

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, REDUCTION

Motion

HON JIM SCOTT (South Metropolitan) [2.00 pm]: I move -

That this House -

- (1) Consider the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- (2) Support any proposal or international agreement to limit or prevent the detrimental effects of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

In moving this motion, I should explain to the House that I tabled a motion yesterday, which was what I intended to move today. I discovered that, due to the changes in standing orders, a member can no longer debate a motion during time for non-official business for which notice has previously been given. As such, the wording of my motion has changed. However, the reality is that it is the same either way. We have before us the issue that is considered by all serious commentators to be the most important issue facing the world and this State today.

The spur to raising this debate was a number of new reports that have come to light recently that examine the worsening situation we face concerning greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. In addition, a further report prepared by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation shows that the rise in CO₂ levels caused by human intervention is growing at a much faster than expected rate. This is an extremely worrying issue because many greenhouse sceptics have said that the rises are due to natural events such as higher sun activity etc. Scientists have known for a long time that CO₂ causes climate warming. The excuses that people have given in the past include volcanic action and bushfires; that is, activities not attributable to human intervention. This latest information shows that the very fast rise in levels is almost entirely due to emissions caused by the burning of fossil fuels. We must deal with the issue. The report prepared on behalf of the Pentagon in the United States that analysed the impacts of the rise in levels of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change had some very startling things to say. They are startling considering they come from that particular body and the tack that the United States Administration has taken in recent years in refusing to sign the Kyoto Protocol.

Hon Peter Foss: It is not clear from the document what its origin is.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Is the member referring to the one I tabled yesterday?

Hon Peter Foss: Yes. The one you called the Pentagon report. I have looked right through it and I cannot see -

Hon JIM SCOTT: It was produced by Peter Schwartz and Doug Randall. It looked at scenarios -

Hon Peter Foss: Yes, it appears a hypothetical type of report.

Hon JIM SCOTT: That is right. They were looking at the likely impacts of abrupt climate change.

Hon Peter Foss: Not the likely impacts.

Hon JIM SCOTT: In the report they were not looking at the impact of gradual climate change that we now see, but an abrupt change to climate because of the movement of the world's ocean currents. Quite some time back, some people conducted comprehensive studies of the Canary Islands current and the Gulf Stream.

Hon Peter Foss: They are not suggesting it would happen.

Hon JIM SCOTT: They are suggesting very much that it could happen.

Hon Peter Foss: No, they are not.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Indeed, they are.

Hon Kim Chance: As I understand it, it is predicting abrupt climate changes.

Hon Peter Foss: It is not predicting anything. It is saying that if it did happen, what the consequences would be.

Hon Kim Chance: No. I think it is more definite than that.

Hon JIM SCOTT: The impact of the change in the directions of the currents would result in climate change. It would not make the climate in the northern hemisphere hotter. In fact, it would freeze a large part of the northern hemisphere. There were predictions that England would end up -

Hon Peter Foss: It is not a scientific prediction. It is saying that if it were to happen, they, as strategists, think something might be the outcome. It is not a scientific document; it is a strategic document.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Yes, it is a strategic document based on scientific studies that have already been conducted by other people.

Hon Peter Foss: It is not based on anything; it is a supposition. It is a hypothetical.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I think perhaps that the member can have his say afterwards.

Very comprehensive studies have been conducted of the Gulf Stream and the Canary Islands current, on which this scenario is based. It is based on the switching of those currents and causing abrupt change to climate. That abrupt change would have a very severe effect. The sorts of effects they talked about included millions of lives lost in wars and natural disasters. They talked about the planet being brought to the edge of anarchy as a result of countries fighting to get more territory to grow food, obtain sufficient water supplies and, equally, getting greater energy supplies. For instance, China was looked at as having a significant need for additional food and energy because of its population. China would have a terrible time. Some of the worst disasters would occur in low-lying areas of the world such as Bangladesh and a lot of the Pacific Islands to the north of Australia. They would be completely inundated. We have already seen that Kiribati has lost its ability to produce any agriculture or have proper water supplies because of its problems with inundation. The Pentagon report, which Hon Peter Foss says is a supposition, states that an impending scenario of a catastrophic climate change is plausible.

Hon Peter Foss: Did you read the first paragraph?

Hon JIM SCOTT: Yes, I read the whole of it.

Hon Peter Foss: You seem to have forgotten the first paragraph.

Hon JIM SCOTT: It refers to a scenario; there are a number of scenarios in which these things could happen.

Hon Peter Foss: Yes, it is a scenario. You can have many sorts of scenarios. I could posit Krakatoa blowing up again. That could happen. It is probably more likely than this scenario.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Hon Peter Foss may think it is more plausible.

Hon Peter Foss: I think Krakatoa blowing up is quite plausible.

Hon JIM SCOTT: It is obvious that the Liberal Party wants to keep its head in the sand and pretend this is not happening. The Liberal Party should come on board in this debate and tell us its position.

Hon Peter Foss: I made it quite clear what our position is.

Hon JIM SCOTT: The federal Liberal Party does not want to sign the Kyoto agreement. Let us hear what the Liberal Party at the state level says.

Hon Peter Foss interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Jon Ford): Order, members! We are at risk of getting excited. Hon Jim Scott has the call.

Hon JIM SCOTT: Mr Deputy President, I want to hear today the position of the Liberal Party, because Hon Peter Foss is attacking these scenarios. Does the Liberal Party believe that climate change will happen? Does it want to do anything about it? If it believes it will happen, does it believe Australia should sign the Kyoto agreement?

Hon Peter Foss: No; I have told you why.

Hon JIM SCOTT: It is because the Liberal Party does not want to do anything at all.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Kate Doust): I ask Hon Jim Scott to address his comments to me. I am sure Hon Peter Foss will be afforded an opportunity to speak when Hon Jim Scott has ceased his comments.

Hon Peter Foss: Madam Deputy President, I do apologise. It is just that he kept addressing me and I found it rather hard to resist.

Hon JIM SCOTT: I believe the federal Labor Party will move to sign the Kyoto agreement, but I am not sure what the state Labor Party thinks about it. I do not know what the state Liberal Party thinks about it. The state Labor Party is sitting on the fence and saying that it will kind of support greenhouse amelioration if it will not hurt us too much and it may have some support for the Kyoto Protocol. That position of the Labor Party is fairly tepid; whereas from debate in this place it is clear that the Liberal Party does not want to deal with it at all. The Liberal Party does not believe that signing the Kyoto agreement will provide any help at all, even though the international panel on climate change is saying that more countries must sign the protocol because the world is going backwards fast in that the level of CO₂ emissions is exceeding any previous level. Many people do not realise that there is a 40-year lag between the level of greenhouse production and its effect on climate. The climate changes that we are currently experiencing come from the level of CO₂ produced 40 years ago. The climate changes already in train will be far worse in 40 years than those that we are currently experiencing. Western Australia has already seen a rapid loss in rainfall, significant economic losses and a major shift in biota moving south down the coast. There are now mud crabs in the south coast due to the movement south of

complete animal species. Fauna is able to move at that rate but, unfortunately, flora is unable to move fast enough to survive those climate changes.

Although Hon Peter Foss correctly pointed out that the Pentagon paper painted a scenario, many other papers indicate that it is not a scenario, that there has been a rapid increase in greenhouse gas emissions and that we are in dire need of taking real action on the most important issue that this planet has to deal with. The attitude of members opposite indicates that they are coming from a head in the sand position. All sorts of wonderful ideas have been put forward by both the current Labor Government and the previous Liberal Government for ameliorating greenhouse gas emissions in the State. However, in reality there is no chance of those ideas succeeding. It is a fact, not a scenario, that the measures we are currently taking and planning to take are not sufficient to avoid a global disaster. We must make a change. Although honourable members opposite may think that what I am saying is an exaggeration, in fact, it is not an exaggeration; definite changes are already occurring.

I will read from a report of Dr Paul Fraser of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, which is based on estimates and measurements taken in eastern Australia, the southern island state of Tasmania, Macquarie Island in the subantarctic and the Australian station in Antarctica in the South Pole. The report states that an increase in global greenhouse gas emissions over the past two years due almost entirely to the burning of fossil fuels has been recorded by Australian researchers. The figures show the biggest increase of the decade after a 223 billion tonne jump in 1998. The report further states that the government scientific research agency said much of that was attributed to massive bushfires in Indonesia. The CSIRO estimated that 18.7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas blamed for global warming, was released into the atmosphere in 2002 and 17.1 billion last year. In only one year, a huge amount of gas was released into the atmosphere. The report further states that the figures compared with a 10-year average growth of atmospheric CO₂ of 13.3 billion tonnes. The chief research scientist at the CSIRO's atmospheric division, Dr Paul Fraser, said he was alarmed that the new jump in atmospheric CO₂ came despite global attempts to reduce these emissions. The results are concerning because carbon dioxide is the main driver of climate change and I am a little surprised that the level is so high without input from forest wildfire. Dr Fraser is clearly saying in that report that it is an unprecedented rise at a time when it is imperative that it be exactly the opposite. It makes the sort of scenario that Hon Peter Foss is concerned is extremely likely to occur, rather than unlikely to occur.

Let us look at some of the effects that the reports say are likely to occur if there is a change in ocean currents. The Pentagon report reads -

Europe. Hit hardest by the climatic change, average annual temperatures drop by 6 degrees Fahrenheit in under a decade, with more dramatic shifts along the Northwest coast. The climate in northwestern Europe is colder, drier, and windier, making it more like Siberia. Southern Europe experiences less of a change but still suffers from sharp intermittent cooling and rapid temperature shifts. Reduced precipitation causes soil loss to become a problem throughout Europe, contributing to food supply shortages. Europe struggles to stem emigration out of Scandinavian and northern European nations in search of warmth as well as immigration from the hard-hit countries in Africa and elsewhere.

The document then runs through the situation in the United States, in which there will be a fairly similar effect. It then outlines -

China. China, with its high need for food supply . . . is hit hard by a decreased reliability of the monsoon rains. Occasional monsoons during the summer season are welcomed for their precipitation . . .

Further, the Chinese section reads -

Widespread famine causes chaos and internal struggles as a cold and hungry China peers jealously across the Russian and western borders at energy resources.

Everyone is well aware of Bangladesh's low lying lands in relation to sea level. The document reads -

Bangladesh. Persistent typhoons and a higher sea level create storm surges that cause significant coastal erosion, making much of Bangladesh nearly uninhabitable. Further, the rising sea level contaminates fresh water supplies inland, creating a drinking water and humanitarian crisis. Massive emigration occurs, causing tension in China and India, which are struggling to manage the crisis inside their own boundaries.

The report continues until it reaches Australia, about which it states -

Australia. A major food exporter, Australia struggles to supply food around the globe, as its agriculture is not severely impacted by more subtle changes in its climate. But the large uncertainties about the Southern Hemisphere climate change make this benign conclusion suspect.

Western Australia is one of the most likely States to experience severe changes in terms of rainfall and higher temperatures. The result of climate change on this planet is that we are very likely to see massive conflict across the world in efforts by various nations to obtain sufficient food, water and energy supplies. The world will need a massive reduction in population to enable the continuation of human civilisation.

I have only touched on this issue. I very much want to hear the positions of the Liberal Party, One Nation, the National Party and the Labor Party on this matter. How serious are they about dealing with climate change, if, indeed, they believe that climate change will have any effect at all on our lives? I want to hear what members have to say. I note that scientific studies, like that in *New Scientist*, indicate that climate change is already killing 160 000 people a year on this planet. That is likely to be vastly exceeded in the next 30 to 50 years. Unless we do something now, and unless we do something about the record increases in human-produced carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, our children will not inherit a better world from us; in fact, they will inherit an impoverished disaster of a world that is at conflict from one end of the globe to the other. I commend the motion and ask members to treat it with seriousness, not in a glib way. This is a most serious issue.

HON PETER FOSS (East Metropolitan) [2.25 pm]: I am amazed that Hon Jim Scott has asked the Liberal Party to state its position on greenhouse gas. I am totally astounded. We had an almost identical motion some time ago to which I think I spoke for days pointing out the problems with the Kyoto Protocol.

Hon Jim Scott: What about pointing out what you will do about it?

Hon PETER FOSS: The member should just listen to me. He wants to know our view on the Kyoto Protocol. It is so riddled with holes that once it gets past high sentiment, it moves straight to self-interest. The problem we have as an emerging industrial nation is that the protocol is nicely set up to give benefits to countries such as America and those in Europe, which gain credit under the calculation for changing their old, inefficient industries, which created the problem in the first instance, to new, efficient industries. I have no problem with them making that change. However, Kyoto does not allow countries such as Australia that have not been highly industrialised to become industrialised. It does not allow countries that produce a clean fossil fuel, such as gas, to receive credit for that production. We are actually debited because we take it from under the ground and lose some greenhouse gas in the course of the process. We get a major debit, yet the people we sell it to get a credit!

Hon Kim Chance: The credit can be shared once there is Kyoto compliance.

Hon PETER FOSS: It can be shared. The fact that aspect is part of the protocol indicates that Kyoto is flawed.

I outline the biggest problem with Kyoto: who is producing most of the world's greenhouse gas? It is two nations.

Hon Jim Scott: Western Australia, per capita.

Hon PETER FOSS: Lovely one! Per capita has nothing to do with it! The example I gave previously was somebody who has a stomach tumour and puts on 100 kilograms and cuts his toenails to get his weight down. It does not matter what we use per capita, we are so insignificant that we do not count. There are four billion people producing greenhouse gas. What language do most people speak in this world? It is Chinese. The fact that most of us do not speak Chinese has nothing to do with it. I understand that Tan, or something like that, is the most common name in the world. It does not matter what we do.

Hon Jim Scott: Yes, it does.

Hon PETER FOSS: No, it does not if China and India are not involved at the same time. I spent days going over that point. The member then asks me my views about Kyoto. We will try to limit the length of debate because the House wants to get a measure passed. If Hon Jim Scott does not know my views on the matter, I suggest that rather than take the time of the House going over it again and telling members why the Kyoto Protocol is not only not very clever, but also has been written with the self-interest of Europe and America in mind, he should look at earlier debate. My mind boggles that Hon Jim Scott was not listening during that speech. I thought it was quite a good speech - lengthy, but reasonably to the point. Kyoto has become an icon and talisman. It does not do anything, but people like Hon Jim Scott like to wave it around. It was clear during that earlier debate that I was the only person who had actually read the document at that stage.

Hon Jim Scott: Rubbish!

Hon PETER FOSS: The member admitted it. I asked by way of interjection whether any Green members had read it, and the member had not.

Withdrawal of Remark

Hon JIM SCOTT: The member is misrepresenting the facts. I would like him to withdraw.

Hon PETER FOSS: If the member wants to make a personal explanation, I would be very happy -

Hon JIM SCOTT: The member opposite said that I had said something, and he attacked me for it. He said that somehow he thought I had said it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER FOSS: We will have to differ on that matter because I made a special point in the course of my speech to find out whether Hon Jim Scott had read this document. I asked people all round who had read all these things, and, as far as I could tell from the answers I got then, nobody had done so. It is one of those little icons. The Greens are the sort of people who need only to have people sign things; they do not have to read them. So long as they keep saying Kyoto Protocol, it means something. Some people out there actually read the Kyoto Protocol and worry about it, including the Australian Government. I am pleased the Australian Government actually reads the things we are supposed to sign, and questions the effect they will have on Australia. I do not have a problem with that. I would be very happy to have China and India sign up to the protocol, I hope in terms that would mean that we could have some impact on what would happen.

I am glad I interjected on Hon Jim Scott because I got him to admit that this wonderful document - tabled paper No 2106 - is not a scientific document, but a strategy document. One of the things the Pentagon does is work out what would happen if Russia were to drop every one of its hydrogen bombs on America, and America were to drop every one of its hydrogen bombs on Russia. The Pentagon works out what would happen if there were total world war. I hope that it would do so. The US army must plan for even the most ridiculous situation. It even has a plan for the Greens - that shows the extreme of ridiculousness planned for. The reality is that it does not matter to a strategist how improbable a plan is - it is part of the planning process. I will read what these non-scientists had to say about this matter. What is this document called? In a box right at the top of the page is the heading "Imagining the Unthinkable". They are some good words. In case that was not enough of a clue to anybody else, other than a Green, the document goes on to say -

The purpose of this report is to imagine the unthinkable - to push the boundaries of current research on climate change so we may better understand the potential implications on United States national security.

We have interviewed leading climate change scientists, conducted additional research, and reviewed several iterations of the scenario with these experts. The scientists support this project, but caution -

This is the part Hon Jim Scott did not read -

that the scenario depicted is extreme in two fundamental ways.

That is a fairly strong bit of wording. The document continues -

First, they suggest the occurrences we outline would most likely happen in a few regions, rather than on globally. Second, they say the magnitude of the event may be considerably smaller.

We have created a climate change scenario that although not the most likely, is plausible, and would challenge United States national security in ways that should be considered immediately.

I will give members another scenario - Krakatoa explodes. Is that plausible? It has happened before, why should it not happen again? I do not know how likely it is. It may not be the most likely thing, but it is certainly plausible. Another volcano could explode in the same way as Krakatoa, and I hope that somebody somewhere has planned for it. That is the sort of this planning these strategic thinkers are hired to do - to sit down and think how to respond to such an occurrence if it were to happen. People need to think through what would happen in the case of an unlikely event. I do not have a problem with people doing it; in fact I applaud the fact that they do it. Their job is to come up with hypothetical cases and to see what might be the consequences. We are starting off with a hypothetical case, and we then begin to hypothesise from that. Everything that follows is a hypothesis. It is not scientific fact; it is somebody's idea of the extreme case of what might happen. It is necessary to begin with extreme cases every time. I am sure the Deputy President (Hon Jon Ford) has been involved in emergency planning in offshore matters. The starting point is not what is most likely to happen, but the worst that can happen. It is called the worst case scenario. It is not unknown to planning; it is one of the things that needs to be done. If the response to the worst case scenario has not been worked out, it is very hard to work out what all the other possibilities will be. As it is a hypothesis built on a supposition and draws some ideas of what will happen in the future, the occurrence must be considered at best to be highly unlikely. It is done because it is a useful exercise. Questions can be asked about what would need to be done in the event of such an occurrence, and what is already there.

This document was not meant to allow Hon Jim Scott to scare the daylight out of people by saying that this is what will happen. However, that is the way he has been putting it forward. He began with a remote case, took a hypothesis that is pure supposition, and told us that that is what will happen tomorrow.

Hon Jim Scott: There is more than one document mentioned in the motion.

Hon PETER FOSS: I know there is, but I am just dealing with the one I asked Hon Jim Scott to deal with. I was very interested to hear how he dealt with it. He represented this report as being virtually the gospel. This possibility was about to happen.

Hon Robin Chapple: It is a scenario put forward for information.

Hon PETER FOSS: Of course it is a scenario.

Hon Jim Scott: I said that in my speech.

Hon PETER FOSS: Only when I pushed him into it. Hon Jim Scott could have made the most dreadful speech without any problems if I had not interjected on him. I saved him from transgressing the boundaries of credibility.

Hon Norman Moore: Look at the motion he tried to put up today - it says all these things are about to happen.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am not allowed to refer to that motion. I can refer to the Notice Paper, without anticipating, to see how he referred to it there. There is no point back-peddalling now and saying that it was only a scenario. He has said in the House that that is what we should be worried about. Who was the Greenpeace founder - was it Patrick Murphy or another - who went around explaining that Greenpeace had this wonderful system of going around frightening the daylights out of everybody because that is where the membership came from? Whenever membership dropped off a bit, they gave them another scare.

Hon Jim Scott: Do you think there is no problem with greenhouse gas and climate change?

Hon PETER FOSS: Hon Jim Scott has not been listening to me.

Hon Norman Moore: He has never listened in his life.

Hon PETER FOSS: No, because his mouth is based on rattling out the latest thing he has seen on television. What about that wonderful thing the other day? We were told that - horror of horrors - contrary to the common belief that forests are good at removing greenhouse gas, the rainforest in Queensland is actually producing it. What I love is that the Greens can hold these views simultaneously. We are told that we must plant many trees to get rid of greenhouse - I have that clear in my mind. If we now find that the rainforest in Queensland is producing greenhouse gas, it would seem that under those circumstances, if we were utterly consistent, we should go and cut it down before it does any more damage. That would be logical, but I do not expect logic from the Greens. If the Greens started to apply logic to things, they would cease to exist. One of the beautiful things about being green is that they have this capacity to dabble and take little scientific facts from here, there and everywhere and use them as they wish. They do not have to be consistent, because it is like a religion; that is, it is all right so long as they believe it at the moment they are saying it. Religion frequently has this problem with contradictions. The answer from the Greens is that they believe it - it is a matter of faith. They believe what they are saying at a particular moment. I do not doubt that Hon Jim Scott stood up and told us, in all sincerity, those misleading words with which he started his speech, before I started getting him down to making a little more reasonable assertions about this paper. He believed what he was saying because he is used to dealing with people who are very easy on the facts, particularly the scientific facts. Of course, everyone knows that a scientific fact is a fact only until it is disproved. We all know about Newtonian physics; we learnt about it in school. However, Newton's physics no longer applies. We are into relative physics. Other things go on every day. Every theory that is discovered is always interrupted by some other theory that explains it better. Do members remember antiphlogistine? That was a great scientific theory. Antiphlogistine attached itself to a burning object. It was like antimatter that floated in the air and had the ability to make things lighter. That is why when the object burned, it became heavier. It had nothing to do with oxygen; it was antiphlogistine. There have been some other wonderful theories over a period, such as animal magnetism. There is no doubt that Volta was a great discoverer; he made a great contribution to society. However, his ideas have been totally changed, but not for the Greens (WA); they love it. There is no reason that the Greens cannot use some of the good theories from those days alongside each other. What does it matter that one theory is 200 years out of date and is inconsistent with modern thinking? Why should they not be able to use all those theories? They are as valid as any other scientific fact that the Greens pull out of their hat.

Hon Jim Scott: Where are your scientific facts?

Hon PETER FOSS: I am not getting to them at this stage. I am saying that the member has used a big scare tactic based on a document that does not even purport to be a scientific study. He admitted during his speech, because I interjected on him, that it was not a scientific study; it was a strategic hypothesis - a scenario. That is not how the member's speech started. He started out by saying, "We are all doomed; the day of reckoning is tomorrow. There will be wars and pestilence; repent, sinners, now. Stop farting; you are producing as an individual more greenhouse gases in Australia than anyone else in the world." We probably breathe more

because we get a lot of exercise; we do a lot of outdoor sport. I am sure that that is a great contributor to biological greenhouse gas emissions in Australia!

The reality is that this is another scare tactic of the member. I do not mind listening to a serious argument from the Greens. I am pleased that Hon Robin Chapple is in the Chamber, because, generally, he is a little more stringent when he deals with science. He still has to deal with the general green philosophy of whatever it takes to scare the daylight out of people, but, generally speaking, he is a little more stringent in his scientific approach. All Hon Jim Scott has to do is hear something on television and he comes in here and tells us that we are doomed. He heard this on the ABC, so at least it was a reputable channel. However, I do not think the ABC would rate it as highly as the member. The terrible rainforest is producing all these greenhouse gases!

Hon Simon O'Brien: The rainforest is?

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes. I think it was in Hon Jim Scott's statement.

Hon Simon O'Brien: We will have to get rid of the rainforest then!

Hon PETER FOSS: Exactly; logically, that is what we should do next.

Hon Jim Scott: It might be logical to you, but it is not logical to most people.

Hon PETER FOSS: Frankly, I do not think it is logical either. I am astounded by the way in which the member has the capacity to deposit one argument one day and a totally inconsistent one the next and not worry about it. What will we do about it? We will all be doomed! We should join the Greens, pay our dues and we will all be saved! We in Western Australia will cut our toenails and save the world from greenhouse gases! The fact that India and China are producing enormous quantities of greenhouse gases is not something to worry about. It is like someone rearranging the deckchairs on the *Titanic* as it went down. That is exactly what the suggestion is. The member is suggesting that we rearrange the deckchairs in Western Australia, while India and China produce huge quantities of greenhouse gases. During my five-day speech, which Hon Jim Scott somehow missed, I made it quite clear that I in no way demean the concerns that people have about climate change, but I will not get involved in some useless exercise that leaves out the principal players just to satisfy the mantra of the Greens. I would like to think that we could work for a more sensible approach to greenhouse gases by working with China and India and doing a fair deal whereby Australia, which does not have efficient gas -

Hon Robin Chapple: I wish to point out that in the Kyoto Protocol -

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! The member does not have the call; Hon Peter Foss has the call.

Hon Robin Chapple: He is misrepresenting -

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER FOSS: I have made it quite clear, and Hon Jim Scott missed it when I spoke for about five days -

Hon Nick Griffiths: It was not quite a record, but it got close.

Hon PETER FOSS: It was quite good.

Hon Nick Griffiths: That is a view.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am entitled to my view in the same way that the Greens are entitled to theirs. I felt that what I said made a lot more sense than what they said. I am quite concerned that signing the Kyoto Protocol will enable us to say that the problem is fixed and we should not worry about it, when it will not address the problem. It is easy to get involved in things that do not solve the problem and say that it has been done now and we do not need to worry about it. I raised this issue only the other day. What is the biggest problem we have? Population is the biggest problem. Why is it that greenhouse gases have become so significant? They have become so significant because of the world's population. Who are the major contributors to the world's population? The major contributors to the world's population are the same countries that are the major contributors to greenhouse gases. We have not even put pressure on those countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Hon Robin Chapple: The United States does not have the largest population.

Hon PETER FOSS: The United States is the largest country within the Kyoto Protocol. This is another Greens habit; they say that the United States is the biggest contributor to greenhouse gases and tell people to look at the schedule to the Kyoto Protocol. Which countries are listed in the schedule to the Kyoto Protocol? Is China listed in the schedule?

Hon Jim Scott: Yes.

Hon PETER FOSS: No, it is not. It does not have the quantities for China.

Hon Jim Scott: Yes, it is. It signed it in 2002.

Hon PETER FOSS: China was not in the schedule when the last debate was held.

Hon Jim Scott: I told you then that you were wrong, but you didn't listen.

Hon PETER FOSS: The member did not tell me anything of the sort.

Hon Jim Scott: I did; you did not hear.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER FOSS: The worrying thing about China is that the Kyoto Protocol does not require it to do anything. China is allowed to increase its emissions, and the same applies to India. India is not obliged to reduce its emissions; it can carry on because it is a developing nation. The amazing thing is that the Kyoto Protocol does not require those countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. It allows people to make money -

Hon Jim Scott: It has finally got through that they have signed it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER FOSS: Those countries are not obliged to do anything. The only benefit in having those countries listed in the schedule to the Kyoto Protocol is that people can make money by reducing their greenhouse gas emissions; they can do a deal. We get the credit for doing that, but those countries are not obliged to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. What is the point of not requiring two countries that are busily increasing their industrial capability and have industries that are among the most inefficient in the world, particularly in the production of greenhouse gases, to meet any form of reduction target?

Hon Jim Scott: They have actually reduced by 11 per cent.

Hon PETER FOSS: What is the point of it? Interestingly, some people keep track of what is happening and some do not.

Hon Robin Chapple interjected.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes.

Hon Jim Scott: Pity you didn't read it.

Hon PETER FOSS: I did read it, and we had a long debate about it. I read practically the entire web page to the House. If the member reads my speech, he will find it is all there.

Hon Jim Scott: We are talking about the IPCC reports.

Hon PETER FOSS: I read what had happened. I read all the stuff on its web page. We must have had that debate in 2001 because, at that stage, China certainly had not signed the Kyoto Protocol. The reality is that we will not make major changes until the Kyoto Protocol is changed. Australia is disadvantaged by it, because it was set up in such a way as to benefit nations in Europe and America that have inefficient industries. There is no encouragement for Australia to drive those inefficient industries out of business altogether by starting those industries here. If a new steel plant were started in Western Australia that produced greenhouse gases and caused those other plants to go out of business, even if it were highly efficient and better than a similar plant in China, we would be penalised. However, if one of those other countries changed one of its inefficient industries and built the very same plant to sell steel to Australia, it would get a credit. That is the way it works. There is no way that a nation such as Australia, which has areas in which there are no steel plants - Western Australia is a classic example - would get a credit for constructing such plants. We will always get a debit for that, because we currently do not have a major steel industry. On the other hand, China has a massive steel industry. However, a lot of that industry is made up of small, inefficient blast furnaces. China would get major benefits from changing its system and becoming more efficient. China would receive benefits but if we constructed a new plant to produce the same type of steel by the same methods, we would not receive benefits. Australia would get a debit and China would get a credit. Members should tell me whether that has been set up for the benefit of the people who brought that problem to the world in the first place. The protocol was set up to benefit those who are responsible for the problem we have now. It is mainly due to the fact that we have kept a record of all the -

Hon Robin Chapple: Are you quite happy with the projected 67 per cent expansion of greenhouse gas emissions that is proposed in this State?

Hon PETER FOSS: No, I am not. However, the method of calculating it could be fairer. One reason it will increase is that we are continually finding new gas fields and producing gas in the process. If we do not find the new gas fields and do not produce that gas, what will the rest of the world do in order to use gas as a more efficient fuel? How will that be done?

Hon Jim Scott: Gas does produce greenhouse emissions.

Hon PETER FOSS: Of course it does. I know that. People are trying to change from coal to gas.

Hon Robin Chapple: The coal lobby is saying that gas is more harmful than coal. That is an interesting point.

Hon PETER FOSS: I have not heard a call from the Greens (WA) for coal-fired buses -

Hon Robin Chapple: You haven't. I am saying that that is what the coal lobby is saying.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am sure that the coal lobby would say that. The reality is that the Greens have been quite keen for Western Australia to change to gas-driven buses. I have not heard anyone suggest that we should change to coal-driven buses. The Greens have also been critical of oil-driven buses. By doing this, Western Australia is providing a service to the rest of the world. It is beneficial to the rest of the world if Australia produces gas. However, we are penalised and other countries are not. If China, India or Japan uses our gas to produce a more efficient result and less greenhouse gas emissions, they will get a credit. If they put in a more efficient plant, they will get a credit. However, if we constructed a new plant using the same gas, we would be penalised, even though in that case the gas would not be transferred all the way to China or Japan to be used to produce steel that would then be transferred back to Australia, which we must all accept is an inefficient use of energy and one that produces greenhouse gas emissions.

Hon Robin Chapple: By way of a question, if I may, would you support the continued use of coal, gas and petroleum to the point at which there is none left?

Hon PETER FOSS: That is an interesting prospect. One of the problems is that we know of a very good energy source that is unlikely to run out and does not produce vast quantities of greenhouse gas. Of course, the Greens have another objection to that source of energy.

Hon Robin Chapple: Are we talking tidal or hydro?

Hon PETER FOSS: No, nuclear.

Hon Jim Scott: How do you get the uranium into the process without creating greenhouse emissions?

Hon PETER FOSS: The amount it produces is small compared with burning fuel. Whatever is used, some gas will be produced in recovering it. The difference is that when fuel is burnt, greenhouse gases are produced, and when nuclear power is used, they are not. That is a nice simple answer. I accept that we must look at alternatives. More importantly - I said this also the other day - we should be looking at cutting down on the waste of energy. There is a massive waste of energy. I keep repeating this point: what is the biggest, single environmental problem that we have? It is people. Six billion people are not only consuming energy but also trying to improve their standard of living so that they can consume more. What are the Chinese trying to do at the moment?

Hon Jim Scott: They are doing a lot to cut the population.

Hon PETER FOSS: China has at least brought in the one-child policy. On my first visit to Beijing in 1985, everybody rode bicycles. There were bicycles everywhere. Later in the day, I would see a few cars. The more important people were generally driven around in extraordinary looking cars. When I went back to Beijing two years later, the number of cars had multiplied. I have not been back since 1987, but I understand that the number of cars there has gone wild. Beijing now has many flyovers, highways and other things, such as high-rise buildings. China is now building the tallest building in the world. High-rise buildings consume inordinate amounts of electricity per capita. Skyscrapers are the most inefficient thing there is in terms of the consumption of power, but China is building them. It is trying to catch up with the west. China has two billion people. Can members imagine what will happen when two billion people lift their standard of living and start consuming energy at a rate comparable with consumption in the United States and Australia?

Hon Robin Chapple: Is it not about time that we actually started to deal with the problem?

Hon PETER FOSS: Of what?

Hon Robin Chapple: Of expanding the use of energy and the consumption of CO₂-emitting or CO₂-equivalent emitting components.

Hon PETER FOSS: We must look at the consumption of power irrespective of that. Even if one is not concerned about the exhaustion of fossil fuels, or even if there were a limitless amount, the constant increase in the consumption of power will lead to problems. We dealt with temperature the other day. The temperature will rise not just because of greenhouse gas emissions but also because of power use. Entropy will cause that. The big argument against nuclear power is that it allows an increase in heat that has not come from the sun. At least at the moment we know that there is a limit to the amount of heat on this planet, because heat really comes only from the sun.

Hon Robin Chapple: So you are of the opinion that we need to cut production of CO₂-equivalent emissions?

Hon PETER FOSS: The member has tried to put another word in my mouth. I believe that first and foremost we must address population. None of these other things would matter if the population of the world were one-sixth of what it is now.

Hon Robin Chapple: But if it were one-sixth at a standard of America or here, we would still have -

Hon PETER FOSS: No, we would not have that problem. It is not a straight, geometric progression. Every time we talk about these other things, we miss the main problem, which is people. Even if we were to find alternative forms of power, it must be taken from somewhere. If it were taken from the tides, wind or whatever, kinetic energy would be taken out of the environment. I do not like that. My first objection to that came when there was a suggestion to use tidal power off the north west coast. I know the impact of taking kinetic energy out of an ecosystem. It will have a radical impact on that ecosystem. The hydro-electric power scheme in the Snowy Mountains is another classic example. However, at the other end we are producing heat. We are releasing years and years of solar heat and injecting it into the system. It has to go somewhere. The problem is that the reason for global warming is related to not only greenhouse gas emissions, but also the energy that used to be dissipated in some other way and is now being turned into heat. If we generate power, we generate heat. I have not come across anybody yet who can generate or expend power without creating heat - members should not forget that other part of the equation. We cannot say that we should merely have alternative forms of energy. I would hate to see a world with six billion people all deriving their power from non-fossil fuel sources. That would indicate to me an environment under massive attack from people removing not just fossilised kinetic energy, but current kinetic energy. When I was Minister for the Environment we had problems with salinity. However, there are other problems associated with land clearing. If a person clears land alongside a river, more water is discharged into that river at a faster rate because there is nothing to stop it as it heads downhill. A riverbed must not only accommodate a volume of water but also the kinetic energy of that water. When more water is discharged at greater kinetic energy into a river, the result is massive erosion, which is why the Kalgan River is so important - it has a reasonably wide strip of land along either side of it. In the same way that we can cause environmental problems by injecting kinetic energy into where it originally was not, we can cause environmental problems by removing kinetic energy from where it was. We cannot fiddle with this. If we are going to fiddle, we have to fiddle on such a remarkably small scale that we do not cause a problem. I despair when people trot out the view that the answer is to change over to renewable sources of energy and do not look at the fundamental problem. It is a great way of not paying attention to the source of the problem. The reality of the matter is that the problem is, first and foremost - I keep saying this; I have said it a number of times this year - people. Unless we severely reduce the population, we will produce the scenario in those old science fiction books by Asimov, the "Foundation" series - I do not know how many members have read those classic books. I think the main planet in them was called Trantor. Whatever it was called, it had ceased to have any self-derived power. Everything was brought in from everywhere and the entire planet was covered to a depth of about 100 miles in buildings. If people want to deal with scenarios, that is where we are headed, except we do not have another planet from which to bring in supplies, even if it were thought to be a good idea. To talk about greenhouse emissions and alternative forms of power without talking about population is to miss the basic point.

Hon Robin Chapple: If the system collapses as a result of CO₂ emissions - and I will talk a little later about the forest you mentioned earlier - what do we need to do to resolve that one specific issue?

Hon PETER FOSS: One of the things that I have found as a Western Australian is that we are very small fish in a large pond. When I went to Canberra -

Hon Robin Chapple: With no responsibility.

Hon PETER FOSS: No. When I went to Canberra I argued for all sorts of things on behalf of the State, and I often got some things that Western Australians did not get. From time to time, I was quite an effective arguer for things that I thought should be done nationwide. However, the whole time I was fighting the fact that I was from Western Australia. Federally, everything is worked out on the basis of what is happening in New South Wales and Victoria. The classic example of that was when the Commonwealth started planning for a teacher oversupply because of what was going to happen to the young population. There was going to be a teacher oversupply in New South Wales and Victoria. However, there was going to be a shortage here. The federal Government was planning to reduce the number of teachers and to take away funding for teacher training on the basis that there was going to be an oversupply in those States, but we were going to be desperately short of teachers in this State. We had to say, "Hang on; your legs might be the right temperature, but ours are freezing over here." They would say, "But it's a very small part of the body; you only amount to 10 per cent." On an Australian stage, Western Australia has some problems getting its voice heard, no matter how eloquent it might be. What position do members think Australia holds on the world stage? We like to think of ourselves as hugely important, but we are nothing. We should protest and do all sorts of things, but we should not kid ourselves that the real difference will be made here, because it will not. The real difference will be made when people in the places that do count start to realise that they have a problem. China has at least realised that it has a problem

with its population, and it has brought in a one-child per couple limit. If members are interested in science as opposed to merely scenarios and suppositions, the *Scientific American* had an interesting article in it some years ago about how China should reduce its population. China has a real problem from the reduction in its population, which is very similar to the baby-boomer problem here. If the population is rapidly decreased, who will look after the current large population when it gets old? It is a real problem. One of the other problems is that if the population is rapidly decreased, who will be the technicians and the money earners coming up through the system with a vast population to be supported? It is not a simple solution.

Hon Jim Scott: Should we do nothing because -

Hon PETER FOSS: I am not suggesting we do nothing but I am suggesting that we start to concentrate on where we might be able to make an argument. One of the things I kept saying federally was "fiscal imbalance" - I kept repeating it over and over. This Government is now starting to reap the benefits of that. I am pleased to say that the Howard Government did try to do something with the goods and services tax. I know we have had a lot of complaints about it, but I do not think anybody is complaining about the extra \$290 million they got the other day. Hopefully, that will continue to be the situation. The idea is for the States to impose the GST. In that way we can start to have some impact on what we do in this State and give ourselves greater control over what happens. The reality is that we could campaign to deal with the real problem. However, at the moment, we are just going along with another person's suggestion - he worked it out to look after himself, but in doing so it enabled him to ignore one of the most fundamental problems. It is not enough to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, because they are purely a product of the problem. The problem is - this has not been tackled by China - the over-consumption of power. Of course, we in this place and those in America have another problem - the waste of power. Members should look around this Chamber at the number of people who probably should not be eating like Australians and should be eating more like the Chinese.

Hon Kim Chance: Name them.

Hon PETER FOSS: I will not name any of them. However, the reality is that we do not see that as being a contribution to greenhouse gas, but it is, in some of the most fundamental ways - if I can use that term. It is a contribution to greenhouse gas at every stage of that process. Tractors are driven around paddocks and expend fossil fuel and produce heat and greenhouse gas emissions to harvest food, and more of it is being carted around. We are all eating it and a lot of it becomes methane or we breathe it out as carbon dioxide.

Hon Kim Chance: A lot of grain goes into making alcohol.

Hon PETER FOSS: Exactly. People living in China with that diet look a lot healthier than we do. They also produce less greenhouse gases. What are they trying to do? What is the ambition of every Chinese? To be a rich capitalist able to consume as conspicuously as all of us. It is a worry in our society but Australia's overall impact is not all that great. However, what about two billion people? What is the ambition of all those Indians? They want to be rich capitalists and they want to over consume, over expend and overuse power.

Hon Robin Chapple: Is over consumption by Chinese, Indians or us - whoever - an acceptable outcome?

Hon PETER FOSS: No. I have said so all along. I have been consistent. The one thing members will find with me is consistency. I have consistently stood here and said that I think that more important than renewable forms of energy is the reduction in the consumption of energy. There are more than two ways to do that. One is to reduce the amount of consumption per capita and another is to reduce the number of capita. They are the two main ways. There are many ways to reduce the consumption of power including more efficient use of power and less waste of power. I will be quite frank. If it were suggested that we move to new renewable sources of energy to replace our fossil fuels, I would say I was horrified at the prospect of six billion people deriving their energy from the kinetic energy of this planet. I am horrified at that prospect. I have no problem with our using it in moderation, but I am not convinced it is the solution to the problem. Ultimately, we have to address the real, underlying problem. Why I get upset with people like Hon Jim Scott is -

Hon Jim Scott: I agree with the member on reduction.

Hon PETER FOSS: We have not yet had a resolution. When are the Greens (WA) going to put up a motion about doing something about population? Why will they not put something like that up? What about the over consumption of food? Why are we not talking about people eating too much? We could reduce a lot of our consumption by not eating so much. Why do we not do that? We could do that by buying our produce from Kakulas Brothers instead of buying it from Coles.

Hon Robin Chapple: I hear what the member is saying but one of the things facing us all at the moment is the dramatic, nay, rapid rise in the level of CO₂ emissions. We must deal with that immediately.

Hon PETER FOSS: I have struck this situation before with other social problems. It always seems that the people who are the biggest source of a problem in the world are the ones whose numbers are increasing exponentially. It is much easier to get a society in which the numbers are small and possibly dwindling to take a

conscientious view on education and the upbringing of children. They feel they are doing a good thing. They are; I am not knocking that at all. However, it permits us to ignore the major problem that is expanding exponentially. I will not refer to one that faces Western Australia but I am sure members can guess what it is. Members can guess which part of our society is a major source of social problems and in which the population is growing exponentially. It is a major problem for this State in social terms. When I was the Attorney General, I tried to address that because I could see the time bomb. I keep coming back to this fundamental point: we can beat our breasts and we can halve our emissions in Western Australia - we could even go down to one-tenth - but would that address anything?

Hon Robin Chapple: We could become part of the global solution.

Hon PETER FOSS: I somehow do not think that it is a global solution. I am highly sceptical of that partly because of the massive amounts of self-interest that are built into formulas. When I read out the Kyoto Protocol in this Chamber I said that, in terms of sentiments, it was absolutely beyond criticism. No-one could possibly object to the sentiments; they were absolutely spot-on and right.

Hon Jim Scott interjected.

Hon PETER FOSS: I am not here to defend the United States in all this because I do not think it is the role of Australia to do that. There are good grounds for criticising the United States. I must say that I supported the federal Government's view on the Kyoto Protocol because I believe that the procedures, which were worked out afterwards, were plainly set up to advantage the worst offenders. It was to enable them to pay lip service without tackling the real problem. I am always worried when we talk about something else. We all know that two major problems in this world are the number of people and the amount they consume. That is the cause of our current problems. If we all know that, we must be concerned that we are not prepared to do anything about it. I do not think it helps the debate to take a document, such as the document taken by Hon Jim Scott, and misrepresent what it does.

Hon Jim Scott: How have I misrepresented it if I tabled it?

Hon PETER FOSS: A good question. Maybe the member thought that none of us would see what it was and what it did.

Hon Robin Chapple interjected.

Hon PETER FOSS: I understand. Unfortunately, the member did not talk about that document. It does not help to take an extreme case and start saying that it will happen. Sure, it is a possibility but there are lot of possibilities. As I said, I think Krakatoa is a real possibility. I will give another example. I travelled to Kalimantan on the island of Borneo. One of the big concerns expressed during the first Gulf War was the burning of the oilfields when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Each year, bigger fires occur in Kalimantan. Kalimantan is permanently on fire. We arrived five hours late at the Balikpapan airport; we could not land due to the smoke. Was anybody lighting a fire? No. The place is permanently on fire because it is a massive coal field with seams that reach the surface. There was a major fire some years ago and no-one has ever been able to put it out. Every year, Indonesia, quite unwittingly, produces a huge quantity of greenhouse gases. I am not sure whether that is part of the report.

Hon Robin Chapple: It is responsible for approximately one-third of all CO₂ emissions.

Hon PETER FOSS: A third! That is enormous. What are we doing about it? Can anything be done about it?

Hon Robin Chapple: I am not saying there is a right or a wrong, but, according to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, we have now reached the crucial point -

Hon PETER FOSS: If one place in the world, without willing it, is producing one-third of the world's CO₂ emissions, surely we should be spending some money on trying to put out that fire.

Hon Robin Chapple: Your policy will be to send our firefighters over there to try to resolve the issue?

Hon PETER FOSS: No, come on! The first words of Hon Jim Scott were to not trivialise the debate.

Hon Robin Chapple: I am not.

Hon PETER FOSS: Hon Robin Chapple is trivialising the debate. Both he and I know that it would take significant technology to put out a fire of that size. It would take massive investment from countries that have massive amounts of money, such as the United States. If we are going for unreal scenarios, that is a real unreal scenario. That is a scenario beyond the sort of thing we should be planning for. The reality of the matter is that this is a world problem.

Hon Robin Chapple: I agree.

Hon Jim Scott; Deputy President; Hon Peter Foss; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Kim Chance; Hon John Fischer

Hon PETER FOSS: It needs a sensible world solution. It needs a solution directed at where the problem is. One-third of the problem was created by a fire in Indonesia that we have not been able and not done much to put out.

Hon Robin Chapple: In 1988 or 1989 one per cent of the problem came from the Kimberley.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes, and I know the cause of that problem too; it was setting a fire.

Hon Kim Chance: Rangeland fires.

Hon PETER FOSS: Yes, rangeland fires. That is a problem we could tackle. It would be an interesting cultural problem to tackle.

Hon Robin Chapple: There is a great debate on that.

Hon PETER FOSS: I know all about it because I have been in the middle of that debate. I have heard both sides of the debate, but I do not know who is right. Hon Robin Chapple knows what I am talking about.

Hon Robin Chapple: Yes.

Hon PETER FOSS: The problems are increasing population and increasing consumption of power. I recall a classic analogy. There was a particular health minister - I will not say who, but members can guess - who said he would solve the problem with the health budget by contracting out cleaning. Really! What does the health budget spend money on? It is not spent on cleaning. The problem of providing medical care in major hospitals will not be tackled by tackling the cost of cleaning. The cost of cleaning ain't gonna make the slightest difference. My recollection is that the total cost of cleaning represented about two days' expenditure in hospitals. We will not make a big difference by contracting out cleaning.

I recall a time when my old legal firm went through a major economic recession -

Point of Order

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: What relevance does this have to the debate?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Jon Ford): There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER FOSS: The relevance is that I am saying we should deal with real things and I am trying to give an example of how people deal with inconsequential matters, which I suggest the Greens (WA) have done.

Everybody in my old legal firm was being paid, except the partners. We were going deeper into debt trying to pay everybody. The solution that one of my partners came up with was to cut out cream biscuits for the staff. Big deal! That really did a great deal. It really lifted staff morale and cut out costs! Rubbish! What we are doing in many ways is dealing with cream biscuits and cleaners; we are not dealing with the problem. If we want to solve a problem, we do not go around and busy work everything else. That is a classic theme. There is a very good book on how to get things done. It says that, first, we should deal with urgent and important things; secondly, we should deal with important things; thirdly, we should deal with urgent things; and fourthly, we should deal with busy working. What are we doing here? We are busy working. The reality of the matter is that Western Australia is busy working. The real problems are in China, India and elsewhere, where populations and consumption are increasing exponentially.

Hon Robin Chapple: All care, no responsibility.

Hon PETER FOSS: No, not all care, no responsibility. I am saying that the Greens should stop kidding themselves. Why are they talking about this issue when they know that the underlying cause is outside this country?

Hon Robin Chapple: It is not.

Hon PETER FOSS: Why do the Greens not move a motion to say they are distressed at the failure of world bodies to address the question of population; they are distressed at the failure of world bodies to deal with the conspicuous consumption of power; and they are distressed at the failure of world bodies to deal with wastage? They are the real causes of the problem and the Greens are not dealing with them. All they are saying in this motion -

Hon Robin Chapple: The motion, if you read it, is about urgency.

Hon PETER FOSS: I think the urgency is to reduce population. What are the Greens talking about when they say they want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, when the population of the world has increased from three billion to six billion in 20 years?

Hon Robin Chapple: This is about a global contract.

Hon PETER FOSS: The Greens are talking about the impact, not the cause. Why do they keep talking about that?

Hon Robin Chapple: Because the impact is crucial.

Hon PETER FOSS: I have asked again and again in this House why the Greens talk about the side effects instead of the cause. What will the Greens do about the reduction in heat from the consumption of power? They have not addressed that problem.

Hon Robin Chapple: It is not a case of just stopping; we must deal with the issues. The motion says that we must deal with the issues.

Hon PETER FOSS: All I am saying to the Greens is that they are dealing with cream biscuits and cleaners. By all means they should keep themselves busy talking about cream biscuits.

Hon Jim Scott: That is absolute rubbish because a 17.1 billion tonne increase in CO₂ emissions is a very significant problem for world climate.

Hon PETER FOSS: What does Hon Jim Scott think a three billion increase in population has done?

Hon Jim Scott: That is not an increase of 17 per cent a year.

Hon PETER FOSS: What does Hon Jim Scott think the per capita increase in wealth in China will do?

Hon Jim Scott: It will be a disaster.

Hon PETER FOSS: Totally!

Hon Jim Scott: That is not a population increase.

Hon PETER FOSS: What does Hon Jim Scott think that a reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions will do to the overall world population? It will do absolutely nothing. The cream biscuits will be fine, the cleaners will be fine but, in fact, we will not have made the slightest difference.

I want to correct something about the ratification, acceptance, accession and approval process of the Kyoto agreement as at 17 March 2004. China signed the agreement on 29 May 1998. On 30 August 2002, China went through the approval process, not the ratification process. The agreement does not apply to Hong Kong and Macau special administrative regions. India has not signed it and as at 26 August 2002 it had accession only. The record now shows the actual situation. Those countries are not fully bound by the process and for the major part have excepted themselves from it.

Hon Robin Chapple: The other signatories to the agreement all have get-outs of a similar nature.

Hon PETER FOSS: Exactly.

Hon Robin Chapple: You can read those into the record too, if you want.

Hon Jim Scott: It does not apply to 55 per cent of them.

Hon Alan Cadby interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER FOSS: That is a very interesting piece of information. I am grateful to Hon Alan Cadby for bringing a degree of exactitude to the debate. Perhaps the Greens and I will have to agree to disagree. I am looking for the day when the Greens will stop raising ludicrous arguments. They should come back to the real argument and tackle the real problem. I have reminded them time and again that the real problem is population. Every time they agree with me but I do not see any difference in their argument.

I have told the story before, which I am sure will be appreciated by the Minister for Forestry, about a day soon after I became Minister for the Environment when I invited the members of the Conservation Council of Western Australia into my office. I went around the board table where we were all sitting and I asked everybody what they thought was the biggest environmental problem facing Western Australia. Some said forests and this and that, and other great little problems were suggested. When it came to my turn I said, "What about salinity? I think that is the biggest problem facing Western Australia. All the other problems are a total waste of time if we don't deal with salinity. It seems to me that if we worry about all those other ones and not worry about salinity, we will have missed the point." Everybody said, "Of course you are right." However, given the opportunity, nobody had raised it. That is what worries me about the green movement. The Greens all have their pet bandwagon, their little cream biscuits and their little cleaners. They all like to deal with these things because they can point to them and complain about them; but the problem is still there. What do they think will be the greenhouse gas situation if the population continues to increase at the same rate that it has increased in the past 20 years - from three billion to six billion? If the per capita consumption of power increases by 10 per cent throughout the world, we are doomed. Hon Jim Scott talks about only the cream biscuits. The reductions the

member wants will not be helped if the population continues to increase. The member agrees with me on that point, but he never talks about it. It is almost like *Fawlty Towers* and the German in the house, and not being allowed to talk about the war; we are not allowed to talk about population increase because it is too difficult and awkward. It might be embarrassing to see how little we can do in Western Australia.

I find it very hard to take the Greens (WA) seriously, when we have scaremongering of the nature Hon Jim Scott produced. If I had not interrupted him with unruly interjections on occasions, I doubt we would have got to what he is really dealing with. He then tried to use the Pentagon document to deal with the problem. He should deal with the more serious problem. The Greens need to get serious about the real problem, and tell us what they will do about the world population. What will they do about the population in India, China and Australia? Until they start to get serious about that aspect, I find they are nothing but people who worry about cream biscuits. Until they get off the cream biscuits and deal with the real problems, they cannot be taken seriously. Mr Deputy President (Hon Jon Ford), you might have gained the impression that I find the motion to be less than helpful because it misses the main point.

HON KIM CHANCE (Agricultural - Leader of the House) [3.32 pm]: I will not speak at great length. I hope I can take a position somewhere between the extremes established by the last two speakers. There are three distinguishable features of the motion. The first is that it calls on the Gallop Government to inform the federal Government that the State recognises an urgent need -

Hon Jim Scott: That has changed.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Is that the old motion? It is the Pentagon report and the German advisory council matter. I have a copy here.

Hon Jim Scott: It is the revised shorter motion.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It is the revised revised one.

I will deal with the major issue I was going to deal with anyway regarding the Pentagon report, which was a major component of the contributions by Hons Jim Scott and Peter Foss. The report referred to as the Pentagon report was commissioned by the Pentagon and prepared by two highly respected military scenario planners as part of a program to explore the climate issues and other emerging threats to the security of the United States. In a sense, somewhere between the two views expressed by members, it has been properly described. The scenario planners chose to apply a possible climate change outcome, which was abrupt climate change, including changes to the major ocean currents. It is a scenario based on what I think are credible projections. They are not scientific certainties, obviously, of possible climate impact - nor do they claim to be. It was constructed specifically to test the capacity of existing US and global mechanisms to cope with the requirements it would generate. The likelihood of the scenario was a matter of some debate between Hons Jim Scott and Peter Foss.

The motion brings to mind something I read many years ago. I wish I could remember the name of author and find the book. It was by a Russian oceanographer whose specialty was climatology. He understood very well the relationship between ocean current change and climate change. This book was written in the early 1950s. It was a remarkable work as it related to the cause and effect between ocean currents and climate, which is something we are starting to get our heads around now in Australia and the rest of world. The El Niño concept did not dawn on people until the late 1980s. That was followed by La Niña and the Southern Oscillation Index and, more recently, the even scarier 40-year drought scenario for southern Australia. This Russian based his entire logic around the change between the currents, which he calls the third ice age, and the situation during the Pleistocene era. The record of that era exists in the permafrost below the surface, and it indicated that grapes grew in Siberia.

Hon Robin Chapple: It was during the Carboniferous period.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It could have been the Carboniferous or even the Devonian era, but I have an idea that he referred to Pleistocene. Similar conditions existed in Australia in the Devonian era, when the Kimberley was a warm shallow sea. It was some time ago.

Those issues of fact do not really matter. His hypothesis is what matters; namely, during that period, the Bering current that is analogous to the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic that runs up the Asian east coast, reached the Bering Strait and the Aleutian Islands, and it turned right. It then ran down the coast of Alaska, Canada and northern United States. That current passed through the Bering Strait. It did not turn right at the Aleutian Islands. It passed through the Bering Strait. The northern polar ice cap did not exist. The Sumerian climate enjoyed conditions similar to those enjoyed by Great Britain as a result of the impact of the Gulf Stream; that is, it was far more temperate than should have been the case given its latitude. Reading that book by the Russian author was the first time I had experienced anyone relating oceanography to climate. I can understand the enormous

change made, and the abruptness of that change, in the event of something that normally creeps up on us incrementally. That is why I take the Pentagon issue, although it is only a scenario, seriously.

I reflected earlier today on climate change and its precursors. I have lived on the edge of a climatic zone between the wheatbelt and the desert for most of my life. One notices changes happening in the biodiversity in that area when living between two systems. The effects of climate change could be seen in the area 40 years ago. Hon Jim Scott would know this as he lived in the same area. I remember the first of the spinifex pigeons coming into the wheatbelt. People who knew the spinifex pigeons asked why they were there. They came in after a run of successive droughts in the adjacent pastoral zone in the Western Desert. They came to the wheatbelt and thought it was the much nicer place to be: more food was found in the wheatbelt than was the case in the desert. The spinifex pigeons settled and are now a feature of the wheatbelt. A change in the northern agricultural area in Hon Murray Criddle's area has been the southward movement of the corellas. These are now displacing the native pink and grey galahs because the corellas are more aggressive in competing for nesting sites. We should not be surprised that native animals respond before we are able to measure the nature of the change. I take these issues about climate change seriously. It is certainly a believable scenario that the slow and incremental nature of climate change we are currently experiencing, but can measure now, has actually been on the books for 40 years - that is about when those other changes started to happen - and could result in an abrupt change. A tiny change in ocean currents can change everything all of a sudden.

Hon Alan Cadby: That is called chaos theory.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It could be, although that is not where the term came from. In Hon Bill Stretch's electorate, he may have been approached by people on the south west coast complaining about the huge number of commercial crayfish boats operating on that coastal area. There is certainly an explosion in the number of rock lobster fishermen, because there has been an explosion in the number of rock lobsters. It is as simple as that. That was caused by two things. There was a very high puerulus settlement three years ago. We understand the science of that; it is pretty simple marine biology. What caused that? The Leeuwin current. Hon Jim Scott referred to mud crabs on the south coast. It is the same thing. An extraordinary number of western rock lobsters are now being caught on the south coast, and we all know that rock lobsters cannot breed on the south coast. They are there only because something put them there. What put them there? An extraordinary flow of the Leeuwin current - tiny changes in the ocean's movement, but enormous changes in its effect on biodiversity. Can the ocean currents change? Yes, they can; we have ample records of their changes. Can a change in ocean currents affect global climate? You bet! Those changes turn on the switches for the next ice age or the next greenhouse age. The natural ebb and flow of our planet's climate is driven by the currents that run in our oceans.

Hon Robin Chapple interjected

Hon KIM CHANCE: If, when entering a room with a neon light, one turns on the switch, some time later the lights come on. It is quite possible that the switches for climate change that we are experiencing now were actually turned on 40 years ago. It is quite possible that we can do little about fixing it. We nonetheless need to be aware of and understand the nature of the changes. There is no time to be depressed about it. I can remember all these arguments being presented about the hole in the ozone layer and the somewhat tenuous connection - as was thought at the time - between chlorofluorocarbons and the hole in the ozone layer. We did stop the CFCs being used, by and large. I am sure they are still used in China and India, but the rest of the world managed to stop using CFCs, and what happened? The hole in the ozone layer contracted. That might have been coincidental; I do not know. It may have also been some very clever work by people who did identify the real cause of the hole in the ozone layer. We cannot afford to ignore the messages we are being sent about climate change. It is measurable now. Ocean current changes are measurable, and maybe they are simple seasonal and cyclical issues. I do not know.

Hon Alan Cadby: Has this not been going on for millions of years?

Hon KIM CHANCE: It could have been; and it could be that we are simply entering another cycle of global warming. Again, we heard those stories about CFCs and the ozone layer.

Hon Alan Cadby: There is no direct causation there.

Hon KIM CHANCE: There is pretty good circumstantial evidence.

Hon Alan Cadby: It is not good enough for a scientist, but it may be good enough for a farmer.

Hon KIM CHANCE: It is not good enough for a scientist, but it is a question of whether we can afford not to take notice of the circumstantial evidence we are faced with. This is a serious issue. It must be taken seriously. It may be that there is little we can do about it, but there may be something. Maybe the Kyoto Protocol is a flawed process. I am one of the many who have never read the Kyoto document. The reason is that it is not a dead document. The Kyoto Protocol is a living document; it changes every time international authorities meet

and deliberate on outcomes. It is flawed, and it has a number of clearly biased intentions towards our friends in northern Europe and the United States.

Hon Robin Chapple: It is now seen mainly as a precursor.

Hon KIM CHANCE: Yes; it is not the be-all and end-all. It is a living document, and I very much would like Western Australia to explore what it can do about this. I will not spend a lot of time going through it, although I am happy to provide my notes to the mover of the motion. I get a feeling that it may be possible for the individual States - that is, the sovereign States of Australia and the United States - to become partners in the Kyoto convention, without their federations. I wonder if that is possible. I do not know. However, I know that people are looking at the possibility of the individual States of Australia and the United States actually ratifying the protocol.

Hon Jim Scott: Alberta is thinking of doing it.

Hon KIM CHANCE: I know the Canadians are looking at the prospect. Even though this is a Kyoto debit jurisdiction, because of our huge output of natural gas - although I agree with what Hon Peter Foss said on that matter - we also have the capacity to offset all of those debits. We have a plantation capacity in this State that is absolutely unbelievable, and investors are lining up to come into this State with unbelievable sums of money to invest. We have a way through this. We should not close our minds to it. Having this debate has itself been extraordinarily valuable.

HON JOHN FISCHER (Mining and Pastoral) [3.48 pm]: This is a very interesting motion, and I most certainly will not be supporting it. When I listen to the arguments put forward by Hon Jim Scott, I think of the famous phrase from the Harvard Law School that if the case is good, pound the case, and if the case is bad, pound the table. I have also listened to Hon Robin Chapple refer to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Material I have read from the IPCC seems to be rather different from that read by the honourable member. I believe the original motion has been changed, but it is still relevant, and the dot points in the motion claim that climate change over the next 20 years could result in a global catastrophe costing millions of lives in wars and natural disasters. One of the big problems we have is that the environmental movement continually overstates its case. It is like the boy who cried wolf; in the end, no-one took any notice of him.

Hon Robin Chapple: They are the statements that were in the document that I provided to you; they are not our statements.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: I did not say the Greens; I said the environmental movement, because I was not sure whether they were the statements of the Greens or from the document. I thank the member for providing me with the document last night, but I did not have enough time to go through it. That is a very overstated and inflammatory point, and there are several others. I will quote from the book *the sceptical environmentalist*.

Hon Robin Chapple: Do you realise he has been charged by the Danish courts?

Hon JOHN FISCHER: I did not, and I do not know exactly what he has been charged with.

Hon Robin Chapple: Misleading and libellous science.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: I happen to think that a lot of what he says is extremely good, so we will see what happens in the court case. I am sure that Greenpeace etc are somewhere behind it. The parts of this book that I will quote are not actually the statements of Bjørn Lomborg. The first part states -

The main thrust of *Newsweek's* 1996 cover story on global warming was one of possible "catastrophic global warming" with "more floods, worse hurricanes." The US experience was summed up in this way: "The weather is always capricious, but last year gave new meaning to the term. Floods, hurricanes, droughts - the only plague missing was frogs.

The book continues -

... *Congressional Quarterly* told us how since the signing of the Kyoto Protocol "the weather has intensified ... It was a time of killer storms, such as Hurricane Mitch, raging wildfires ... In their summer 2000 cover story, the *Earth Island Journal* even told us how extreme weather is linked to global warming and will give us "higher (and lower) temperatures, fiercer winds, deadlier floods, longer droughts, and an increased frequency of dust storms, tsunamis, storm surges, tornadoes ... The *Global Environmental Outlook 2000* also claims that "global warming models indicate that rising global temperatures are likely to affect many atmospheric parameters ...

These many confident statements are surprising and conflict clearly with the 1996 findings of the IPCC,

-

Which Hon Robin Chapple has quoted -

which set aside an entire section to discuss the question: “Has the climate become more variable or extreme?” In conclusion, the IPCC found:

Overall, there is no evidence that extreme weather events, or climate variability, has increased, in a global sense, through the twentieth century, although data and analyses are poor and not comprehensive. On regional scales there is clear evidence of changes in some extremes and climate variability indicators. Some of these changes have been toward greater variability; some have been toward lower variability.

It goes on to say -

... in an overview article in *Science* ...

There are a number of statements in informal writings that are not supported by climate science or projections with high-quality climate models. Some of these statements may appear to be physically plausible, but the evidence for their validity is weak, and some are just wrong. There are assertions that the number of tropical storms, hurricanes, and typhoons per year will increase. That is possible, but there appears to be no credible evidence to substantiate such assertions. Assertions that winds in midlatitude (versus tropical) cyclones will become more intense do not appear to have credible scientific support.

The point that I make is that the environmental movement continually overstates these problems. Frankly, I do not think there is anywhere near enough scientific support for them. Two of the dot points in the member’s proposed motion state -

- a significant drop in the planet’s ability to sustain its present population, which will become apparent over the next 20 years;
- deaths from war and famine will run into the millions until the planet’s population is reduced by such an extent the earth can cope;

They are totally inflammatory points.

Hon Robin Chapple: That is the scenario that is painted in that document.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: As I said, one of the big problems of the environmental movement is that it continually -

Hon Robin Chapple: This is military.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: The Greens have put forward these statements, so obviously they believe them. As I have said, it is like the boy who cried wolf; in the end no-one took any notice of him. There is plenty of support for that attitude. I will quote further from this book, and it is not a statement of Bjørn Lomborg. It goes on to state -

“The battle to feed humanity is over. In the course of the 1970s the world will experience starvation of tragic proportions - hundreds of millions of people will starve to death.”

Hon Alan Cadby: Paul Ehrlich.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: That was the introduction to one of the most influential books on hunger, *The Population Bomb*, by Paul Ehrlich. More than three million copies of that book have been sold. It continues -

From the same quarter Lester Brown, who later became president of the Worldwatch Institute, wrote in 1965 that “the food problem emerging in the less-developing regions may be one of the most nearly insoluble problems facing man over the next few decades.”

They were both mistaken. Although there are now twice as many of us as there were in 1961, each of us has *more* to eat, in both developed and developing countries. Fewer people are starving. Food is far cheaper these days and food-wise the world is quite simply a better place for far more people.

There are many facts in this book that go toward -

Hon Robin Chapple: They are not facts.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: They are facts.

Hon Robin Chapple: The ruling says that they are not facts. I will read you the ruling if you want me to.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: It continues -

Globally, the proportion of people starving has fallen from 35 per cent to 18 per cent and is expected to fall further to 12 per cent in 2010 ... This should be compared to an estimated 45 per cent of developing country people starving in 1949.

Once again, Greens members have emphasised the scare tactics. I will also quote another gentleman, who states -

Many environmentalists rejected consensus politics and sustainable development in favour of continued confrontation, ever-increasing extremism, and left-wing politics.

Hon Robin Chapple: Who is that?

Hon JOHN FISCHER: I will tell the member who it is in a minute. He goes on to say -

I would have argued that, if adding a daffodil gene to rice in order to produce a genetically modified strain of rice can prevent half a million children from going blind each year, then we should move forward carefully to develop it.

He continues -

In 2001, the European Commission released the results of 81 scientific studies on genetically modified organisms conducted by over 400 research teams at a cost of US \$65 million. The studies, which covered all areas of concern, have 'not shown any new risks to human health or the environment, beyond the usual uncertainties of conventional plant breeding. Indeed, the use of more precise technology and the greater regulatory scrutiny probably make them even safer than conventional plants and foods.' Clearly my former Greenpeace colleagues are either not reading the morning paper or simply don't care about the truth. And they choose to silence by force those of us who do care about it.

That was Patrick Moore.

Hon Robin Chapple: Who was paying for him?

Hon JOHN FISCHER: He is the co-founder of Greenpeace.

Hon Robin Chapple: We know exactly who he is.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: I am sure the member does, but he would not have mentioned him so I thought I had better raise it just to remind him.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: Yes.

Hon Jim Scott interjected.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: I do not think anyone is absolutely perfect. Hon Jim Scott cannot stand Bjørn Lomborg. He tells me everything that is wrong with him. Passing this book to the blokes opposite is a bit like the Pope pointing a crucifix at the devil, because they get very shaky about it. I am not trying to trivialise the issue that the Greens have raised.

Hon Jim Scott: You think there is a problem with greenhouse?

Hon JOHN FISCHER: I think there is quite probably a correct concern about the increase in greenhouse gases. Quite frankly, that is why I have always been in favour of nuclear plants; because they are the cleanest. The attitude of the Greens always surprises me. I was going to say that its policies are irrelevant, but it is that their policies do not run in and connect with each other, mainly because underneath they follow a Trotsky-type philosophy. I agree with the previous speakers that this motion demands debate. However, the Greens and their side of the argument put up irrational, emotional issues all the time.

Hon Robin Chapple: The Pentagon put it up.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: Hon Robin Chapple used it in a misleading way, as he denigrates anyone who comes up with a different view.

Hon Robin Chapple: I didn't denigrate him, the courts did.

Hon Jim Scott interjected.

Hon JOHN FISCHER: Sorry, who is a liar?

Hon Robin Chapple: Lomborg. The court ruled in 2002 that, "Objectively speaking, the publication of the work under consideration is deemed to fall within the concept of scientific dishonesty."

Hon JOHN FISCHER: I was quoting from the book. I was not quoting from Bjørn Lomborg; I was quoting from the content of the book in reference to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. I bring the member's attention back to the fact that in an interjection to Hon Peter Foss, he quoted the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on several occasions. The review it has done and which I read out indicated a totally different approach from the one he was indicating. On the basis of what occurred last time that a private

member's Bill was debated, when one government member spoke for most of the time, I will sit down. I will be fair, because it is a Greens' motion and we have only 10 minutes or so left. I know that Hon Robin Chapple wants to put across his point of view. I should be more open-minded and charitable and should want to listen to what he has to say. I will, so long as it is not based on emotive rubbish similar to the paper that was previously passed out.

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [4.04 pm]: I want to correct a couple of misinterpretations or a lack of understanding in relation to issues concerning China, India and the African group. When one deals with the issue of the IPCC and the signing of the Kyoto Protocol, it has now clearly been identified that the Kyoto Protocol itself is not an answer. The Kyoto Protocol is merely the precursor or the key to bringing together nations of the world to then develop what was referred to as a contraction and convergence policy as a result of post-Kyoto emission protocols. It is important to note that the concept of contraction and convergence as identified in the IPCC is supported by the European Parliament and the Governments of China, India, the African group and the non-aligned movement. It is important to realise that beyond Kyoto, we are clearly seeing that the elements Hon Peter Foss identified as having a great deal more responsibility are being taken into account in terms of where we go beyond Kyoto.

Some concerns were raised. I again go back to the issue raised by Hon Peter Foss about forests and their ability to consume carbon. Let us gain some understanding of what is required in terms of forests. The average Australian emits about 24.5 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent. I make a distinction between CO₂ and CO₂-equivalent. CO₂-equivalent is the definition of CO₂ or methane, with methane having approximately 21 times the impact value of CO₂. The average Australian belts out around 24.5 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent each year. The average Australian native tree can soak up about 270 kilograms of CO₂ in that time. The average Australian science journalist with a calculator reckons that that means that we need to plant about 91 trees every year for every person in Australia. On a national scale, we are talking about planting 1 729 million trees each year on about 300 million hectares of land, just to deal with our emissions. However, there is a bigger problem. Up until now we have considered the ability of the forests to absorb CO₂. About three years ago, the British establishment the Hadley Centre did a scenario of forest absorption. One interesting thing that it found was that trees in the lung of the planet, which is basically South America, were starting to consume or absorb less CO₂. Interestingly, an article published on the Internet on 12 March identified that the lush Amazonian rainforests were no longer absorbing CO₂. This was a problem that the Hadley Centre had alluded to but could not quantify in its modelling; that once the forests reached a peak of absorption, we would have to totally review our figures of CO₂ emissions because no longer would there be the ability for it to be absorbed. The article quotes William Laurance of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama, who states -

"It's a little scary to realize seemingly pristine forests can change so quickly and dramatically."

This is to the point that, as the lungs of our planet, it no longer absorbs the surplus CO₂. The article also states -

Levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) have risen by 30 percent in the past 200 years because of emissions from automobiles and industry and rapid forest burning, particularly in the tropics.

Much of the increase in CO₂, which plants use from the air for photosynthesis, has occurred since 1960.

The scientists suspect the rising CO₂ levels are fertilizing the rainforests and increasing competition for light, water and nutrients in the soil. So the big fast-growing trees have an advantage and are outpacing the smaller ones.

The researchers believe the odd change in growth patterns could also be a signal for an overall change in rainforest ecology.

This was one of those switches that Hon Kim Chance talked about and that is now being clearly identified in many of the documents presented to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. If we suddenly reach the stage at which forests can no longer absorb CO₂ and become CO₂ emitters, CO₂ levels will spiral out of control.

In *Climate Projection Strategies for the 21st Century: Kyoto and beyond*, by the German Advisory Council on Global Change, it states -

The risk of singular, non-linear events triggered by climate change represent a devastating risk to humankind. Several systemic thresholds are possible in the complex planetary system, beyond which large singular events can be triggered . . .

This was the very issue that we talked about in terms of change to the drivers of climate in the current systems. It is also important to note that these comments have appeared in recent documents put out by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, which my honourable colleague mentioned earlier. At Cape Grim in Tasmania we are now seeing significantly larger amounts of CO₂ emission without forest fire input, which is providing CSIRO scientists with a particularly scary analysis. The impact, which is

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shown on a graph in one of the CSIRO's documents about climate rise, is significant. From the Western Australian perspective, by 2070 we anticipate a rise of temperature in the north-west of this State of two to seven degrees. We have already seen the predictions of a 35 per cent rainfall reduction in the south west region. These are the direct results of CO₂-equivalent emissions in the atmosphere. The motion my honourable colleague put was merely that we, as a nation, a State and a global society, need to address these issues. To say we need to address something else is to bury our head in the sand. It is highly and significantly important that this State and this Government clearly indicate their position with regard to the signing of the Kyoto Protocol. The Labor Opposition at a federal level has indicated that it will sign the Kyoto Protocol. Will the Government of this State be supportive of that and will it, in turn, come on board and support that signing?

Amendment to Motion

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: With that in mind, I will move an amendment to the principal motion. I move -

After paragraph (2) - To insert -

- (3) Ask the Premier to provide this House with his position regarding the signing of the Kyoto Protocol agreement.

I will now provide some of the rationale behind that amendment. According to this Government's greenhouse strategy, it is aiming for a maximum increase in CO₂ emissions over the next 20 years of 67 per cent. That is totally inconsistent with the conditions described under the nation's current agreement with regard to the Kyoto Protocol in that we have committed, should we sign, to a maximum increase of eight per cent.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to sessional orders.

Sitting suspended from 4.15 to 4.30 pm