

RENEWABLE ENERGY

276. Dr J. KRISHNAN to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to delivering a safe, stable and secure electricity system.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on action underway to prepare our electricity system for Western Australia's clean energy future?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the *SWIS demand assessment 2023 to 2042* will assist in delivering a stable transition?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

- (1)–(2) That is an excellent question from a member who has unbounded energy as we all know!

This government is doing what is necessary to get Western Australia ready for our high renewable energy future. We have done that by having a careful plan to transition Synergy away from the use of coal in Collie as the coal plants cease to have a capacity to operate in the system. It is not well understood by many people that for large periods of the year, the coal-fired power stations are not able to function in the way they are designed. Sometimes they have to be completely switched off and other times they have to be run at low capacity in what is called “ramping mode”, by which their power output goes up and down constantly. That is not what they were designed to do. The government has responded to that with a \$3.8 billion plan to decarbonise Synergy. Many people, including the shadow Minister for Energy, do not understand that a bigger piece of work is needed, which is the decarbonisation of industry in Western Australia. I make it clear again that the \$3.8 billion that was allocated to Synergy is for the efforts to decarbonise Synergy, not to decarbonise the south west interconnect system. Last year, we set up a task force led by the Department of Treasury called the SWIS Demand Assessment. That has now reported. I presented the report to the Australian Institute of Energy with my 220 favourite energy nerds at the Hilton hotel.

Ms R. Saffioti: That would have been a great time!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It was; it was a great time had by all!

Ms M.M. Quirk: A charged atmosphere!

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It was a charged atmosphere—thank you, member for Landsdale!

The SWIS Demand Assessment shows the future, not for decarbonising Synergy but decarbonising the users of the Western Power network that currently use natural gas, either as part of their production processes or as a feedstock for the processes—not in energy—and for the future hydrogen industry that is very exciting here in Western Australia. The SWIS Demand Assessment shows that we will build an additional 4 000 kilometres of network to bring the high-voltage energy to where it is needed. This has nothing to do with the \$3.8 billion project we are running with Synergy. This is about allowing the private sector to build the power infrastructure it needs to decarbonise its projects; it has nothing to do with government. I know it is challenging for the shadow minister, but that is what it is about.

It is interesting that not everybody in Australia supports using renewable energy as part of the decarbonisation strategy. In particular, the National Party thinks we should go nuclear. That is its position. David Littleproud is proudly out there saying that when we retire coal, we should replace it with small nuclear reactors. David Littleproud has said that the place where the coal plant is retired is where the small nuclear reactor should be put. I wonder whether the member for Collie–Preston is aware that the National Party's argument currently is that we should put a nuclear power station in Collie. That would be news to the residents of Collie. Is it not interesting that the National Party does not own its own policy? It does not come out and acknowledge it; it does not talk about it. Is that because it is a silly policy that nobody supports or is there another reason that it runs away from that policy?