 they were 69 megatonnes a year. Today, Western Australia's greenhouse gas emissions are around 70 megatonnes a year. We are on a trajectory that is going north.

The gas developments that have already been approved in Western Australia will increase our greenhouse gas emissions by 37 megatonnes per annum. The projected gas developments will increase our total greenhouse gas emissions by 70 megatonnes. Therefore, we will almost double our emissions from 70 megatonnes to 140 megatonnes. That will put us about 131 per cent above 1990 levels. Therefore, rather than going down, our greenhouse gas emissions are going up.

Yesterday, the Premier talked about recommissioning some of Western Australia's coal-fired power stations. That is very sad. The Bluewaters 1 and 2 coal-fired power stations each produce in the order of 1.5 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. The Aviva 415-megawatt power station is also on the cards. That is not the way to deal with greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, we are certainly on the wrong track. If we are to tackle greenhouse gas emissions in Western Australia, we should be implementing a range of climate technologies for the future, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Before I deal with that matter, I want to mention the carbon pollution reduction scheme. The Greens have said that any carbon pollution reduction scheme should cover as many sectors as possible, because that will spread the responsibility across the entire economy. We believe also that we should have 100 per cent options. If we believe in the free market economy, we should decide what our emissions should look like, and we should allow people to bid into the market to buy their emission rights. If people cannot bid into the market, it is because they are inefficient and bad polluters. We believe those sorts of people should not be in the game. We should ensure that such an emissions trading scheme provides a level playing field for all players. Emissions trading schemes do work. They have worked in North America and in Europe to reduce acid rain by allowing companies to trade pollution emissions.

However, we also need to introduce a range of complementary initiatives. State governments can play a major role in implementing green energy protocols, in investing in infrastructure such as rail and other forms of public transport, in building energy transmission systems for the use of renewable energy, in refitting housing stock so that people will live in more efficient houses and buildings, and in refitting industry. That will save not just emissions but also money.

I have spent some time in this house discussing profitable ventures that will lead to not only a low carbon economy, but also a high economic return. If we design our pollution reduction schemes badly, we will set very low targets. We will get all the pain but none of the gain. We will get all the transaction costs of a badly designed system but none of the environmental and economic benefits that come from having a competitive carbon market. A badly designed pollution reduction scheme will be worse than having no scheme at all. We want these ventures to be profitable. We also want to encourage intervention by non-government organisations. Over the past few weeks, we have been talking in this house about the feed-in tariff. We want that to be funded not by the government, but by a broad levy on all renewable energy transactions in the economy. That will bring private sector investment into clean energy. We should do the same with our building stocks and with our public transport infrastructure. We should set up market conditions that will allow people to invest in a clean energy future. We can reduce our emissions significantly by using clean energy. For example, we can bring some of our iron ore industries in the Pilbara into an interconnected system so that they will become part of an electrical network and can trade in the market for clean energy.

The Greens also want to encourage the use of complementary initiatives at the state level. We introduced the Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction (Hot Water Systems) Bill 2007. We also introduced the Water Services Licensing (Water Conservation Target) Amendment bill 2008. We would like to introduce a building standards bill. All those initiatives will lead to a low emissions economy. We need to get ready for that. We know that when we reduce emissions—that is, the energy intensity of our economy—profits go up. There is an interesting document on the web called “Carbon Down Profits Up”. I urge members to look at that. It provides an inventory of companies that have made a living out of carbon emissions trading. This is not a matter for conjecture. This is a matter of economic prosperity. That is the case we put on the table.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan — Minister for Environment) [3.58 pm]: The motion moved by Hon Paul Llewellyn raises a number of issues. The motion reflects on all governments, including the commonwealth government. It is pleasing, given what the motion talks about, that Hon Paul Llewellyn has said that he is not a sceptic today. It is fair to say that we are all watching with interest what is happening at the commonwealth level in respect of climate change. It seems to be a moveable feast; who knows where it will end up. Having said that, the proposed principal method for achieving greenhouse gas emissions abatement will be by way of an emissions trading scheme that will impose an emissions cap on most areas of the Australian economy. That scheme is currently being proposed by the commonwealth government for implementation in 2011. Although the exact targets are yet to be finalised, the commonwealth has indicated a five to 25 per cent cut in emissions below 2000 levels by 2020, with the upper band being determined by the outcome of international negotiations through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to which Hon Paul Llewellyn has made reference. In proposing this, it has been put that a 25 per cent cut in international emissions will be more significant for Australia than for other developed countries. Indeed, a clear concern that has been raised is that if we achieve a cut of 25 per cent without international action, we will risk jobs through carbon leakage, and, as Hon Paul Llewellyn has also said, and has been said by others, we will achieve very little in reducing global emissions.

Having said that, the Western Australian government accepts the need for significant reductions in future greenhouse gas emissions if dangerous climate change is to be averted. Climate change is happening. However, it is important that reductions are made in a least-cost manner that does not cost jobs or international competitiveness. From a state perspective, Western Australia's economy is dependent on the extraction of resources, and by virtue of this is greenhouse emission intensive. It is important that our resource exporters, such as the liquefied natural gas industry that assists globally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, are not put at a competitive disadvantage through unilateral action by the state or Australian governments. If we are to look at this issue from a positive perspective, in Western Australia we already use natural gas for about 60 per cent of our energy needs, and there are excellent prospects for renewable energy. We already have some wind power, and there are prospects for wave, geothermal, solar thermal and tidal resources. Indeed, in February of this year the Minister for Energy and I announced the state's support for new low-emissions technology through an investment of nearly \$13 million in wave energy off the coast of Albany. This funding will enable the Perth-based Carnegie Corporation to develop the first two stages of a 50-megawatt power station by 2013, and includes the commissioning of a five-megawatt facility. I am advised that this investment gives the company a platform to explore the benefits of a commercial-scale, wave-powered technology that has the potential to save 240 000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions a year. It should also be remembered that Western Australia makes a positive global contribution to emissions reductions through the export of LNG. Further, the role of the state government complementary measures will be considered as part of the climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy, which was part of the government's election platform. The Department of Environment and Conservation will undertake this in 2009-10. The Office for Climate Change has already commenced development of this strategy. The strategy will cover each major sector of Western Australia. It will

assess the likely impacts and risks of climate change to various sectors of the economy and to communities, and will make recommendations on mitigation and adaptation actions.

I turn briefly to commonwealth-state collaboration. In addition to emissions trading, there is likely to be a role for so-called complementary measures that address areas where emissions trading is ineffective. The state government is currently reviewing the state's existing greenhouse gas emission mitigation policy framework to determine which measures are complementary to the proposed emissions trading scheme. This review is being coordinated through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the Office for Climate Change and other relevant agencies. It is fair to say that with respect to the proposed commonwealth model, the state government has some reservations with the current design of the carbon pollution reduction scheme, but we all agree on the need to reduce national emissions. Most recently, the state agreed to the expanded national renewable energy target at the recent Council of Australian Governments meeting, and I believe that Hon Peter Collier will be saying a bit more in regard to that. The development of new technologies in stationary energy will play a central role in reducing the nation's emissions, and, nationally, reducing reliance on coal for energy generation is central to moving to a lower carbon economy. There is, of course, also a role for complementary measures, such as energy efficiency standards in buildings, which Hon Paul Llewellyn has also mentioned.

If I may digress for a moment in mentioning building standards, it reminds me of a function that I attended last week, when I had the opportunity of opening the new KPMG buildings just down the road. These buildings have a five-star green rating, which was awarded by the Green Building Council of Australia in recognition of their high standard of energy, water and waste management design and functionality. The Western Australian government supports and encourages the adoption of progressively higher green ratings for new commercial buildings throughout the state. The green rating features of these particular buildings included double-glazed windows, greywater recycling systems, airconditioning designed for reduced energy consumption, 60 per cent recycled steel used throughout construction, 60 per cent of construction waste reused or recycled, high-efficiency lighting and dedicated basement storage for the collection and recycling of office consumables. These features will significantly contribute to reducing greenhouse gases, waste to landfill and water consumption. It is but one example of the great things that industry and others across our community are doing to respond to the greenhouse challenge.

With all that in mind, and knowing that Hon Peter Collier will say a bit more, particularly with respect to renewable energy, may I say that for its part, the state government recognises the need to reduce emissions. We are committed to the development of a climate change adaptation strategy and we are participating in COAG's complementary measures review. These are important actions, along with a range of other initiatives, that this government is taking on this important issue.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Minister for Energy) [4.07 pm]: May I say at the outset that I have great sympathy for the spirit of the motion—I really do. However, I believe that it is perhaps a little ambitious in its targets, and potentially it may be counterproductive. Those are the issues which I have with the motion and to which I will direct my comments. I ask Hon Paul Llewellyn to understand that I do not oppose what the motion hopes to achieve. The motion calls for a 25 per cent reduction in 1990 levels of greenhouse emissions by 2020, as opposed to the federal government policy of a five per cent reduction by 2020, unless there is a consensus of opinion in Copenhagen for a significant reduction at the end of this year, in which case the reduction may be up to 25 per cent or 450 parts per million.

The reason I say that the ambitious targets may be counterproductive is that, as I have said on numerous occasions, I believe there is a genuine desire on the part of the community at large to embrace renewable energy sources and a reduction in emissions. I do not think there is any issue with that at all. I believe the community has largely accepted it, particularly the youth of the community. Younger members of the community have a genuine desire for it, but it is not exclusive to younger people. The community at large has a genuine concern about climate change and its implications. The community wants to know how people can do something on an individual level and how we as a state and a nation can do something to help overcome climate change. Of course, to do that, we need to reduce emissions. By putting, dare I say it, excessive or perhaps unrealistic targets —

Hon Paul Llewellyn: They are scientifically based targets from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which says that this is what we have to do.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I understand that. The federal government is essentially responsible for mandating the targets. It has said five per cent by 2020. It would be very difficult from a Western Australian perspective to pass a motion saying that we will go for 25 per cent. The criticisms about a reduction in greenhouse emissions come from those who ask why we should bother when Australian emissions constitute less than two per cent of all emissions. They ask why we should have to bite the bullet on everything when large polluters are perhaps let off

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scot-free. Of course, there is then the other potential of carbon leakage, which I am sure the member is aware of, which potentially means that some industries and companies will leave Western Australia and Australia to move overseas to other nations that have less stringent targets. Yes, if we work together towards a common goal, we can achieve a reduction in emissions, but if the targets are right out there, that will potentially put people off. As I said, I agree with the spirit of the motion, but we must be careful. As for what Western Australia can do, it can do a lot, but we must do it collectively.

The member mentioned the Muja power station, and I expected him to mention it after the government announced yesterday that it intends to look into re-establishing Muja as a power source in the short to medium term with a joint venture partner. I say to the honourable member that it is absolutely vital that Western Australia have a diversification of fuel supplies. I think the honourable member mentioned that matter when we discussed the feed-in tariff issue. Currently, 60 per cent of Western Australia's fuel supplies are provided through gas, 35 per cent through coal and the rest through renewable technology. What happens of course—this was never more typified than after the Varanus Island incident last year—is that problems are caused when a state is too heavily reliant on one fuel source and that fuel source comes under threat. We must ensure that there is diversification of fuel supplies, while at the same time we maintain our commitment to renewables, which the government has done.

Certainly, the re-establishment of Muja is a medium-term solution. It is a strategy to make sure that we maintain our power supplies in the short to medium term, while at the same time we look at investing in low carbon generation and renewable technologies. That is the point of the exercise. We could have either done that in a 10 to 15-year period, or spent \$1 billion on a brand-spanking-new coal-fired power station that would last for 40 years, but we have not. Let us look at our energy security in the short term for 10 to 15 years, while at the same time we invest in renewables and other low-emission generators so that we can move forward and embrace renewables as, dare I say it, an effective energy source. Western Australia has made a commitment. The Premier signed off just a couple of months ago on the national commitment to have 20 per cent renewable energy sources by 2020, so we are committed to that plan. But at the same time we must be mindful that at the moment renewable energy will not keep the lights on, and I am sure that the honourable member will acknowledge that. We must ensure that we have sufficient capacity of other fuel sources, while at the same time we invest in renewables. One of the biggest issues, which we discussed during debate on the feed-in tariff motion, is the intermittency of wind. Essentially, our renewable energy portfolio almost exclusively comes from wind. The intermittency associated with wind is problematic and we have to overcome that. We must look at alternative sources of renewables, while not remotely diminishing—I emphasise this—the very significant role of wind energy sources.

I remind members that the government supports solar technology through the Solar Schools program and the solar water heater subsidy program. We have committed \$13.5 million to the feed-in tariff. As Hon Donna Faragher mentioned, we have also committed \$12.5 million to Carnegie Corporation Ltd to support \$50 million of investment in an innovative wave-energy generator on the south coast near Albany. Again, we are trying to diversify. As the honourable member will know, we have a number of wind farms, including the 22-megawatt farm at Albany, owned by Verve Energy; the proposed 14-megawatt extension at Grasmere; the 80-megawatt farm at Emu Downs, owned by Griffin Energy; the 90-megawatt farm at Walkaway, owned by Alinta; and the approximately 6.1-megawatt farm at Esperance, owned by Verve. Verve is also investigating the feasibility of building a wind farm with a capacity of up to 55 megawatts at Milyeannup, 20 kilometres east of Augusta. That is fine, but, as I said earlier, that means that virtually all our current renewable energy source rests with wind, and that in essence will not keep the lights on. We must ensure that we have a safe and secure energy system within Western Australia, while at the same time we try to diversify our portfolio with renewable energy sources. We do not have long to go. It is 2009; if we are to meet our target of 20 per cent by 2020, we will have to work hard at it. The development of most of the renewable energy projects with geothermal and wave technology et cetera is still in its infancy. As I have said, I support the spirit of the motion, but if we try to go too far too soon, it may defeat the intention of the motion.

HON WENDY DUNCAN (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [4.14 pm]: I, too, have some sympathy for this resolution. I also have some sympathy for Hon Paul Llewellyn, who has difficulty deciding whether he is a climate sceptic or a climate convert.

Hon Paul Llewellyn: That is only for debating purposes, though.

Hon WENDY DUNCAN: That is actually irrelevant because, in my view, we should be endeavouring to leave the world a better place for our kids. Of course, in doing so, we must make sure that we are responsible in how we manage our waste and emissions and our impact on the environment.

Climate change is a significant issue for agriculture on a number of fronts. There are the potential impacts of a warmer, drier climate on sectors such as rain-fed cropping and pasture production, and the water supply for stock and irrigated horticulture. The agriculture sector produces about 14 per cent of Western Australia's greenhouse gases. There are questions of course about how agriculture can be involved in reducing emissions. There is the potential for agriculture to play a significant role in greenhouse gas abatement in areas such as farm forestry and soil carbon sequestration. I am sure that the honourable member will be interested to hear that one of the ways that Canada has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions has been to introduce genetically modified canola. The Canola Council of Canada reports in a study it conducted in 2001 that because GM canola required fewer field operations, such as herbicide applications, growers used 31 million litres less fuel. A report entitled "GM crops: global socio-economic and environmental impacts 1996-2006" also backs up the Canadian council report. PG Economics Ltd, which produced the report, concludes that in 2006 the cultivation of GM canola in Canada resulted in a permanent saving of 136 million kilograms of carbon dioxide because of the use of less fuel.

In agriculture, greenhouse emissions are mostly methane and nitrous oxide, and the major emissions come from savanna burning, methane from livestock and nitrous oxide emissions from the soil. The significance of methane and nitrous oxide is that they are assigned, respectively, 21 and 310 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. The agriculture sector emissions do not include fuel use in agriculture and the transport of agricultural inputs and products or in forest management, vegetation sinks, land clearing and soil carbon.

One of the difficulties for the coverage of agriculture is how to reduce emissions. There are few options other than for grain growers to reduce inputs or for livestock producers to reduce production. The options are limited due to the limited number of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change-recognised options for managing emissions. Reducing emissions from agriculture by limiting it to these options is probably not the best way to ensure a productive agriculture sector, as well as to reduce emissions for both Australia and the globe. There will be leakage of animal protein production to places other than Australia, and often these production systems are far more emissions intensive than those in Australia. There has been no thorough analysis at a national or state level to date identifying the best policy mechanism to reduce emissions from agriculture. An approach that could be pursued would be to provide producers with incentives to improve management or increase research, but it is likely to take between 10 and 15 years to collect sufficient data.

Other options are available obviously, and these have been mentioned by other honourable members during the debate. Biomass energy and biofuels are being investigated as options in which the agriculture sector can participate to reduce global emissions. Both are treated as carbon neutral under the proposed carbon pollution reduction scheme. Landholders could choose to participate in reducing emissions through converting land from agriculture to forestry either through integrating trees into the farm or converting all land to forestry. The Australian government's proposal is that forestry activities can opt-in to the scheme from commencement, with the option of generating emission permits from 2010.

Trees can have a multiple environmental benefit, including the management of salinity and soil erosion. Forestry activities eligible for opt-in need to meet the requirements under article 3.3 of the Kyoto Protocol—that is, conversion of non-forested land to forested land after 1 January 1990; to be on land that did not contain forest on 31 December 1989; to be established by direct human-induced methods; to be a forest of trees with a potential height of at least two metres and crown cover of at least 20 percent; and to be in greater patches than 0.2 hectare.

Another interesting aspect can be found under article 3.4 of the Kyoto Protocol. It allows for countries to elect additional land-based activities to count towards their emissions targets during the first commitment. For example, this may include forest management with plantation forests established before 1990; revegetation activities, such as the establishment of woody biomass—for example, saltbush; grazing land management, perhaps with carbon stored in soil and vegetation on grazing land in the rangelands, for example; and crop land management, with carbon stored in soil and crops.

Offsets article 3.4, sinks or improvements in management practice, will not be included in the carbon pollution reduction scheme from the scheme's commencement. It is likely that a decision on inclusion of these sinks will be made as soon as a decision is forthcoming from the upcoming negotiations for agreement beyond the Kyoto Protocol. The commonwealth position is for comprehensive coverage of all human-induced emissions from land use, land use change and forestry.

Although each of the article 3.4 activities has potential over time to sequester significant amounts of CO₂, either as soil carbon or plant biomass, natural events such as drought and fire could result in this sequestered CO₂ being re-admitted to the atmosphere within a very short time frame, and that is a problem we need to deal with.

To date there are no reliable and cost-effective ways to measure and report emissions for article 3.4 sinks. As chairman of the Southern Rangelands Pastoral Advisory Group, I am particularly interested in these types of carbon sinks providing opportunities for pastoralists in the rangelands, but much more work needs to be done on

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this issue. Article 3.4 sinks could also provide a cost-effective means for agricultural producers to reduce emissions through activities such as improved soil carbon under cropping or grazing systems, changes in carbon as a result of changing rangeland management or the establishment of changes to saltbush on salt land. Significant research needs to be undertaken, but there is no doubt that Australia and Western Australia should be working towards reducing emissions.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [4.23 pm]: Like members opposite, I welcome the opportunity that Hon Paul Llewellyn has given us to debate the crucial issue of controlling carbon emissions in Australia by introducing this urgency motion. Personally, I have always thought, Hon Paul Llewellyn, that the expression should be “climate change sceptic”. Coming as he does from Denmark, the member cannot be a sceptic about climate. I explained to somebody at the weekend that the reason the area of Denmark where he works is called the rainbow coast is not the reason that some people would think; it is so named because it is always raining there. Like Hon Donna Faragher, I am glad that Hon Paul Llewellyn is having a day on which he can actually talk about climate change science.

I was very interested in Hon Wendy Duncan’s contribution. I remember one of the first contributions to debate that I made in this house touched on the subject of climate change. I recall when I was sitting not far from where Hon Wendy Duncan sits now, there were howls of derision from this side of the house, the opposition side then occupied by the Liberal Party, every time the topic of climate change was raised. I am talking about only 2005, at which stage a member had to be pretty eccentric to be espousing one’s scepticism of climate change, particularly in a forum like this. Nevertheless, they were unashamed about their luddite attitudes towards the subject. I remember in that debate Hon Murray Criddle, by way of interjection, pointed out that people who have worked on the land have been aware of the effects of climate change for decades and have been putting in place their own adaptive strategies to try to mitigate some of the effects of climate change. I know from conversations with Hon Wendy Duncan that she has been living with this problem and for some time has been trying to find practical solutions to it. I acknowledge that and pay tribute to her efforts. Unfortunately, her colleagues in the Liberal-National minority government are not showing anything like the same willingness to embrace the problem or, indeed, to move into the twenty-first century by nutting out solutions to these issues.

Nowhere was their lack of enthusiasm to show any real commitment to address climate change more evident than in the energy announcement yesterday that the government was recommissioning the old coal-fired power stations at Muja, which is old technology. It also announced in the same statement that it was rejecting the Pilbara integrated power solution in favour of some sort of standalone turbines. This is very depressing stuff. What Hon Donna Faragher and Hon Peter Collier need to understand is that the community of Western Australia and Australians in general are not just watching with interest the commonwealth government to see what it does. The commonwealth government is operating at a level at which it can be major driver of change in all sorts of areas, from industrial processes to personal behavioural change. Clearly, the federal government will drive a lot of this. However, there are many important things that we could be doing at a state level, but all we have seen from the Liberal-National minority government is a set of policies and announcements, and projections into the future that, effectively, will lock us in to not only a high-cost energy future, but also a high-carbon energy future—and it is not good enough.

Another example from recent times is that our colleague in the other place Hon Alannah MacTiernan has been absolutely relentless in pursuing the possibility of the biomass plant in Ravensthorpe, which would play a double role by not only increasing our contributions to carbon emissions, but also injecting economic life back into that community. What have we heard from members of the minority government? We have heard nothing but lip-curling sarcasm about that very worthwhile project.

When I talk about what we can do at the state level, we need look no further than the actions that the Labor Party took under two Premiers—Geoff Gallop and Alan Carpenter. I will quickly run through them. I have taken the list from a document that is available to members who are interested. I am happy to make it available. It can be found on the internet. Hon Peter Collier might like to take the document and ascertain whether it gives him some ideas. He was talking as though he were still in opposition by canvassing the range of possible energy sources but saying, “Well, it’s a bit too hard and we’ll have to get cracking because time is running out.” I will leave him with the list because it might give him a few ideas on the directions he might explore.

In the seven and a half years that we were in government, we created a renewable energy buy-back scheme that allowed households to sell surplus home-generated green energy back into the system. We made it easier for households to purchase accredited renewable energy from Synergy. I acknowledge the steps that the Liberal-National minority government has taken in this regard. We provided 12 000 rebates worth \$5.5 million for the installation of domestic solar water heaters. We established the Solar Schools program, and again I give credit where it is due by acknowledging that the Liberal-National minority government has progressed that scheme.

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We entered into climate change partnerships with local government to deliver a 60 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. That was a very significant step to have taken. We created a state renewable energy target of 15 per cent of the south west interconnected system by 2020, and 20 per cent by 2025. We committed to the state government purchasing 20 per cent of renewable energy by 2010, having already achieved five per cent in 2008-09, with a contract for 10 per cent in 2009-10. We established the low emissions energy development fund, providing nearly \$37 million to support the kinds of technologies that both Hon Donna Faragher and Hon Peter Collier referred to. I will come back to the future of the LEED fund in a minute. We introduced legislation to encourage geothermal resource exploration and production in Western Australia, boosting long-term renewable energy options. We committed to powering the Binningup desalination plant with renewable energy, including 20 per cent for leading-edge emerging renewable technologies. We funded wind farms in the regional communities of Kalbarri, Esperance, Hopetoun, Bremer Bay, Exmouth, Denham, Coral Bay and Rottnest Island, reducing reliance on dirty and expensive diesel generators. That is what we were able to do in nearly eight years in government. As I said, I suggest that members opposite have a close look at that list, and hopefully it will give them some ideas.

What did the Liberals promise? They promised to encourage—I am taking this from their election platform—and support the development and uptake of renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, geothermal and wave and tidal power. We came out and said, “What on earth are you doing with the LEED fund money? It’s all sitting there. You’re not spending it.” That was back in February-March of this year when we were already two or three months past the submission time for applications under that fund. The Liberals eventually made an announcement—why it took them so long, I cannot imagine—that they were going to fund the wave power pilot project at Albany. We applaud that. Why would we not? It is a first-class project. But that is all they are doing. It is just not good enough. This afternoon we got an insight into what their problem is. As Hon Peter Collier said, they just do not know what to do to progress the development of solar, geothermal and tidal power. I suggest that the Liberals sit down with some of us, and we will help them think this through. It is absolutely imperative that the Liberals realise that they are now in government and that they have to take responsibility for making these decisions. Unfortunately, all we are seeing is prevarication and lip-service to something that we on this side are not entirely convinced they believe in.

However, they have one idea; that is, every time they talk about climate change, they talk about the mining and export of uranium. That is not good enough. It is dirty technology. It is dangerous to mine, to transport, to ship and to process, and there is no answer to the storage of nuclear waste.

HON PAUL LLEWELLYN (South West) [4.33 pm] — in reply: Mr President, do you know how much time is left?

Hon Norman Moore: We want you to have as much time as you need for your last week.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: I thank Hon Norman Moore very much.

I want to address some of the issues that were raised, and I thank all members for their contributions. First of all, I will deal with the concept that the strategies set out in my motion are too ambitious and we cannot do it. Yes, they are ambitious, but if we are to believe the science, and we do today, we must do it. When we put ourselves on a war footing when the Germans or the Japanese were invading, we did not say, “Should we go out and build tanks?” We said, “We are going to go out and build tanks, and we are going to actually address the issue.” I think that that is the kind of attitude we should take in addressing this massive issue—at this moment I say that it is a massive issue—of reducing our carbon emissions. That does not mean to say that we have to play a small game; it means that we have to play a big game. It does not mean to say that we crash the economy. In actual fact, our contention is that we do the opposite.

I will deal with something that Hon Donna Faragher mentioned. She said that we have to find the least-cost solution. When people go out to buy a public service bus, they do not look for the least-cost solution; they look for the best technical solution to the problem. They do not buy a cheap bus; they buy the best bus to do the job. Therefore, I believe that we need to be very careful that we do not try to address climate change on the cheap. We know that it will cost money, but we also know that in investing that money into the economy, we will generate new economic activity. We will create green-collar jobs and create work opportunities for people who are currently losing jobs in the mining industry and so on as a result of the general downturn in the economy.

This motion is about leveraging the opportunities that arise out of the imperative to reduce our emissions. Let us assume for one minute, in a bubble of this Parliament, that we could believe that it was imperative. What would we do? If this were the equivalent of the Japanese or the Germans attacking, what we do? We would put our minds to it. That is the challenge of climate change; that is the challenge of restoring our economic prosperity through a clean, green future.

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Hon Peter Collier: That was my point. It is fine to have a common enemy, but you have to be careful that you don't fight among yourselves.

Hon PAUL LLEWELLYN: Okay. We are not going to fight among ourselves in this matter. It is very clear that we need to have complementary legislative initiatives. The government, as I understand it, has taken away the 5 Star Plus building standard. It has not put in place bigger and better building standards. It should put those building standards in place. It should put the building sustainability index proposal in place, and it will generate a very large-scale industry in retrofitting and rebuilding houses and buildings. That is what we are talking about.

In the agricultural areas—I am very glad that Hon Wendy Duncan raised this issue—there is an entirely new energy economy. There is a bioenergy economy. These are new economies waiting to happen. We need to make investments in the front end of the forestry industry to bring those new technologies and the new agricultural practices into existence to address our land care, water and energy issues and to build new regional economies. That is absolutely correct. To some extent we are on the way. An emissions trading scheme will drive the investment in regional areas in carbon farming. A renewable energy target scheme will drive investment in regional areas in renewable energy generation.

It is a bit disingenuous for the Labor Party to say that it introduced all those initiatives. What it did in this house was reject the biggest climate change initiative put on the table in the past four years, which was the Western Australian renewable energy target bill. It was the current government, the Liberal-National government, and the Greens (WA) that actually passed that bill in this house. I hope that we will see similar legislation passed by the Liberal-National government, because in fact it saw the business case. Climate change is a business case waiting to be taken up.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.