

NUCLEAR POWER

Motion

Resumed from 21 June on the following motion moved by Hon Ken Travers -

That this house -

- (1) rejects nuclear power as a viable alternative for addressing climate change on the basis that -
 - (a) it is too expensive compared to alternative strategies;
 - (b) it does not address the problem quickly enough;
 - (c) it produces waste for which there is no viable means of storage;
 - (d) it assists in the proliferation of nuclear weapons and increases the risk of terrorism; and
 - (e) there are only limited sources of high-grade resources identified;
- (2) opposes a nuclear waste storage facility being developed in Western Australia due to there being numerous technical and social issues that have not been addressed and will transfer significant risks to future generations; and
- (3) believes that the mining of uranium will significantly increase the pressure for a waste storage facility to be introduced in Western Australia, and therefore supports the government ban on the mining of uranium.

HON LOUISE PRATT (East Metropolitan) [2.04 pm]: When we were debating this issue last week, I said that I was about to go through Hon Ken Travers' motion step by step to wind up some of the issues relating to nuclear power. Paragraph (1)(a) of the motion states -

it is too expensive compared to alternative strategies;

The nuclear industry around the globe has had the benefit of a huge level of subsidy from government. For example, in the United States direct subsidies to nuclear energy totalled \$115 billion between 1947 and 1999, with a further \$145 billion in indirect subsidies. This is in contrast to subsidies to wind and solar energy during the same period amounting to only \$5.5 billion. Those subsidies do not include the cost of decommissioning nuclear power plants. The simple fact is that nuclear power is about the most expensive energy option that we could consider.

Paragraph (1)(b) of the motion states -

it does not address the problem quickly enough;

Nuclear reactors take many years to come into play and are much too slow a response to climate change. If, for example, we were to say today that Western Australia - or somewhere else in Australia - would have a nuclear reactor, it would take at least 15 years before it could deliver electricity; some people suggest 25 years is a more realistic time frame. These statistics have been sourced by Professor Ian Lowe, president of the Australian Conservation Foundation, who has done a lot of work on these issues. They certainly fit with my knowledge of the environmental approvals process, not to mention how we would go about integrating and structuring a nuclear power plant into Western Australia's energy market. The simple fact is we know that nuclear power is much too big an item to be suitable for Western Australia.

Paragraph (1)(c) of the motion states -

it produces waste for which there is no viable means of storage;

Some places around the globe are beginning to consider how they might dispose of their waste. The simple fact is that the majority of places around the globe are very much struggling with ways in which to deal with their nuclear waste. That is why investors in nuclear power are putting pressure on Western Australia to become the world's nuclear waste dump. That is not something I support.

Paragraph (1)(d) of the motion states -

it assists in the proliferation of nuclear weapons and increases the risk of terrorism;

Irrespective of whether we try to control the source of nuclear power and the places it goes to, it is implicit in the nuclear industry around the globe that safeguards implemented to track where and how nuclear energy has been used have not always been successful in preventing nuclear technology from being diverted to military purposes. When we consider that nuclear plants and weapons are not easily decommissioned and that the energy they

Hon Louise Pratt; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Giz Watson; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;
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contain is potent for many thousands of years into the future, it is an incredible ask from the global community for Western Australia to manage these items and impose on many generations to come that much political, social and environmental instability. As I highlighted in my speech earlier, the world has already had experience of large numbers of nuclear weapons going missing and being unaccounted for.

The motion also states -

- (2) opposes a nuclear waste storage facility being developed in Western Australia due to there being numerous technical and social issues that have not been addressed and will transfer significant risks to future generations;

I certainly do not want Western Australia to become a nuclear waste dump for the globe. Although Western Australians are very lucky to be living in an environmentally and socially stable community, and although I have great faith in the people of Western Australia that they will ensure that it continues, the simple fact is that nuclear waste lives for many thousands of years and we do not yet have well documented and managed science to ensure that if we undertook nuclear power storage, we would not be placing future generations of Western Australians at risk.

The indigenous people of Western Australia whom I have spoken to are very much against nuclear power because it will poison our landscape and turn it into a significant global rubbish dump. I am very much opposed to that. I believe that the mining of uranium increases the pressure for a nuclear waste storage facility to be built in WA. For that reason, I also support the government's ban on uranium mining. Australia supplies 20 per cent of the world's uranium. That is not Western Australia's problem; we are not exporting that uranium. Uranium mining accounts for one per cent of Australia's mining activity. We are significant players in global uranium markets. We are significant players in the nuclear industry as a whole. Our land form is geologically stable and we have sites that are suitable for a nuclear power plant. Implicit in the argument is that when we create a very hazardous material, the moral pressure is on us to dispose of its waste.

Hon Norman Moore: That is rubbish, absolute rubbish.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: If I was complicit in saying that I am happy to export uranium from Western Australia, it would be morally incorrect for me to say that I would not be happy to take the waste also.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Are you happy to export coal from Western Australia?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: We are complicit in creating a very substantial global problem.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Are you happy to export gas from Western Australia?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: We have pollution that cannot be -

Hon Simon O'Brien: You don't want to answer that.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Members, Hon Louise Pratt has the call. It is reasonable for members to interject but if the honourable member does not want to take interjections to the degree that some members are inviting, members interjecting should desist.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I believe that should we export uranium, it would be morally incumbent upon us to reflect on whether we should accept nuclear waste just because WA is geologically and politically stable. I believe we have the right to say that we morally object to the nuclear industry, and we will not participate in the exportation of uranium from this state.

Hon Norman Moore: Do you have a problem with the morality of exporting coal?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: Coal is a separate issue on the basis -

Hon Norman Moore: But it actually creates pollution.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: I do have problems with the coal industry and the fact that it is polluting the atmosphere.

Hon Simon O'Brien: That's actually happening now. Why don't you say something about that?

Hon LOUISE PRATT: That is not the question before us. We have an industry that has historically supported coal.

Hon Simon O'Brien: You have never sought refuge in relevance before; don't start now.

Hon LOUISE PRATT: They are entirely separate issues. Western Australia will play a role in sequestering carbon emissions for the globe. That is very much a part of the industry that we are developing. We are big

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exporters of oil, gas and coal. We are also looking at planting trees, geo-sequestration and a whole range of things to do with the abatement of greenhouse gases. I will not be further distracted from the motion.

I very much oppose the development of a nuclear waste storage facility in WA. The mining of uranium in Western Australia would place us very much at the beginning of the nuclear fuel cycle. Therefore, it would place pressure on us to play a role at the end of it. I object to that very strongly.

Amendment to Motion

HON MURRAY CRIDDLE (Agricultural) [2.14 pm]: I welcome the opportunity to take part in this very serious debate on nuclear energy, which is happening around the country. I wish to move an amendment to the motion before us. I move -

To delete "rejects nuclear power as a viable alternative for addressing climate change on the basis that" and insert instead -

Appoints a committee of four members, any three of whom constitute a quorum, to inquire into whether nuclear power is a viable alternative to addressing climate change, and in particular whether

To delete paragraphs (2) and (3) and insert instead -

- (2) The committee is also to inquire into the following additional matters -
 - (a) whether a nuclear waste storage facility in Western Australia is viable, including whether such a facility would transfer unacceptable risks to future generations;
 - (b) whether the mining of uranium in Western Australia will increase the pressure for a waste storage facility for Western Australia; and
 - (c) whether nuclear power generation or the mining of uranium in Western Australia would contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons or increase the risks of terrorism.
- (3) The committee, and the proceedings of the committee, are subject to chapter XXII of standing orders and it is to be regarded for all purposes as a committee appointed under that chapter.
- (4) The committee may present interim reports without a requirement for leave and is to report no later than 30 November 2007.

The debate that has gone on in this house underlines the need for a wide inquiry of the sort that is currently going on at the federal level. I was encouraged by some of the words of Hon Ken Travers, who said that he would be more than happy to discuss with me outside the chamber the viable alternatives to nuclear power. He also made the point that at the national level, although the federal government is happy to have a study done into nuclear power, it is not happy to have a study done to consider the viable alternatives to nuclear power. The viable alternatives are varied and many, and that is included in this motion. We need the opportunity to look at the alternatives to nuclear power in Australia, including coal, gas, hydrogen, which I have had a lot to do with, wave, wind and solar, and a broad discussion about renewable energy.

A number of people across the chamber have been discussing the development of policy. Hon Shelley Archer and Hon Vince Catania have also given their views on the nuclear debate, which to a great extent are different from those of the government itself.

The National Party moved a motion at its federal council, which states -

... the Commonwealth and State Governments to lead an informed public debate on uranium mining in Australia, with particular attention to:

- Public consultation with industry, business and community leaders in Australia;
- An even-handed public education campaign on the social, environmental, and economic benefits and disadvantages of increasing uranium mining activity in Australia;
- Consultation with current trade partners as to the effect of impact the decision to mine and export uranium will have on the current export agreements, with a particular focus on food; and
- Providing the public with a direct and formal opportunity to contribute to the debate.

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A number of facts flow from that. Most of the 470 nuclear power reactors operating or under construction will require uranium enriched in the U-235 isotope for their fuel. Conversion plants are currently operating commercially in the United States of America, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany and the Netherlands. The enrichment involves only natural, long-lived radioactive materials. There is no formation of fission products or irradiation of materials, as in a reactor. There are a number of other issues. I will go through some of those alternatives shortly.

Our party has been calling for this broad inquiry for quite some time. We are well and truly aware of the growth in demand from China. China has nine nuclear power reactors in operation and a further two units under construction. There will obviously be an enormous demand from China. Of course, India is expecting to bring on board a number of reactors.

The commonwealth government is running a parliamentary inquiry into uranium mining. That committee is considering the global demand for Australia's uranium resources and associated supply issues; the strategic importance of Australia's uranium resources and any relevant industry developments; the potential implications for global greenhouse gas emission reductions from the further development and export of Australia's uranium resources; and the current structure and regulatory environment of the uranium mining sector, noting the work that has been undertaken by other inquiries into and reviews of these issues. It is interesting that that committee has received 200 submissions. The chairman reported that the committee was surprised at the number of submissions from people who wanted to go further and promote a fresh look at nuclear power. The inquiry that I am suggesting would have the opportunity to do that. It would give a broad understanding of the industry itself.

Clearly, 17 countries are dependent upon nuclear power for at least a quarter of their electricity supply. We need to draw that issue into focus. Those nuclear power plants are operating. We have heard a lot of discussion in this place about the dangers, yet those 17 countries are operating those plants. Of course, some of those countries are in the most populated areas of the world. One need look only at France and Lithuania, which get about three-quarters of their power from nuclear energy, while Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Slovenia and Ukraine get one-third or more. Japan, Germany and Finland get more than a quarter of their power from nuclear energy, while the United States gets a fifth. There is clearly a great demand for uranium. I will admit that it is one of the alternative power sources, but it has certainly been taken up by those countries.

From that understanding, it is time to promote a rational and fact-driven debate on uranium mining in Western Australia. I understand that it is the Labor Party's blanket policy to allow no uranium mining. However, I believe that some of the debate that Hon Louise Pratt engaged in just a moment ago underlines the fact that there are many unknowns within the debate, and we need to bring them forward. My mind goes back to the debate that we had about genetically modified organisms, and the fact that a committee of this Parliament researched the issue and developed a report that I believe is recognised across Australia as a very solid basis for consideration of the GMO question. The establishment of a committee to inquire into these matters would create opportunities across the political spectrum. The request is that four members - I envisage one member from each party - be involved in this inquiry, so a very balanced committee membership would consider some of the arguments.

I will deal with some of the arguments in this debate. Some of the arguments against uranium mining are the prospect of nuclear proliferation and the issue of nuclear waste management. Australia, and particularly Western Australia, has large reserves of both natural gas and coal. Why would we want to promote and develop an industry to compete with those products? Uranium mining creates conflict with traditional landowners. If Australia were to open more mines, it would increase the supply of uranium. This increased supply might force down the price and reduce the pressure on society to conserve energy and develop other energy sources. Uranium mining may be an unsafe practice. The consideration of that issue is a downside. According to the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, uranium mining has been responsible for the largest collective exposure of workers to radiation. I put those matters forward as some of the arguments against uranium mining.

Some of the arguments for uranium mining are that there is a worldwide shortfall in uranium stocks, which is strengthening demand. An additional 80 million pounds will be needed by 2020 if the growth of nuclear power continues at its current pace. The development time for uranium projects can be up to 25 years, although I heard it said in the debate that it can be 10 years or longer. If we do not start development and increase exploratory activity now, we will miss the opportunity to capitalise on our natural assets. There has been a change in thinking. James Lovelock of Greenpeace - I heard Hon Norman Moore talk about another person from Greenpeace - has been recently quoted as saying that only nuclear power can halt global warming. In July 2005, a Westpoll survey found that the public remains divided on the issues. Forty-eight per cent support lifting the ban on uranium mining and 44 per cent want it retained. That comes from the *Western Australian Business*

News of 4 August 2005. Among the arguments for uranium mining are that it is an environmentally friendly electricity generation alternative. About 20 tonnes of coal would need to be burnt to get as much energy as could be obtained by the nuclear fission of one kilogram of uranium. Australian uranium goes only to countries that undertake to use it solely for peaceful purposes.

Another issue is that radioisotopes play an important part in the technologies that provide us with food, water and good health. In medicine, they are used for research into and the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, as well as the sterilisation of medical equipment. In agriculture, they are used to inhibit the sprouting of root crops after harvesting, to kill parasites and pests and to control the ripening of stored fruit and vegetables. In mining, they are used to examine welds, detect leaks and study the rate of wear of metals.

They are some of the issues that could be debated and examined by the committee. I have outlined the issues that I believe should be debated by the committee. They are along the lines of those in the motion that has been moved by Hon Ken Travers. I believe that his arguments underlined, as did a lot of the other debate that we have had, the necessity to have an inquiry by the upper house in the Parliament of Western Australia. Certainly, it is a very relevant issue in Western Australia. Therefore, I commend the amendment to the house.

HON GIZ WATSON (North Metropolitan) [2.27 pm]: I will speak to the substantive motion first, and then I will make some comments about the amendment. At the outset, the Greens (WA) are very pleased that this motion is on our notice paper and being debated in this Parliament, because there certainly is a high level of public interest in issues about uranium mining and the nuclear industry. Certainly, we are in the midst of a very concerted push from the industry itself to have a debate about nuclear matters. The Greens are always willing to debate nuclear matters. We constantly have debates about nuclear matters to educate and inform the public of our concerns about the nuclear industry.

I wanted to talk initially about the proposition that by supporting the nuclear industry and, at the beginning of that process, engaging in uranium mining, we are in fact looking at mortgaging our future. Nuclear energy is being held up as the Holy Grail of a sustainable energy future. However, I will share a quote with members. It states -

The nuclear industry fails the sustainability test as it is transferring nuclear waste problems to future generations. The waste problems of uranium mining and power generation are numerous and long lasting. Due to the long half-lives and inability . . . to find an acceptable final disposal method for radioactive materials, the problem will continue for a long time without solution. Therefore there are significant concerns about whether an acceptable waste disposal option currently exists. From a sustainability perspective, while the nuclear waste issue remains unresolved, the uranium/nuclear power industry is transferring the risks, costs and responsibilities to future generations.

I invite members to guess which radical green group made this statement.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Yes, that radical green group. The document was, in fact, the AMP Capital Investors' recent nuclear policy position paper of 2004.

The Achilles heel of the nuclear industry is, indeed, nuclear waste. Much as this is an industry that dreamt of electricity too cheap to meter, its Achilles heel is and always will be the thousands of tonnes of highly radioactive waste that must be isolated from the environment for up to 250 000 years. These are the sort of figures that boggle people, as they rightly should. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. The claims of the nuclear industry fall into this category, with some unacceptable health risks. The nuclear fuel chain generates waste that must be isolated from the environment at every stage of its operations. The waste varies in its radioactive characteristics, the risks it poses to humans and how long these risks persist. There are no safe levels of exposure to radioactive material. The diseases and potential genetic damage caused by exposure to radioactive materials have a 20 to 60-year latency period. One of the challenges in interpreting the impact of existing nuclear facilities and uranium mining is the fact that, as the industry has been in existence only since the 1950s, the 20 to 60-year latency period creates a huge gap in our knowledge. I will talk more later about health implications.

That nuclear waste is extraordinarily dangerous is well known. We produce plenty of it globally. According to current global statistics on high-level nuclear waste production, there are 440 nuclear reactors or thereabouts operating in 31 countries. These produce 12 000 to 14 000 tonnes of spent fuel every year. A typical 1 000-megawatt power reactor produces about 300 kilograms of plutonium each year. The total global production of plutonium is about 70 tonnes a year. We need to be concerned about this quantity of plutonium, because only 10 kilograms of plutonium is required to produce a weapon with destructive powers comparable to the bomb that destroyed Nagasaki in 1945. Even if 99 per cent of the 16 000 tonnes of plutonium already produced were

indefinitely protected from military use, the remaining one per cent would be enough for 1 600 nuclear weapons of that capacity.

Therefore, everything hinges upon the safe storage of nuclear waste. Unfortunately, there are no convincing results in this area. After nearly six decades, not one repository exists in the world for the high-level waste from nuclear power generation. Sweden is the closest to having adequate storage, but it still does not have a final repository. Only a handful of countries, such as Finland, Sweden and the United States, have even identified potential sites for high-level waste dumps. If global nuclear output were increased threefold to 1 000 gigawatts - assuming direct disposal, rather than reprocessing - a new repository storage facility, equal to the legal limit established for Yucca Mountain in the United States, would have to be created somewhere in the world roughly every three or four years. We know that nuclear waste is an extremely unpopular problem. We have had that debate in Western Australia already, and as long as there is a nuclear industry, we will no doubt continue to have it.

We can be sure that if highly radioactive waste were not such an intractable problem, the nuclear industry would not be trying to sweet-talk Australia into becoming the world's nuclear dump. If providing a global nuclear dump were such an irresistible financial proposition, why is it that no other country is jumping to take it up? Perhaps we can sleep comfortably knowing that other countries will be carefully safeguarding their toxic waste and would certainly not consider using any fissile materials for weapons. The problem with waste storage is that the host country has to be rich and politically stable. To safeguard the waste, it must remain rich and politically stable for tens of thousands of years. This magical place must also be immune from unpredictable weather events and be geologically stable.

I make the point that nuclear power is not cheap. The question is: who actually pays? I refer to public underwriting of the nuclear industry. During the period 1953 to 2002, the Canadian government gave the nuclear industry approximately \$14.5 billion in direct subsidies. The US government spent nearly \$67 billion in direct subsidies between 1948 and 1998. Since 1957, the Price-Anderson Act has capped the liability of US nuclear operators in the event of a serious accident or attack, with the taxpayer liable for most of the potential damages. That is the only reason there is a nuclear power industry in the US. The Bush regime in the US passed the Domenici-Barton Energy Policy Bill in July 2005, lavishing a further \$12 billion of taxpayer subsidies on the nuclear industry, reauthorising the Price-Anderson Act and extending the industry's liability cap to any nuclear power plants built over the next 20 years. The public underwriting of the industry continues at a cost of \$12 billion in taxpayer subsidies. The European Union spends 61 per cent of its research and development funding on nuclear power, despite the fact that the industry contributes only 13 per cent of the EU's energy supply. In France, if the nuclear industry was not exempt from paying full accident insurance, the premiums would increase the cost of nuclear-generated electricity by 300 per cent.

The next issue I will tackle is the question of who we sell uranium to. Obviously uranium is mined in parts of Australia. Due to costs, safety concerns or public opposition, the nuclear industry has stalled or is in decline in many developed countries, despite the comments of the previous speaker.

Hon Murray Criddle interjected.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I notice the member mentioned Switzerland; Switzerland is one country that has voted to phase out its nuclear power.

Hon Murray Criddle interjected.

Hon GIZ WATSON: Yes, we will get to that.

The number of reactors in western Europe and the United States peaked 15 years ago and has been declining since. There have been no new reactors ordered in the US since 1978. Approximately 75 per cent of installed nuclear power capacity in Europe is expected to be retired by 2030. In contrast, wind power and solar energy production is increasing at rates of 20 per cent to 30 per cent a year. That is where the expansion is occurring. The proposed expanded market for Australian uranium is Asia, including China, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, South Korea and Japan. Twenty-two of the 31 reactors that have most recently been connected to the grid and 18 of the 27 reactors under construction are located in Asia. There is almost no new construction in western Europe and the US.

The Australian federal government is leading the charge with an aggressive push to sell as much uranium as possible, particularly to China. However, both China and India have nuclear weapons programs. India operates 14 reactors, with a further 19 reactors listed as under construction. India already has an arsenal of plutonium fission weapons and is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. China, on the other hand, operates nine nuclear power reactors, generating about two per cent of the country's electricity. A further 27 are planned.

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I turn to China as a potential buyer of our radioactive material. As we know, China is not an open society. Members might have noticed an interesting book review in *The West Australian* a few weeks ago about the dangers of China that discussed whether it was an economic powerhouse or a possible powder keg. The book review might be good reading for members about the potential dangers involved in dealing with China in this way.

China is not an open society and faces serious unresolved human rights issues. China is also one of five declared nuclear weapons states: the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China. The Non-Proliferation Treaty enshrines the inalienable right of member states to all civil nuclear technologies, including dual-use technologies with both peaceful and military capabilities. In other words, the NPT enshrines the right to develop a nuclear weapons threshold or breakout capacity.

China has refused to commit to international inspections of its nuclear power facilities as a condition of buying uranium from Australia.

An article in September 2005 in the *Financial Times* makes interesting reading. It states -

When a Chinese general warned that Beijing could use nuclear weapons to destroy “hundreds” of American cities if the US intervened in a war over Taiwan, Washington was not the only one to take notice.

Major General Zhu Chenghu’s comments in July also alarmed Australia, a close US ally negotiating a nuclear co-operation agreement with China to export billions of dollars worth of uranium there.

The politics of uranium exports, and Beijing’s nuclear ambitions, are more complicated than the lucrative supply contracts Australia and other resource-rich countries have landed to provide China with iron ore, coal and other minerals.

. . .

Strict safeguards built into Australia’s supply agreements require a commitment from importing countries to use the uranium for power generation only and to submit to international inspections of all their nuclear power facilities. China has already signalled its reluctance to commit to such inspections, conducted on Australia’s behalf by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Furthermore such arrangements could be worthless as Australian sales could free China to use its own uranium to build nuclear weapons. I made this point at the presentation I gave to the Australian Uranium Conference in October last year. There is absolutely nothing to prevent China from importing Australian uranium, using that to power its nuclear reactors and then using its own uranium, which it has quite a lot of, to fuel its nuclear weapons program. As one of the nuclear powers, it can do that legally and legitimately. The second question from the floor of the conference was from someone who identified himself as being from the Chinese embassy. He was there to assure the conference that not a single ounce of uranium would be used in nuclear weapons, to which I answered, that that was my point exactly.

Hon Murray Criddle: What does that prove?

Hon GIZ WATSON: It proves that if we export uranium to China, it frees China’s uranium to be made into weapons.

Hon Murray Criddle: It could do that anyway.

Hon GIZ WATSON: It does not have enough uranium to do both.

Hon Murray Criddle: Maybe that is why we ought to look at it.

Hon GIZ WATSON: I can show the member the evidence if he would like.

China also has enormous problems coping with its current challenges of overpopulation, environmental degradation and political instability. It certainly does not have the capacity to deal with expensive complexities of containing radioactive waste. Unfortunately, China has been following the western model of progress of develop first and clean up later, and the clean-up costs are not factored into the economy at all. China has horrific problems with its existing industries and shows little capacity to deal with this as central control is lacking and regional authorities unwilling. We must remember that corruption is rife in China, industrial standards are dubious and monitoring enforcement is patchy. We are talking about a country that may have embraced the profit motive but has not yet even embraced the rule of law.

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Surely we can rely on international safeguards to ensure that none of this fissile material is used for weapons. In relation to safeguards, Mohamed ElBaradei, who is the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and was the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize last year, said -

As long as some countries place strategic reliance on nuclear weapons as a deterrent, other countries will emulate them. We cannot delude ourselves into thinking otherwise.

Further, a report by the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons states -

Nuclear weapons are held by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. The situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable; it cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them.

In an increasingly destabilised world, who in their right mind would want to run the risk of adding even a kilogram more of radioactive material into the lucrative and volatile marketplace for nuclear weapons and dirty bombs? The IAEA safeguards systems still suffers from flaws and limitations despite improvements over the past decade. At least eight nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty member states have carried out permissible weapons-related activities but failed to meet their reporting requirements to the IAEA. They are Egypt, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Romania, South Korea, Taiwan and Yugoslavia. The IAEA's illicit trafficking database records more than 650 confirmed incidents of trafficking in nuclear or other radioactive material since 1993. In 2004 alone, more than 100 such incidents occurred. Of the 60 countries that have built nuclear power or research reactors, more than 20 are known to have used their peaceful nuclear facilities for covert weapon research and/or production. Efforts have been made to improve the IAEA safeguards system through the development of a strengthened safeguards program. However, getting the NPT signatory states to sign up to the additional protocols of the strengthened safeguards program has been protracted and many states have yet to agree to the program. As at November 2004, 42 states party to the NPT had not fulfilled their obligations to bring into force comprehensive safeguard agreements with the IAEA; 133 of the 187 states party to the NPT did not have additional protocols in force; and 25 of the 71 countries with significant nuclear activities had yet to bring the additional protocols into force by mid-2004.

To add any further source of fissile material for weapons that are universally recognised as not only repugnant but also illegal, is, at best, naive and misguided and, at worst, unethical and cavalier. There was an exchange earlier between members about the issue of ethics. It is totally reasonable to identify the whole nuclear sector as unethical in the way in which information is used and the way in which future generations are being mortgaged. Far from producing cheap electricity, the industry would not exist without huge public subsidy. Every dollar spent on the nuclear industry is a dollar diverted from genuinely sustainable solutions. This debate has arisen again in the context of a significant number of people, particularly people in leadership positions, having recognised that global climate change is a reality. That is probably the most positive thing that can be said about this debate. The cost of the quick-fix of nuclear power is the legacy of radioactive mine waste, tailings, waste dumps, contaminated disused reactors, and cancers and genetic damage for all future generations.

The AMP Capital Investors nuclear fuel cycle position paper states -

Nuclear power and the uranium industry are neither financially or environmentally sustainable . . . The positive greenhouse impacts could be equally, and arguably better, obtained from investing in, or supporting of, the renewable energy sector. It is critical that the nuclear industry does not manipulate the climate change threat to divert government policy and finance away from the intrinsically safe renewable sources of electricity.

I turn now to the issue of the health impacts and health implications in this sector. I note with interest that a very good explanation of the complexities of assessing the impacts of radioactive material, and particularly the risks associated with uranium mining and the nuclear fuel chain, was provided by John Coulter during an interview on *Ockham's Razor* on ABC radio in April this year. He gave an explanation in the context of the debate about the Chernobyl disaster and the hotly contested question of exactly how many people were killed or have suffered illness and contracted cancers as a result of that disaster. In the interview he states -

. . . For example, it was asserted that:

‘The Chernobyl disaster killed only 31 people and less than 100 deaths have been clearly linked to the explosion in 1986.’

But John Gofman, Professor of Medical Physics at Berkeley, a well recognised world expert in both the physics and biology of radiation, has calculated that 950,000 will have got, or will get cancer as a result of the Chernobyl fallout, and roughly half will die of their cancers.

The claim that only 31 deaths occurred deliberately hides behind the impossibility of identifying the exact cause of particular cancers and the statistical impossibility of identifying a proportionately small change in a large background of spontaneous cancers.

Let me explain.

In most populations, about 25% - 30% will get a spontaneous cancer at some time in their lives.

Radiation increases the amount of genetic damage in an exposed population and some of this damage leads on to cancer.

The amount of cancer being proportional to the dose of radiation.

Small exposures will cause only a low incidence of cancer in the exposed population.

And no cancer caused by radiation exposure is distinguishable from a cancer that may have arisen spontaneously.

Therefore we can never say that a particular cancer was caused by radiation. Only when enough people are exposed to large enough doses can we say that the increased number of cancers in the exposed population is more than we would expect from chance variation alone. We may then say that the exposure has increased the cancer rate by a certain percentage. The maths is the work of epidemiologists and statisticians.

He goes on to say -

Those who assert that civil nuclear power can be totally divorced from the military and criminal use of nuclear material are asking us to forget history. The first reactors were built specifically to produce the materials for the first atomic bombs and only later became suppliers of electricity. The bombs exploded at Maralinga were fashioned from material made in a reactor that went on to become a power reactor on the UK electricity grid. Much of nuclear knowledge and technology is common to both power generation and the making of weapons.

Hence, of course, the difficulties with countries such as Iraq and Iran claiming that the possession of certain aluminium tubes has nothing to do with weapons and that the technology that is needed for a domestic reactor is just that. However, we know that any domestic reactor can also produce fissile material. He continues -

The Non Proliferation Treaty has proved quite incapable of ensuring that nuclear fuels and facilities are not misused. The Iraq war started over a claim that that nation possessed nuclear weapons. The IAEA and the NPT could not provide an assurance that was not the case.

He goes on to say -

The more comprehensive context of unsustainability is this. Over the last 180 years humans have exponentially exploited cheap, non-renewable fossil fuels. We have used that temporary energy bounty to build a global human population from about one billion to over 6-billion. We now face a time when that cheap energy is not going to be available and none of the vaunted alternative sources can fill the gap. A very basic example: it has been said that modern industrial agriculture is the process of using soil to turn oil into food. Global food supply is less than 1% as energy efficient as our gatherer/hunter forebears. The 99% energy subsidy comes overwhelmingly from oil and we are now passing through the peak of oil production. In only a few years oil production will fall ever more steeply while demand will remain high. The cost of petroleum and all the products that we now derive from it will rise more and more steeply, very large numbers will starve, economies will collapse. There will be greatly increased intra and international tension and strife of which the present Iraq war is but a gentle prelude. Not only can nuclear energy not replace oil and its many vital services such as fertilisers to grow crops in Australia's poor soils, it adds an additional danger into this increasingly turbulent mix.

That is a very good point that has been made by other members in their contributions to the debate. Nuclear power, at best, is only a substitute for the production of electricity; it does not deal with the shortage of fuels for transport. That is another reason that we should look at renewable rather than nuclear energy.

I will address an issue that is related to this matter, because it is part of the supposedly new argument that is being run about nuclear power; that is, a new generation of reactors will solve all the problems of the old reactors. This is the sort of rhetoric that I have heard from the nuclear industry certainly since I became aware of these issues in the late 1960s. There is nothing new in the argument. I have done some research in the area and I have discovered that this technology also is not developed or proved. Fast breeder reactors are often held up as being the solution to the puzzle of making nuclear reactors safer and more efficient in dealing with the issue of waste. I refer to a paper produced by a UK organisation, the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability. Its

subtext states “economics as if people and the planet mattered”. At page 6 of the report entitled “Why nuclear power cannot be a major energy source”, reference is made to fast breeder reactors. It states -

Breeders are in principle a very attractive technology. In uranium ore, a mere 0.7 percent of the uranium it contains consists of the useful isotope - the one that is fissile and produces energy - uranium-235. Most of the uranium consists of uranium-238, and most of that simply gets in the way and has to be dumped at the end; it is uranium-238 which is responsible for much of the awesome mixture of radioactive materials that causes the waste problem. And yet, uranium-238 does also have the property of being fertile. When bombarded by neutrons from a “start-up” fuel like uranium-235 or plutonium-239, it can absorb a neutron and eject an electron, becoming plutonium-239. That is, plutonium-239 can be used as a start-up fuel to produce more plutonium-239, more-or-less indefinitely. That’s where the claim that nuclear power would one day be too cheap to meter comes from.

But there is a catch. It is a complicated technology. It consists of three operations: breeding, reprocessing and fuel fabrication, all of which have to work concurrently and smoothly. First, breeding: this does not simply convert uranium-238 to plutonium-239; at the same time, it produces plutonium-241, americium, curium, rhodium, technetium, palladium and much else. This mixture tends to clog up and corrode the equipment. There are in principle ways round these problems, but a smoothly-running breeding process on a commercial scale has never yet been achieved.

Secondly, reprocessing. The mixture of radioactive products that comes out of the breeding process has to be sorted, with the plutonium-239 being extracted. The mixture itself is highly radioactive, and tends to degrade the solvent, tributyl phosphate. Here, too, insoluble compounds form, clogging up the equipment; there is the danger of plutonium accumulating into a critical mass, setting off a nuclear explosion. The mixture gets hot and releases radioactive gases; and significant quantities of the plutonium and uranium are lost as waste. As in the case of the breeder operation itself, a smoothly-running reprocessing process on a commercial scale has never yet been achieved.

The third operation is to fabricate the recovered plutonium as fuel. The mixture gives off a great deal of gamma and alpha radiation, so the whole process of forming the fuel into rods which can then be put back into a reactor has to be done by remote control. This, too has yet to be achieved as a smoothly-running commercial operation. And, of course, it follows from this, that the whole fast-breeder cycle, consisting of three processes none of which have ever worked as intended, has itself never worked.

There are three fast breeder reactors in the world; one in Russia, one in Japan and one in France. The ones in Japan and France have long been out of operation; the Russian one is still operating but has never bred radioactive isotopes. Faith in fast breeder reactors is misplaced, to say the least.

I will conclude my remarks very shortly, but I just want to summarise. The case has always been very clear from the evidence put before me, and I do read all new material, as is incumbent on all people who take an interest in this area. If the case were made that waste could genuinely be eliminated and one did not have a legacy of highly radioactive and dangerous material that remains dangerous for tens of thousands of years, I would be the first person to celebrate the fact that we had cracked the problem of providing energy. However, as I said earlier, things that sound too good to be true usually are. Many people who have a science background understand the questions of energy. The dream has always been that we could create energy from nothing, as it were. The nuclear industry very much trades on that idea and on misinformation. It is highly ironic, therefore, that those who are opposed to the nuclear industry are painted as being fearmongerers, whereas the industry trades on fear more than anything else. It is inextricably linked with the production of weapons and the issues of waste.

I will take one or two minutes to comment on Hon Murray Criddle’s interesting amendment. I heard about it only yesterday, which I think places on members an unreasonable time frame in which to consider the amendment. I am not unattracted to the idea of an inquiry. However, I do not think that I would like to set a precedent for this way of establishing a select committee. I appreciate that maybe the member thought it would be a useful way of achieving it, but if we are to consider the establishment of a select committee inquiry as important as this, we need longer than 24 hours to think about it and we need to consider the terms of reference.

Hon Murray Criddle: How long would you want?

Hon GIZ WATSON: I will suggest what I think is a solution to this. If members believe that there is a need for such an inquiry, we need to consider that as a specific proposal for a committee inquiry. I think that the appropriate committee for such an inquiry is the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. The member might want to put a proposition in writing to that committee. The questions that arise in the motion need answers, and the Parliament has been offered the opportunity to put that information into the public arena by way of this debate. I had hoped that the debate would be extended, so that any speaker who wished to speak would have the opportunity. However, I realise we must finish the motion today. I would have preferred that we

were absolutely sure that every member who wanted to contribute had the opportunity. I would suggest that if the member were to genuinely want an inquiry, the appropriate way would be to look at that standing committee and to put that proposition to it. I would have concerns about setting a precedent, whereby a motion could be amended to become a vehicle for establishing a select committee. It could start to mess up the processes of this place to date. I have not come across such an amendment in my nine years of being here. The amendment is probably not the best way in which to consider a committee inquiry. We will not support the amendment, therefore, but we will support the substantive motion.

HON KEN BASTON (Mining and Pastoral) [3.09 pm]: I rise to speak against the motion. I will comment on the amendment later. As Hon Norman Moore has said, the opposition would accept parts of the main motion and oppose others; we would oppose paragraphs (1) and (3) and support paragraph (2). When notice of the motion was given on 29 November last year, I thought Hon Ken Travers was out of touch and that maybe the motion would be moved to embarrass some of his colleagues. The federal resources opposition spokesperson, Martin Ferguson, was reported in *The West Australian* of 29 November of last year as joining backbenchers in saying that mining for uranium should be allowed. He was reported as saying -

Let's debate the issue of uranium mining in a professional, constructive and objective way rather than bringing unwarranted emotionalism about dirty bombs to the debate.

This is about the export of yellow cake to nations who are absolutely committed to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

He was reported in *The Australian* of 7 September 2005 as saying that there was a lot of uranium in Queensland. The article reads -

Mr Beattie has argued that increasing uranium mining would detract from the performance of the coal industry in Queensland.

Mr Ferguson was reported as saying -

In the minds of the resources industry, they cannot see why uranium mining is acceptable in South Australia but not in Queensland . . .

It was "hard to accept that in a resources state" coal stocks could be exploited to take advantage of the resources boom, but uranium deposits had to be left undeveloped.

Of course, that also applies to Western Australia. In *The West Australian* of 26 August 2005 was the headline "Labor MPs turn up heat on uranium". Carol Martin MLA said that she believed that a logical debate should take place on this matter. The article states -

Asked if she had discussed her views with Dr Gallop, Ms Martin said, "they're still picking on Vince and Shelley".

"We can't keep going on the emotional seat of our pants," she said. "By the time they are finished school our young people are actually brainwashed about the ills of these sorts of things but they're never actually told what the alternative is, which is to kill the planet."

I initially thought when Hon Ken Travers moved this motion that he was being very cunning and that the negative statements in the motion were designed to encourage this debate, and I commend him for that. I will certainly support the amendment moved by Hon Murray Criddle.

As Hon Norman Moore alluded to, since the state conference on 11 October last year, the Liberal Party has adopted a position on uranium mining in Western Australia. The motion at the conference stated that it was -

. . . subject to the proponent:

- a. Meeting all the necessary international safeguards in relation to the safe and peaceful use of uranium resources
- b. Ensuring that all environmental approvals have been obtained in relation to the mining of uranium and the transport of uranium oxide, and
- c. Ensuring a safe workplace for all employees involved in the mining of uranium and the transport of uranium oxide

Broadly speaking, uranium occurs naturally throughout the world's crust. It is 500 times more abundant than gold and as common as tin. Uranium itself has a very low level of radioactivity compared with granite. Virtually all the radioactive material from the associated minerals in the ore process ends up in a tailings dam. Australia has about 40 per cent of the world's uranium reserves, most of it that has been found so far as yet untouched, and Western Australia having about 40 per cent of that. Australia exports some 10 000 tonnes of uranium oxide every year, which is used solely for the generation of electricity. Its management is ensured

through the non-proliferation treaty, of which Australia is considered a champion. The major difference between nuclear power generation and fossil fuel power generation is in the amount of fuel required and in the resulting emissions. A tonne of uranium fuel will keep a large power station of 1 000 megawatts going for two weeks. This fuel would come from about nine tonnes of mined uranium oxide concentrate. It would take about 160 000 tonnes, or some 250 000 cubic metres of gas, to get the same amount of power from coal.

In May 2005, the World Nuclear Association data indicated that there were 439 commercial nuclear reactor power plants with a capacity of some 360 000 megawatts; that is, seven times the capacity of the Australian electrical industry. Numerous additional power plants are presently under construction. Most of those are in China, Japan, South Korea and India. China is interesting. Its energy consumption is rapidly growing. Despite its huge coal industry, it is planning to quadruple its nuclear capacity of 40 000 megawatts by 2020.

The AusIMM Bulletin No. 5 of September/October 2005, a journal of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, states that of those 439 power plants, some of which members have mentioned, France has 59 reactors producing some 78 per cent of France's power. There are other interesting statistics. Japan has 54 plants producing 29 per cent of its power; the United States, 103 plants producing 20 per cent of its power; Russia, 31 producing 16 per cent of its power; and South Korea, 20 producing 38 per cent of its power. There are seven countries in the world producing more than 50 per cent of their electricity from nuclear power.

Another interesting aspect of this debate is that many people say that nuclear power is too expensive. However, the actual charges for demolishing a nuclear power plant at the end of its life must be built into the charge for electricity. With obvious world demand for uranium to provide power and China willing to sign forward contracts for between 10 and 20 years, Western Australia will be left behind. This government will let other states, such as South Australia, the Northern Territory and most likely Queensland, fill these export orders and thus relinquish jobs and royalties for Western Australia. The present three-mines policy dictates the supply of uranium from Australia. These mines are Ranger in the Northern Territory, which was opened in 1981; Olympic Dam in South Australia, which was opened in 1988 and which, according to *The West Australian* of 31 May, will increase its capacity and send much of its uranium to India; and Beverley in South Australia. A fourth mine, Honeymoon in South Australia, has been cleared to start construction. Thus the only state to benefit from the increase in demand and price of uranium will be South Australia and the Northern Territory. Western Australia's sources are BHP Billiton's deposit at Yeelirrie, Western Australia's largest deposit near Wiluna; Rio Tinto Limited's deposit at Kintyre, south east of Port Hedland; Paladin Resources Ltd's Manyingee deposit south of Onslow; and Oobagooma, 75 kilometres north east of Derby. Interestingly, the Oobagooma deposit is on freehold land owned by the commonwealth Department of Defence.

Winning public support for uranium mining is clearly a difficult task in Australia. Many of our leading trading partners regard nuclear power as an important element of the energy mix and part of the solution to global warming. Nuclear power generation has virtually no greenhouse gas emissions and no CO₂ emissions.

Hon Ken Travers: How does it produce enriched uranium then without CO₂ emissions?

Hon KEN BASTON: It has some but not like coal has. In fact, the 439 nuclear power plants around the world save the emission of 2.5 billion tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere each year. There is no doubt that uranium mining requires extra care to avoid long-term damage to the environment. However, I am sure that we can successfully contribute to the world's need for energy and benefit financially from the safely controlled export of uranium from Western Australia. The government should therefore join the modern world and end the opposition to uranium mining in this state. I have to say that we should at least have the debate that we are having. I support the amendment to the motion.

HON SALLY TALBOT (South West) [3.17 pm]: I am very glad to be given the chance to play a part in this debate. I must say that sitting in this place in the past few weeks has been like sitting in a taxi watching the meter click over. When I first got to my feet in this house and talked about this subject last October, the cost of decommissioning nuclear power plants in Great Britain was running at £50 billion. I note that when Hon Ken Travers moved the debate some three to four weeks ago, it had hit the grand sum of £70 billion. A couple of weeks later it had gone up to £90 billion. Heaven knows what it is today or what it will be in seven to eight weeks when Parliament returns from the winter break.

It has been very instructive listening to my colleagues on this side of the house Hon Ken Travers and Hon Louise Pratt, who have both made very substantive contributions to this debate. The points made by Hon Giz Watson and Hon Paul Llewellyn were also highly pertinent. This is a bit like a Clayton's debate: it is the debate that we have when we are not having a debate. I do not know what members who continually talk about the need for a debate think we are having. I have spent a considerable amount of time in the past 20 years, if not more, talking about this issue, and I believe all those subjects have been canvassed many times in considerable detail in those couple of decades.

Hon Louise Pratt; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Giz Watson; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;
Deputy President; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Simon O'Brien

The contributions to the debate from members opposite were pretty perplexing. Hon Norman Moore seemed to be very confused about the target of the motion. Hon Ken Baston shared some of his puzzlement. I am not quite sure what he meant. I thought the target was very clear. Members of the opposition have defined themselves in great big red and white concentric circles - that is, the target. They have spelled out to us over several hours of debate that they want to mine and sell uranium and then they want to forget about it. They do not want nuclear power in Western Australia and they do not want nuclear waste; they just want the money. I was slightly puzzled about the comments made by Hon Norman Moore. I think he said that the opposition would oppose parts (1) and (3) of the motion but might support a bit of part (2). I wondered how on earth this could be. Part (2) states that this house -

Opposes a nuclear waste storage facility being developed in Western Australia due to there being numerous technical and social issues that have not been addressed and will transfer significant risks to future generations.

I would have thought that the opposition could at least have opposed that part unambiguously. Then I read on in the debate and found that the opposition does not want to oppose that part without several conditions on it because it does not think it is a good idea to have a nuclear waste dump in Western Australia because the electorate is not really capable of understanding that there is no problem health wise with a nuclear waste dump. They say that would get in the way of our clean, green image but only because the electorate is incapable of understanding. I do not think I will go down that track.

The opposition is very confused and muddled. However, some things are very clear. The opposition is setting itself up in a way that is not supported by its federal leader. The Prime Minister, John Howard, was quoted the other day by David Crowe in *The Australian Financial Review*, not a hysterical rag.

Several members interjected.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Graham Giffard): Order! There are several conversations going on. Hon Sally Talbot has the call and she is trying to make herself heard. Can members please be quiet.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The headline to David Crowe's article from *The Australian Financial Review* on Monday, 19 June is "Spent nuclear fuel back in five years". It states -

Prime Minister John Howard has defended taking back spent nuclear fuel from countries that buy Australian uranium

. . .

Mr Howard yesterday insisted Australia had a responsibility to store the waste and said he was confident voters would not punish the coalition over the issue.

"It is a Nimby, head-in-the-sand attitude to say on the one hand, look, that we're quite happy to sell uranium, we might even be quite happy to process uranium, but when it comes to any other aspect of it, well that can be somebody else's problem . . .

I do not usually feel sorry for the Prime Minister. I do not usually feel sorry for opposition members either, but it seems that they have a real problem in that they are going head to head over this issue.

Several members interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I want to continue briefly -

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Conversations across the chamber are quite unruly. Hon Sally Talbot is trying to make herself heard.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I want to continue briefly with this campaign that I have embarked on to help members of the opposition understand the issues. After having read their contributions to the debate so far, I realise that they are very confused. Last week Hon Norman Moore said in this place -

The day will come, I suspect sooner rather than later, when the Carpenter government will have to make a decision on whether to allow the mining of uranium in Western Australia. I look forward to the government having to deal with that, because it will not be easy. Until now it has been easy for the government, because it has not been required to make a decision.

I do not know how anybody who has had their eyes open and has been listening to this debate over the past few years could have missed the fact that we do have a position on this. It is not an ambiguous position. I refer to the general election in Western Australia in February 2005. I remember it well. In that election the Australian Labor Party put out a document entitled "Labor's plan for our environment". I have a copy here. Under the heading "Keeping Western Australia nuclear free" on page 4 it says -

Hon Louise Pratt; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Giz Watson; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;
Deputy President; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Simon O'Brien

The Gallop Government has implemented its policy to prohibit uranium mining in Western Australia and remains committed to this position. Since 22 June 2002 all new mining leases have been subject to a condition which prohibits mining of uranium.

I remind members that this is an election policy commitment leading up to the February 2005 general election in Western Australia. Over the page it says -

The Gallop Government will:

- Continue to prohibit uranium mining in Western Australia;
- Prohibit the importation of radioactive waste into Western Australia;
- Oppose the establishment of nuclear waste dumps in Western Australia.

There does not seem to be anything remotely ambiguous about that.

I take members now to the Australian Labor Party state conference held in November 2005, out of which came a document that I am happy to share with anybody who would like to read it.

Hon Simon O'Brien: What's that document?

Hon SALLY TALBOT: "Building a Better WA: Platform, Australian Labor Party, As Amended November 2005". On page 157 there is a resolution headed -

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! Conversations across the chamber are unhelpful and impolite. Hon Sally Talbot is trying to make herself heard. She is not responding to very many interjections, so can members please listen in silence.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: The resolution headed "Uranium Mining" states -

This conference reaffirms the State Labor Government's ban on uranium mining and its commitment to ensure Western Australia does not play any part in the nuclear fuel cycle.

It ends with eight words -

Uranium shall not be mined in Western Australia.

Again, I do not think that is terribly ambiguous.

Hon Simon O'Brien: Was it passed unanimously?

Hon Ken Travers: It was passed without debate, in fact.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members! Hon Ken Travers has taken advantage. I would ask Hon Sally Talbot to resume.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Finally, I thought that members of the opposition might find it useful to realise that they do not have to worry about the Premier being placed on the spot when it comes to making a decision because he has already made one. I have a copy of an article that appeared in *The Geraldton Guardian* just the other week when the Legislative Assembly sat in Geraldton. It is headed "Premier firm on uranium" and states -

PREMIER Alan Carpenter used his visit to Geraldton this week to reassert his stance on the possibility of uranium mining in WA.

"I think it's timely that we're here in Geraldton where the local council and the Chapman Valley Shire have a nuclear-free zone policy . . .

. . .

"Western Australia is the most successful economy in Australia without mining uranium and without being a nuclear waste dump. Why would we want to change that?"

On 24 May 2006 the Premier said -

"It is now quite obvious that the nuclear and uranium mining debate being generated by the Federal Government is just a cover to soften up Western Australians for a nuclear waste dump.

"But my message to the people of WA is that I will not allow it to happen.

There was an article on page 1 of *The Australian* of 6 June headed "Coal hits back at N-power". I will refer to that later if I have time. However, it states that when the opinions of various state Premiers were canvassed about the Prime Minister's inquiry into nuclear power -

Hon Louise Pratt; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Giz Watson; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;
Deputy President; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Simon O'Brien

Western Australian Premier Alan Carpenter went a step further, threatening to mount a High Court challenge against any move by the commonwealth to enforce uranium mining, reprocessing or nuclear energy on the state.

I could go on, but I believe I have made that point.

As some members know, in a previous life, in a previous job, I taught at Murdoch University, in the philosophy department. One of the courses I taught was introduction to critical reasoning. Some of the points that have been made by the opposition in this debate would earn the big red stamp in a first-year course, saying "must try harder" when it comes to stringing together any kind of coherent argument.

An opposition member interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: I am so tempted. There was a very curious argument in putting forward the case, which I extracted word for word from last week's *Hansard*. The argument goes like this: first, greenhouse gases cause climate change, which is bad; second, X - in this case, nuclear power - reduces greenhouse gases; therefore, X is good. It does not work like that. That is a completely fallacious way of stringing together an argument. Of course, this is all being done by people who put a pejorative spin on any notion of green, conservation or environmentalist, which members on this side of the house do not do. There is more curious logic. How about this one? It goes something like this: we have a nuclear waste problem anyway. Okay; I think everyone in this house agrees that we have a nuclear waste problem anyway.

Hon Ken Travers interjected.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: Yes. Hon Ken Travers should not get to the point too quickly. I am getting there. We all agree that we have a nuclear waste problem anyway. As Hon Norman Moore said, it needs to be sorted out anyway. He then went on to argue that, therefore, we might as well keep creating more waste. The logic just escapes me. There was a similar argument about terrorists, which went something like this: there are lots of bad people out there, and they have some truly dreadful means of inflicting terror on us, so a little more radioactive waste will not really make any difference.

Apart from the opposition's point that we have a nuclear waste problem, I found myself agreeing with some points made by the opposition. One was - again, I will come back to this if I have time - that it is not fair for us in the west, and in Australia in particular, because we have such abundant sources of power and the means of generating power, to tell developing countries that they are obliged to reduce their power consumption to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I agree that it is not fair, but I am not hearing anybody say that in this debate.

The final point that I want to make very briefly before I move on to some of the more substantive issues is that when I spoke on this issue in October last year, I referred to the fact that when we are talking about uranium mining, the generation of nuclear power and the handling of such dangerous and toxic waste, we must have a very sophisticated understanding of the nature of the risk. I noticed last week that reference was made - I thought rather unkindly, because we do not want to wish any misfortune upon Hon Ken Travers - to the fact that it is dangerous to cross the road, and that there were no guarantees that Hon Ken Travers would not be run over by a bus on his way home. The reality is that the risks posed by the whole nuclear cycle are quite unlike the risk of being run over by a bus. They are what the actuarial industry calls dread risks. Hon Giz Watson referred to the nature of that kind of qualification - that is, the different qualities of risk - when she talked about the fact that most of the risk from the nuclear energy cycle involves subtle and pernicious changes to the genetic system. If a person is run over by a bus, that is the kind of risk that we can all understand, and we can get our heads around the nature of the injuries. When we are talking about the dangers of just transporting enriched uranium around the world, we are talking about such potentially catastrophic events, not just to ourselves, but also to our children and their children, and risks to the environment, that most of us could not even begin to get our heads around them, except through science fiction, until we witnessed the events at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl.

I will now move on to talk about one other aspect of the debate so far. I am not talking about just the debate in this Parliament; I am talking about the way in which we have been conducting ourselves nationally in trying to move this debate along in a constructive fashion. I notice that Patrick Moore has been quoted by the opposition as having had some sort of road-to-Damascus experience with the whole nuclear energy cycle, being a recent convert. The old saying that there is no Catholic like a convert is probably true in this case. He seems to have gone remarkably over the top.

However, I was browsing through *The New York Times* in the past couple of days, and I found a reference, which I want to share with the house, to the fact that Patrick Moore has - I was going to say - gone to the dark side, but that is just shorthand, I suppose. In fact, the nuclear industry has employed two quite well-known "environmentalists". We do not know how much it is paying them, but, clearly, a substantial amount of money is going into trying to clean up the image of the nuclear industry. It would need to, would it not? After the Three Mile Island accident in 1979 and the Chernobyl accident in 1986, the industry really needed to do some

serious work on its image. It clearly knew that because it is an industry that has such long lead times, this would be a 20-year project. However, it has managed to recruit two people to its team. One of them is Christie Whitman, who is the former administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency in America. *The New York Times* article states -

Mrs. Whitman headed the E.P.A. when it published rules for the proposed high-level nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain in Nevada. After she left the office, the courts threw out the rules because they covered only the first 10,000 years of waste storage, while peak releases of radiation were expected after that time.

She got it a bit wrong, I think. It appears that Mr Moore is still an advocate for renewable energy. The issue gets a bit complex. Mr Moore is quoted as saying that -

... he favored efficiency and renewable energy, but added that solar cells, which produce electricity from sunlight, were "being given too much emphasis and taking too much money."

It turns out that Patrick Moore is actively involved in running a company that promotes geothermal power; that is, the hot rocks option, for which we have many very eloquent advocates in Australia. It seems to me that Mr Moore has had an interesting career path that has taken him into this realm of apparently being an advocate for the nuclear industry. It is one that we will probably want to look at a bit more closely. It seems to me to be a fairly clear case of mixed messages.

I was going to talk about various aspects of sustainability, again in an attempt to convey the essential simplicity of the concept of sustainability, which I think tends to get lost in some of these debates. Sustainability is not an immensely complex idea. A great achievement of the Labor Party's five years in government is that it has managed to get "sustainability" into the conversation in a way that it is now very much an accepted part of any consideration. Sustainability simply means that not only the economic arguments are considered for a particular proposition -

Hon Murray Criddle: As matter of interest, the farming community has been doing that for years, and you have totally disregarded that.

Hon SALLY TALBOT: That is a very important interjection and I appreciate Hon Murray Criddle making it. Of course it is not a new concept. We have never pretended that we invented it. However, the Labor government has been able to get it into the common lexicon when people consider these types of issues. It is not an immensely complicated argument. If we relied only on the basic principles of sustainability, we could go a long way towards understanding the argument about the nuclear fuel cycle.

Some members will have noticed that in the recent honours list, Professor Phillip Jennings was made a member of the Order of Australia. Phil Jennings has been very much at the forefront of these types of debates for several decades in this state. In acknowledging his membership into the Order of Australia, Phil Jennings said that sustainability -

... is now the top issue in the world ... A lot of hard work needs to be done to make societies sustainable, socially, economically and technically.

Professor Jennings concluded his comments, and I conclude mine, with the observation that -

Science on its own is not a solution to the problem. We now need to consider social and environmental impacts to tackle problems.

HON NORMAN MOORE (Mining and Pastoral - Leader of the Opposition) [3.41 pm]: I will talk about the amendment moved by Hon Murray Criddle and ignore the dribble I have had to put up with for the past 20 minutes or so. Unfortunately I am not entitled to debate that, so I will save it for another occasion. Hon Murray Criddle's proposition was put to me a couple of days ago, and I thought it was a very good idea. In this debate we have demonstrated that some questions must be answered regarding the nuclear cycle and that some members of the chamber do not have totally fixed views on a range of issues. Unlike the previous speaker, who has an element of certainty in her own mind about everything to do with this matter, other members would like to know a lot more and are prepared to acknowledge that they would like to know more about many issues concerning climate change and the nuclear cycle.

It is a very good idea to create a select committee of this chamber to consider the issues that have been raised in the motion moved by Hon Ken Travers. He has obviously gone to some significant trouble to include in his motion all the issues relevant to this matter. His motion refers to nuclear power in the context of climate change, nuclear waste disposal and the mining of uranium. They are the three most fundamental elements of the nuclear issue. Hon Giz Watson said that more time was needed to think about this. She gave the impression that the motion did not cover everything that needed to be thought about if it was intended from the beginning to be a deliberate exercise to establish a committee. It is fair to say that Hon Ken Travers has included everything that is

relevant to the issue at hand. Hon Murray Criddle's amendment to the motion to include other matters that an inquiry could consider provides us with a very good opportunity to make a decision about this matter now.

Another benefit to agreeing to the amendment moved by Hon Murray Criddle is that the whole house can put up its hand to vote for the motion. I am a bit worried that not all members who have a view on this matter have been heard yet. Some members of this chamber might not speak because they do not agree with the views of their colleagues. I do not know who will be here to vote when the house votes and I do not know who will be paired. That is for the Whips to sort out; it is not for me to know. However, a moment ago I got the call ahead of Hon Ken Travers, who may or may not have been about to close the debate. He may have wished to speak to the amendment.

Hon Ken Travers: I was going to speak to the amendment.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: That is fair enough; I accept that. It crossed my mind momentarily that he might have been about to close the debate and that a couple of members of the Labor Party -

Hon Ken Travers: I thought that you would want to hear the government's position on the amendment. That is why I went to take the call. I was not trying to close the debate.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I accept that. I am saying that when the member stood, it crossed my mind that it might have been his intention to close the debate, which would have been a dreadful tragedy because at least two of his colleagues have publicly taken a view on uranium mining that is different from the view Hon Ken Travers is promoting. I do not know where Hon Shelley Archer, Hon Vince Catania or the member for Kimberley stand on the issues of establishing a nuclear waste dump in Western Australia or on nuclear power. However, I know what they have said about uranium mining. I was hoping that the two Legislative Council members would give us their points of view. Indeed, they may well do that in the half hour left to debate this matter before we vote on the motion.

If it is any help to the government and to the Labor Party on this matter, I suggest that consideration of Hon Murray Criddle's proposal would be in their interests. It simply means that those members of the Labor Party who might have a different point of view from their colleagues about some parts of the motion could join with their colleagues to vote for the amendment. They then would not have to be paired or be embarrassed by having to cross the floor or take whatever other options might be available to them. Ironically, I was looking forward to the vote on the motion because I wanted to know where members opposite stood on the matter. However, Hon Murray Criddle then moved an amendment to the motion to establish a select committee, which is far more useful than voting on a matter for which members might either absent themselves or cross the floor. An inquiry by this house into these sorts of issues has tremendous potential.

Whether or not we like it, and regardless of whether some members believe we should completely ignore this issue forever, it is not going to go away. It will continue to be an issue while the world wants energy. The world's demand for energy is increasing dramatically. I repeat the point I made before: the developing world desperately wants more energy. If nuclear energy is an option that might assist in raising the living standards of billions of our fellow human beings, it must be considered. The issue will not go away. Members can bury their heads in the sand and say "No, no, no," to everything if they wish. That might be the view of the Murdoch University school of philosophy. However, it is not my view when I consider the people around the world who live in absolute and abject poverty. I am prepared to say that if we can solve the problems associated with the disposal of nuclear waste, we should consider nuclear energy as an alternative energy source and as a proposition that may help to solve the problems of some of the poorer people around the world. We have said that the disposal of nuclear waste is a problem that must be sorted out. However, to deny that the nuclear industry exists and to deny Western Australia's energy sources to the rest of the world is simply to bury our head in the sand and ignore the fact that this matter must be debated.

John Howard has started a debate on nuclear power, and it is a good idea. I think he also could have given more thought to other forms of energy. That would have been helpful. We must look at all the options, and if we can get lots of different sources of energy, so much the better. It is not one or the other, and that is the problem with this debate. We can support renewable energy as well as other forms of energy. The more energy we get, the better because the world desperately needs more energy now, and as the developing world develops further, it will need significantly greater amounts of energy.

The amendment moved by Hon Murray Criddle makes a lot of sense. I hope that the government will agree to it. The Greens (WA) have already indicated that they will not agree to it. However, I hope that the government will agree to it as a vehicle for giving the Parliament an opportunity to talk to and take evidence from the people who have a lot to contribute on this issue. I have an open mind on the matter.

Hon Ken Travers: Except for the mining of uranium.

Hon Louise Pratt; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Giz Watson; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;
Deputy President; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Simon O'Brien

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I do not have a problem with mining uranium in Western Australia, just as the member does not have a problem with mining it in South Australia.

Hon Ken Travers: I personally do have a problem with it.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I did not hear the member say anything about stopping it. Does the member's government believe that South Australia should accept nuclear waste?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Graham Giffard): Order! The interjections are leading Hon Norman Moore into debate on the substantive motion. He is trying to address his remarks to the amendment, and should be allowed to do so.

Hon NORMAN MOORE: In fact, to save time now, I will ask the Premier that very question tomorrow by way of a question without notice of which some notice will be given, and then we will know what the answer is.

I support uranium mining. For different reasons from those given by other members, which I think I have outlined, I do not support Western Australia being a nuclear waste dump. I do not believe we need nuclear power right now. However, I have an open mind on whether nuclear power is a good thing. I have an open mind on whether we can store nuclear waste in Western Australia. I have an open mind on the whole issue. I have an open mind on all sorts of issues. As, I think, Dr Patrick Moore said, one of the problems is when people believe in a certainty. The only certainty about certainty is that it is not certain. I thought that was an interesting comment in the context of the debate that has been raging on this matter. Let us not presume that we are all absolutely knowledgeable on this matter. Let us presume, like on most other issues, that we have a lot to learn. This would be a good way in which at least four members of this house could learn a lot more about an issue that will not go away, whether or not we like it. I commend Hon Murray Criddle for his amendment, which takes into account all the points raised by Hon Ken Travers - it does not ignore any of them - and which would give us a chance as a Parliament to look at a very serious issue facing the world.

HON KEN TRAVERS (North Metropolitan) [3.52 pm]: I will make a couple of points about the amendment moved by Hon Murray Criddle. First, if the house were to take the view that it was necessary to have an inquiry, would a select committee be the appropriate vehicle for that inquiry? We have within the Parliament the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. I would have thought that, should the house want to have an inquiry into a matter such as this, that would be the committee to which it would be referred. I will also make some points about whether I feel an inquiry is necessary. However, if members genuinely feel that there is a need for an inquiry into this issue, they should encourage that committee to consider an inquiry, and not establish a select committee to do so. When we set up the standing committees of this house, the intention was to move away from establishing select committees. There are times when issues will cross the boundaries of the terms of reference of standing committees; therefore, there may be a need to establish a select committee. The classic example is the finance brokers inquiry, which applied to the operations of the Standing Committee on Public Administration, the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations and a range of different government areas. No one standing committee would have had the capacity to inquire into that matter in totality. The issues that have been put forward in the amendment by Hon Murray Criddle could all be dealt with by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. Not one issue in the amendment would not fall within the terms of reference of that committee. The first point is that if members feel that that is what they want to do, that is the committee to which this issue should be referred.

The reality is that this house has finite resources. It is not as though extra resources are created when a select committee is established. When a select committee is established, resources are taken from standing committees and that prevents them from doing other work. The environment committee should be allowed to weigh the importance of this issue against the importance of other issues that it is either inquiring into or about to inquire into. The house has entrusted that responsibility to that committee. I understand that the range of political views of members in this place is represented on that committee.

Two select committee inquiries are under way at the moment. Do we really need another select committee inquiry? It was interesting to hear Hon Norman Moore say that this amendment covers all the issues that I have raised. Therefore, members would think that I would want to participate in the select committee. According to the proposal of Hon Murray Criddle, one of the questions that the inquiry would not consider is whether we support the mining of uranium in Western Australia. It is clear why Hon Norman Moore would not want an inquiry to go down that path. He has already made up his mind on that matter. That is his choice; he is entitled to that view. He has had that view since he made his inaugural speech in this place, according to his comments in the house last week.

Hon Norman Moore: If you want to move an amendment so that the committee can inquire into whether we should mine uranium, I would support that.

Hon Louise Pratt; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Giz Watson; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;
Deputy President; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Simon O'Brien

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The point I am making is that we could have an inquiry, but the Leader of the Opposition's mind is already firmly set. He has held that view since 1977. I do not feel that an inquiry would change his opinion on that matter.

Hon Norman Moore: It might change yours.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Exactly. I agree that I have made up my mind on this matter, because I have already looked at the issue. Many members in this place have already looked at the issue, considered it, made their own inquiries outside this place -

Hon Norman Moore: Which is a good argument for never asking for a select committee of inquiry into anything.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: When I was a member of the Select Committee on Immunisation and Vaccination Rates in Children, I had no understanding, no knowledge and no view about the matter. We inquired into the issue and it informed my views because I had not previously looked at the issue. Clearly, members have already done a fair degree of work on this issue. I have listened to the speeches of members of both sides of the chamber. When I moved the motion, it was clear that I was happy to have a debate on the issue to allow people who had already done the work to put their views and to let this house express an opinion on the matter one way or another. I feel comfortable and ready to express an opinion on the matter. Members opposite claim that one of the reasons for moving the amendment is that members on this side of the chamber have a different view from their federal colleagues. However, if we listen to members opposite, we will find that they, too, have a different view from their federal colleagues. Do we have a different view from our eastern states colleagues? Yes, we do. Do we have a different view on the issue of poker machines from our eastern states colleagues? Yes, we do. We are no different.

Hon Norman Moore: However, you have a different view from three of your state colleagues. That is the problem.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: The Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about members in this chamber and their views. I interjected during the speech by Hon Ken Baston to try to elicit from him his views. I recall that he had made comments to the media about the issue of waste being sent back to the state in which the uranium was mined. Is that right, Hon Ken Baston?

Hon Ken Baston: Can we have this debate? Then we can look at that.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: We have had this debate. The member got up on his feet and did not want to talk about that issue. I tried by interjection to encourage him to talk about that issue, but he did not want to. Hon Norman Moore should not look at this side of the chamber; he should look behind himself. The opposition should always look behind, that is for sure! I accept that members will have many varying views. I will not quote from uncorrected *Hansard*, but I can use it as an aid to remind us of what Hon Norman Moore said last week, when he clearly outlined to the house the Liberal Party's support for uranium mining. This debate has been useful for that reason, because, for once, there is a clear articulation of the views of the Liberal Party. We do not need to amend this motion, because we have finally got the Liberal Party position. Prior to the last election, the government was unable to get that out of the opposition. The opposition fudged the issue of whether or not it supported the mining of uranium. Whenever the opposition was asked a question about uranium mining, the answer was always, "We would consider it, subject to . . ." The opposition never said it would support uranium mining. This debate has finally extracted from the opposition that it actually supports the mining and export of uranium. That has been a good thing. Members should not walk away from this house being able to state an opinion by moving the issue off to an inquiry by way of an amendment. Taking into consideration the debate into the issues surrounding nuclear power as a viable alternative energy source, including the points I have listed, which I feel are already clearly demonstrable without any further inquiry, members have clearly outlined why nuclear energy is too expensive when compared with alternative energy sources.

Hon Paul Llewellyn has a vast knowledge of wind power - far more than I will ever know in my life - and he gave members the figures on the clean-up costs in the United Kingdom; he outlined that 65 000 megawatts could be created through wind power applying the expenditure required purely to clean up nuclear power in Britain. What more information do people need than that already outlined by Hon Louise Pratt and Hon Giz Watson? If people do not get it now, I am not sure that an inquiry will take it any further.

Several members interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will not take any more interjections, so I can move through my comments very quickly. I had hoped we would continue the debate, but we are limited by time. Each of the relevant points has already been clearly articulated to the house by members. I am more than comfortable in voting against nuclear

Hon Louise Pratt; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Giz Watson; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;
Deputy President; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Simon O'Brien

power as a viable energy alternative to address climate change. There are far more environmentally friendly ways of addressing climate change that we need to get onto. The second point in the amendment states -

- (2) The Committee is also to inquire into the following additional matters -
- (a) whether a nuclear waste storage facility in Western Australia is viable . . .

I do not need to have an inquiry into that aspect. The Labor Party position is very clear: we do not want one. Our federal position is very clear: we do not want one. I can understand why the state Liberal Party may want an inquiry. Its position is clearly in conflict with what its federal colleagues are talking about, including Hon Wilson Tuckey and Mr Barry Haase. The federal Liberal Party wants a nuclear waste dump in Western Australia. The state Labor Party does not kow-tow to its federal colleagues in the way that those opposite do. If the opposition wants to kow-tow to its federal colleagues and reopen the debate about a nuclear waste storage facility, go ahead. We do not need it. We are happy to say here and now that we do not want one. We do not want an inquiry into it.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is what the member's federal colleagues are talking about.

Hon Simon O'Brien interjected.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Hon Simon O'Brien said he would support it. He, too, could have put up an alternative amendment. He said he wanted to support this proposed amendment, and that means he is saying that he is happy to have an inquiry into whether or not we have a nuclear waste dump. I am saying that the Labor Party's position is very clear. The line is in the sand: we do not want one. If the opposition wants to reopen the debate, go ahead. We do not. Hon Sally Talbot made reference to the proposal being put up by the United States - to which John Howard has given encouragement - for Australia to lease enriched uranium to countries around the world rather than selling it, and to bring it back once it is used for storage in Australia. The Labor Party does not want that; it is not necessary to have an inquiry into that. The Labor Party has a very clear position.

The other two issues -

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Graham Giffard): Hon Ken Travers, I thought that during my brief absence you might have resumed your seat and stood again, because you sound like you are actually in reply to the issues that you are addressing. Are you speaking on the amendment?

Hon KEN TRAVERS: Mr Deputy President, if you go through the amendment put forward by Hon Murray Criddle, you will see that I am clearly addressing the points he made.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I accept that there is a fair bit of overlap, because a large part of the amendment moves to delete certain paragraphs.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is one of the problems. The motion seeks to delete it and insert other matters. I accept that there is a lot of overlap, but I am clearly addressing the amendment.

Hon Simon O'Brien: You are responding to each speaker before you. You are trying to close the debate by using this opportunity.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Members, I have clarified where the member is at in the debate, and we should allow him to address the amendment, as he is doing.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: I will take that interjection; I was trying to avoid interjections, but I will not listen to members opposite, when I have sat here listening to Hon Simon O'Brien drone on and on and on. I do not know how Hon Barry House refers to it -

Point of Order

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: If the member wants to address the very limited things he is allowed to address, he should do so. He is clearly trying to use this opportunity to close the debate. I hope that might be restated to him, because he is using every device he can to talk about everything except the amendment.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Graham Giffard): The amendment moves to delete paragraphs (2) and (3), and by virtue of doing that, it creates a significant overlap between the substantive motion and the amendment. That is the difficulty we are having in the debate. Hon Ken Travers is less likely to stray onto the substantive motion if there are not too many unruly interjections making him stray him from his intended speech. I take your point, but I think Hon Ken Travers is still reasonably within the bounds of the amendment.

Debate Resumed

Hon Norman Moore: Albeit that Hon Ken Travers has no consideration of the fact that other members may want have a go. He has now had an hour altogether on this issue, and some members have not had one minute.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Hon Ken Travers has the call.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: It is extraordinary to sit in this place and listen to other members go on and on and on. I do not know who agreed that the time for this debate should be limited to the question being put at 4.15 pm today. Personally, I was happy for it to continue beyond today.

Hon Norman Moore: The sessional order limits these motions so they can't go on forever, like they used to.

Hon KEN TRAVERS: That is the problem with having a sessional order that puts a time limit on debate. Most of my time over the past 10 minutes has been taken up with interjections from Hon Norman Moore and Hon Simon O'Brien. When they try to interject and make a slur, they will get a response. When they accuse me of improper motives, they will get a response. I will not go on about that, because I have made my point. I was addressing the amendment. Subparagraph (b) related to whether mining would increase pressure for a waste storage facility in Western Australia. If members do not think that the Howard position of leasing uranium to other countries will mean that the waste will come back to Australia and will increase the pressure for a waste storage facility in Western Australia, I do not know what will convince them. It is not necessary to have an inquiry to look at that, because I am already convinced of it.

Members in this place who have spoken in the debate have already covered subparagraph (d) and whether the mining of uranium in Western Australia would contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons or increase the risk of terrorism. That is not the only reason we should reject nuclear power and the mining of uranium. I would have thought that if we were to go down that path, we would want to broaden the debate. As I say, I do not think it is necessary because I have already investigated these matters; I have looked at these matters and I am convinced. I am comfortable to stand in this place and make a statement about how I feel about the mining of uranium, about nuclear waste and about nuclear power. I reject the amendment and urge members to support the motion.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [4.12 pm]: There is not much time left in which to respond, because the questions must be put and I am sure there will be a series of divisions.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Graham Giffard): I will probably need to interrupt the member before 4.15 pm for the purpose of putting the question.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: God bless you, Mr Deputy President, because we must not intrude on further items of business. I support the amendment. I came to this debate prepared to sit and listen and with a completely open mind. However, Hon Ken Travers wanted to tell us some other things. When Hon Murray Criddle suggested advancing the debate and having a serious debate instead of just listening to rhetoric, he put up this amendment. I support the amendment because it might advance the debate. Hon Ken Travers has had a conversion on the road to Damascus. The cost of committees never concerned him when he was in opposition. The demands on the Council's purse were of no consideration. Apparently, committees are now not required. His mind is made up by virtue of the Australian Labor Party platform, endorsed at the recent state conference without debate. That says almost all. Where are the ALP members who have also called for a rethink or perhaps an inquiry? They are silent and not here. Perhaps we should move for an extension of time to allow this motion to be debated to finality so that they might get the chance to speak, but they remain locked in a cupboard somewhere until they are allowed to come out. I endorse the amendment, even though I have concerns with the motivation of the primary mover.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Noting the time, I am required to put the question by 4.15 pm. There are probably four questions I need to put.

Point of Order

Hon NORMAN MOORE: I asked in my speech if the three paragraphs of the motion could be put separately. I ask if that is your intention, Mr Deputy President.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Graham Giffard): I propose to put the first part of the question, which will be that the words in the first paragraph to be deleted be deleted. If that is successful, we will seek to insert the words that Hon Murray Criddle has moved to have inserted. We will then deliberate on paragraph (1) and then move to deal with paragraphs (2) and (3) separately. The question is that the words to be deleted be deleted.

Debate Resumed

Extract from *Hansard*
[COUNCIL - Wednesday, 28 June 2006]
p4375d-4396a

Hon Louise Pratt; President; Hon Murray Criddle; Hon Giz Watson; Hon Ken Baston; Hon Dr Sally Talbot;
Deputy President; Hon Norman Moore; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Simon O'Brien

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (13)

Hon George Cash	Hon Nigel Hallett	Hon Helen Morton	Hon Ken Baston (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Murray Criddle	Hon Ray Halligan	Hon Simon O'Brien	
Hon Donna Faragher	Hon Barry House	Hon Margaret Rowe	
Hon Anthony Fels	Hon Norman Moore	Hon Barbara Scott	

Noes (14)

Hon Shelley Archer	Hon Adele Farina	Hon Louise Pratt	Hon Giz Watson
Hon Vincent Catania	Hon Graham Giffard	Hon Ljiljana Ravlich	Hon Ed Dermer (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Kim Chance	Hon Paul Llewellyn	Hon Sally Talbot	
Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Sheila Mills	Hon Ken Travers	

Pairs

Hon Bruce Donaldson	Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm
Hon Robyn McSweeney	Hon Kate Doust
Hon Peter Collier	Hon Jon Ford

Amendment thus negated.

Motion Resumed

Paragraph (1) put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (14)

Hon Shelley Archer	Hon Adele Farina	Hon Louise Pratt	Hon Giz Watson
Hon Vincent Catania	Hon Graham Giffard	Hon Ljiljana Ravlich	Hon Ed Dermer (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Kim Chance	Hon Paul Llewellyn	Hon Sally Talbot	
Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Sheila Mills	Hon Ken Travers	

Noes (13)

Hon George Cash	Hon Nigel Hallett	Hon Helen Morton	Hon Ken Baston (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Murray Criddle	Hon Ray Halligan	Hon Simon O'Brien	
Hon Donna Faragher	Hon Barry House	Hon Margaret Rowe	
Hon Anthony Fels	Hon Norman Moore	Hon Barbara Scott	

Pairs

Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm	Hon Bruce Donaldson
Hon Kate Doust	Hon Robyn McSweeney
Hon Jon Ford	Hon Peter Collier

Paragraph (1) thus passed.

Paragraph (2) put and passed.

Paragraph (3) put and a division taken with the following result -

Ayes (14)

Hon Shelley Archer	Hon Adele Farina	Hon Louise Pratt	Hon Giz Watson
Hon Vincent Catania	Hon Graham Giffard	Hon Ljiljana Ravlich	Hon Ed Dermer (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Kim Chance	Hon Paul Llewellyn	Hon Sally Talbot	
Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Sheila Mills	Hon Ken Travers	

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Noes (13)

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Hon Norman Moore

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Hon Simon O'Brien
Hon Margaret Rowe
Hon Barbara Scott

Hon Ken Baston (*Teller*)

Pairs

Hon Matt Benson-Lidholm
Hon Kate Doust
Hon Jon Ford

Hon Bruce Donaldson
Hon Robyn McSweeney
Hon Peter Collier

Paragraph (3) thus passed.

Sitting suspended from 4.24 to 4.32 pm