

## CLIMATE CHANGE

### *Statement*

**HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan)** [5.31 pm]: Today is the last day of February and it has been a pretty extraordinary February from a climate change perspective. Members are probably aware that this February, Perth broke a range of heat records that have stood for a long time. There were seven days over 40 degrees—almost double the previous record of four in about 1985. On Monday last week, the 15 hottest places on earth were all in Western Australia, including poor old Carnarvon, which reached 49.9 degrees.

**Hon Neil Thomson:** I was there!

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** The member was there. It also reached 47.7 degrees in Geraldton. It is pretty extraordinary when we look around the world and realise that 12 of the 15 hottest temperatures recorded last Monday were right here in WA. Of course, climate change is playing out globally. A range of things have happened since we last sat in this place that I think are worth putting on the record. For the first time, the world breached its 1.5 degree Celsius warming over a 12-month period. The target in the Paris Agreement is about 1.5 degrees, but over the past 12 months, and for the first time, we have breached that. Perhaps those temperatures we saw in February will be remembered by our grandchildren as some of the cooler temperatures they experienced.

According to the European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service, 2023 was the hottest year on record. Antarctica sea ice reached a record low for the third year in a row. Disturbingly, over the past couple of months we have seen reports that the Atlantic Ocean's circulation is reaching what scientists call a devastating tipping point.

*The Guardian* reports that a study has found —

Collapse in system of currents that helps regulate global climate would be at such speed that adaptation would be impossible

That is the opinion of global scientists.

Over the summer, since we have been away from this place, we have seen increasingly rapid climate change happening everywhere. I hoped and expected that we would see this government respond to that. It is disappointing to find nothing—I am happy to be corrected—from the Minister for Climate Action or others about this. There was not a single media statement or even anything on social media over the summer that talked about climate change. How is that possible? I know that I have said this before: how are we again silent on this issue in the face of the overwhelming evidence? It is pretty extraordinary. I get why. One other thing we saw since we last met was a government announcement of new legislation; there will be no 2030 target and no targets until 2035, which is more than 10 years away, a critical decade. For some reason, we feel that our special circumstances here in WA mean that we do not have to act. Just before Christmas, after two years of waiting, Labor released the *Sectoral emissions reduction strategy for Western Australia*, which is literally so thin and so lacking in substance or proper planning to get emissions down that it is barely worth the paper it was printed on. Perhaps the only emissions that were reduced were captured in the 40 pages of that report.

It is very frustrating to see so little action on the back of this summer. Heatwaves like the one we just experienced are the new normal, and we need to start getting serious about that. We also need to start getting serious about increasing renewable energy, getting off gas, helping people adapt and improving social housing. People live in some of our suburbs without air conditioning or insulation; we need to help them cope with these temperatures. We need to get serious about planting more trees and protecting the mature trees we have. We need to get serious about helping people in our institutions and prisons, like Roebourne Regional Prison and unit 18, by installing air conditioning in cells. We need to get serious about not letting the Woodsides and other big gas corporations of the world do what increasingly feels like writing government policy for their own profits.

Last week, I joined about 100 other peaceful protesters who were gathered outside Woodside. What I came away with was that it was a very normal, good, peaceful protest. There was lots of singing, drums and things people would expect. What was remarkable was that it seemed that about as many police as protesters were there for a very peaceful protest. People were arrested very quickly for behaving peacefully and, in fact, sitting on the ground. I thought to myself: is that really our action on climate change? The state prioritises putting police resources into arresting climate protesters rather than doing what is right. I think the protesters and climate activism of today will be compared with the types of civil disobedience that have been so crucial throughout history. My only hope is that the government starts to listen to these people. I was very proud to be there and support them.

Finally, there is really good stuff happening. I do not want to be despairing. If we look around the country and the world, good things are happening in this space. I am especially impressed by what happened in the US with President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, which is about 18 months old and has already seen about \$1.2 trillion of investment into renewable energy, and that investment is probably likely to snowball to about \$3 trillion from industry as a result of the government's investment. Already 272 new green technology projects are up and running,

including 91 batteries and 81 wind and solar projects. We are seeing a huge transformation across the world, even in China. In the last 12 months, China has put in more solar power than the rest of the world combined. A huge amount is happening in this space.

I know that the WA government does not like using sticks; it likes using carrots. The Inflation Reduction Act is a really good example of using carrots to get industry going. I cannot help but compare that with what is happening in our renewable energy space, which frankly has stalled. Have a look to see what new renewable energy projects are in the pipeline. I can tell members what they are, and I do not even need one hand: Flat Rocks wind farm, King Rocks wind farm and one small solar project. That is it. Western Australia is normally 10 per cent of everything in Australia. At the moment, we have three per cent of possible projects but only one per cent of probable projects because we keep putting our foot on the hose. One example of that is the recent idea that we are going to charge new renewable energy projects \$100 000 for every megawatt that they want to put in. That is the complete opposite of what is happening in places like the USA and the other states.

We have a huge opportunity to get on and do this and we need to encourage it. I think we need to wake up. There is a lot of rhetoric that we are going to be the new renewable energy superpower; that is not what is happening. We need to understand that the rhetoric is not being matched by action or by investment, jobs and all the other things that should be going with it. We need to wake up and realise that we need to do things differently. There is talking about climate change, and there is actually allowing, encouraging and investing in the kind of renewable energy projects that will make WA prosperous into the future.

In the last minute I have left, I want to talk about something much more local. During the break my daughter and I—she has just started year 1 and she is loving it—went to see something at the Perth Cultural Centre. We stopped and had some sushi by the wetland. The wetland was almost dry and she asked, “Daddy, what’s going on?” I explained that there was a plan to demolish the wetland and pave over it, and she was outraged. She asked, “Where will the birds go to drink? Where will the frogs go?” I said, “That’s a really good question. I don’t know.” She was so outraged that she went to school the next day and wrote a few letters with her friends. I want to acknowledge my daughter, Aoife, and her friends Ruby and Harry. They all wrote to the government in their year 1 writing—I am happy to table these, if appropriate—asking that the government does not drain the pond near the Western Australian Museum; there is some wonderful year 1 spelling here! They explained that, otherwise, we might be fired! I tried to explain that that is not quite how government works and that we could not be fired until next year, at the election! But that is their plea, and I seek leave to table these three letters from six-year-olds in White Gum Valley, please.

[Leave granted. See paper [2988](#).]