



Energy down the drain

By REX DRABIK

CLEAN energy generated by Esperance's wind farms is going to waste, according to Greens member for Mining and Pastoral Robin Chapple.

The reason is state government commercial contracts with a private sector power producer.

During parliamentary question time earlier this month Mr Chapple asked the Leader of the House Peter Collier to clarify whether the amount of power able to be delivered to the Esperance power grid by wind farms was being constrained by commercial arrangements with the private sector operator of the town's gas-fired power station.

Mr Collier conceded energy produced by the Ten Mile Lagoon and nearby Nine Mile Beach wind farms, both owned and operated by Verve Energy, displaced electricity generation from the town's gas-fired power station.

"Currently, Verve Energy is constrained to a maximum amount of renew-

able energy that may be supplied from these wind farms each year. Any increase to this level would need to be negotiated with the private sector owner," Mr Collier said.

"The private power station owner has a commercial arrangement with Horizon Power for the output of the power station. The level of renewable energy supplied by Verve Energy has been capped to provide certainty to this power station's revenue."

"The wind farms are constrained by a control system between the power station and the wind farm."

Mr Chapple said he was "gobsmacked" and "appalled" by Mr Collier's admission the wind farms' renewable energy was not being used.

"The energy minister has admitted the Esperance windfarms happily rotate away most of the time, while the clean, cheap, renewable energy they produce is simply wasted," he said.

"The arrangement entered into by the government guarantees the fossil-fuel

powered generator a large slice of the market, beyond which the wind farms can pick up only the remaining crumbs.

"They effectively have to pour the electricity down the drain.

"This is a classic case of greenhouse-gas intensive fossil fuel generation being granted a massive public subsidy and shows in microcosm just what is wrong with this government's approach to its energy policy."

Mr Chapple also expressed concerns about the future of Esperance's wind farms.

When questioned in parliament by Mr Chapple, Mr Collier said Verve Energy had no immediate plans to replace the Ten Mile Lagoon wind farm once it reached the end of its operating life.

Verve Energy did a study of the condition of the wind farm last year with independent engineers from SKM, which concluded that the wind farm was capable of safely operating for another three to five years.



Wasted resource: Greens member for Mining and Pastoral Robin Chapple claims Esperance wind turbine energy is being wasted.