

BULK-BATTERY STORAGE TRIAL — MANDURAH

810. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the bulk-battery storage trial in Mandurah announced yesterday that will for the first time integrate a utility-scale battery into a major metropolitan electricity network. Can the minister advise the house how this trial will benefit those participating; and can the minister outline how this technology could benefit Western Australians into the future?

Mr B.S. WYATT replied:

I thank the member for that very, very good question.

As members know—the member for Mandurah certainly knows; he turned up in front of the cameras very eagerly yesterday—we have announced our first ever bulk battery on an existing grid. It is an interesting conversation now, because ultimately, with renewables reaching a certain pricepoint now, the issue is not so much around generation. Generation is coming, whether we like it or not. That is the reality. The issue is integration. That is something that is quite new to this government, because ultimately when I became energy minister, I asked the very question relating to integration. Not much was done, it is fair to say, in the term of the former government. This is actually fundamental. Although people often describe it as a race to maximise renewable energy, the actual story is how we integrate in a way that ensures reliability and stability.

That is why the PowerBank trial is so important. The two-year trial will effectively allow up to 52 people across the City of Mandurah—not just at Meadow Springs, where the battery is based—to partake in it. There will be 200 people invited, but we are looking for about 52 with a certain pattern of usage that would benefit from this battery. It will effectively allow them to virtually store the energy that is lost during the course of the middle of the day. It will do that thing that we have been trying to do—equalise the duck curve and marry up the supply of and demand for solar. That will be beneficial, and not just to those on the trial—it will cost about \$1 a day for those on the trial. But if this works, as I expect it will—batteries are now rapidly advancing in their capacity—it will mean that networks like Western Power will hopefully over time not have to spend the sort of money that they now need to spend in respect of augmenting the network, whether on substations et cetera. That will have a huge impact on power bills because, as most people know, or should know, about 40 per cent of our power bill is by way of network cost.

This is a good investment by the collaboration between Synergy and Western Power. I was looking at a quick assessment done by SolarQuotes, which analysed our announcement yesterday. On average, the cost per kilowatt hour, if people want to put their own battery in, ranges between 20c and \$1.07 depending on the nature of the battery et cetera. But the community battery—the PowerBank—works out at about 12.5c per kilowatt hour. So it actually highlights the fact that it enables people to take advantage of battery technology without having to actually make the very significant capital investment of putting their own battery in. A community battery allows us to get the broader community and network benefits that we are trying to achieve all the time.

I want to make some final points, but I was intrigued by the member for Bateman's question to the Premier yesterday about our renewables strategy. Members should bear in mind that when I became the Minister for Energy, zero had been done on renewable energy in eight and a half years.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr B.S. WYATT: Indeed, large-scale renewables cannot even connect to the grid without a huge capital spend to get connected. We are changing that and easing the way for large-scale renewables to connect. Importantly, we are at a point at which large-scale renewables no longer need power purchase agreements from government to justify their construction. I want to confirm one thing for the opposition: when we say “renewable energy”, we do not mean simply renewing a clapped-out old coal-fired power station. The then Minister for Energy, who is now the Leader of the Opposition, had a shovel and was shovelling dollars into the damn thing as it burned and burned to the tune of \$300 million. Just for the record and for all members who may be somewhat confused, that is not renewable energy!

This is a good trial. We are doing something that did not happen under the former government. We are working on the process of integrating renewable energy into the system so that we have a stable and well-planned energy system. After eight and a half years of nothing, we are starting a long way behind.