

Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024

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7 March 2024

Ms Kim Richards MP
Chair, Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Email: cejrtc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Re: Submission on the Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024

Dear Ms Richards MP,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee (the Committee) on the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024* (the Bill).

The Queensland Renewable Energy Council (QREC) is a not for profit industry association, focused on providing policy leadership and advocacy on matters relating to the development and operation of renewable energy projects in Queensland. We act in the best interests of our members and connecting stakeholders to build a clean, reliable and affordable energy future where Queensland communities prosper.

Given QREC's remit, we support the introduction of the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024* to set emission reduction targets in Queensland legislation.

By enshrining emissions reduction targets in law, including the ambitious new '75% emissions reduction by 2035' target, the Bill sets a clear long-term direction for Queensland, ensuring that Queensland will take a leading role in reducing emissions across key industries in the economy over the decades to come.

Importantly, while reducing emissions, the Bill will support and create jobs and help to secure Queensland's economic future. The setting of emissions reduction targets will provide an important signal to existing businesses and future investors, and will incentivise investment in new industries and in decarbonisation of existing industries.

To avoid any fusion, the emission reduction targets needs to work hand in glove with the renewable energy targets outlined in the *Energy (Renewable Transition and Jobs) Bill 2023*, and with the broader Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, to deliver on Queensland's decarbonisation agenda.

Together, this suite of legislation and policy will further boost the renewable energy industry in Queensland. Renewable energy plays the key role in the State's broader decarbonisation agenda, enabling the electrification of traditional fuel-based systems (including energy and transport) as well as providing a direct energy solution for heavy industry.

Queensland has already attracted significant renewable energy investment and exciting initiatives. To note a recent example, in February 2024, Rio Tinto became Australia's largest renewable energy buyer by signing a renewable power purchase agreement with Windlab to

supply electricity from the Bungaban wind project to Rio's Gladstone operations. This deal is representative of the ambition from Queensland-based heavy emitting industries to lower emissions and to stay competitive in a global market that demands products that have high Environment and Social Governance credentials, an ambition that will be supported by the Bill. Further, the sector plans outlined in the Bill will provide critical direction for relevant sectors in meeting Commonwealth and State emissions reduction targets.

While generally supportive of the Bill, for the reasons outlined above, QREC makes the following comments in the context of ensuring the fulfillment of these ambitious targets:

- **Omission of legally binding constraints and requirements on industry:** The Explanatory Notes state, *'While the Bill will increase accountability for achieving the State's emissions reduction targets, it is not intended that the Bill operate as a legally binding constraint in any future statutory decision or approval processes. The Bill does not seek to override existing statutory decision-making processes, rights and obligations, including those that already consider emissions such as those under Queensland's development, planning and environmental laws. Similarly, the Bill itself does not impose any requirements on industry to achieve the State's targets.'*

Although QREC appreciates the government's intent, as set out by the Department of Energy and Climate Change's Director-General, Mr Paul Martyn at the departmental briefing to the Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee, on the Bill on 4 March 2024, of working in partnership with industry to achieve the targets, rather than duplicating existing legislative processes, QREC would like to see this position re-considered if the government does not feel, by the due date of the sector plans at the end of 2025, that commitments are unable to realise the government's ambitions.

- **Support across the political spectrum:** Without support across the political spectrum, long-term targets of any description – including for emissions reduction – cannot fulfil their intended purpose of signalling ambition and providing certainty of direction. QREC urges leaders and parties from across the political spectrum to support the Bill and its statutory emissions reduction targets so as to not undermine the long-term benefits that the Bill can provide.
- **Alignment with other governments:** Queensland's state targets and the actions to achieve them are made in the context of a national emissions reduction and decarbonisation agenda that is being pursued across various State/Territory governments as well as at the Commonwealth level. QREC urges the Queensland government to wherever possible work with other governments and levels of government (local, State/Territory and Commonwealth) in implementing its emissions reduction targets. In particular, a high degree of coordination, particularly for project assessments, between the Queensland and Commonwealth governments must be maintained if the targets in the Bill are to be met.

QREC in particular notes that the Queensland government is, or will be, working with the Commonwealth government on:

- o developing a bilateral Renewable Energy Transformation Agreement; and
- o aligning Queensland sector plans with the Commonwealth government's own sector plans for emissions reduction, which are currently under development.

Both of these initiatives will support delivery of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, the *Energy (Renewable Transition and Jobs) Bill 2023* and this Bill. The initiatives are important and QREC urges government to continue to engage on a regular basis with the community and industry (including industries bodies such as the QREC) in furthering these initiatives.

- **Sector plans:** The proposed 'sector emissions reduction plans' are a crucial element of the Bill and will be key to the ultimate success of the legislation. It is understood that the sector plans will cover Queensland's highest emitting industries, such as energy, industry, transport, land and agriculture and the built environment. To the extent that government entities (at both the local and State government level) are not themselves covered by sector plans then QREC also recommends that the government sector itself should have its own sector plan, to prioritise decarbonisation from the wide variety of publicly owned and controlled assets (in particular those which are high-emitting).
- **Expert Panel:** QREC would like to nominate a representative to be a member of the panel, as well as encourage the government to make the Panel's operation as transparent as possible.

Follow up

QREC would welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee to discuss this submission and I can be contacted at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Katie-Anne Mulder
Chief Executive Officer
Queensland Renewable Energy Council