

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY — SUMMER

942. Ms C.M. TONKIN to the Minister for Energy:

I have been given the extraordinary privilege today of asking our awesome Minister for Energy his last question from our side in this place. I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to delivering clean, reliable and affordable power to all Western Australians.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on the ongoing work to bolster Western Australia's electricity system over summer?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how our power system performed during last week's unseasonably warm weather?

The SPEAKER: Minister for Energy.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

- (1)–(2) Thank you very much for the call, Madam Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I know she has a deep interest in the energy transition. If I can just have a moment of indulgence, I want to thank my kids in the back of the chamber—Rebekah Roche, Zoe Johnston and Liam Johnston—and again say how proud I am of them and acknowledge what they missed out on.

[Applause.]

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: It is hard for all of us here. I just let people know that my kids were aged three, six and nine when Kate was elected to the upper house and at the same time I was elected as state secretary of the Labor Party, so they suffered a lot.

Mr P.C. Tinley: So did we!

Several members interjected.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: I am looking forward to sitting next to the member for Willagee.

Mr P.C. Tinley: Can you arrange that?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: Like the guys in *The Muppets*! The good news for everybody in the chamber is that I might be moving to the back bench, but I will still remember everything about the Liberals and the National Parties' performance in government and I will be able to speak on every bill that comes to the house.

The SPEAKER: That was an appropriate indulgence and now you may answer the question.

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: The dynamic nature of the sector here in Western Australia is best set out by the fact that we had a record system low on 25 September this year, when the total amount of electricity generated by the central system was only 595 megawatts. To put that in context, when I became minister, I was told the system could not function under 900 megawatts. The hard work of the people in the sector implementing new policies, new rules, new procedures and new ways of doing business means we can now get that down to that very small number. In fact, over the last 13 months, we have had the 10 lowest ever demand days. Just six weeks later, on 23 November, we had a record system high. I was originally advised 4 037 megawatts; now I am advised 4 041.

We have to understand that massive difference between trough and peak, and we have to have a system that can handle both sides. What we know in Western Australia is that we have a system that can handle that. The south west interconnected system is continuing to deliver the reliable, affordable and increasingly low carbon energy that we all want. Kwinana battery energy storage system 1, which is a 100 megawatt and 200 megawatt hour battery, is giving more flexibility to the system. KBESS 2 will be available from 1 October next year, with 200 megawatts and 800 megawatt hours. We are building one of the largest batteries anywhere—the Collie BESS, which will have a 500-megawatt capacity and 2 000 megawatt hours of storage. These are the investments that are needed to see the transition of the grid.

I also want to acknowledge the private sector investment that is going into the system. We have had the Shepherd report look at the challenges for Western Power, and I congratulate the hardworking people at Western Power who are taking the actions needed to make our Western Power distribution network more reliable. For example, we are seeing upgraded feeders in Byford, Southern River, Beechboro, Mandurah and Meadow Springs. When that work is completed, 26 feeders will have been ungraded since the 2021 outages. The Australian Energy Market Operator is using its powers under the supplementary reserve capacity process to make sure that the system has every support that it needs.

I want to finish by pointing out that we get criticised from those on the other side of politics about our energy system, but I will just refer to four media releases on the home page of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy's website. The first one congratulates the government on the introduction of carbon capture and storage legislation, which,

as Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I am proud to have brought to the chamber. In the second media release on the website, it congratulates Premier Cook's announcement of the transmission upgrades and it says that the transmission upgrades are a welcome step towards energy transition capability. The next one is headlined "Government funding boost a step on the journey to net zero". Again, it is welcoming what we are doing. Finally, the fourth media release says, "Gas at the centre of a secure, reliable energy transition". It welcomed Premier Cook's comments at the energy transition summit.

Everybody who has invested in the system is acknowledging the hard work that is being done. I am proud of the part that I have played, but the broader energy transition is being done by thousands of people, particularly public sector employees, public sector engineers at Western Power, the bright energy nerds down at Energy Policy WA, the hardworking people at Synergy and, of course, the people in the member for Collie–Preston's electorate who are being directly impacted by the transition. I met with them at the Mining Emergency Response Competition dinner on Sunday night and they asked me what is the next step. They are being directly impacted, but they know that this Labor government supports them. There are also the private investors who are taking advantage of the opportunities that the government is creating.

This is an energy transition system that I know the hardworking people in this government will be able to take forward without me. Thank you all very much.

Members: Hear, hear!

[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: The member for North West Central with the last question.