

ENERGY PORTFOLIO — MINISTER'S PERFORMANCE

Motion

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures in managing his portfolio that have cost Western Australian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars more, particularly due to his dereliction of duty to plan for the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target.

[Quorum formed.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There is no clearer example of the dereliction of the minister's duty than not being here today to answer to these allegations. The Premier always says, "If you have an allegation, make it." Here we are making the allegation, yet the Minister for Energy cannot bring himself to defend this issue. No wonder, because his management of the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target has been a disaster and will cost hundreds of millions of dollars for Western Australian taxpayers. It should have been handled properly. We note in the resolution that this minister has already wasted millions in his portfolio, and a clear example of that is the Muja project. The minister still claims that this project is good value. In *Hansard* on 10 April 2014, he stated —

I am confident that the state government has taken the difficult but correct decision to bring Muja AB back on line ...

That \$330 million disaster is the problem that we are talking about today. I will go back to 11 May 2009 when the Premier and the Minister for Energy gave a press conference. Members can find the audio of his conference on the Premier's website, unless he has taken it down recently. The Premier said at the conference —

At the meeting of the COAG, the Council of Australian Government meeting a week or so ago Western Australia, along with all other States and Territories agreed to the national target of 20% renewables on the grid by 2020.

Hon Peter Collier later said —

We have embraced the 20% renewable by 2020.

At that same press conference they announced the disastrous decision to refurbish the Muja AB power station. If they had really wanted a coal-fired power station, they could have built a brand-new station for the same price, but instead they decided to refurbish a 45-year-old dinosaur. As I have said before, they tried to put a new engine into a Holden HR and found out after they had spent all that money that the gearbox was broken.

I remind members that on *Stateline* on 17 July 2009, Alannah MacTiernan, who was at that time the opposition climate change spokeswoman, said —

It is a complete disgrace to be taking a dirty dinosaur of 45 years, some of the worst most polluting technology in Australia today and to be reinstating that when there is absolutely no reason to do so.

Ray Wills from the Sustainable Energy Association of Australia, who is now a board member of Horizon, appointed by the current minister, then said —

By starting up a last century coal-fired station we are going to lose that opportunity because we're not investing in renewable instead.

The ABC reporter Claire Moodie paraphrased and said —

But the issue most worrying the renewable energy industry is market share and a proposal to remerge Verve and Synergy. It's an option being considered as part of a review of ways to fix Verve's huge financial woes.

Ky Cao, the managing director of a company in Western Australia that invests in energy said —

It would create enormous sovereign risk. It would drive away all private sector investment and the next five, six years the Government would have to find two to \$3 billion worth of capital expenditure and where would that come from?

It is not as though these things were unexpected. Again, quoting from *Stateline* of July 2009, Claire Moodie said —

So the way we're going, what are the chances of WA achieving the COAG target of 20 per cent renewable energy by 2020?

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

Alannah MacTiernan answers —

Under Mr Barnett I would say virtually zero.

Ray Wills said —

All we've heard so far is talk. We need to see some action. I believe the Barnett Government's capable of that action. I want to see a demonstration of it. We haven't seen it to date.

What I am getting at is that we knew six years ago that there would be a problem, and what do we find now? That is exactly what is happening. On 17 April 2013, the minister in this place said in respect of the renewable energy target —

We are also being forced to buy windmills even if we do not need them, so there is a large number of stranded assets and potential accumulated losses in the market.

Even he knew about the renewable energy target in 2013 and that is why I have asked him questions on notice every few months since then about what he is doing to plan for the inevitable renewable energy target. I will give members an example. On 15 May 2013, I asked about the government's commitment to achieving the 20 per cent renewable energy target. In his answer, he basically said that it was the retailer's problem, not his. I also asked the minister about his quote about windmills. On 26 June I asked —

I refer the Minister's comments in the House on 17 April 2013 that we are also being forced to buy windmills even if we do not need them, and I ask what windmills have been purchased that we do not need?

The minister replied —

The comments related to the Commonwealth Renewable Energy Target requirements that are encouraging development of renewable energy generation facilities in a market that already has significant over-supply of generation capacity.

That was in June 2013. Do members know what happened at the same time? The minister decided to proceed to finish the Muja AB project. He was bright enough to understand that there was an excess capacity of generators, but he still proceeded to spend tens and tens of millions of dollars—in the end, \$330 million—on a 45-year-old dinosaur. I imagine even the minister is capable of seeing that that was a bad decision. He was spending money even though he knew that the renewable energy target would come into play.

On 1 August 2013, I asked the minister whether 20 per cent renewables on the grid by 2020 was still Western Australian government policy? The minister replied —

Yes. On 30 April 2009, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to the expanded Renewable Energy Target, which required 45,000 gigawatt hours of Australia's electricity to be obtained from renewable supply sources in 2020. When the target was set, it was forecast to be equivalent to 20 per cent of electricity supplies in 2020.

At that time, the minister knew that this was the obligation of the state. What was the minister's plan? How did he respond and what did he think would be the solution for this? What the minister then did is interesting. He attended the 2013 Energy in WA conference. I quote an article on reneweconomy.com.au, under the headline "WA government says no to new renewable energy" —

But Nahan, who just last week opened the latest wind farm, the 55MW Mumbida facility near Geraldton—says the government is not encouraging new large scale renewable energy projects. "Western Australia is clearly in a situation of having excess generating capacity," he said in the conference speech. "To build additional capacity on top simply to satisfy the RET ... is a sub-optimal approach and expensive for taxpayers. Western Australia can satisfy its RET requirement by purchasing certificates from projects on the Eastern States."

Let us understand how the minister will solve the problem of having not done any planning to cope with the renewable energy target. Remember, this is the minister who completed and invested his political capital into completing the Muja AB project in a market in which he says there are too many generators, but who has not done any planning to cope with the renewable energy target. He says that the state government will buy renewable energy certificates from eastern states operations. He will pay to build wind farms, probably in South Australia, to provide low-cost energy on the east coast. He is going to pay for that energy because of the way that the renewable energy target works. Every retailer has an obligation proportionate to the total amount of renewable energy to be produced under the RET scheme. They are required to buy that obligation of certificates. This can be done in two ways: they can buy the energy and the certificate or just the certificate and somebody else buys the energy. But if they buy just the certificate and not the energy, it means that someone else gets to

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

buy cheap energy that they have subsidised because they are required to pay for that. This is a disaster and it will cost Western Australian energy users even more.

Let us understand, the minister has complained that there are too many generators in Western Australia. The Liberal government funded the two largest new generators in Western Australia with the ridiculous decision to refurbish Muja AB and the high-efficiency gas turbine at Kwinana. Those two are the largest most recent pieces of generation. When the minister complains that there are too many generators in Western Australia, he is saying that the Liberal government built too many generators when we did not need them. He knew when he became Minister for Energy, and the former minister also knew, that there would be an obligation to build renewable energy projects, but this minister is happy to have the Western Australian energy system and therefore the taxpayers of this state fund the construction of additional renewable energy projects in South Australia. It is bad enough that they made the stupid decision to refurbish a 45-year-old coal-fired power station in Collie when for the same money they could have bought a brand-new one if they were actually committed to the coalfields. But it is even worse to think that they are going to fund the construction of South Australian wind farms. That is their plan. That is the minister's idea of how to cope with the renewable energy system.

Last week, in this chamber, I asked the minister what he would do about the renewable energy target. What he said is very interesting. I asked whether the federal Minister for Industry and Science had consulted him about the RET review. He replied —

No, the federal minister has not sought my view.

It is interesting that the Labor shadow Minister for Resources and Energy, Hon Gary Gray, regularly speaks to me about negotiations between the federal Labor and Liberal Parties on this issue. For some reason the federal minister does not think that the Western Australian Minister for Energy's opinion is important. That is hardly surprising. It is clearly not important. Unfortunately, not his opinion but his behaviour is important to Western Australians, because it will cost us tens of millions of dollars. The minister went on to talk about the renewable energy target. He said —

All I can say is that although we are supporting renewable energy greatly in the state ... it is largely small-scale renewable energy that now exceeds 400 megawatts of installed capacity in the metro area ...

I asked a supplementary question —

Is the minister aware that small-scale plants are not part of the large-scale renewable energy target?

He replied —

I am fully aware ...

Why in the hell was he even talking about it? The fact that he is absent today; I imagine he has lined up a couple of backbenchers to waste our time telling us about things that they have no knowledge about. I bet the first thing they will talk about is rooftop solar panels. Before backbenchers do that, I just want to make the point that rooftop solar panels do not relate to the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target that is the subject of today's debate. If any member gets up and tries to argue about the effects of rooftop solar and that being a commitment of West Australian Liberal government, I will take a point of order and whoever is in the Chair will shut them down, because that has nothing to do the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target. It is irrelevant. The small-scale target is a separate procedure. There is a separate process for that, and it is not part of today's debate. If members want to have a debate about that, I welcome it, but it is not what we are doing today. Today, we are talking about the minister's behaviour in respect of the large-scale renewable energy process, not the small-scale renewable energy process.

Last week, the minister went on to say —

I also recognise that we have between 15 per cent to 20 per cent excess capacity in generating facilities, and I do not want to add to that other than by small-scale, because it just imposes excessive costs on electricity consumers. I am not wont to do that.

Of course, as I said, that excess capacity is largely because the Western Australian Liberal government built the HEGT in Kwinana and made the ridiculous decision to spend as much money refurbishing a 45-year-old coal-fired power station that it could have spent buying a brand-new one if it wanted to and was really committed to the interests of the people of Collie.

Again, where is the policy response? Everybody knew that the renewable energy target was sitting there. Remember this: if there had not been an agreement between the federal Labor Party and the federal Liberal Party to reduce the RET to 33 000 megawatt hours, it would have continued at 45 000 megawatt hours. It was not

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

going to disappear. It was just that it was going to be higher. Where is the policy response? There is none. This minister has had his head in the sand on the renewable energy target since the day he became minister.

I remind members that the minister announced in a newspaper article in *The Western Australian* on 26 April 2013 that he was going to get the Economic Regulation Authority to review the impact of renewable energies in Western Australia. But the minister never actually did that. In fact, he came into this chamber, and we asked a number of questions on it, and he said, "I cannot do anything until I know what the federal RET is going to do." The minister's plan was to wait until it was too late to do anything.

Just as an example, on 17 February this year, I asked the minister what the policy was, and he said —

The State Government expects all businesses with obligations under the Renewable Energy Target Scheme that are based in Western Australia to meet their legislated obligations under the Scheme.

The minister then went on to describe how it works, and he continued —

Liable businesses in Western Australia will be required to comply with obligations that correspond to any revised target. This is a statutory obligation imposed by the Federal Government rather than a matter of State Government policy.

Of course, in Western Australia 80 per cent of the generation capacity belongs to the government. Yet all that the minister could do was come into this place and say, "We had to merge Verve and Synergy, because the government is at the centre of everything, and a decision cannot be made in Western Australia without the government's involvement." There is no policy response to the needs of the Western Australian energy system from this minister—none at all. The minister was derelict in his duty. He was not on top of this.

Last week, in the minister's answer, he tried to wish away the RET, and he referred, by implication, to the Warburton review. The Warburton review was rejected by everybody. Even the federal Labor government rejected the Warburton review. Nobody took any notice of the Warburton review, except, apparently, the minister, who thought that he would be able to do nothing. That is the minister's usual approach to public policy—do nothing; do not worry about it; it will not be a problem. But this problem is going to cost tens, and probably hundreds, of millions of dollars. We can actually do a rough calculation. A renewable energy certificate probably costs around \$100 a megawatt hour. Probably 300 or 400 megawatt hours of RECs will be required. So, if we just do the maths and multiply one by the other, we are talking about \$40 million or \$50 million a year for every year between 2020 and 2030. We are talking about perhaps as much as \$500 million being given away by the government of Western Australia to build wind farms in South Australia, and the minister thinks that is a good policy response! It is unbelievable that a minister would do that. It is no wonder the minister is not prepared to stand here and defend himself, because there is no defence of this minister's complete and utter abrogation of his responsibilities. There is no way the minister can defend himself.

It is interesting that the minister arranged for the electricity market review. The Minister for Energy announced two reviews when he became minister. One was into renewable energies and their impact on the system, and the other was into the next steps in electricity market reform. The electricity market reform paper was called the electricity market review. The electricity market review was a policy of the Labor opposition at the 2013 election and that is why, when the review was announced, I welcomed it. Often oppositions oppose things that governments do. I actually supported it. But when the report came down, what was my specific critique? Again, breaching the Premier's instructions not to quote oneself, I just draw attention to the fact that I appeared on the John McGlue program on ABC radio on 13 August 2014 and the government monitored my commentary and transcribed it. The government of Western Australia's Department of the Premier and Cabinet media monitoring unit transcribed my words, so I can read from the government's media monitoring service. I do not know how much it costs for that service to transcribe my words, but I said —

Firstly John, we called for a market review, so obviously I welcomed the Minister when he conducted ... commissioned a report. I've read through it. Some of the questions raised are very important. I think it's missed a little bit, because it doesn't really address disruptive technologies, you know, solar panels and ... the new way of producing electricity, but it's an interesting report. It shows the fact that the Government basically spent five years doing nothing in the energy sector, while costs and prices just kept increasing, so you know, there's clearly plenty of blame for the minister, former minister Collier and the current minister, Mike Nahan, to accept for their bad management of the electricity system.

I endorse my own words. This paper—given that the minister cancelled the companion paper, which was to provide a policy response to the demands of renewable energy, and that must have been intended to include the large-scale renewable energy target—was completely ignored. The government had a golden opportunity to look at what was happening. It commissioned this report and spent tens of thousands of dollars on the report. It had the opportunity of having the opposition support it. How often in energy policy in Western Australia do we get both sides of politics aligned? The only time it has happened is when we disaggregated Western Power in 2006,

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

when the Liberal Party supported us for a couple of weeks and then went back to the usual opposition politics on energy. The government had a golden opportunity and it missed it. The government could have included in that report the effect of the renewable energy target on the system. The minister also had a golden opportunity to draw a line under the incompetence of Hon Peter Collier. The minister could have drawn a line under that and said, "That was that minister; I am the new minister", and he could have moved forward. But, instead, he endorsed all the behaviour of the previous minister. So, we have missed an opportunity. The minister has not taken the opportunity that was presented to him.

[Quorum formed.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As part of the Warburton review, ACIL Allen Consulting was commissioned to do some modelling of the potential costs of the renewable energy target. There is often discussion about the costs of the renewable energy target between now and 2020, but there is not so much understanding that the renewable energy target goes beyond 2020, up to 2030. I remind the house that the WA Renewable Energy Alliance, in its media release of 29 August 2014, points out that —

The draft modelling from ACIL Allen commissioned as part of the RET Review confirms that the target will reduce prices for consumers and that the industry can meet the existing target within the 2020 timeframe.

Would it not be great to have taken the opportunity to participate in reducing costs for consumers through the renewable energy target? The Minister for Energy's plan is to spend the money to reduce the costs of energy in South Australia. During the Energy in WA Conference 2013, the minister outlined his plan to buy renewable energy certificates from the east coast of Australia. Given that most wind farms are being built in South Australia, that almost certainly means wind farms in South Australia. It might mean some new innovation in energy technology, such as a current project in South Australia that uses solar panels floating on the top of sewage ponds. They are working more efficiently because of the cooling effect of the water underneath the panels. They are getting a higher generation out of that project. That is the sort of thing that Western Australia will do. Western Australia is going to pay for innovative renewable energy solutions and the energy is delivered on the east coast of Australia. That is the minister's plan.

The Minister for Energy is too scared or too whatever to defend himself today. I am sure he must be too busy. I saw the post on Twitter about the budgets arriving at Parliament House this morning. Clearly he is not writing the budget because it has already been written, printed and delivered. He is not doing that. That is not what he is busy doing. I am sure he is very busy. I am sure he is on important parliamentary duties elsewhere in the building.

Ms R. Saffioti: He is trying to scrub out \$850 million in education and health funding.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes, that could be quite right. The minister is not prepared to defend his plan on renewable energy for the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target. He gives these notes to his backbencher MPs. It will be very entertaining to hear them —

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am told they are now called the backbench bots. They will get up and say, "Look how good we are doing on rooftop solar." Yes; but that has nothing to do with today's debate. That is irrelevant to the debate today. Today we are not talking about small-scale projects; we are talking about large-scale projects.

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I look forward to the completely unique contributions from these two members from the other side when they get up to explain the government's decision about the renewable energy target; that is, to buy certificates from the east coast so that the east coast of Australia can have lower cost electricity while we pay for that.

Ms R. Saffioti: Member for Cannington, I have heard that petition about the TAB sale so many times.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Yes.

Mrs G.J. Godfrey: You will get more of it, too!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman): Members! The member for Cannington has the floor.

Ms R. Saffioti interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! I will stand up in a minute; stop now, please.

Ms R. Saffioti: They are pulling the rug from underneath them.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: That is right.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members—both of you! Next time I stand up, I will call you.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: In September 2014 the Clean Energy Council published a paper entitled “The impact of cutting the Renewable Energy Target on state jobs and investment”. This paper pointed out that if Western Australia had a continuation of the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target, by 2021–22 there would be \$1 billion of investment in Western Australia for renewable energy projects and that that would create 1 600 jobs. But the government’s plan is for that \$1 billion investment to take place in another state. That is its plan. I do not understand why any government of Western Australia would plan to take money out of the pockets of Western Australian consumers and put it into the pockets of investors in renewable energy projects on the other side of the country. It does not make any sense. The fact that the Minister for Energy is not prepared to come in here and defend his decision to do nothing about the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target means he must be condemned.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells) [4.34 pm]: I rise to speak to this motion moved by the member for Cannington. I offer my full support to the motion —

That this house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures in managing his portfolio that have cost Western Australian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars more, particularly due to his dereliction of duty to plan for the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target.

We know that Western Australia has enormous capacity when it comes to renewable energy. Some have described Western Australia as the future Saudi Arabia of renewable energy. Indeed, the person who coined that phrase is now on the board of Horizon Energy—appointed by the Minister for Energy. I refer to Professor Ray Wills. He has done much work in promoting renewable energy in this state. The language around renewable energy is changing almost on a yearly, if not monthly, basis. I have noticed the current Minister for Energy has started to talk up the reliance Western Australia has on renewable energy. He has referred to the fact that Western Australia is not likely to need a new fossil fuel–burning power station simply because we have this great capacity coming from renewables. To pick up on points made by the member for Cannington, principally that has come from the installation of rooftop solar panel systems on 170 000 homes. That totals about 400 megawatts of capacity. That is happening in Western Australia, but what about the real wealth in this state—the large-scale renewable energy projects? What about some of the opportunities there? What is this government doing to ensure they are accommodated within the renewable energy target and accepting there have been reviews, such as the Warburton review? There have been discussions about somewhat downgrading the renewable energy target and I will come to that in more detail, but we have this unique situation of amazing potential and the potential for incredible industrial and manufacturing growth in the renewable energy sector in Western Australia. For example, there is upscaling potential in Carnegie Wave Energy Ltd–CETO Development Company’s wave energy systems. That technology has been developed in Western Australia. It could be marketed overseas, but we have to make sure we have the right parameters in place and the right policy settings to encourage those sorts of projects to be installed in Western Australia.

How do we do that when we have declining demand for electricity in this state? That is a real problem that the government is not addressing at all. We want to stimulate the renewable energy sector because we should be involved in the development of businesses that produce a product that can be marketed around the world. It seems we are not able to look internationally enough with the marketing; instead, we look to see where the demand is in Western Australia. Of course we do not have it because we do not have the growth. We have been successful in other areas as well in reducing our electricity consumption. That means that on those days we have peak electricity demand on the south west interconnected system, we barely get past the 4 000 megawatt mark. We are not growing our demand.

So what became of a great initiative? I think of the situation wind turbine manufacturer Westwind Wind Turbines faced about 15 years ago. It produced turbine systems that were up to 30 kilowatts, and the biggest had, I think, a blade diameter of about 10 metres. The turbines weighed about 750 kilograms, so they were not the very big wind turbines that we see at, say, Collgar Wind Farm, Albany Wind Farm, Emu Downs or any of the other big wind farms we care to name. Those turbines were quite specific-use and ideal for small micro-grids. It was identified that in India there was a great demand for these systems. We just needed to have in place the necessary support for that company and we could have been the producers of wind turbines for a huge market in India. What a shame we missed that opportunity. In the end, the Indians found other means of generating electricity. I am not sure they went for renewables even, but they still would have had that need for micro-grids so I do not think they would have necessarily gone for fossil fuels. That is one example of the sort of capacity we could have gone for.

Another example actually has come to fruition. It involved Blair Fox and its purchase of second-hand wind turbines principally from Italy. It has made up some micro-grid or grid connected systems as well, where they have, on a number of farms, five-megawatt systems that comprise 10, 500-kilowatt, second-hand Enercon wind

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

turbines. The company purchased them from Italy and dismantled and reassembled them here in Western Australia, and they are now on farms in the Lancelin area. I look forward to seeing how they are operating. But it just shows that there is innovation there, and I have no doubt that the installation, of course, and maintenance that goes with managing second-hand wind turbines could be a skill area that we could develop. We could refurbish these things so that they operate effectively and provide electricity to the farms. That is the interesting information I have from Blair Fox. They are described as being “embedded wind farms” so they are providing electricity for the on-site needs of the farms, and when there is an excess, they have ready access to the Western Power network, and, therefore, to other south west interconnected system customers. That is another development that shows the way forward and gives us an idea of the opportunities that await us.

I turn to what I think was perhaps the biggest missed opportunity. This could have been incorporated very well into how we as Western Australians could accommodate any changes that may have come with the renewable energy target. It is the idea of solar thermal power plants. There was one proposal for a solar thermal plant at Perenjori in the north east wheatbelt. Solar thermal plants get around the intermittency issue that renewable energy power generation often faces; they get around it because they use a system of solar panels—mirrors in fact—to concentrate heat on a body of oil, water or, more often than not, salt to produce a molten salt that then is able to heat up water to generate the steam that will then drive around the electricity generators. It is a very reliable system because we can heat up the molten body such that it will give off heat over an extended period for somewhere approaching 24 hours—18 hours—so that we do not have the problem we have with photovoltaics of the electricity generation just being during the day. We can get around the problem of how to produce electricity at night from photovoltaics. The proposal was put to the government; I know that because I asked through a question on notice whether the minister had had contact with a consortium called Abengoa. There was to be a 20-megawatt solar thermal power plant at Perenjori and I asked the minister whether meetings had taken place. He told me, yes, they had taken place and that there was a degree of interest. In fact, he advised me that through the federal government’s system—the Australian Renewable Energy Agency and the renewable energy support program—\$450 000 was given to Abengoa in May 2014 for a feasibility study to examine the potential for this 20-megawatt system. So, there was great support for it, but where has it gone? It seems to have evaporated as the minister and perhaps some of his senior policy advisers have come to think they are not sure where they are going with renewable energy targets. Of course, we were at the time talking about the renewable energy target being one that warranted production of 45 000 gigawatt hours of electricity. That is the position we were at, but that has been revised downwards following the publication of the Warburton review. I will get to the Warburton review now.

That “Report of the Expert Panel” was commissioned by the Abbott government under the renewable energy target scheme. I note that on the panel, led by Dick Warburton, was also Brian Fisher, who was previously with the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics. I know when Dr Fisher was at ABARE, he always manage to use ABARE’s reporting as a means of perhaps reinforcing his own climate change scepticism, and always dismissed anybody who said that agricultural production projections needed to be tempered by potential climate change shifts. I am not sure that Dr Fisher was necessarily an ideal person to have on the Warburton review. We also had Shirley In’t Veld, who was of course with Verve Energy, and Mr Matt Zema.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Shirley In’t Veld was the CEO of Verve when they invested in Muja.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Indeed, yes; that is an interesting point. When that big, very, very expensive decision was made to invest in Muja to establish a relationship with a private company for the refurbishment of Muja, Shirley In’t Veld was the CEO at Verve Energy.

To summarise the findings of the report, I will quote from its letter to the Prime Minister; federal Treasurer; the Minister for Industry and Science, Hon Ian Macfarlane; and the Minister for the Environment, Hon Greg Hunt. The letter reads —

Our report concludes that the costs of the scheme to the community outweigh its benefits and that significant change is required. The report presents recommendations for the Government’s consideration to achieve this.

I think it is clear that the report set out with the intention of belittling or downgrading the importance of the potential for renewable energy. I suppose when our state minister read this and heard about this, he thought: why should I be bothering to work out how I can make sure that the renewable energy target works for the benefit of Western Australians? He was perhaps thinking that there would have been this dramatic reduction, but in fact we are not seeing that. Although the Warburton review was dismissive of the renewable energy target and described it in all kinds of negative terms, the fact is that the outcome is that it will be reduced from 45 000 gigawatt hours to 33 000 gigawatt hours. There is still some negotiation going on. I noticed in the press last week that there was talk about whether the burning of native forest residues should be included, and that might become a major issue

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

in the passing or consideration of the changes when it is presented to the federal Senate. That remains to be seen, but it is clear that we will retain to some extent our renewable energy target and it will be the target of somewhere around 33 000 gigawatt hours. That is something the government needs to work with so there is not the result, as the member for Cannington outlined, of renewable energy certificates being sourced from outside the state. That would be a terrible result.

I want to talk a bit about the enthusiasm that exists in Western Australia, and indeed across the nation, when it comes to renewable energy. I noticed a report presented by Essential Media Communications, “The Essential Report”, published in late March—just over a month ago. It listed the percentage of respondents who said that the current target of 20 per cent renewables by 2020—the trajectory that the renewable energy target has us on—is too low. In February 2014, 25 per cent of respondents said that 20 per cent renewables by 2020 was too low. By July 2014, 29 per cent said that that target was too low. By March 2015, so very recently, 33 per cent of respondents to “The Essential Report” said the target of 20 per cent renewables by 2020 was too low. That compares with the figure of the number of people saying renewables should be kept at the current level, which was 32 per cent. Therefore, we can see that more people say the target is too low than those who say things should be kept at the current level. There is an indication of the growing enthusiasm—perhaps it is a resurgence of enthusiasm.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: I think there was a time when the desire of the Australian community for action on climate change and the commitment towards renewable energy was very strong, and I can only speculate about what happened. In 2009, there was bipartisan support for things like the carbon pollution reduction scheme and there was real support for action, but somehow that got dissipated. In November 2009—I think it was 30 November—the Senate managed to vote against the CPRS. The next day Tony Abbott became leader of the federal Liberal Party and one of the first votes he held in the federal Liberal Party room was that there would be opposition to a price on carbon. That goes back to 2009 and since then, yes, I think the Australian people have been confused about what direction we are going in when it comes to action on climate change and supporting renewable energy. But here we have it: there is a resurgence. There is clear evidence now that there is great support for action on climate change, and that is why this motion moved by the member for Cannington is so appropriate. It clearly states that the minister is not working to effect Large-scale Renewable Energy Target implementation in our Western Australian system, and that is such a great loss. I have outlined some of the projects that we were missing out on—things like solar thermal plants and the capacity to retain and use some of the technologies we are developing in the state. What are some of the job opportunities we are missing out on? I now turn to a report that the Clean Energy Council put out in September last year highlighting the job opportunities that would be available to Western Australia with the full retention of the renewable energy target. It highlighted that the wind sector alone—I am thinking of the example I gave earlier of a company like Westwind Wind Turbines—would have provided 160 jobs for Western Australia. Solar photovoltaic, which admittedly is most likely the small-scale end of the energy spectrum, would create 1 155 jobs. The jobs mentioned in hydroelectricity perhaps are associated with the Ord scheme, which I think is our only hydro system.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: There might be some opportunities for hydro in the south west perhaps at Wellington Dam and elsewhere, but the report quantifies very conservatively that there are five job opportunities in that area. There are 100 or so potential jobs in bioenergy. To tally that up, at the beginning of 2014, we were talking about 1 615 jobs in Western Australia. There are some costs associated with this renewable energy target, and going back to the Warburton report, it said it would be a terrible and burdensome cost on everyone. It said it would cost approximately \$60 a year for someone with an electricity bill of \$1 500 per year; it could be said that would cost \$1 a week for someone with a typical electricity bill. The cost would be about four per cent of a bill for the typical household.

I noticed that the Minister for Mines and Petroleum had a question about the success and usefulness of a subsidy given to the mining sector. He was referring to the exploration incentive scheme and how it has a multiplier value—we put in \$1 and we get \$10 out; I think it is more like \$1 million in and \$10 million out, because that is the scale of activity that goes on there. Fair enough; we support subsidisation. I recall having an exchange about this issue with the current Treasurer, and I said to him that given his background with the Institute of Public Affairs, he would probably be opposed to things like subsidies to industry. He said, no, he supported subsidies like the exploration incentive scheme. He said that he thought they were a good idea because there is this multiplier effect. Likewise, there are multiplier effects with policy settings that support renewable energy, and that is precisely what we have seen with the renewable energy target. It has been a tremendous way of stimulating our renewable energy sector and that is why things like the solar PV scheme have been so successful. Most excitingly, and I think the Treasurer even referred to this quite recently, things like Tesla Power Walls are

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

now becoming viable. The level of investment and technology are coming together and people like Elon Musk with that Tesla Power Wall are perhaps in a position to iron out the concern we have of intermittency with renewable energy. It is an amazing and fantastic opportunity. It is incredibly exciting to think that each home could have a Tesla Power Wall installed next to it that could be absorbing the energy perhaps produced from PV. It raises some complicated questions. What about those of us who would stay connected to the grid and what about the costs of the upkeep and maintenance of the poles-and-wire systems we have? How will that be done equitably, bearing in mind that for some people the option of having PV and a Tesla Power Wall might not be in the budget? It might not be within their lifestyle if they are perhaps just starting out renting a place. Those people will find that the grid connection charges could well go up. These are the sorts of issues that the minister needs to address, but as the motion indicates, there is no sign that there is any thought going on into this. It is very much a case of the government waiting and thinking that the technology is moving along so fast that it will not try to keep up with it. That is not acceptable at all. We need to determine what opportunities are there for our industry sector and, at the same time, we need to make sure that we have the right policy settings available to accommodate people regardless of whether they are on a low income or are in a better situation and can afford to have some form of renewable generation and electricity storage installed at their place.

I have highlighted some of the job aspects that come with a renewable energy target commitment. I want to say a little more about how we have got to this point and the history of the renewable energy target, bearing in mind that in 2001, when the Howard federal government was in power and prior to the Gallop government coming to office, what was then called the mandatory renewable energy target was in place. Since then, it has evolved into a 4 500-gigawatt-hour target. Certainly, 41 000 gigawatt hours is the aim by 2020; it is fixed in legislation. That is driven mostly by the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target. That is something that we have ahead of us, but it has been somewhat downscaled. That is true, but the system is still in place and is putting the onus on the electricity retailers to purchase the renewable energy certificates. Electricity generators create a certificate for every megawatt hour of electricity that they produce, and the retailers have to obtain those and then surrender them to the Clean Energy Regulator. That is how the system works. It has provided this stimulus to our renewable energy system.

With those words, I will conclude. The motion before us deserves the support of all members, because Western Australia is being let down by our failure to ensure that we have in place policy settings that support the renewable energy target.

MR J. NORBERGER (Joondalup) [5.02 pm]: From the outset, I might make mention that I am not the lead speaker for the government on this motion.

Several members interjected.

Mr J. NORBERGER: I reserve the pleasure of the Minister for Energy for members opposite, but I will grace them with my contribution for a few minutes. Right from the beginning, it might be worth exploring what this motion is all about. Dare I say that this motion has very little to do with exploring and discussing the portfolio at hand; rather, it is probably a political stunt, an afternoon out from the budget, to try to delay the Treasurer.

Mr A.P. Jacob: Surely not!

Mr J. NORBERGER: Call me cynical if members will, but it seems to me that it is all about not letting the Treasurer prepare for the budget tomorrow and getting him to deal with some frivolous motion that lacks facts or any kind of depth to try to waste his time.

Interestingly, we heard the member for Cannington almost pre-empt—I might say rightly so—what some government backbenchers may wish to talk about in addressing the motion before the house. He sent out a stern warning: “I know that backbenchers are going to jump up and talk. I am the all-wise member for Cannington and I know that they are going to talk about rooftop solar panels. How dare they! I am putting them on warning that if they even dare to stand in this place and talk about rooftop solar panels, I am going to jump to my feet on a point of order and get whoever is in the chair at the time to sit them down because this motion has nothing to do with rooftop solar panels.”

Before I explore the veracity of that claim, I must say that I found it very bemusing that one of the very first things the member for Gosnells spoke about—about one minute into his speech—was rooftop solar panels. I looked for the member for Cannington; maybe he was having a belated cup of tea. I was almost going to do the point of order on his behalf. I wondered where the member for Cannington was, because his team had not been briefed by him. They went off on a tangent. On no fewer than three occasions, the member for Gosnells spoke about rooftop solar panels; in fact, he even spoke about solar hot water. There was not a lot of preparation. I put the member for Cannington on notice: I will at some stage in the time I have allotted to me today talk about rooftop solar panels. Before he flexes his quad muscles and jumps to his feet, let me remind him of the motion that he wrote. His motion states —

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

That this house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures in managing his portfolio ...

The last time I checked, solar panels were part of the Minister for Energy's portfolio. If all the member opposite wanted to do was talk about the large-scale renewable energy system, maybe he should have worded his motion a little better. But we have come to expect that from the member for Cannington. He tries to dress everything up and make it sound intelligent, but generally it is lacking in facts. It is a bit shallow once we scratch beneath the surface. I put him on notice that I will talk about rooftop solar panels. There is plenty to talk about. There is plenty to be proud of. If the member writes his motions so broadly as to encompass the entire energy portfolio, he should be prepared for that discussion to take place.

There is something else. Let me read the full motion; I digressed, because I read only the first sentence. The full motion states —

That this house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures in managing his portfolio that have cost Western Australian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars more, particularly —

But not limited to —

due to his dereliction of duty to plan for the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target.

Point of Order

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The member said that he was quoting the motion and he clearly is not. He said “particularly but not limited to”. It does not say that at all.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Member.

Debate Resumed

Mr J. NORBERGER: I will tell members what was missing. I almost had to have a second take. I had to re-read the motion. I thought maybe I was given the wrong copy. I believe four words were missing from what should be a trademark member for Cannington motion. I looked and I could not find these four words—“energy sector in chaos”. I thought: hang on minute; normally every time the member for Cannington talks about the energy portfolio, he cannot help but throw in the words “energy sector in chaos”. Today he did not. Maybe the member for Cannington is not feeling too well. Maybe it was an absent-minded mistake. Perhaps he has a new adviser. Is that the case? Does he have a new adviser who has finally convinced him that that is not really a valid argument because in fact the energy sector is not in chaos? Perhaps the penny has finally dropped and he has realised that he can no longer use that phrase because the energy sector is actually not in chaos. Under this Liberal-National government, the energy sector is not in a state of chaos. I am really glad that he has finally cottoned onto that. We welcome him to our way of thinking in that regard. It took him a while, but he has got there nonetheless.

I will tell members what was chaotic; it was the mess that we inherited from Labor. When we came to power, we inherited an energy sector that could have been described as being in chaos. I want to cover some of those facts, because if we are talking about where we are today and where we are heading in the future, a little history goes a long way in framing the context of what we are discussing today. We know that Labor went about its disaggregation process with some pretty lofty intentions. They were good intentions; I will not deny that. The objective of the reform agenda undertaken by the previous Labor government was to take the pressure off electricity prices. I do not blame it for that; it was a lofty ambition. It should have gone out with that aim. It went about its disaggregation process, hoping that doing so would take pressure off prices. It is interesting, however, given that that was Labor's aim, that its policy was clearly increasing electricity prices by 10 per cent a year, year after year, for a very long and foreseeable period. A 10 per cent annual increase in electricity prices after going about a disaggregation process, the whole purpose of which was to take pressure off prices in the first place, was an interesting outcome.

All that this process saw happen was an increase in prices and a massive increase in the subsidies that had to be paid to Synergy and Verve. These subsidies that used to be in the range of \$60 million to \$70 million ended up peaking at \$1.8 billion over a four-year period. Bravo, members opposite! I am sure that is plenty to be proud of. We have previously heard from the Minister for Energy and, as we know, nothing new is coming out in this debate. There is nothing new about what has happened tonight because the debate tonight has not been about substance; it has been about wasting the Treasurer's time. We know that the Minister for Energy has said in the past that Labor left Verve on a path to near bankruptcy. If members want to go into the finite details of that, I have no doubt that the Minister for Energy will be able to do that. We have discussed this before in this

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

chamber and I am amazed that we need to remind members opposite yet again that had we left them to their own devices, God only knows where Verve would be today.

Several members interjected.

Mr J. NORBERGER: This government has made the hard decisions; we have made the decisions that needed to be made to get the energy sector back on track. We changed the vesting contract for Verve—that was a very important step. We merged Synergy and Verve—a move that was strongly opposed by members opposite. I was in the chamber when these things were being discussed during matters of public interest and question time, when members opposite condemned us, saying how dare we do it. Yet it is interesting, because if they have read any part of the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement* that came out in December, they will have seen that we have already booked over \$500 million in savings, and a large part of that \$500 million in savings is a result of the merger of Synergy and Verve. That is not a bad outcome, but it was opposed by members opposite.

We would like to move to a different regime; we want to move towards a market-based system. If we are to move to such a system, one of the key things that we need is to have the costs aligned at the start. If we are going to start with a market-based system, the costs should be at a point of parity. To sum it all up, that is the true chaos that was left behind by members opposite. Because of their failed disaggregation, despite 62 per cent increases in electricity prices—that is a given fact; we know that and it has been discussed in this chamber—and their failed attempt to reform, we are still 20 per cent to 30 per cent behind in costs and require massive government subsidies. We have a plan to deal with that; in fact, we have already made a start, but it is important to remember history. Before those guys opposite get to their feet with all their lofty claims, they should remember that thanks to their failed process, we have had a massive fix-up job on our hands. We have taken it in our stride and we have the talent to tackle it, and we have made great inroads.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, members.

Mr J. NORBERGER: The member can speak for himself.

In terms of the electricity market review, in March 2014 the Minister for Energy announced a review of the market structure to address the failed disaggregation process, and a large number of recommendations came from that. One of the key recommendations—it is a measure that the government has accepted—is that we move towards retail contestability. That move is certainly supported by members on this side of the house. In fact, we are confident that we can achieve that and move towards retail contestability. We are confident that we can do this through Synergy and we are confident that the market reforms will do that. First and foremost, we need to look at how we can get to a point at which we no longer need to have these huge subsidies for Synergy before we will have any chance of reaching full retail contestability—a legacy from members opposite.

The member for Cannington decries that we have failed to plan for the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target. I thought that was quite interesting and I think we should consider it for a moment. Beside the fact that this state, through Synergy, has already underpinned hundreds of millions of dollars in renewable energy investment in this state, we have seen new wind farms and new power plants, and we have certainly made a significant enough investment to help meet the initial requirements of the near decade old RET. The interesting thing is that we are now talking about the new RET target, which, unless something has changed in the last hour, has not yet been finalised. Why has it not been finalised? Who is stalling this process? The last time I checked, we were not stalling it. Do not forget it is a federal government initiative, not a state initiative, binding all states at a national level. The last time I checked, it was the opposition's federal colleagues who were playing games with the RE target. The opposition's colleagues are stalling and mucking around, preventing it from being finalised. I think it is a bit rich for members opposite to come into this place, stand on their feet and try to condemn us. Maybe they should get on their phones, instead of surfing the net, call their friend Bill Shorten and condemn the federal Labor opposition for failing to plan for the RET. At the moment, we still have no clear direction on where the RET is going to land in the future. Western Australia will be ready for the final stages of the RET if and when the Labor opposition finally stops opposing it, moves forward with a sensible plan and sets it down in law. We will be ready for it.

People in this state use renewable energy in diverse circumstances. To the credit of the member for Gosnells, he gave some examples of this. In fact, he started the discussion by talking about rooftop solar panels. As I said, the motion refers to the entire energy portfolio. Let us talk about rooftop solar panels. As we have heard from the member for Gosnells, there are now approximately 450 megawatts of rooftop solar panels installed throughout the south west interconnected system. Why is that? It is because this government has funded the residential feed-in tariff scheme and the renewable energy buyback scheme. This was a phenomenal investment that has seen prices of this technology come down.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

Mr M.P. Murray interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Collie–Preston!

Mr J. NORBERGER: There has been huge investment in that technology. As I doorknock around my electorate, I am amazed and delighted to see more and more homes with rooftop solar panels. It is generally not hard to spot them. In fact, if I cannot already see the panels on the roof, normally by the time I get to the front door I can see that second little juncture box—call it what you will. Even as a humble backbencher from Joondalup, it is fairly easy to make a bit of an analogy by saying that there are more and more homes in my electorate with rooftop solar panels. They are not necessarily the homes of well-off people. We have heard the argument from members opposite that this scheme benefits only the really wealthy people, and all the not-so-well-off people will be subsidising it. Can I say that that is absolute rubbish. I like to consider that the electorate of Joondalup is very aspirational. People might say that some suburbs are a bit wealthier or well-off, and other suburbs are really middle of the range, hardworking and tradie-oriented, with young families who are neither rich nor poor; they are what we would call middle-class Western Australians. It is those very suburbs—Heathridge, Beldon, Craigie and Edgewater—that have seen a phenomenal take-up of solar energy. Why is that? It is because this government has supported it, and we have supported it generously. I wonder whether members opposite are suggesting that we should not have done that. Now it is all quiet—all quiet on the Western Front.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: We are just so bored by your speech.

Mr J. NORBERGER: I am glad. It is fine—I aim to please.

Moving on, it is quite interesting. We have heard the member for Cannington get on his high horse and ask how we even dared to consider purchasing renewable energy from the eastern states. I need to dissect that for a moment.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs M.H. Roberts interjected.

Mr J. NORBERGER: The member opposite just told me how glad she was to be listening to me. I do not want to disappoint her. As I said before, the member for Cannington has a particular skill in that he takes the truth and dilutes it and changes and morphs it a little to sound intelligent to progress an argument. It does not generally stand up to much scrutiny. However, the member for Cannington referred to one element that is true: states are able, if they want, to purchase renewable energy certificates and energy from the eastern states. He is right about that because this is a national scheme. The whole idea is that as long as a state meets its target, how it achieves that target is up to the state. I will give him that much credit, but then he gets onto his high horse. In fact, half of his motion assumes that that is exactly what we will do in Western Australia and that we will have no investment at all in large-scale renewable energy. Somewhere along the line he is of the opinion that we will buy all of our renewable energy certificates or energy from over east. I would love to see that policy paper or whether the member has anything to back up that claim. I certainly have not heard about that and the Minister for Energy is shaking his head. Just because we can do it does not mean we will. However, it will not stop members opposite from moving a motion on it and rabbiting on.

The reality is that even in the area of large-scale renewable energy this side of the house is more than happy to stand on its record. We do not have to look too far to find some amazing investments in large-scale renewable energy projects that have already occurred under this government. We have underwritten the success of the \$750 million, 206-megawatt Collgar wind farm in Merredin, which supplies renewable energy into the south west interconnected system. Synergy has directly invested \$40 million to build the 14-megawatt Grasmere wind farm in Albany, which was completed in 2011. They are large-scale renewable energy projects that have been successfully delivered. Synergy has also successfully entered into joint ventures to build the \$50 million, 10-megawatt Greenough River solar farm and the \$200 million, 50-megawatt Mumbida wind farm, both of which are located south-east of Geraldton and were completed in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The Greenough River solar farm was made possible through a \$10 million injection of capital from the royalties for regions program, another great example of wise use of the royalties for regions programs. We believe that the royalties for regions program has the potential to be a lead funding stream for renewable and off-the-grid future energy solutions. That is just an example of some of the projects that have already been undertaken. As we speak Western Power is working actively to look at new investment opportunities and other projects that will be viable. However, we are waiting to have a properly defined set of the goal posts from the national renewable energy target scheme. As soon as members opposite have finished asking Bill Shorten to get on with agreeing on what that will be, the sooner we can see what best technology will be implemented to achieve that.

I will leave it now to the Minister for Energy and other backbenchers who might want to talk more about that, but I thought I would share those few words with members. It is a ludicrous motion to bring before the house,

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

but we are always up for a bit of a debate, especially when it is quite shallow and it does not take too long to find the cracks in the argument. Thank you.

DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Minister for Energy) [5.23 pm]: I would like to have a brief discussion on this motion. Firstly, the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target scheme has been in existence for a long time. The LRET was an initiative of the Howard government all those years ago, and has led to the creation of a large increase in large-scale renewables and a parallel scheme for small-scale renewables, which is also very successful. This government is very committed to that scheme. The RET scheme has been under review for some time. Synergy and the Water Corporation are major users or facilitators of renewables, as are all retailers, including Alinta Energy. They are all required to support, according to their retail sales, a certain amount of renewables as defined under the relevant acts. We have met our requirement to date largely and exclusively through local investment in large-scale renewables. Again, the member for Joondalup outlined a large number of those. In fact, we have been working on expanding the Greenough River solar farm for some time. There is uncertainty around that expansion because of uncertainty with the RET scheme. I understand that the major parties in Canberra are still negotiating. There is no clarity to the aggregate target, the timing of it, and what is defined as “renewable energy”. Until those are clarified, and we hoped that they would be clarified by now, it is hard to commit hundreds of millions of dollars to expansion, especially since most of these projects are facilitated through private-sector investments. I understand that they were coming to a deal of some sort, but the federal Labor Party has pulled out—this is what I read in the paper—over disagreements on what is renewable energy. The Liberal government supports the use of wood waste products as a renewable energy source, and it seems to me to be one. Wood is renewable, and if it were used as a renewable energy source it would help to remove flammable material from the native forests. It would help to add income to those who manage native forests, and it has some attributes that other types of renewables do not have generally. First, it is a baseload generator, 24 hours a day. It is steady, whereas wind and solar energies are intermittent. To some extent that could be overcome in the future with batteries, but the energy varies over a day and over shorter periods. Importantly, using wood as a renewable energy source has a high level of local content whereas with wind and solar energy, the cells and the structures involved in their use are largely purchased offshore. The levels of local content are very low, particularly for wind. I will give members an example. The only local content for the Mumbida wind farm is the civil works and the construction, whereas the monitoring of the wind facility is done in Germany. If something is wrong, the monitors get a hold of Synergy, which manages the facility, and Synergy sends somebody to repair it. One of the problems with wind farms in particular, but also solar farms, is the very low level of local content. However, the proposal to use wood as a renewable baseload generating source of energy depends almost entirely on local content and that would be seem to be the preferable option. I have no idea why the federal Labor Party is against that. In the past, WA Labor has supported, particularly in the south west, some proposals to use waste wood from the native forest as a fuel source. I do not know why it is not supporting it now, but that is what is holding things up. There is also a growing potential for waste energy; I do not know what Labor’s position is on this. Instead of putting the household municipal waste and other waste such as plastics, green waste and tyres into landfill, they are put into high-temperature incinerators that generate energy. To my knowledge, at least five of these are being proposed around Western Australia. Under the existing rules they are also in part but not fully defined as renewable energy and have a huge potential in this state to provide renewable baseload energy for the system. We support that proposal.

I do not know where this idea that we are against the RET scheme or not fulfilling our requirements or not planning for it comes from. Synergy definitely supports the scheme and has been leading the way, as it should be because it is the dominant retailer. The RET scheme is not a state-based scheme; it is a national scheme. On the eastern seaboard, where there is an integrated system, a very large proportion of the total investment has taken place in South Australia and Tasmania because they have the best wind resources. Last time I looked, South Australia had over 1 200 megawatts of installed wind capacity. The requirement is to facilitate the 2020 target—if that is still the target—and it has been done in a whole range of places. All the retailers have to do is to support it in some way; the location is not specific. The purpose of the renewable energy target is to reduce the carbon footprint of our electricity generation. It does not matter where that generation is. It is fully open for Synergy and the Water Corporation to buy certificates for interstate plants. So far we have not and nor have we indicated that we will; we have facilitated local plants. My guess is that that is what we will do in the future, particularly with baseload plants—that is, wood and municipal waste to energy will probably be our target—but until we know something about the scheme, we will wait. Hopefully the federal Labor Party will sit down and resolve this and include baseload renewables in the proposal and then we will make some decisions. We are not running away from it, and hopefully the Greenough Solar Wind Farm is ready to go as soon as there is some clarity to the RET scheme. As soon as there is clarity to the RET scheme, we are ready to go with our joint venture partner. We are also doing other things.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

My view is quite clear that photovoltaic rooftop solar is the way of the future. We have a large-scale RET scheme because it costs. Most large-scale renewable energy generating facilities cost more than the alternatives such as gas and coal. That is why we need a target and regulations to force people to invest, otherwise they would not. We are talking about adopting a scheme that will impose higher costs on Western Australia. Just like the eastern seaboard, Western Australia has excess capacity of all types of energy but it is even worse here. We do not need any other generating capacity no matter what. We are paying for it, especially if Synergy buys it under a take-and-pay contract. We got lumbered with a whole range of contracts. But if the RET scheme provides that we have to, we will have to and we will do it. We have a very active program of renewable energy buyback of photovoltaic rooftop solar energy that is about 6c to 7c per kilowatt hour. The government's policy is doing nothing but facilitating the installation of that type of energy on rooftops. I see a day not too far away when we will see the expansion of solar cells outside households to small and large businesses. It is already happening. Whether we have a scheme to promote that is yet to be determined. My view is that we do not need it; it is commercially viable now, especially with the introduction of battery technology. Going forward, we can see the need for no generating capacity other than photovoltaic rooftop solar and perhaps backup with gas to support the variation.

Mr A.P. Jacob: It needs to be baseload.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It needs to be baseload and quick start.

We support the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target and have met our requirements to date with local investments. Our plan is to continue with that. We want to focus on baseload renewable energy but we cannot until we get some clarity on that. We ask the federal Labor Party to get its act into gear and make a decision so that we can act accordingly; Synergy is ready to go. The arguments that we are against the RET scheme and have not supported it or planned ahead are just rubbish.

I might add that we invested in the midwest transmission line, which is the largest investment in a transmission facility in Australia in 25 years. It was funded by the Western Australian government to expand to the Karara project, but primarily the justification to the regulator was that it was to open the midwest to wind farms. To say that we have not invested in renewable energy is just ridiculous. In fact, I went and opened it the other day. Again, it is an investment pushing \$500 million to primarily open up the area to wind farms. It has already attached funding to some but Labor Party members say that we are doing nothing.

Mr R.S. Love: It is a great investment.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: It is a great investment.

Why are we debating this issue today? Opposition members are completely wrong on every point they have raised.

Let me make a couple of comments about rooftop solar energy. That is a policy area we have to focus on. It is at a very low price and getting highly competitive. One can easily see that within a few years we will go from generating 450 megawatts to 1 000 megawatts. Put together, it will be easy to have large generating units. That is good news. It is a pretty low price. But we will still need other sources of fuel, including coal, for the foreseeable future. Members on this side of the chamber know that and support the continuation of Collie using its coal resources as a major source of energy into the future. I know the member for Collie–Preston's view on this; I do not have to ask for it. That is a given. I am puzzled that the Conservation Council of Western Australia and the Deputy Mayor of Bunbury have called together a group of conservationists, local people and trade unions at trades hall to discuss a strategy to shut down the coal industry in Collie and to employ the then unemployed coal workers in a major program of revitalising the coal pits. Does the member for Collie–Preston support this?

Mr M.P. Murray: You do not really want me to answer that.

Dr M.D. NAHAN: As I said, I really do not need to ask the member for Collie–Preston.

This is being led by Mr Verstegen who, if I remember correctly, was the advisor to successive Labor Ministers for the Environment. He now runs the organisation that the member for Gosnells used to run. His idea is that the miners would shut down the mines, and they would be employed to fill in the holes and undertake mine rehabilitation. We are going to fire them and tell them to fill up the pits. Does the member for Collie–Preston support this? Mr Verstegen is calling together trade union leaders, traditional owners and environmentalists to meet at trades hall. At least we do not participate in this silliness. The Collie coalfields provide low-cost valuable energy to this state that we will need for a long time. There are some problems in the coalfields, particularly with efficiency and the ownership structures of some of the current owners of the coalfields, which we will work through, but Collie has a long future as a low-cost baseload provider of coal-fired electricity in this state, and we

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

on this side of the chamber are committed to it. I am concerned that some members on the other side of the chamber are not. I would like to hear from them.

We are committed to reducing the cost of electricity in the state and the subsidies paid to electricity consumers so that we have full retail contestability and choice. We are committed to the renewable energy target, particularly small-scale renewable energy, such as photovoltaics, which is the future of the state. We are committed to the coalfields and fixing the mess that we inherited from the Labor Party. I thank the member for Cannington for the chance to say all this today. It was a great contribution to the debate.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington) [5.37 pm] — in reply: We know when the minister knows he has been found out when he does not repudiate his comments. The facts are that the minister went to the 2013 Energy in Western Australia Conference and said that his plan to deal with the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target was to buy renewable energy certificates from South Australia. His plan is to give away Western Australian taxpayers' money to build private investments in South Australia that will provide low-cost electricity to South Australians. That is his plan to deal with the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target. The fact that the minister will not address that harebrained scheme he has developed—that only he could come up with—is why Western Australia's energy system is in the mess it is in.

I would like to address the member for Joondalup. He was six minutes into his presentation before he actually discussed the question of the energy system in Western Australia. Then he did something that he was obviously told to do —

Mr J. Norberger interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Member for Joondalup!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: He was six minutes into his contribution to the debate before he mentioned anything about the electricity system. I am happy for him, and I am pleased that he is going to get his name in *Hansard*, because it happens so very rarely. But it took him six minutes to get to anything about the issue of energy in this state. Then what did he say? He said that we should look at the midyear review. Well, I will tell the member: go and have a look at the midyear review. What it shows is that the subsidy to the electricity system in Western Australia has gone up, not down. It has gone up since this government has been in office. The member talked about \$1.8 billion over four years. Yes, as the member said, \$1.8 billion over four years—that is the subsidy of the current government. As the member said, \$60 million was the subsidy when we were in government, and it is \$1.8 billion when his government is in power. That is really, really good work, member, in pointing out what a disaster it has been since the government changed.

Mr J. Norberger interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup, I am just giving you one warning. If you are going to keep interrupting, I will call you.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is always best to know what we are talking about, rather than just read the minister's notes. We have to actually understand the notes that are in front of us before we —

Mr J. Norberger: Rubbish!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The members says, "Rubbish!" It is okay not to understand them! It is okay for the member for Joondalup not to understand the notes that are given to him by the minister's advisers. That is what the backbench bot across there —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members on my right, I want to hear the member for Cannington.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me! I am the Acting Speaker. I call you for the first time, member for Albany, and I call you, member for Forrestfield, for the first time as well.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is always entertaining. It takes a long time, but occasionally the backbench bots get up and speak. They come in here with their notes carefully prepared by somebody else. But they do not know what they mean. So, they get up and they read the notes, like the member for Joondalup did in this debate. He got up and read the notes provided to him.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members! Member for Swan Hills, I call you for the first time. Member for Joondalup, I call you for the first time. Member for West Swan, I call you for the second time; sorry, Swan Hills.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: So, that is what we get. As I say, the member for Joondalup got it wrong when he said there was a \$1.8 billion subsidy.

Point of Order

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Mr Acting Speaker, I did not actually hear you correct your call, but the member for West Swan is not in the chamber, so I fail to see how —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): No. I said Swan Hills, I thought; but I have corrected that. Thank you very much.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: An amount of \$1.8 billion was the subsidy paid to the system by the current government. The \$60 million that the member referred to was the subsidy paid by the former government. The subsidy to the electricity system has gone up, not down, since 2008. If members opposite would prefer to do their own research and look at the budget papers, that might be helpful to you, Mr Acting Speaker, when you are listening to their speeches, because then you would know that they are actually telling you what is in the budget papers rather than telling you what is the notes given to them by the minister's adviser. That would be helpful to you, Mr Acting Speaker, I am sure, because the quality of the debate from the Liberal Party backbench would increase.

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills!

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: You are on two calls, member for Swan Hills. You are going close.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We have to face the facts here. In respect of the large renewable energy scheme in Western Australia, the government has done nothing. At every occasion that I have asked the minister to let me know of his plan, he has refused to provide a plan. The minister went to the 2013 Energy in Western Australia Conference and said his plan is to buy these certificates —

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am always amused by the member for Forrestfield. He is a very amusing person, and we always get very entertained by his interjections. They are always so clever—so clever. It is always such entertainment, the great contributions that the member for Forrestfield makes. I am always entertained by them.

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member the Forrestfield, I call you for the second time. I want to hear this in silence, members.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The government has some obligations here. The minister has the audacity to come into the chamber and say he is waiting for the federal Labor Party to make a decision before he implements a policy. What audacity! Think about that, Mr Acting Speaker. We have a federal Liberal government in Australia, and a state Liberal government in Western Australia, but the minister does not make a decision on policy because he has not heard from the Labor Party! Let me make something clear: the Labor Party had a very clear position on the renewable energy target. It was a position endorsed by the Premier of Western Australia, who is currently in the chamber, and that was for 41 000 gigawatt hours of renewable energy to be part of the large renewable energy target. That policy, which the Premier endorsed at the Council of Australian Governments' meeting in April 2009, is currently the law of Australia, and that is the target that the minister should be planning for.

It is well known that there have been discussions between the federal Liberal government and the federal Labor opposition to reduce that 41 000 gigawatt hour target to 32 000 gigawatt hours. And, yes, everybody has heard about these matters of detail that are still being discussed. But the facts are that today, the target is 41 000 gigawatt hours and, as I say, the federal rule that the minister must apply is 41 000 gigawatt hours.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The minister's defence is that because he cannot plan for 32 000 gigawatt hours, he will not plan for 41 000.

Ms M.M. Quirk: Do your job!

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

The ACTING SPEAKER: I do not know who that was referring to. If it was me—if that is the case—I call you for the first time. I know my job. Member for Albany, I did miscall you; you were in fact called twice. Member for Girrawheen, you are on three calls now.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I must say, Mr Acting Speaker, I have not invited any interjections, and I do not understand why there are so many interjections from the Liberal side.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr M.H. Taylor interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Bateman, I was on my feet when I heard that call about dishonest. I will not have that. I call you for the first time.

Withdrawal of Remark

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Mr Acting Speaker, before I resume my speech, are you going to ask him to withdraw?

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Yes, I will ask him to withdraw.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, I am on my feet. I understand the laws, but with regard to the “dishonest”, I realise that it could be a fine line, but as far as I am concerned it was a comment that was not necessary to be made, and that is the reason I called you for that comment, and I would like it to be withdrawn.

Mr M.H. TAYLOR: I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The dishonesty displayed by the Liberal Party is unbelievable in this matter.

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am complying with the standing orders, Mr Acting Speaker.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Yes.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If the dishonesty of the Liberal Party in this matter is a problem to the Liberal Party backbench, that is not my problem. I am not here to cater to the prejudices of the Liberal backbench. I am here to stand up for the interests of the taxpayers of this state, because these incompetent fools on the other side of the chamber are allowing the minister to get away with —

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Member, “incompetent fools” is out of order.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I withdraw.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The Liberal Party’s lack of leadership in this matter is causing every Western Australian to lose money. Money will be taken out of Western Australia and given to South Australia because of the decision —

Mr S.K. L'Estrange: How much?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Probably around \$50 million a year, member for Churchlands. The member can calculate that himself if he wants to. The figures are publicly available.

Mr J. Norberger interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup, I call you for the second time. The member for Cannington did take that interjection but I —

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: From the member for Churchlands, yes.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: This is about competence. We know that the Premier of Western Australia is the most unpopular Premier in the history of the country. There has never been a Premier in this —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members —

Mr N.W. Morton interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Forrestfield, I call you for the third time. I will confirm that with the Clerk. You are now on three calls.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: We know that the Premier is the most unpopular Premier in the state's history —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you for the first time.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: There has never been a Premier in Australia's history that has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition in six consecutive Newspolls to the question of preferred Premier. The Liberal Party tell us how unpopular —

Point of Order

Dr A.D. BUTI: The position is generally taken that if the member on their feet is not engaging in interjections, the Acting Speaker will call the interjector. There are constant interjections from the government side. They may not like what the member for Cannington is saying, but that has never been a licence to interject. I wonder whether the Acting Speaker might seek to conform with what has been the usual practice in regard to protecting the member.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: The member for Cannington is not speaking to the motion.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Yes, I am.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: He should be directed back to the motion.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): Members, I will speak to this and I will tell you why. Members on my left, as rowdy as you may think the members to my right are, they are not half as rowdy as the members on my left are when someone is speaking. I am doing my best to protect him as much as I can. There have already been nine calls made of government members. I am doing my best to protect the member on his feet. I would appreciate it if members on my right kept quiet until the member for Cannington finishes. Thank you.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: On a different point of order: when the member for Armadale was on his feet making a point of order, there was a clear interjection from the Minister for Transport. The Acting Speaker ignored that at the time; perhaps he was —

Dr A.D. Buti: It was the member for Churchlands.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: Excuse me, Minister for Transport—it was the member for Churchlands. I heard it coming from that direction. But it was a clear and loud comment made whilst the member for Armadale was making his point of order. That has generally been deemed unruly by the Speaker or those acting on the Speaker's behalf. I ask the Acting Speaker to call to order the member for Churchlands, if he is to be consistent with the rulings.

Mr V.A. CATANIA: If that is the case, the member for Girrawheen should be called to order for her constant interjections throughout this debate.

Mrs M.H. Roberts: That is the point—she has been called to order.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members in the house! Member for Cannington.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As I was saying, it is probably the incompetence that is demonstrated in the management of the electricity sector that has contributed to the fact that the Premier of Western Australia has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition for six straight Newspolls.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I am going to bring you back.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The debate we are having today is on the motion that I moved condemning the Minister for Energy for his failure to properly manage his portfolio.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am making the point that that failure to properly manage the energy portfolio —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine, I call you for the second time.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is probably contributing to the fact that the Premier has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition for six —

Mr V.A. Catania: You don't have a mirror in your house, do you?

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for North West Central —

Dr A.D. Buti: You certainly don't, you rat!

Withdrawal of Remark

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Mr Speaker —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Did you call him a rat?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I withdraw. We all know the truth.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I call you as well, member for Armadale, for the second time. Member for North West Central, I call you for the first time.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As I was saying, we are debating that this house condemns the Minister for Energy. I make the point that it is probably contributing to the fact that the Premier of Western Australia has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition for six straight Newspolls. That is unprecedented in Australia's history.

Mr P.T. Miles interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Excuse me, members. Thank you.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As I was trying to say before I was so rudely interrupted from the other side of the chamber, this motion states that this house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures, and then it goes on. I am making the observation that those failures in the energy portfolio have probably contributed to the fact that the Premier of Western Australia has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition on the question of preferred Premier in Newspolls on six consecutive occasions.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr F.A. Alban interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Swan Hills!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As I was saying before I was interrupted, we are debating the issue that this house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures et cetera. I was making the observation before I was interrupted—I am trying to complete my observation before I am interrupted again—these failures in the energy portfolio have probably contributed to the fact that the Premier of Western Australia has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition on six occasions in Newspolls on the question of who Western Australians prefer as Premier. I make the observation that that is unprecedented in Australia's history. A Premier has never rated six times in consecutive polls as being —

Mr A. Krsticevic interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P.T. Miles: It was not me, Mr Acting Speaker.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is now!

I do not understand why I am not allowed to complete this observation. I will have to start again.

Mr J. Norberger: Start it again; I missed the beginning!

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Joondalup!

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am clearly not seeking any interjections from the other side of the house. I am trying to explain what I think is an important issue. As I was trying to explain, we are debating the question that is before us now and I make the observation that the Minister for Energy's failures in the energy portfolio have probably contributed to the fact that the current Premier has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition for six consecutive Newspolls. I was making the observation that that is unprecedented in the history of Australia. A Premier has never rated behind the Leader of the Opposition six times.

Point of Order

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: My point of order relates to relevance.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr I.M. Britza): The member for Cannington is making the point about relevance. There is no point of order at the moment.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: As I was trying to explain before I was interrupted by that point of order, we are debating that this house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures et cetera.

Mrs G.J. Godfrey interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I have not asked for any interjection, member for Belmont.

As I was trying to explain, we are debating the issue that this house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures et cetera. As I was explaining, I think that those failures have contributed to the fact that the current Premier has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition on the question of who is the preferred Premier in Western Australia on six consecutive occasions in Newspolls. That has never happened before —

Point of Order

Mrs G.J. GODFREY: This is about the sixth or seventh time he has said that. It is becoming very repetitive. I would ask that the member for Cannington come back to the motion.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: On the point of order —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker): No, that is not a point of order, thank you very much. Member, that is not a point of order. Member for Cannington, would you continue the debate, and just in relation to your motion.

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: The member for Belmont, as you gave your point of order, mumbled that, "Yes, it was repetition", and then when you further gave your point of order, she answered you back yet again —

Mrs G.J. Godfrey: I am not a "she".

Mrs M.H. ROBERTS: — and she is now interjecting while someone on their feet is making a point of order. Perhaps, being a new member, she is not aware that it is against the standing orders to canvass the Chair's ruling. I think if she continues to either interrupt people who are on their feet giving a point of order or continues to canvass your ruling, she is the one who needs calling to order.

Mrs G.J. Godfrey: Standing order 97.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Belmont, I call you for the first time.

Mr S.K. L'ESTRANGE: I concur with the member for Midland's point about trying to get the Chair to make a certain decision in a certain way, because that is exactly what the member for Midland is trying to get you to do now.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member, that is not a point of order. Would everyone just calm down and stop the interjections across the chamber. The member for Cannington has 30 minutes left of his debate to run and it is going to be very tedious if you keep standing and interjecting for the next half-hour. Please let the member for Cannington continue his speech. Member, address the Chair, as you always do.

Several members interjected.

Debate Resumed

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: If I can complete what I am saying without interruption, then maybe we can have a vote on this issue.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Try—go!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The only thing that prevents me from completing my comments, of course, is the interjections from the Liberal Party backbench, so I will do my best to complete my comments.

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey

We are debating the issue —

This house condemns the Minister for Energy for his continuing failures in managing his portfolio that have cost Western Australian taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars more, particularly due to his dereliction of duty to plan for the Large-scale Renewable Energy Target.

In considering which way we vote on that motion, I make the observation that I believe that the Minister for Energy's failures in his portfolio are contributing to the fact that the Premier is the most unpopular Premier in the history of Australia. I was trying to make the observation that in six consecutive Newspoll surveys —

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I was interrupted again! I will have to start again. I am sorry.

I make the point that the failings of the Minister for Energy probably contribute to the fact that the Premier of Western Australia is the most unpopular Premier in the history of our state. He has rated behind the Leader of the Opposition six times in Newspolls, which is unprecedented in Australia's history. Nowhere else in the country have we ever had a Premier who rated behind the opposition leader six times in consecutive Newspoll surveys. So that is the unpopularity of the Premier. I believe that unpopularity is being contributed to —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Carine, would you like to leave the chamber if you have a bad cough, because Hansard is not able to hear over your coughing? That would be so you can leave the chamber and sort that out. No more of this. No more of this.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Honestly, I think there is better behaviour in the schoolyard on a Friday afternoon. All of you, get a hold of yourselves. This is Parliament; this is a debate.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Thank you very much, Acting Speaker.

That is why I think it is important. I know that this is not something the other side of politics agrees with, but I think it is important that we try to save money for taxpayers and that we do not give money away to South Australia. The fact that the minister and the only Liberal who contributed to this debate would not address the question about why the minister's plan is to give money to South Australia is just another reason for the minister to be condemned.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Lisa Baker) casting her vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Ayes (17)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr D.J. Kelly	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr F.M. Logan	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr D.A. Templeman (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr M. McGowan	Ms R. Saffioti	
Ms J.M. Freeman	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mr C.J. Tallentire	
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr M.P. Murray	Mr P.B. Watson	

Noes (32)

Mr F.A. Alban	Ms W.M. Duncan	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Dr M.D. Nahan
Mr C.J. Barnett	Ms E. Evangel	Mr R.S. Love	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr J. Norberger
Mr I.M. Britza	Mrs G.J. Godfrey	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr V.A. Catania	Mr B.J. Grylls	Ms L. Mettam	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr M.J. Cowper	Mr C.D. Hatton	Mr P.T. Miles	Mr M.H. Taylor
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr A.P. Jacob	Ms A.R. Mitchell	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr J.H.D. Day	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mr N.W. Morton	Mr A. Krsticevic (<i>Teller</i>)

Pairs

Ms J. Farrer	Mr G.M. Castrilli
Mr P.C. Tinley	Dr K.D. Hames
Mr P. Papalia	Mrs L.M. Harvey
Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr R.F. Johnson

Question thus negatived.

Extract from *Hansard*

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 13 May 2015]

p3636b-3656a

Mr Bill Johnston; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Jan Norberger; Acting Speaker; Dr Mike Nahan; Mrs Michelle Roberts; Mr Matt Taylor; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Vincent Catania; Mr Sean L'Estrange; Mrs Glenys Godfrey
