

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS — BROWSE TO NORTH WEST SHELF PROJECT

Motion

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [1.11 pm]: I move —

That this house —

- (a) notes that the greenhouse gas emissions of the proposed Browse Basin and Burrup Hub LNG development will be several times the amount produced by the proposed Adani mine and will become Australia's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions;
- (b) notes that this development, should it go ahead, will actively undermine Australia's ability to meet its global commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the effects of climate change; and
- (c) recognises that on balance the cumulative impact on the environment is simply too great to justify proceeding and calls on the government to instead prioritise the creation and retention of ongoing jobs in clean and renewable energy industries.

By way of introduction, I want to state from the outset that I recognise that this is not a motion that will be considered valuable by anyone in this chamber who is a climate change denier—I think that they are a real minority—or thinks that climate change is not caused by human activity. I believe that the vast majority of people within this chamber are concerned about climate change and want to come up with solutions to address climate change, but the reality is that the challenge is enormous, wicked and extraordinarily difficult to tackle. It is difficult for us to tackle it at a state, national and indeed international level, but I believe the issue is so serious that we have an obligation to try to be on the right side of history on this one and to do all that we can in our part of the world to try to mitigate the impacts of climate change. The last time the Earth was two degrees warmer than pre-industrial levels was several hundred thousand years ago. We are on track to get substantially warmer than that and, unfortunately, within the next couple of decades. That means there is the risk of setting off feedback loops that will accelerate and enhance the warming. I will not talk about all the impacts that climate change will bring, because members have heard that ad infinitum and should be across the general risks.

The last time I spoke about climate in this place, I referred to the global carbon budget. I gave the figures that we need to achieve globally in order to have a chance of at least keeping it at, or even under, our warming targets.

Under the Paris Agreement target, we will increase our carbon output and put the world on track for more than two degrees of warming. Unfortunately, Australia is tracking terribly against what was already a very generous carbon budget for Paris. Claims that we are doing well are relying, unfortunately, on quite dodgy accounting and transferring of land use, land use change and forestry credits from Kyoto 1 to meet the Paris target. Once we take that out, we are way over our carbon budget, and we will continue to be way over our carbon budget for the foreseeable future.

In terms of dealing with LNG within Western Australia, which is the basis for this particular motion today, for the last three years Australia's actual emissions have been going up. Very simply, the LNG industry has been the cause of that increase. The LNG industry in Western Australia is responsible for 36 per cent of our state's emissions. If the full Burrup hub expansion goes ahead, including Scarborough and Browse, we are looking at just this area within Western Australia producing 47 per cent of WA's greenhouse gas emissions. To put that in some sort of perspective nationally, that is eight per cent of Australia's total emissions. The Adani Carmichael mine does not even come close to that—the expected annual combined scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions are less than half that of the Burrup hub. Therefore, although AGL Energy's combined energy production portfolio currently tops the list of scope 1 emissions, it does have concrete plans to reduce its emissions by almost one quarter over the next four years. That will leave the Burrup hub as the undisputed heavyweight emitter within Australia. Members, I do not think this is something that we want to be a part of or should be looking to be a part of.

Both Woodside and Chevron talk about how these projects will continue to export LNG beyond 2070. I note that that is well beyond the stated 2050 target for carbon neutrality. I remind people that 2050 for carbon neutrality is an extremely soft target, particularly when we look at the rate at which climate change is expanding and the degree of the crisis that we are facing. Frankly, even a date of 2050 for carbon neutrality means that we will not meet the need to stay below that critical two degrees of warming.

The concern that the Greens have, the concern that I have and the concern that increasingly the environment movement has is that we cannot afford to allow these projects to expand, and we cannot continue to approve these new projects. We just cannot afford it. The carbon budget simply does not allow it. We are able to look at saying no to these expansions. In February 2018, the New South Wales Land and Environment Court refused the proposed Rocky Hill coal mine. The Chief Judge of the court, Brian Preston, explicitly referred to climate change and the

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

scope 3 emissions of the coal extracted by the mine as the reasons for refusing that application. We do not have to accept the expansion of what is a greenhouse gas-polluting industry.

It is really important that in this place we are mindful of who bears the cost of the expansion of the LNG industry. If Western Australia were to reduce emissions by only 26 per cent from 2005 levels, which is the Paris Agreement target for Australia for 2030, the full Burrup hub project then would account for over 90 per cent of Western Australia's emissions allowance. This means that every single other sector of the economy would need to cut its emissions by 90 per cent. That does not strike me as a fair arrangement. As it stands, Australia is committed to a five per cent reduction on 2005 levels by 2020. These current projects, with their current emissions, have on their own led to a nearly five per cent increase in Australia's 2005 emissions levels. The proposed expansion would take that to an eight per cent increase over 2005 levels.

I do not need to point out that this is entirely the wrong direction we need to be taking. It is utterly unreasonable to expect Western Australians to effectively be responsible for subsidising the carbon emissions for these projects at all, let alone to the extent that I have just described would be necessary to meet our Paris targets, while at the same time bearing the impacts of climate change in our agricultural lands, forests, water supplies and health system. I note that the Department of Health is undertaking its first public health inquiry into the impacts that climate change will have on mental health and health, precisely because it is recognised that there will be impacts, even as it stands. All the while, as if to rub salt into the wound, we will be receiving no royalties to assist those people who will be most impacted by climate change. The Western Australian Council of Social Service—in fact, all the councils of social service around Australia—have produced some very important data pointing out that people from low socioeconomic areas will be most adversely impacted by the effects of climate change.

I note that this government is very committed to expanding the LNG industry. It has been out on the world stage actively pursuing an LNG future for Western Australia. We have seen the government budget \$10 million over 10 years to assist in the creation of that LNG futures facility. I am concerned that policy settings are locking us into a warmer climate—that is what they are doing—and offering very little money back to government in the process, and are actually directly and indirectly employing relatively few people. I will refer more to that in a moment. This is terrible decision-making and public policy. It is important to look at the issue of jobs, because much is made of how many jobs will be created as a result of the expansion of the LNG industry. However, it affects only a relatively small number of people, particularly when we look at lost opportunities for other areas of job creation, which I will speak about in a moment. At the moment, Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that 14 700 people are employed in the oil and gas industry in Western Australia. To put that into some sort of perspective, McDonald's employs 8 405 people. Even the Department of Health employs 35 000 people, and the Department of Education employs over 39 000 people. Those are the sorts of employment figures we are talking about. I recognise that they are real people with real jobs, but I am suggesting that people with the same skill set should be able to look at other employment opportunities that will have a far greater benefit for the state from both a financial perspective and, most importantly, a mitigation of climate change perspective.

Ultimately, there are no redeeming features of putting all our energy into trying to expand the LNG industry, particularly to the extent that is being proposed. Even if we accept—and I do not—the argument that WA LNG is replacing coal burnt overseas, this has been demonstrated time and again to not be the case. The concern is that by continuing to pump out LNG, it is being burnt in addition to coal, and to the exclusion of pursuing renewable energy opportunities, so that argument does not stack up. We need to remember that LNG produced here and burnt overseas will still have an impact on us as a planet. What happens in other countries will impact just as much here. I recognise, of course, that there are construction jobs initially in establishing LNG, but that is a relatively short time frame in the overall lifespan of LNG production. There are also construction jobs in transforming our energy infrastructure to 100 per cent renewables. It does not have to be an either/or scenario. We do not have to look at LNG as though it is the only way we can produce jobs, because there are also jobs in renewables. We already know that 100 per cent renewables is completely possible—it is.

The Premier has spoken about the possible creation of 1 400 jobs, but we know that simply requiring offsets for these existing last projects will open the door to around 4 000 jobs. That is where the jobs lie. That is where the opportunity lies, and without the overall cost to the planet and the community. The sorts of numbers we are talking about are roughly the current employment numbers for the whole of Woodside just in offsets. Other modelling predicts that there will be more than 10 000 jobs for renewables in WA, if we ever decide to get very serious about transitioning. The Premier's best case scenario for the Scarborough field is almost 600 ongoing operational jobs and 3 200 in the construction phase. I certainly recognise that for the next five years or so, we are talking about a huge number of jobs, but I am also saying that after that, the number of jobs will decrease quite significantly and those jobs could be found elsewhere in other industries.

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

I am also really concerned that there is effectively no financial benefit to Western Australia. There is no financial argument to be made in favour of pushing this industry, particularly if we are looking at doing it at the expense of others, with no requirement for proper offsets. We are talking about years of corporate tax dodgers and some pretty sweet deals that let them get away with not paying royalties and having no real requirement to offset their pollution. It is, therefore, really hard to see where the benefit will be for WA as a state. There is certainly not enough to justify selling out the rest of the state and the rest of the world when it comes to climate impacts. It just does not justify it. If it were not such a serious issue for Western Australia and the world, I think it would be almost comical.

Renewables are here. We have already seen the crossover in which a number of different renewable electricity generation options are as cheap as, or cheaper than, building new gas operations. I refer to the really good work being done by Sustainable Energy Now WA, which is made up of experts in this area. It has demonstrated how we in WA can switch to 100 per cent renewables. It has mapped out what that looks like. We are seeing Australia's biggest energy supplier planning to significantly reduce its carbon emissions by transitioning to a mix that includes a lot of renewables.

One of the other issues I want to raise is the increasing concern—we are starting to see the basis for concerns around this globally also—about what may be effectively the creation of stranded assets. It takes decades for these large installations to pay back their investment costs. For the reasons I have already given, we do not have those decades available to enable us to recoup those costs, especially if we are serious about dealing with climate change, particularly the Paris targets. The Global Energy Monitor has estimated that up to \$US1.3 trillion in proposed LNG import-export facilities are at risk of becoming stranded around the world. As a state, we do not need to be cleaning up billions of dollars' worth of stranded LNG assets on the Burrup Peninsula and off the North West Shelf in 20 years. That is before I even start talking about the intrinsic value of the Burrup itself. I will leave that to my colleague Hon Robin Chapple, who has been talking about this for a very long time.

The long-term contracts with gas companies will commit both them and their clients to not transition for decades. As I said, they are decades which we not only do not have, but also in which it is reasonable to expect that national regulation will start catching up with the science. It may not be there now, but it will be, and their clients will be forced to move away from fossil fuels.

The reality is that the policy framework in the future is not going to look like it does now. We have already seen it rapidly evolve in the last decade alone. We know that once these facilities are built and those billions of dollars of capital investment are made, those companies will seek to extract the resource and sell it as fast as they can. I think it is absolutely bewildering that the government would go to such lengths to encourage further significant expansion of an industry that we know locks us into a future that I think the majority of us here are united in wanting to avoid. I believe that the majority of people in this chamber ultimately want to do their part to offset a climate change disaster. At best, it is a dangerously cavalier disregard for the future and a complete lack of imagination and ambition for Western Australia; at worst, it is a series of deliberate choices being made for deliberately opaque reasons. I recognise that much money can be made in the short term, I recognise that jobs are easily able to be generated in the short term, but we have to take a long-term view to the expansion of this industry. For all the reasons that I have already articulated, I do not think that it is the horse that this government should back. We will find ourselves on the wrong side of history. Western Australia has the incredible luck of being gifted with everything in abundance that we need for clean energy. If we applied the same level of investment into clean energy offsets and decarbonising our economy as we are applying to LNG investments, not only would we be looking at a far better and cleaner future, but also it would make better economic sense in the long term.

The problem with locking us into these large polluting industries that have such a long lifespan is that it does not recognise that technology is changing rapidly. It is changing every single day. Even today I found a business article that outlines an energy start-up company that is backed by Bill Gates, and it is described as a "solar breakthrough". It describes the capacity of one of our most polluting industries—for example, concrete—to potentially be put onto 100 per cent renewables. This sort of thing excites me. This sort of thing gives me hope and makes me think that although climate change is formidable, we do not have to feel as though all is lost, because I do not believe it. I believe there is a future there that we need to explore.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Environment) [1.32 pm]: It is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the government this afternoon to speak on this motion. We have had a few motions on climate change this year and it is an important debate.

Hon Robin Chapple interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It is an important debate, honourable member. I am not taking interjections because I have only 20 minutes. All of us in this place should know that members of the Legislative Council can speak for

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

long periods, but I have only 20 minutes on this topic, so I will direct my comments to you, Madam President, and will not be encouraging interjections.

I reiterate that the McGowan government is committed to climate change. In fact, when we last discussed the issue of climate change in this place, there was almost universal recognition that climate change is real, climate change is here to stay, and we all have to take responsibility and do our bit to tackle this issue. In 2018, the state government announced that it was undertaking a climate change policy, and we have developed a new coordinated policy for Western Australia. Then in September this year, it was my pleasure to release a climate change issues paper, which is here for those members who have not seen it, and it is open for public consultation. The consultation period closes in nine days, on 29 November. If people have not put a submission in or given us their thoughts on climate change, I would encourage them to do so. It is very important. I certainly hope that Hon Alison Xamon and her colleagues from the Greens will put in a submission—if not multiple submissions—to give us their views on climate change. That consultation seeks views from across the Western Australian community, whether from parliamentarians, representatives of industry, companies or people with business interests—everyone is welcome to give their contribution or feedback on how Western Australia can meet the challenges of climate change, including how emissions associated with our significant extractive industries can be reduced and energy use decoupled from the emissions from those sectors. The issues paper also seeks feedback on the opportunities that a low-carbon economy presents, and how Western Australia can make the most of the opportunities that exist at the moment.

The state government has undertaken a range of climate-related initiatives, with a number of bodies of work having commenced over the past 12 to 18 months to help prepare Western Australia to transition to a lower carbon economy. I will mention a few of those for the benefit of members in this place. The government has provided in-principle support for eligible carbon farming activities on pastoral lease land, which will begin to unlock Western Australia's sequestration potential. It will underpin what I think will be the development of carbon markets, while also improving the condition of our rangelands, which we probably all agree needs improving. It would also further support economic development in our regions. Again, members like Hon Robin Scott and Hon Colin Tincknell, who represent regional Western Australia, would acknowledge that it is important to do what we can to create more opportunities and support economic development in regional Western Australia.

Generator interim access arrangements have also been undertaken, which have opened the door to around 900 megawatts of renewable energy generation. This includes the recently commissioned Badgingarra wind farm, Alinta Energy's Yandin wind farm, Risen Energy (Australia)'s 100 megawatt solar farm in Merredin, and Bright Energy Investments' wind farm at Warradarge. Almost 300 000 residential and commercial solar systems have been installed across Western Australia, with total generation capacity now exceeding 1.2 gigawatts. All of this is contributing and helping in this regard. Synergy and Western Power have also launched the PowerBank community battery in Meadow Springs near Mandurah. This innovative solution allows customers to store solar power without the high expense of purchasing their own battery. Outside the state's main energy grid, Horizon Power has launched the Onslow microgrid. That project in my electorate successfully integrates solar and battery storage systems with traditional energy. Horizon Power and Western Power are also deploying standalone power systems across the state, which combine solar panels and batteries with backup diesel to provide more reliable and cleaner energy supplies to off-grid and fringe-of-grid customers.

I draw members' attention to a media statement put out today by my good colleague the Minister for Energy, which outlines that he has officially opened stage 1 of the Agnew hybrid renewable project by Gold Fields. This project about 23 kilometres outside Leinster is leading the way in the transition to renewable power for off-grid remote mines. Mining companies across the state are looking more and more often at the opportunities in the renewables and non-traditional energy generation space to see how they can take advantage of the technology. A number of companies are leading the way in the transition to renewable power for off-grid remote mines. It is pleasing to hear and see that it does not work just in the metropolitan area; this stuff can in fact work right across the state. It can deliver benefits for the environment. It also can deliver financial benefits for these companies and, just as importantly, it can deliver jobs for Western Australians. That is stage 1, which was opened today. Stage 2, which has been provided with some funding from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, is already underway and is expected to be completed next year. Once stage 2 is complete, with the addition of 18 megawatts of wind generation and five turbines, a 13-megawatt battery and an advanced microgrid control system, the project will provide the mine with more than 50 per cent renewable energy over the next 10 years. It is pleasing to see and hear that stuff happening across mine sites in Western Australia.

The state government is also implementing reforms for the electricity sector as part of the energy transformation strategy, which articulates a vision for a clean energy sector that integrates distributed and utility-scale energy resources. It also ensures adequate transmission and storage infrastructure, and takes full advantage of the falling cost of renewables and storage to deliver low-cost, reliable and cleaner generation, particularly in off-grid applications.

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

The energy transformation strategy will support Western Australia in households and businesses to continue their uptake of cleaner distribution sources, including solar and batteries.

As Hon Alison Xamon mentioned in her contribution, the state government has also launched an inquiry to investigate the impacts of climate change on health. That will consider how to reduce the contribution of Western Australia health services to emissions and how to help that sector adapt to the impact of climate change. The state government has also convened a working group to explore ways to accelerate the uptake of electric vehicles across the state and support electrification of transport and a more sustainable, lower emission transport sector for Western Australia. Transport emissions make a substantial contribution to Western Australia's emissions, and they have increased by about 50 per cent from 2005 levels, so it is an area that needs to be tackled, and work is being done in that regard.

I have said this previously and I will say it again: the Australian government is a signatory to the Paris Agreement, and from my perspective and the state government's perspective, it is absolutely the right government to be doing the heavy lifting to tackle the challenges of climate change and to ensure that we reduce our emissions. There is a really important role for the commonwealth government in ensuring that the policy settings are in place so Australia can meet its national emissions reduction targets at the least cost to the national economy. This can help protect the international competitiveness of key industries and also avoid perverse outcomes, including costs imposed on businesses in Western Australia that are not imposed in other jurisdictions. Last week in Adelaide, I attended the national Meeting of Environment Ministers where, again, the issue of climate action was discussed. It is fair to say that on the one hand we are told by the commonwealth government that we should leave things to it and that it is tackling these issues, but we called for increased transparency about the commonwealth government's emissions target. I have said previously, and we are on the record as saying, that we support the target of reducing emissions by 26 per cent to 28 per cent by 2030, but we want to have reassurances that that is being met. Ministers for Environment from the territories and states from around the country have asked for a briefing at our next meeting—hopefully, from the federal Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction—to talk about exactly how the commonwealth is delivering in this regard. Certainly, it is the commonwealth government that signed the Paris Agreement and it should bring forward national policies to help the country deal with this issue.

I will touch on the issue of emissions from liquefied natural gas versus coal. Some people outside of this place—I do not think Hon Alison Xamon did this today—are calling for the LNG industry to close down now. I say at the outset that that is not the view of this government, plainly and simply. Tens of thousands of Western Australians are employed in the LNG sector. It has been employing thousands of people for a while and it will continue for the next period of time.

Comparing emissions from Western Australia's LNG production with emissions from the production of coal can be misleading. In terms of total carbon emissions and toxic pollutants, LNG is cleaner than coal. However, LNG extraction and processing is emissions intensive, and I am happy to admit that. But there needs to be a balance in this policy area, and that is certainly what this government is trying to do.

Greenhouse gas emissions from LNG processing accrue to Western Australia, while the benefits of coal to gas switching—the emissions avoided by the displacement of coal with gas for energy generation and heating—occur elsewhere. Anthropogenic climate change is a global rather than a national or state phenomenon. Actions and industries developed in Western Australia can assist the global transition to net zero emissions. It is very important that we should not be penalised in Western Australia because the benefits of LNG are likely to be received by other countries, not here on the ground. We certainly have a role to play. I have a real issue with people who say that we should be closing down this industry in Western Australia because there is absolutely no benefit to us here. I totally disagree. It employs thousands, if not tens of thousands, of Western Australians. It is absolutely better for the environment across the world than coal. I am disappointed to hear people calling for the industry to close, and we certainly will not be supporting that.

The global benefits of lower emission fuels over higher emission fuels are recognised. The International Energy Agency has estimated that coal to gas switching avoided 95 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions globally in 2018. The IEA acknowledges that unabated consumption of fossil fuels is inconsistent with long-term climate solutions. However, there can be significant CO₂ and air quality benefits in specific countries, sectors and time frames from using fewer emissions intensive fuels.

LNG production contributes a portion of Western Australia's overall greenhouse gas emissions. Up to 70 per cent of Western Australia's overall greenhouse gas emissions are from other sources, including mining and manufacturing, energy generation, transport and agriculture. I am pleased that at least those people have not said that we should close down those industries too, because if we did, no jobs would be left in Western Australia. Certainly, this

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

government believes that all sectors of industry need to play their part in tackling emissions. I think it is very unfair to pounce on one industry.

While we are on this issue, I wanted to mention an article—I have not had a briefing on the issue yet, but I look forward to it—that appeared in the business section of *The West Australian* last Saturday, titled “Gas good for global emissions: Woodside”. It states —

Woodside chief Peter Coleman says a new report on “life cycle” emissions from the company’s proposed developments off WA confirms gas has a significant role to play in reducing global emissions.

The oil and gas giant commissioned ERM to produce a report on the global greenhouse emissions from its Scarborough and Browse gas fields over the life of the proposed projects.

It modelled the emission reductions to be gained if customer countries switched to gas, compared with the likely power mixes in those export markets.

The report, which was critically reviewed by the CSIRO, showed an emissions reduction of more than 400 million metric tonnes over the period to 2040.

As I said, I have not yet seen or been briefed on the report.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I will be referring to it later.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Maybe the member has more information on it than I do. Certainly, this report has been peer reviewed by the CSIRO and shows that absolutely there are benefits.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I will give you a bit more detail then.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is great. I could say a few more things about it, but if the member is going to comment, I will use my four minutes for something else.

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: It is important to be collaborative in this place. I am certainly collegiate. I am happy to work with Hon Dr Steve Thomas.

I want to touch briefly on renewable hydrogen. Western Australia’s emerging renewable hydrogen industry can contribute to global decarbonisation. I want to pay respects to the work being undertaken by my good colleague the Minister for Regional Development, who is away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business.

Renewable hydrogen is a means to export Western Australia’s world-class solar and wind resources, but also to assist international partners to meet emissions reduction goals and to assist the state’s industries to transition to a lower carbon future and reduce reliance on imported diesel for remote areas. Our state government’s Western Australian renewable hydrogen strategy, released in July this year, will underpin growing global demand for hydrogen made from renewable energy sources and support global decarbonisation. Stay tuned for more on that from the Minister for Regional Development as that rolls out.

I could go on for hours, but I am rapidly running out of time. In relation to decarbonising Western Australian industry, the state government can support emissions-intensive industries in reducing their carbon footprint through focusing on international best practice and supporting the adoption of renewable energy sources. There is a balance between short-term impacts on jobs and the economy and longer term goals to safeguard Western Australia’s future. On 26 August, the state government announced its commitment to work with all sectors of the economy to achieve net zero emissions for Western Australia by 2050, and that certainly lines up with the Paris Agreement. That policy sends a clear signal for new investment, but also creates certainty for business and positions Western Australia for the global low-carbon transition. This again brings me back to the commonwealth’s—I am not trying to be party political this afternoon—lack of policy in this area. It cannot seem to tackle this area. I am not sure what the blockage is, but elements of the business community that are doing stuff in this area are calling on the commonwealth to act and to have some sensible policy in this space. It has not thus far and I hope to goodness it comes out at some stage very soon and tells us that it has a policy, because industry and others are calling for it.

Certainly, projects in Western Australia are already showcasing innovative clean energy solutions. The DeGrussa copper–gold mine in Doolgunna, 900 kilometres north of Perth, is one of Australia’s first movers in renewable energy use in an off-grid mining application. The project represents the largest integrated off-grid solar and battery storage facility in Australia and reduces emissions by around 15 per cent. Woodside is looking at the hydrogen space. It has also installed a battery on its Goodwyn Alpha platform to meet its spinning reserve requirements, which has enabled the company to remove the gas turbine, thus reducing gas use and emissions. Recently, Fortescue Metals Group announced that it was partnering with Alinta to power the Chichester hub. Right across the state, we are seeing good work in this area.

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

I cannot support Hon Alison Xamon's motion this afternoon, because she is asking us to close down an industry that Western Australians rely on and will rely on in the future.

HON CHARLES SMITH (East Metropolitan) [1.52 pm]: I would like to make a few brief remarks in response to the honourable member's motion this afternoon and address some of those concerns and perhaps offer one or two solutions. I am sure that this development will emit a considerable and significant amount of greenhouse gases, but I refute the honourable member's claim that we should be embracing renewables. A simple look at the German economy will offer members an insight into what happens when a government embraces renewables. Some years ago, the German government spent around \$100 billion on renewables and what was the result? Germany's energy prices are double those of its neighbour France. It now emits more carbon than it did before because it has to keep turning on its coal-fired power stations.

Given the globalist nature of the resources industry, largely foreign multinational companies take advantage of two things: firstly, the plentiful nature of our resources that we are so lucky to have in Australia and, secondly, our very generous mining royalties and taxes. Companies such as Shell, Exxon and Chevron pay relatively little tax on our resources, which they source from our own backyard. In essence, these corporations use us for our natural resources and, in relative terms, pay very little for the privilege. Not only that, they also leave us with the greenhouse gas emissions as a thankyou, which is the true scandal of this scenario. Global multinational companies, emboldened by the policies of the major parties, pocket billions of dollars in profits thanks to relaxed royalty and taxation schemes.

Let us glance at the facts. I believe that Australia is now the world's largest exporter of natural gas, having overtaken resource-rich Qatar. Let us take a brief look at the differences in royalties between these two countries. In 2017–18, LNG companies in Australia raked in a profit of \$29.7 billion. Of that, \$1.07 billion in royalties was paid. On the other hand, Qatar collected a very tidy \$26 billion in royalties in the same year. To use another point of contrast, Norway is projected to pocket \$46 billion from the petroleum industry in 2019. For countries with very similar natural resource capacities, this is a huge, significant and, quite frankly, ridiculous difference. As a nation, we have many and serious obligations to our citizens, who now appear to be getting poorer. We have to ask this question: why on earth are we giving away our resources for peanuts? In this light, it is not an exaggeration to declare that taxes such as the commonwealth petroleum resource rent tax is a total national policy failure. Is it any wonder that these multinational companies call Australia "Treasure Island"? They come here, take our resources, employ few Australians and pay next to nothing in taxation and royalties. I think it is obvious that the country and the state of Western Australia should be getting much more of the pie to invest into more state projects that will fuel jobs here in Western Australia into the future.

I want to inject a brief dose of reality into this debate about carbon emissions. Most of the commentary we have heard is about policy debate on Australia's rising greenhouse gas emissions. One of the things it totally misses is something that I always go on about. I am sure members can guess what I am going to talk about. The elephant in the room is population growth in Australia. The first part of this motion asserts that the proposed Browse Basin and the Burrup Hub LNG development will become Australia's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Emission levels depend on many factors, including our energy-use patterns, industry mix, exports, transport and the design of our cities. The seldom acknowledged truth is that Australia's extremely high population growth rate will make it next to impossible to substantially reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions. Australia's rate of population growth will cumulatively contribute more to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions than we could ever dream would be contributed by any LNG project or mine. Australia now adds nearly 400 000 people to its population every year. At the behest of the self-serving growth lobby, Australian governments of both persuasions have cranked up immigration laws to unparalleled rates. Our per capita growth rate is currently the highest in the world. We also have a population growth rate that is far higher than those of other developed countries. If present trends continue, Australia will nearly double its population to a projected 43 million by 2066. It has previously been estimated that population growth accounts for over 80 per cent of Australia's total emissions growth.

A 2016 study led by the University of Adelaide titled "Implications of Australia's Population Policy for Future Greenhouse Gas Emissions Targets" examined the link between population growth, emissions and environmental degradation. I read from that report —

Based on current population policies, the projected growth in the Australian population will make it already challenging future emissions-reduction goals even more difficult to achieve. In addition to the rising pressure of Australia's population on its ecosystems, the country's future greenhouse gas emissions are also partially tied to its immigration policy. As immigrants adopt Australian lifestyles, they inevitably increase their emissions by accessing emissions-intensive electricity and transported goods and perhaps also by becoming more intensive consumers themselves.

The report concludes —

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

More population growth driven by immigration will hamper Australia's ability to meet its future climate change mitigation commitments and worsen its already stressed ecosystems, unless a massive technological transformation of Australia's energy sector is immediately forthcoming.

Interestingly, the report also notes that the large-scale adoption of nuclear energy in Australia is the only realistic way to reduce emissions from electricity generation under these high-population-growth scenarios. Nuclear energy is a readily deployable, zero emission, reliable, baseload energy source that could help meet Australia's needs. However, to date, it has been excluded from our energy mix due to a combination of ignorance, hysteria and ideology. An utterly bizarre situation currently exists in Western Australia in which we sit on globally significant reserves of uranium and thorium but are not permitted to develop a high-value, high-tech nuclear industry that could generate billions of dollars for the state's economy, support long-term jobs and potentially provide us with abundant, reliable and sustainable energy. By refusing to even examine the possibility of a nuclear industry in Western Australia, those opposed to nuclear energy are sabotaging our long-term economic and sustainability prospects.

In summary, it is difficult to take this motion too seriously when it ignores one of the key reasons that Australia's greenhouse gas emissions will continue to rise. The Australian Greens party lauds itself as the leading advocate of environmental issues, but never criticises Australia's runaway population growth. As my mate the fair dinkum sustainability advocate Dick Smith has observed, the coalition, the Labor Party, the Greens, industry and the media are all "Big Australia" allies engaged in a code of silence when it comes to the downside of rapid population growth. The reality of the situation is that the Greens—the self-proclaimed defenders of the environment—support a "Big Australia" mass immigration policy that is degrading our natural environment, adding to pollution, and causing cities to spread over bushland and farmland wiping out biodiversity and diluting our fixed resources. The Greens support a population policy that actively undermines Australia's ability to meet its global commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, through its irrational opposition to nuclear energy, the Australian Greens party is actively denying us the one energy source that could feasibly help reduce emissions growth while still providing Australia with the power required under this high population growth scenario. This appears to be strange, self-defeating behaviour by a party that tells us on a daily basis that we are facing a catastrophic climate change emergency.

HON JACQUI BOYDELL (Mining and Pastoral — Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA) [2.05 pm]: I thank the honourable member for bringing the motion to the house today. It is a timely debate, given the current conversations in the media and communities regarding gas emissions, the potential in the Browse Basin, and how Western Australia manages environmental impacts and also jobs and economic growth. It is a good debate to be had and I thank the member for bringing the motion to the house. I will not be supporting the motion today; however, I appreciate the opportunity to have this discussion. The first paragraph of the motion states —

- (a) notes that the greenhouse gas emissions of the proposed Browse Basin and Burrup Hub LNG development will be several times the amount produced by the proposed Adani mine ...

It is vital that we look at the wider context of what that means and not just at a very small piece of the LNG pie; therefore, today I will discuss the broader global picture. Although I appreciate the member's view, and certainly the views of the Greens, it does not take into account the current and future real-world economic and environmental conditions or the wider implications of this project for the nation, Western Australia and the globe.

The importance of the LNG industry has been talked about by other members today, but the importance of this industry that underpins our state in both fiscal and environmental terms, and national and global economies, cannot be underestimated. That is why we are talking about it today. The value of the WA LNG industry rose more than \$10 billion between 2017–18 and 2018–19, from \$18.9 billion to \$28.9 billion. That is significant growth. The timely development of the Browse gas resources along with the Scarborough gas field in the Carnarvon basin is key to the continued operation of the five trains of the North West Shelf joint venture at Karratha and the expansion of the Pluto LNG project, both of which I am exceptionally supportive of. A total of 1 800 jobs will be created at the peak of that construction in 2024. That is a significant number of jobs for the people of Western Australia. It will include 720 operational jobs, with 320 of those predicted to be in Karratha.

When LNG replaces more polluting fuels, it can dramatically improve air quality through reducing particulates and other emissions. The main market for our LNG supplies is the Asian market, particularly China and Japan, and India in South-East Asia. These places traditionally use energy sources derived from older fossil fuels that are very high carbon emitters, particularly compared with LNG. I would like to refer the house to the document titled "Comparative Life Cycle Assessment: Browse and Scarborough" that was released on 14 November 2019. That document, and particularly page 18, gives a range of scenarios showing the impact of the generation of electricity using Browse and Scarborough gas for the period 2025 to 2040, as opposed to fossil fuels, which many of those markets I talked about currently use. It is significant that the document refers to the way that LNG avoids those

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

emissions. There is a range of comparisons from page 18 onwards. That report is certainly worth a read for members, because it shows the emissions that are produced by LNG as opposed to other fuel targets.

The Australian LNG sector is making a real contribution to our economic growth. It is providing clean energy compared with other sources, and helping to reduce the global carbon emissions that the minister talked about earlier in his response, particularly for many of our trading partners, especially in Asia. More than 26 000 people are employed in petroleum extraction, and thousands more are employed in maintenance and support services to the LNG industry. Many of those people are in rural and regional Western Australia and across Australia in general. A significant part of our population is employed both directly and indirectly by the sector. That is why the sector deserves our support.

Natural gas is one of the mainstays of global energy supplies. Where it replaces more polluting fuels, it can dramatically improve air quality through reducing particulates and other emissions. The federal government's focus is on reaching our emission reduction target by 2030. Through its \$3.5 billion Climate Solutions Package, the federal government has laid out how it will achieve those targets, right down to the last tonne, members. The LNG industry is incredibly important to our bottom line, both here in Western Australia and on a national scale. The life cycle assessment report to which I referred earlier highlights the importance, in a range of predicted scenarios, of LNG in the global sense. We need to take that into consideration when we have this debate. Although the Burrup hub may boost Australia's carbon emissions, it goes a long way towards reducing emissions in other parts of the world. That may be a somewhat simplistic view. However, if we in Australia have a capacity to reduce global emissions through the production of our LNG industry, we should absolutely be a part of doing that, and in fact have a responsibility to do that. In acknowledging the importance of the LNG industry in Western Australia and in Australia in general, I am not saying it is all perfect and there is nothing to see here. Of course I am not saying that. There is room for improvement in the way in which things are done. There is no doubt about that.

I say in conclusion, because I know other members want to speak to this important motion today, that I will not be supporting the motion. I believe that the benefits of the Burrup project, both financially and in an environmental sense, are too significant, and the opportunities outweigh the emissions that could potentially be produced. I take this opportunity, having reflected on this motion in the last few days, to ask members to think about the fact that the light bulb was developed by candlelight, and cars were developed while horse and cart was the main form of transport. In order to develop new technology, we must use the current technology at our fingertips. LNG has developed alongside coal. New greener technologies will continue to develop alongside LNG. That is a good thing. We are constantly striving to improve in this area. As Hon Alison Xamon herself said, no member in this house wants to see the environment not in balance as we move forward with our projects. But we have to move forward with some sort of balance in the ideology and balance in the economy, and work alongside it, as we continually do, to improve on a cleaner environment. There is nothing wrong with that. I absolutely acknowledge that that is worthwhile. However, the Burrup hub is exceptionally important to the Mining and Pastoral Region and to members of the Pilbara community in particular for the jobs and economic benefits they get from those projects, while managing the environmental concerns. I fully support those LNG projects and look forward to their development, particularly along the Burrup.

I thank Hon Alison Xamon for bringing the motion to the house. I cannot support it today, but I certainly recognise the importance of the discussion.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West) [2.14 pm]: Thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to make a contribution on the motion moved by Hon Alison Xamon. I will go through the motion in a bit more detail shortly, but I will just make the comment that I find it is very easy for parties that never have to occupy the government benches to make comments about what the economy might look like in the future. A balance is always required between economic development and managing other outcomes, including environmental outcomes. Comments are made all the time that suggest that this is an easy process—that it is very easy to change industries around. A simple calculation is put forward, mostly by people who never have to go through the gradual process of transition of an economy, such as the energy economy.

Let us have a quick look at this motion. Paragraph (a) states that this house —

notes that the greenhouse gas emissions of the proposed Browse Basin and Burrup Hub LNG development will be several times the amount produced by the proposed Adani mine and will become Australia's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions;

I do not disagree with that part of the motion. Paragraph (b) reads —

notes that this development, should it go ahead, will actively undermine Australia's ability to meet its global commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the effects of climate change;

Let us take my first exception to that part of the proposal, which suggests that this development will actively undermine Australia's ability to limit the effects of climate change. I am not convinced that Australia's capacity

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

to limit the effects of climate change will be dramatically impacted by this proposal or any other single one. As is commonly known at the moment, depending on which measure is used, Australia produces about 1.2 per cent or 1.3 per cent of global emissions. Global emissions have increased over the years and are currently sitting in the region of 37 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per annum, of which Australia is producing about 540 million tonnes. I refer to the same document that a couple of members have spoken about—that is, the comparative life cycle assessment of the project particularly focused on in the motion, which mentions Browse Basin in particular, and the developments around Scarborough. Woodside commissioned ERM to do some work on what the emissions will be and the potential emissions savings that might occur in the future. There is some very interesting information in this document. As stated on preliminary page iv, the total emissions from Woodside-sourced power, over the 15-year period from 2025 to 2040, are in the region of 526 million tonnes to 560 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. That is over a period of 15 years, so when it is calculated back, we are talking about, in a worst-case scenario, 27 million tonnes a year and, in a best-case scenario, 17 million tonnes a year of carbon dioxide emissions.

Let us compare that briefly, because this motion says that these projects will limit Australia's ability to affect world climate change. At peak production of 37 million tonnes per annum, out of a world production of 37 billion tonnes per annum, these two projects will produce 0.1 per cent of the world's emissions. Australia's annual production of about 1.3 per cent is interesting, because if we look at projected growth into the future, most of the growth in the world's emissions does not come from Australia. The expected growth in emissions of the biggest emitters—the USA, China, India, Russia and the European Union—is significantly higher than Australia's total emissions. Forget the 1.3 per cent of world emissions that Australia puts forward—the projects targeted by the Greens in this motion, with the suggestion that these projects should be stopped, represent 0.1 per cent of emissions. Theoretically, if the rest of the world stayed stable, our carbon emissions might go from 1.3 to 1.4 per cent instead of dropping back slightly. However, the reality is that there is more emissions growth in those other nations than there is in the total production of Australia during the entire year from every source of carbon emissions.

The second part of this motion, which suggests that stopping these projects will have a significant impact on the capacity to limit the effects of climate change, is obviously not accurate. These projects are a minor contributor on a world scale. That is not to say that Australia should not take its commitment to climate change policy seriously. I have said in this place on numerous occasions that I believe climate change policy is important and it is a real issue, with a significant anthropogenic contribution, and it is incumbent upon governments in Australia to make sure they respond to it. However, it is far too easy for those who do not have to manage the economy to suggest that it is easy or simple to transform this part of the economy when its impact is relatively small.

The document referenced by a couple of members compares the three various versions of the International Energy Agency scenarios. The first is, basically, the current policy scenario, which is business as usual, and which expects global greenhouse gas emissions to rise from about 37 billion to 42.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent over that period. That is a significant increase. When we take the potential impact of these projects, which is significant—37 million tonnes—out of a total increase, which, based on the current policy scenario of 37 billion to 42 billion, is about five billion tonnes, it is a small percentage, but it has an impact. We therefore need to try to minimise that impact and make sure it works. I wonder how everybody thinks the global discussion on limiting the emissions of the major emitters is going, such as the commitment of the US to reduce its emissions. I read recently that the US President has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement. I understand that in relation to China, the Paris Agreement is pretty vague and non-binding—not that it is binding on any country. Although it is true that China is increasing its production of renewable energy significantly—it is, and it should be congratulated for doing so—it is also significantly increasing its production of energy from coal sources. We get part of the argument. We get the argument that says, “Gosh, China is producing a lot of renewable energy”, and it is. However, it is very easy to ignore the additional energy that is coming from traditional fossil fuels, particularly coal, of which China has massive resources and will continue to use increasingly.

The world argument about where we expect this will go is problematic. However, it is easy to place all the responsibility on Western Australia. I think that is a very dangerous trend. I understand the ease of an argument that says that a wealthy country like Australia should pick up the pieces. It is very easy to fall into a trap of reacting to that and saying that we should make no effort because too much of it is coming from elsewhere. I am not suggesting we do that. I am suggesting we take action and address the issues of climate change. But to catastrophise at one level and then point the finger at an easy target in Australia remains problematic in an industry that will reduce emissions.

We have not discussed yet the expected “avoided emissions”. I have a CSIRO peer-reviewed paper that suggests that over the 15-year period from 2025 to 2040, under the current policy scenario, the total avoided emissions by Woodside gas production would be 415 million tonnes of carbon dioxide—that is, 27 million tonnes a year. Under the International Energy Agency's new policy scenario, which is the one that is most likely to be successful if we get some action, it is still a total of 406 million tonnes, so that would go from 27.7 million to 27 million tonnes of

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

carbon dioxide a year. Under the sustainable development scenario, which is the most radical change to emissions and is probably the least likely to be developed but is an idealistic goal, the total avoided emissions would be 254 million tonnes. According to that document, over a lifetime, there would be a significant reduction in the level of natural gas. Although 17 million tonnes a year might not sound like a significant level to members in the chamber, it is a significant level compared with the total emissions of Western Australia. Therefore, there are benefits to be gained from the gas industry. Although the gas industry is easy to blame, because during production it has significant emissions, it is also an industry that makes a contribution.

I would like to address the third part of the motion before the house. It states —

- (c) recognises that on balance the cumulative impact on the environment is simply too great to justify proceeding —

I disagree with that part of the motion —

and calls on the government to instead prioritise the creation and retention of ongoing jobs in clean and renewable energy industries.

It is very easy, because it is unproven for the most part, to say that there are impending jobs in renewable energy industries. I will point out to members a couple of the prospects. During Labor's election campaign in 2017, it made an election commitment to the town of Collie, in my electorate of the South West Region, for a reasonably significant solar farm. From an economic perspective, that has, quite rightly and appropriately, been junked. The interesting part is that when questioned on exactly how many jobs this solar farm in Collie would create in the long term, the answer for Collie was none. It was potentially going to create a part-time employment position in Perth, with the monitoring of some of the output. But, in fact, it was not an employment generator. At the last election, the Labor Party also proposed to put in a wave farm in Albany. How many jobs do members think were developed out of the wave farm proposal? Ultimately, wave research has delivered some government-subsidised jobs, and the private sector is making a small contribution to that. I get that; that is a good outcome, and wave energy research is not a bad thing. But when this project was up and running, how many jobs was it delivering in Albany? The answer is none. Although jobs are available in renewable energy, and renewable energy will provide some employment into the future, it is far too easy to sit here and say, "All these jobs that are sitting in the oil and gas industry will be transferred magically into renewable energy, and it will happen almost immediately." However, all those jobs will not transfer, and if it happens, it will happen over a long time. That means that it is incumbent upon the government, whether it is the current government or the government that will succeed it—hopefully, in the not-too-distant future—to manage employment prospects as well as energy outputs.

In the limited time I have left, I will refer to a couple of comments made by the minister in his contribution, which I thought were quite good. He referred to the development that has occurred in the renewable sector. A government report, released this year, states that for the first time in Western Australia, rooftop solar capacity exceeds coal for electricity generation capacity. The rate of growth of the rooftop solar generation industry is higher in this state than in almost any other state and higher in Australia than in pretty much any other country. The minister and I have had this debate before. We are both believers in renewable energy. We both believe that there is a future in the process. As the minister enunciated, he is a believer in broadscale solar farms and having large-scale areas. I have always been a believer in the independence from the system that is created by having rooftop solar on individual houses. There will come a time when the storage of renewable energy is remedied. When that happens, the energy market in this state will change enormously. That will come. For the first time in recent months, the peak capacity of coal, of about 1 150 megawatts, has been exceeded by rooftop capacity. That has happened without shutting down the oil and gas industry. In fact, as that has occurred, the oil and gas industry in the north west of Western Australia has expanded remarkably, and will continue to do so. Things are happening.

The minister mentioned industry investing in this process. I am an enormous optimist about where emissions will go, not because of government policy or debates that occur in this house, because I think they are largely irrelevant, but because industry is engaged in the process. Industry is already talking about decarbonising its own economy. It is interesting that the target of the motion today is probably Woodside, as much as any other gas-producing company in Western Australia. Every time I meet with Woodside, we have a discussion about its investment in renewables. It is immensely interested in the hydrogen economy and how that might add to the state of Western Australia, potentially in energy exports. Woodside is interested in reducing its emissions intensity and overall emissions. I have the same conversations with companies like BHP and Rio Tinto, but Woodside is investing and is highly interested in renewable energy as part of the energy mix in Western Australia. It does that at a time when it is still a major exporter of gas. It is evidenced by the work that Woodside has done that the gas produced in Western Australia has a positive environmental benefit around the world. It is a world problem, but it is far too easy to point the finger at Western Australia.

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

Western Australia's coal industry is the one that we probably need to be talking about. Western Australia's coal industry is on its knees. At some stage in the not-too-distant future it will probably be flat on its face. The transition of that economy into something else is what we need to focus on. That industry has struggled for purely economic reasons. The easy coal in the Collie coalfields is not there anymore. The strip ratios are problematic. The cost of getting that coal out is uncompetitive at the prices it is receiving from both Synergy and the private sector. That industry needs to be discussed. It was interesting that when we started to talk about the next step of the crisis, the response from the government was, "It's okay; don't worry, we'll keep the lights on." It is the Western Australian gas industry that will keep the lights on. The renewable industry is slowly building and ramping up, and hopefully one day, with the use of affordable batteries, it will take over. In the meantime, the gas industry in Western Australia will keep the lights on; however, the people of Collie will not get any benefit from that.

The government has announced its transitional closure of Muja power station. That is fine, because it is a very old power station and it will not survive for much longer. The government will be forced to build a new power station to cover baseload in the interim. Do members know where that might come from? As I have said in here before, a new gas-fired power station will be built somewhere to the north of Perth, taking gas from the Dampier to Bunbury gas pipeline from the North West Shelf. It is the gas industry that will keep the lights on in the interim. It is the gas industry that will continue to replace coal technology as we export it through Asia. It is the gas industry that will continue to employ, when it is extrapolated out, tens of thousands of Western Australians. It would be irresponsible of either this or the next government to cut the throat of that industry on the basis of this ideology.

HON AARON STONEHOUSE (South Metropolitan) [2.34 pm]: I will be very, very quick, because I know other members want to speak. I just want to point out how rich it is to be lectured to by the Greens on reducing emissions. In case anyone has forgotten, it was just in 2009 when Senate Greens voted down, with the coalition, Kevin Rudd's emissions trading scheme.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members!

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I am sure, Madam President —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am trying to hear what Hon Aaron Stonehouse is about to say.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I am sure the Greens will weasel their way out of this one and come up with some excuse for why they had to vote down the ETS at that time, but it ultimately comes down to the Greens being incapable of accepting a good proposition at the expense of a perfect one. They make perfect the enemy of good. It is really disappointing. We see that in this motion today. We all know that natural gas produces nearly half as much carbon dioxide per unit of energy compared with coal; we know that. It is a cleaner form of energy. It is certainly not perfect. There are still emissions of carbon dioxide and, as was mentioned by the Minister for Environment, methane can escape into the environment during the production of natural gas, which is certainly a bad thing. It is not perfect, but it is certainly better than continuing to burn coal. The Greens are incapable of seeing that any policy proposal is ultimately a trade-off. In any decision we make there are trade-offs between two competing ideas and values. There is always an opportunity cost but the Greens are unable to see that. It is the Greens' way or the highway. It is a perfect, zero-emission, 100 per cent renewables future or nothing. It is very disappointing to see. In fact, as Hon Dr Steve Thomas pointed out, this liquefied natural gas project will avoid emitting more than 400 million tonnes of carbon dioxide over the next 15 years, I think.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: That is over its lifetime. That is incredible. Again, it is not perfect. It is still sending emissions into the atmosphere, but certainly it is better than continuing what we are doing now.

It is perfectly fine to advocate for more renewables and it is perfectly fine to advocate for lower emissions, but taking this bloody-minded approach by which it is the Greens' way or nothing at all is not helpful. I think it is telling. Hon Dr Steve Thomas pointed this out quite well: when a party is not in a position of being in government and it will never be accountable for the promises it makes, it is very easy to make promises. Like me: vote for Aaron Stonehouse. I will promise 100 per cent renewables by 2022 and zero taxes and everybody will get a freedom dividend. People will get free money. It will be fantastic. I will give the people all those things if they elect a Liberal Democratic Party government. We can make incredible promises when we will never be accountable for them.

But ultimately I agree: I am not a climate change denier. I broadly accept the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. I accept what seems to be a scientific consensus out there.

Hon Diane Evers: "What seems to be"? That is good!

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I accept it; I do not deny it. I am not a scientist. I am not going to wade into the weeds of debating the minutiae of scientific reports, of which there are scores. I accept it. On that basis, I do not think we should take anything off the table. If we really have a climate emergency on our hands, we should be looking at every available technology that we have to reduce our emissions. If that means natural gas, we should be doing it. If that means rooftop solar, I think it is a great initiative. I think we should look at ways to decentralise energy generation and make it so each person with a rooftop solar generator can trade their generated electricity. I think that would be a fantastic way to revolutionise the renewable sector and incentivise people to invest more in renewables to break up this monopoly that the government trading enterprises have on energy generation. But we should also be looking at new technologies, even if they are cleaner coal, gas or nuclear. We should not be taking anything off the table. In fact, currently the federal Parliament has an inquiry into nuclear energy and the Victorian Parliament has just established one too. I am not going to bang on about that; someone else spoke about it previously. We should not be taking a bloody-minded approach to this kind of thing. Policy is nuanced, there are trade-offs and we should not be discounting one form of technology over another. Everything should be on the table. We should be looking at this objectively and not through the lens of ideology. We should accept what the science says about climate science, but also about the safety and efficiency of nuclear energy, if that is the case. On that, I will not support the motion.

HON ROBIN CHAPPLE (Mining and Pastoral) [2.39 pm]: We talk about uranium being very prolific in Western Australia, which it is, but it is one of the lowest value resources anywhere in the world. Australia has 1.5 per cent of ore while Canada has 30 per cent of ore. That is why we never developed a uranium mine. We have looked for uranium at Lake Way and in other areas. When we go searching for uranium, we find it everywhere but not in sufficient quantities or value to be mined.

Hon Colin Tincknell: Absolute rubbish!

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: As a former member of the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency Radiation Committee, I can assure the member that that is the case.

Hon Colin Tincknell: As a member who has worked in uranium for years, I can assure you it is not.

Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE: I do not want to bother with that one.

The honourable member talked about reducing population. We have to remember that it was Tim Flannery way back when who said that Australia should have a population of 11.7 million. I wanted to deal with that too.

I am really supportive of Hon Alison Xamon's motion. We used to have 280 parts per million of CO₂ in the atmosphere. We now have 400 parts per million, which is an increase of 43 per cent, according to my maths.

One of the problems we have is that nitrous oxide is in the atmosphere, which is 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide. When this occurs, it can capture 300 times the heat that CO₂ can. The Burrup hub has significant CO₂ emissions—we have already identified that, and I will not go back to it—but it also has some of the highest levels of nitrous oxide. A recent report appeared in the triennial meeting of The Hague preprints, which dealt with the emissions on the Burrup. The Burrup rock art that is currently in a museum has a pH of approximately seven, which is neutral. The Burrup rock art, until recently washed by some idiot, had a pH of 3.8, which is about the acidity of lemon juice. Unfortunately, the monitoring site, which was next to Woodside, was washed with Karratha water about a month ago. We know that because the surface of the rock was analysed and it was established that it had fluoride and chlorine in it. We know that the effect out there is dramatic.

I want to quickly touch on some statements made by many eminent people such as Hon Colin Barnett. In the other place in 2006, he spoke about the status of rock art in the Burrup, which, in my opinion, is without doubt the most important heritage site in WA and possibly the nation. He stated —

However, today with our level of knowledge, enlightenment and sophistication, the challenge we face is to reconcile conflicts where they exist. We certainly cannot use ignorance today as an excuse.

Former Premier of Western Australia Dr Carmen Lawrence stated during the Australian International Council on Monuments and Sites conference —

Successive governments—my own included—have failed to appreciate the global significance of the site.

She went on to espouse why we should not develop any more gas there. More recently, I think Colin Barnett made some other statements. I will allow other members to have a bit of a shot.

HON TIM CLIFFORD (East Metropolitan) [2.43 pm]: It is no surprise that I rise today to support the motion. What I have heard in the chamber so far has pretty much been a distraction. We have to do something about climate change. We have to reduce our emissions and we have to transition away from fossil fuels.

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

I have been very disappointed by some of the Minister for Environment's contributions because a lot of what the minister said related to what an individual can do in this state. He spruiked a lot of worthwhile things, which I will address later.

Last week I ran a forum relating to the issues in the climate paper that the minister released. I found that the community shares a lot of values. There were people present who did not know what is going on in the north west. They were totally appalled at the size of the project and the amount of emissions that are projected to come out of it. Given what is happening in the background in New South Wales and Queensland, people are absolutely appalled that we do not have a comprehensive climate change policy across the nation. Even John Howard's former adviser said that the current federal government's tactics are akin to those of the tobacco industry. I heard the minister, opposition members and others in this chamber fall back on the fact that the federal government is doing more than enough to transition away from fossil fuels.

This project will impact on us for decades. It is projected that this project will emit 80 million tonnes of CO₂ a year until 2070. This development will not only destroy any chance that Australia has of reaching its Paris Agreement commitments, but also completely undermine all the positive work that the government has undertaken, as mentioned before. We cannot have it both ways. The government cannot put out an issues paper, which, according to the feedback I got, was inaccessible to the everyday person and was more about putting the onus back on the individual in the community rather than addressing the issue with the big emitters in this state, while at the same time spruik some of our smaller projects but still allow them to emit millions of tonnes of emissions by 2070. It is totally inconsistent with where we need to be going. We have seen the impacts of a climate change of 1.5 degrees. There has been general drying out and Denmark is out of water and water has to be piped from Albany, which is an absolute disgrace, yet we do not talk about these indirect impacts.

Just yesterday, the Premier spruiked his support of the development in the north west. I will read out a couple of his quotes. He said —

As I have said in the Parliament recently, I hope that we will see similar progress on the Browse development and urge the companies involved to finalise negotiations as soon as possible.

He also said —

We'll be doing everything we can to ensure the Scarborough and Browse developments create ongoing jobs for Western Australians, particularly in the Pilbara.

As I said, these projects just do not stack up. They are inconsistent with dealing with the issue of climate change and what the minister has put out and what he is undertaking to address climate change.

I have asked so many questions in this place and got a whole bunch of inconsistent answers. First of all, a couple of months ago, I asked a question about methane and CO₂ emissions and the Premier said that LNG is cleaner than coal. But then I had to get more clarification about that; that is only the combustible side of it. I dragged him along the path to eventually admit that, by his own estimation, methane is 26 to 36 times more destructive than CO₂. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has singled out methane as being 86 times more potent than CO₂. If we are going to spruik an industry such as that, we have to acknowledge that it is worse than the coal industry. It is driving us absolutely in the wrong direction.

A recent report commissioned by Woodside showed that gas produced from the Browse Basin will have an emissions intensity of nearly twice the average for Australian LNG exports, making it one of the most polluting gas developments in the country. The report also detailed energy scenarios that are totally inconsistent with the Paris Agreement. According to Woodside, with the amendment to the North West Shelf state agreement, which is currently before Parliament, it is planning to continue exporting until 2070, which goes back to the fact that it is inconsistent with our Paris Agreement commitments. It also goes back to the inconsistency of the Minister for Energy when he put forward his aspirational target for 2050, which is absolutely disgraceful considering that we need to be completely carbon neutral by 2050. The government cannot have it both ways. It cannot, on the one hand, spruik its emission reduction credentials and, on the other, from what I have read in *Hansard*, fly to Texas to secure gas contracts and talk up the industry, which will be exporting dangerous emissions from the North West Shelf until 2070. The Environmental Protection Authority guidelines and recommendations, which were put forward earlier in the year, outlined scope 1, scope 2 and scope 3 emissions. Scope 3 emissions include the burning of gas in other countries. It is putting our economy and our people at risk.

Some of the main drivers behind this development are supposedly jobs and the economic benefits that would bring growth to Western Australia. But it fails to mention indirect costs. How much are the fires costing the state of New South Wales, where one million hectares burnt up last week? How much are the fires in Queensland costing the Queensland government? How many millions of dollars is it costing our state to pipe water from Albany to a drying Denmark and deal with the drought in the southern rangelands? It is galling that the government talks about

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

dealing with the climate issue, but does not also talk about the indirect costs of what the state government is doing to support an industry that is rapidly losing its social licence across the globe.

We have heard in this place and from the minister about some of the initiatives and the indirect costs on health, insurance and liability. I recently heard from a farmer that insurance companies are looking at not even insuring some properties in regional areas because they are in flood zones or places that are highly susceptible to some of the worst impacts of climate risk. It will impact people in not only the regions, but also the metropolitan area. It will impact our state astronomically and we should be looking at how we are going to deal with that.

Western Australia's economy is extremely reliant on fossil fuels. However, the recent Clean State report titled "Runaway Train: The Impact of WA's LNG Industry on Meeting Our Paris Targets and National Efforts to Tackle Climate Change" found that global gas demand will peak and decline within the next 10 to 15 years, which will make LNG unprofitable. How is that consistent with our 2070 goal? If the industry will be phased out by economics in the next 15 years, why is the state government hitching its wagon completely to an industry that will be basically irrelevant in the next 20 to 30 years. It does not make any economic sense.

Yesterday I asked a question about the Swedish central bank selling off Australian bonds. It singled out Queensland and Western Australia as being the worst actors for expanding fossil fuel industries that are globally unwanted and seen as an economic risk to many countries that look to invest in the many things that we have going on in Australia.

What has been said by other members in the chamber is an absolute deflection of where our narrative with the community should be. Recent polling showed that as high as over 70 per cent of the community wants action on climate change. The government's issues paper had some good elements, but some of the concerns raised were that it was inaccessible to a lot of people in the community and allows the LNG industry to totally shirk its responsibility, ensuring that Western Australia's climate policy will be in a cycle of business as usual. If we are going to address this real challenge, we need to make sure that we have a strong policy that deals with the LNG industry. We also need to make sure that we do not have fracking in the north west. I have looked into this and previous arguments made in this chamber. Without considering the emissions that are going to come from the total area being fracked and the methane coming from those fields, fracking is totally inconsistent with the state government's own climate policy.

I would like to see a climate policy that says, "Okay; we can't have fracking. We've got to phase out the LNG industry." Some of my questions are responded to with scaremongering, with answers such as, "You're going to crash the economy", and those kind of things, and then they throw back these ridiculous short-term dates. We need to be absolutely clear. We need to have a planned transition away from these industries, but we cannot have that if we do not have a hard target. I am disappointed that this government has not put forward hard or interim targets for net zero emissions by 2050. If we are not implementing interim targets and not looking to phase out fossil fuels by 2050, we are going to miss out on a lot of global opportunities for renewable energy investment, and we are going to become a risk to a lot of investors. BP and Shell are currently in litigation in Europe because of the way they have acted in the past—where they have put their money and what projects they have invested in. It is the responsibility of the government to put forward a policy that is going to not only protect our community, but also safeguard our economy, to ensure that the Swiss Bank Corporation and other players that have money invested in Australia do not start taking their money out. That goes back to the concerns raised by the insurance industry. A groundswell of voices in the community, as well as in industry, is saying that we need to do something about emissions. The government is hitching its wagon to a project that is going to be one of the worst emitting projects in Australia. It has target dates that put us out to 2070, way beyond its aspirational target of 2050. It is absolutely irresponsible and it is something that we need to be looking at.

HON COLIN TINCKNELL (South West) [2.56 pm]: I will make a very short contribution, as a very good debate has been going on. I thank the honourable member for bringing this debate to the house. On the conservative side, generally, I agree with most of the things that have been said today. I just want to add a few things to what has been said.

I think the number one thing is that if the Greens have a look at the last federal election, they may get an idea of what the Australian public thinks on this subject. Also, if they really want to make a real change to future emissions on a grand scale, maybe they will join the federal government in lobbying the World Trade Organization and the United Nations to no longer classify China as a developing nation. That would make a big difference. Under international agreement, this label allows the world's largest emitter of carbon to increase its output until 2030. It is something that the biggest emitters do not want to talk about. As we know, natural gas is a fossil fuel, but there are dramatically fewer emissions from the combustion of natural gas than from either coal or oil. The world needs energy to operate. No-one here has been saying that we are going to use less energy; the world needs that energy. Western Australia is a primary resource-producing state. We provide that energy to the world. As we have heard, natural gas is environmentally a lot better than coal. This is a stepping stone to an emissions-free future.

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

We have to look at this with a commonsense view. The Greens want to move towards a form of energy that is less harmful than coal or oil. Natural gas is one of those steps. Nuclear is also one of those steps. It is something that the Greens do not want to discuss. We heard the honourable member talk about uranium. In Western Australia, we have not only a lot of natural gas, but also a lot of uranium.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: What do you think the public thinks about that? What do you think is the public's view on uranium?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I know what it is. I have been involved in many surveys and I know exactly what the surveys say.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: What do they say?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I am not going to raise that.

Several members interjected.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I am telling you now —

The PRESIDENT: Member, you might like to not respond to interjections.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: If we want a fossil fuel-free future, “unreliables” cannot deliver that at this stage; we have to look at other options. At this stage, those options are natural gas and nuclear energy. I am talking about in the world scene. We all live on this planet and this state provides energy to the rest of the world. The natural gas that we provide is invaluable to other countries. Remember that Australia is one of a few Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries that do not use nuclear power. Are we saying to the rest of the world that it is wrong and we are right? Sorry, I do not agree with that. It is just ludicrous to think that we know better than the rest of the world.

There has been a good debate on this motion. I am glad that on this side of the house, generally people do not agree with the Greens' take on this matter. As I have said before, the Greens have a blind ideology. They believe that we cannot have nuclear energy, that we cannot have this or that, and that renewables are the only answer. Everyone knows that renewables cannot deliver at this stage. We need natural gas for base power, and we need jobs for people in this state and this country. Our first responsibility is to the people of Australia. If we really want to reduce emissions around the world, we should work with the federal government to have China not classified as a developing nation.

The PRESIDENT: Before I give the call to Hon Diane Evers, I indicate that the last five minutes may be taken up by the mover, in reply. She has indicated that, yes, she will do that.

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [3.01 pm]: I will put off saying a few of the things that I was going to talk about, because I thought that there would have been a more reasonable discussion and members would have talked about drawing down carbon. For anybody who is interested, there is a lovely website called drawdown.org. It has some ideas about how we can manage the emissions that are being put in the atmosphere by burning liquefied natural gas.

Never ever have I felt so old in this place than in this debate. I am astounded by the intellectual lethargy and the archaic thinking that has been passing around this place. If a year 12 group were in here right now, those students would be wondering what planet they had landed on. People have said such things as, “I believe in renewables.” Yes, I believe in the sun too! Does that really need to be said in here? Somebody also said that they “accept science”. Hey, that is good! Imagine if those year 12s were to go back to their teachers and say, “Sorry, I don't accept science; can you give me something else?” I thought we had got to the stage of accepting science a long time ago, but let me see.

Other things have been said. It sounded as though someone said that the LNG industry underpins pretty much the world and that everything comes out of the LNG industry; we are saving the environment by burning fossil fuels that put out emissions. But, no, that is okay—that is saving the environment. Someone also said that we are saving jobs and without the LNG industry, there would be no jobs. Let me tell members that the world is changing and there will be fewer jobs in the future in just about every industry. We are learning how to do things without those jobs and all we need to do is to find alternatives. What are we going to do? I will leave that to members' grandchildren to figure out because, as I said, the intellectual lethargy in here will not get us around those sorts of ideas.

I would like to go on with a few other things. Someone also said the LNG industry is going to save economic growth. Sometime in the future we must realise that economic growth cannot be continuous on this planet. At some stage, people must realise that they have enough. I would guess that just about everyone in this chamber has enough, especially when we compare what we have with what people in other places in the world have. Maybe they deserve some of what we have—but, no, we are going to keep on going with economic growth!

Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boyde; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

A lot of what we have heard in here revolves around money. We do something because there is money in it and somebody is going to make money out of building it, designing it, selling it, transporting it and burning it. But what can we do with that burning? Remember, money is only something that helps our economy to work, and our economy is here for society. Our society needs the economy to help everyone. It is a tool; it is not the whole world, because our society is just part of that whole world, part of that environment, that we are here to do something about.

The best line that I heard today was “fossil fools”. Hey! Is that not a good one? Fossil fools, yes! That is what we are doing. That is what we are. That is what we are being. That is what we are putting on our children and our grandchildren—that use of those fossil fuels that are burning and putting emissions into the air. We are saying that we are going to change all that by using LNG instead, so that we will not be burning fossil fuels in the coal industry. But if we were not putting the gas out there at a price that is probably just below that of renewables, if we left that gas in the ground and we developed more renewable technology in Australia, we could sell that renewable technology, and with that development actually bring down the price of renewable technology.

Those countries that are transitioning from coal could transition to renewables, and not only would it save them money in the initial stages, because they would be able to advance the technology that they have, but also they would not have to pay for the ongoing cost of putting in more fuel all the time. Sure, I recognise that is going to hurt Australia, because we cannot keep selling what we think we own. But, really, it will help those countries, and it will help us, because they will be coming up to a standard that might give them the opportunities that we have had, and we will not be any worse off. It is not going to hurt us to not sell fossil fuels. We have a lot. We have our iron ore to sell, we have our gold to sell, we have our diamonds to sell, and we have everything else. We have our lithium. We will need the lithium for all those batteries we will have.

One other thing that was discussed in here was energy. I just want to talk about our electricity and about who gets to buy and sell it. Guys, wake up! Distributed energy is happening already. People are going off grid. They are not going to need us to supply them with energy, are they? They are going to have their own renewable systems. Get used to the idea of people being more self-sufficient in this manner. If we adopt and embrace it and encourage it, we are going to have a cleaner place for our children and our grandchildren and so forth. They deserve that. They do not deserve us putting this pollution into the air that is changing everything we know. We are getting more droughts, more fires, more floods and more hurricanes. We are getting all those things that are devastating for so many people on this planet, and we are saying that is okay, because the money still flows back to us. People are still doing jobs that could be done by machinery, when those people could do more important jobs, such as caring for other people, creating something, inventing stuff or doing things that really matter. So let us get over the intellectual lethargy of this house and move on and start to embrace what we can do for the future generations of this planet.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am going to interrupt that part of the debate and offer Hon Alison Xamon, as the mover of the motion, an opportunity to provide a reply for the last five minutes.

HON ALISON XAMON (North Metropolitan) [3.07 pm] — in reply: Thank you, Madam President. I thank members for their contributions, some of which were, of course, a bit more thoughtful than others. I want to respond to a few things that came up in the course of the debate. The Minister for Environment responded by rattling off a range of worthy initiatives that are currently being undertaken by government. The Greens of course take no issue with the list of initiatives that are occurring. They are positive. The problem is that they will not be enough to offset the sheer amount of carbon that will be produced by the expansion of the LNG industry. That, members, is the key here.

When I first started to look at the research, before I put forward this motion, I had hoped that I would be able to put forward a motion that would talk about all the opportunities around offsets, job creation and the sorts of things that I was going to suggest the government needed to initiate in order to fully offset the sort of expansion that we are looking at. But, unfortunately, the more I looked into it, the more apparent it became that over a 50-year life span, even if we go to the full extent of the offsets that are possible within this state—a huge number of offsets are available, and a huge number of jobs, as I said, can be produced by that—that still will not be sufficient to fully offset the amount of carbon that will be produced by the expansion of the LNG industry as it has now been proposed. Renewables have a huge role to play in the future, and there are job opportunities there. It is a desperate shame that they are not being grasped with the same fervour as the expansion of the LNG industry by this government. It is a mistake; it is short-sighted, and for a government that talks about jobs, there are jobs there, and that is where we need to be going.

I will just quickly address the old chestnut of nuclear power. I look forward to the ideologues who love nuclear power to bring that to the election, and for the Australian public to smack it away, as it will. There is no social licence for a filthy industry. There is still no actual strategy to deal with nuclear waste. We still do not have any scientific solution for that. Come back with a solution to the nuclear waste problem that is not just about burying

Extract from Hansard

[COUNCIL — Wednesday, 20 November 2019]

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Hon Alison Xamon; Hon Stephen Dawson; Hon Charles Smith; Hon Jacqui Boydell; Hon Dr Steve Thomas;
Hon Aaron Stonehouse; Hon Robin Chapple; Hon Tim Clifford; Hon Colin Tincknell; Hon Diane Evers

it in traditional lands. Come up with a proper solution, and then let us have a bit of a discussion. Until then—no. Then there is the issue of population. The Greens have been talking about the footprint of individuals in the Western context around population for a long time.

A lot of stock was put on the Woodside report, initiated by Woodside, that was trying to make the case for why LNG is an important part of the future. I was also going to flag that there have been a lot of criticisms about that report, and I also note the work of the CSIRO, which is starting to talk about the gymnastics needed to justify LNG emissions. I encourage members to go away and do some research around that. The key thing here is that we need to stop talking about LNG as a transition fuel. We were talking about LNG as a transition fuel 15 years ago, and there was a sound argument to be made for that. However, it is not a transition fuel for the next 50 years. It is not a sound substitute for coal in the long term.

The minister talked about the Greens pouncing on one industry. I remind the minister that if the full Burrup hub expansion goes ahead, we are looking at just this area producing 47 per cent of Western Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, and eight per cent of Australia's total emissions. That is why I am specifically talking about the LNG industry. The concern here is that we are not talking about a gradual process of transition away from LNG. We are not talking about using existing technologies to transition, although I do agree with that sentiment. We are talking about locking ourselves in, until 2070, to a very carbon-intensive industry. Western Australia has a responsibility in the global scheme of things, as does Australia, and it is important therefore that we address this.

I understand the attraction for government in the short term. There are jobs in construction, and potential ongoing jobs, but there is also a potential for jobs elsewhere. I am concerned with the petroleum resource rent tax, which is a pretty garbage tax. We do not even see the sort of money we should be getting for such a polluting industry. It is important that we revisit this.

Division

Question put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (4)

Hon Robin Chapple

Hon Tim Clifford

Hon Diane Evers

Hon Alison Xamon (*Teller*)

Noes (31)

Hon Martin Aldridge
Hon Ken Baston
Hon Jacqui Boydell
Hon Jim Chown
Hon Alanna Clohesy
Hon Peter Collier
Hon Stephen Dawson
Hon Colin de Grussa

Hon Sue Ellery
Hon Donna Faragher
Hon Adele Farina
Hon Nick Goiran
Hon Laurie Graham
Hon Colin Holt
Hon Alannah MacTiernan
Hon Rick Mazza

Hon Kyle McGinn
Hon Michael Mischin
Hon Simon O'Brien
Hon Martin Pritchard
Hon Samantha Rowe
Hon Robin Scott
Hon Tjorn Sibma
Hon Charles Smith

Hon Aaron Stonehouse
Hon Matthew Swinbourn
Hon Dr Sally Talbot
Hon Dr Steve Thomas
Hon Colin Tincknell
Hon Darren West
Hon Pierre Yang (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.