

## CLIMATE CHANGE — EMISSIONS TARGET

### *Statement*

**HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan)** [5.19 pm]: I want to raise and talk about a letter that I expect many if not all members will have received this week from the Beeliar Group, which is the Professors for Environmental Responsibility. It is a very impressive group, including Professor Peter Newman, along with many other professors from I think all the Western Australian universities, who have written a letter that I want to read. It is a long letter; I will not read it all. It is about 12 pages long, but I want to highlight some points. The letter is titled “Parliament Must Hold the Executive Accountable for the State’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions”. I will read the opening part of the letter. It states —

Dear Dr Pettitt

Thirty years ago, in November 1992, the members of the *Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters* published the final report of their inquiry.

Their report observed that:

The accountability of government and of the administrative arms of government is at the heart of the matter. Our inherited system of representative democracy has traditionally given the Parliament the central role in securing the executive’s accountability to the public. Yet, as we have seen, in its present form the Parliament does not adequately perform that role.

That was a quote from 1992. The letter continues —

We are writing to you in your capacity as a member of the Parliament of Western Australia, to ask that you hold the executive accountable for the State’s greenhouse gas emissions.

I must say, as someone who is really interested in this, I still learnt a lot from what these professors outlined in this letter. It is worth highlighting a few key elements of it. They start by saying that, as we know, WA is unique among the six Australian states as our greenhouse gas emissions have gone up by 20.8 per cent since the 2005 accounting period. We are the only state that has done that. The second point is one that I thought was really interesting. They actually quantify where those emission rises have come from. They put it in a really interesting way. They note that the biggest rises have come from the five LNG production facilities, with about 20 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. The four alumina refineries accounted for about eight million tonnes, the four coal-fired power generation facilities accounted for 6.7 million tonnes, and the 38 gas-fired electricity generation facilities accounted for 7.1 million tonnes.

It is interesting, of course, that we had a bit of good news this week about coal. I congratulate the government on making what I think was a really important decision on having a clear road map this decade on closing down coal-fired power. An opinion piece that I wrote that was published today in *WA today* notes that although that is really important, it will reduce about four million tonnes of the 40 million tonnes plus that we need to get our emissions down by this decade. That is 10 per cent of the task, if we are going to meet our minimum obligations. I also note that today the Prime Minister signed a 43 per cent target for this decade. WA’s part of that will be to get its emissions down a minimum 32 per cent from 2005 levels, which means about 47 to 48 per cent this decade. We have a huge task. As we can see, a lot of that will come down to these major facilities.

The letter goes on to refer to the state aligning itself with what is called the Glasgow Climate Pact, which, of course, Australia has signed on to, and very much aligns with what Prime Minister Albanese has signed today, which is to get global emissions down by 2030 by 45 per cent relative to 2010 levels. Australia signed that at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, or the COP26, in December last year. That is a really good move. It highlights what that means in terms of actions.

Really interestingly, these professors talk about what we need to do to meet that target. The letter states how we can reduce those key emissions. One of the key lines I like in here is one that came from the Global Conference on Energy Efficiency in Denmark last year. In many ways, it is the bit that we do not talk about enough; that is, “the cleanest energy is the energy we don’t use”. This has to be part of what WA does—energy efficiency, getting our emissions down, and how we can achieve this.

The sixth point in the letter is important. It refers to something we find difficult to talk about, however, I raise it in this place on their behalf because I acknowledge that the professors who wrote this letter want to raise it. The letter states —

The sixth element is that parts of the executive of this State are too close to the LNG industry, such that LNG industry lobbyists and company representatives have special access and influence within government.

The letter goes on to give examples of this and how it plays out. It states —

- the lack of an agreed international framework for the validation of such claims;

- the lack of EPA guidance on how decision-makers should regard proponents' claims of 'avoided emissions'; and
- the failure of LNG companies to present empirical examples across the entire value chain ....

Parliament should be scrutinising these really important issues, because as the letter states —

... Parliament must articulate the public interest for greenhouse gas emissions in this state,

That is one of the key things we can do. In fact, the letter quotes the Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Australia, who recently observed —

Evaluation of good or bad decision-making about greenhouse gas emissions and the risks of global warming is one to which the highest considerations of the welfare of the Commonwealth attend.

It is a really good letter and one that I suspect is sitting in the inboxes of many members. It goes on to call on the Parliament to do a number of things. The first is to implement an independent review of ministerial conditions and regulatory arrangements for greenhouse gas emissions from industrial, mining and electricity generation facilities in Western Australia, which is worthy. Secondly, it calls on the government to enact a climate integrity act. It refers to short-term emission targets, and transparent and accountable ways of how to respond to that. I commend the letter to all members and thank the Beeliar Group of professors for writing it. The letter is really useful and interesting and I hope everyone reads it.

Another matter I want to raise quickly is about a question I asked this week about bicycle widths. Frustratingly, I did not get an answer to that question, however, I thank Minister Saffioti, who despite not being able to give me an answer, dealt with the matter at the heart of that question. Some of my constituents are concerned that not only are police bikes unlawful, but trailers that people hire at Rottnest and the average mountain bike are unlawful. Perhaps, most importantly, people have also been trying to access funding under the NDIS for tricycles that are technically unlawful because of a hangover piece of legislation to do with the limit of 660 millimetres on the width of bicycles. I am pleased to learn that is to be extended to 800 millimetres and it will bring WA into line with other states. Importantly, those people who need extra mobility will now be able to lawfully access tricycles through the NDIS. I thank the minister for responding and dealing with that issue quickly after we reached out to her directly. There have been some frustrations. I also acknowledge WestCycle, bicycle industry groups and the many others who had been trying to get a solution to this matter through normal processes for more than a year. I am pleased that that has now been remedied and I thank the minister for getting on and doing that.