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GOVERNANCE, ENERGY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr MJ Crandon MP—Chair
Mr CG Whiting MP
Ms B Asif MP
Mr JT Barounis MP
Mr LR McCallum MP
Ms KJ Morton MP

Staff present:

Ms E Lewis—Acting Committee Secretary
Mr Z Dadic—Assistant Committee Secretary

PUBLIC BRIEFING—INQUIRY INTO THE ENERGY ROADMAP AMENDMENT BILL 2025

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Monday, 27 October 2025

Brisbane

MONDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2025

The committee met at 10.30 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this public briefing for the committee's inquiry into the Energy Roadmap Amendment Bill 2025. My name is Michael Crandon MP, member for Coomera and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. Other committee members with me here today are: Mr Chris Whiting MP, member for Bancroft and deputy chair; Ms Kendall Morton MP, member for Caloundra; Mr Lance McCallum MP, member for Bundamba; Mr John Barounis MP, member for Maryborough; and Ms Bisma Asif MP, member for Sandgate.

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CUSSEN, Ms Catherine, Executive Director, Energy Frameworks and Engagement Policy, Queensland Treasury

FINCH, Ms Claire, Director, Energy Frameworks Policy, Queensland Treasury

GARDINER, Mr Mitch, Director, Coordinated Transmission, Queensland Treasury

KELLY, Mr Matt, Executive Director, Energy and Financial Institutions, Queensland Treasury

REEVES, Ms Kellie, Deputy Under Treasurer, Energy and Government Owned Corporations, Queensland Treasury

WILLETT, Ms Rachael, Manager, Transformation Team, Queensland Treasury

CHAIR: I welcome representatives from Queensland Treasury who have been invited to brief the committee on the bill. Please remember to press your microphone button on before you start speaking and off when you are finished. I invite you to provide an opening statement, after which committee members will have some questions for you. Over to you, Kellie.

Ms Reeves: Thank you. Good morning and thank you for the invitation to provide this briefing on the Energy Roadmap Amendment Bill 2025. Firstly, I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which this meeting is held, the Yagara and Turrbal peoples, and pay my respects to elders past and present.

As the committee is aware, the Treasurer, Minister for Energy and Minister for Home Ownership released the Energy Roadmap on 10 October. As its name suggests, the bill before you today is intended to support delivery of the Energy Roadmap and ensure alignment between Queensland's energy policy settings and enabling legislation. The bill amends the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024, which I will refer to as the energy act throughout this briefing. It also makes consequential amendments and amends associated regulation.

At a high level, the bill renames the energy act as the Energy (Infrastructure Facilitation) Act 2024 and amends the act to better reflect the government's priorities of facilitating energy infrastructure and investment to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy for

Queenslanders. Amendments to the act—namely, the energy system planning and infrastructure frameworks—align with the government's policy position outlined in the Energy Roadmap. The road map recognises that Queensland's energy system will continue to evolve and policy and legislative settings should be flexible and responsive to market dynamics, technological advancement and the needs and preferences of consumers. The bill also makes streamlining amendments to the act, removing unnecessary prescription, processes and governance.

I will now take some time to talk through the amendments in further detail. Firstly, the bill will implement the government's commitment to repeal Queensland's renewable energy targets. Repealing the targets, together with the proposed amendments to the system planning framework that I will outline shortly, are intended to support a market-based approach to facilitate investment and Queensland's evolving energy system needs. The renamed Energy System Outlook will continue to include strategic infrastructure investments identified to assist in meeting legislative system planning objectives, renamed strategic infrastructure path objectives. The revised strategic infrastructure path objectives will guide the system planning framework to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy—namely, the long-term minimisation of the cost of electricity for Queensland consumers; the provision of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity to Queensland consumers; and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the generation of electricity in Queensland which replaces the objective related to achieving the renewable energy targets.

The Energy System Outlook provides for the minister to include capacity estimates of the infrastructure required to support Queensland's energy market and information on the operating timeframes of state owned coal-fired power stations. The bill also clarifies that the Energy Roadmap is the first Energy System Outlook, noting it was released prior to legislative changes. In addition, the bill will amend public ownership provisions to align with the government's commitment to maintain ownership of critical energy assets while signalling the opportunity for private sector investment in new energy infrastructure. The existing targets for 100 per cent public ownership of transmission, distribution and deep storage assets will be retained. These will be enduring targets, with the existing target of by 2035 removed.

The bill includes a public ownership target to maintain 100 per cent ownership of all existing operational generation assets. This replaces the existing target of achieving 54 per cent public ownership of all generation investment by 2035. The revised target for generation reflects the government's commitment to maintaining ownership of existing assets while providing opportunities for private sector investment in new generation. It is also intended to address risks. The existing target could potentially crowd out private sector investment and place pressure on the state's fiscal position.

Amendments also make definitional changes to provide that publicly owned assets are those owned by the state government only. Updated reporting obligations will provide that the minister is to prepare a report by 31 May 2027 and at further intervals of two years regarding whether the targets have been achieved and how the percentage of publicly owned assets for each class of energy assets is worked out. This aligns with the review requirements for the Energy System Outlook and the report must be published on the department's website.

Moving on to infrastructure frameworks, the bill revises and reframes key infrastructure frameworks to support the Energy Roadmap and new investment across the energy sector. The bill renames 'renewable energy zones' as 'regional energy hubs' and facilitates the development of coordinated transmission to connect new generation and storage in Queensland. The framework is designed to be responsive to industry and community by ensuring hub declarations are market led based on private sector interest and development activity and align to community expectations. The development of hubs will take account of broader requirements such as resource availability, existing grid infrastructure and proximity to major load centres to ensure efficient outcomes for the whole system. The hub transmission framework is funded by connecting generators in the first instance, with costs only able to be recovered from customers as a last resort.

The bill also streamlines the legislative framework by removing unnecessary assessment mechanisms, recognising that government can already undertake impact assessments without legislation and to avoid duplication with Planning Act amendments. A coordinated planning and development approach to regional energy hubs will seek to minimise impacts on communities and optimise associated benefits. Each hub will be unique and subject to its own planning and investigation of detailed benefits and impacts for local communities, landholders, the environment, project proponents and the broader community.

The priority transmission investment framework provides for assessment and delivery of significant transmission projects. The bill aims to streamline and improve operational efficiency of the PTI framework. It replaces an existing process under the energy act which requires responsible

ministers to first seek a submission from Powerlink on Powerlink's proposed approach to assess candidate PTI projects and then seek advice from a suitably qualified person. Importantly, it does not change the minimum matters that must be consulted on. Amendments enable additional information to inform the responsible minister's decision to direct construction or variation of the option proposed by Powerlink in its assessment report. The bill also removes the previous 2035 sunset date for the PTI framework which was aligned to the previous government's renewable energy target. The framework may be needed beyond 2035 to support achievement of the Queensland energy system and strategic infrastructure path objectives.

A key element of the bill is the inclusion of a new part 8 intended to facilitate and support delivery of the CopperString project. The CopperString project is identified as a priority in the Energy Roadmap to connect the North and North-West Queensland areas to the national grid, enable investment in new generation and storage and industrial development. The new framework introduced by the bill supports the Queensland Investment Corporation's recommended delivery model for the project, including opportunities for government to partner with the private sector. It facilitates the delivery of CopperString by providing arrangements for economic regulation which will support certainty for investment and ensure appropriate assessment of efficient costs for the project. The amendments require responsible ministers to obtain advice from an appropriately qualified person on the efficiency of proposed costs for the construction and operation of the project before it is declared. The declaration of a stage by the responsible ministers will allow for making or amending the first transmission determinations that apply to the stage and subsequent determinations, if required. This is facilitated by a regulation-making power included within the framework. These amendments support a tailored, legislative and regulatory framework for CopperString.

Finally, as part of the amendments that streamline the energy act, the bill repeals the governance bodies established by the act. These bodies are the Queensland Energy System Advisory Board, the Energy Industry Council and the Queensland Renewable Energy Jobs Advocate. This is intended to meet the government's objectives to support administrative efficiency by removing duplication, complexity and cost associated with these governance arrangements. Repeal of the governance bodies will not prevent government from seeking expert advice in making energy policy decisions, including through existing administrative processes.

In developing the amendment bill, Queensland Treasury has taken targeted engagement and consultation with affected stakeholders and functions under the energy act. This includes as part of the consultation process for the priority transmission investment and regional energy hub amendments with Powerlink and the Australian Energy Regulator briefed and also the Australian Energy Market Operator. Stakeholder feedback was considered during the development of the amendments before you today. That brings my opening statement to a conclusion and my colleagues and I welcome questions from the committee on aspects of the bill.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. I call the member for Bancroft.

Mr WHITING: Thank you. I will hand over to the member for Bundamba.

Mr McCALLUM: Thanks for your opening statement. There is an unplanned outage at Callide C4 this morning and there is a heatwave today which means that only two of Callide's generators are currently operating. Can you tell the committee what has happened at C4?

CHAIR: I am sorry, but I ask you to come back to relevant questions for the committee in relation to the bill before us, not in relation to matters that have just occurred.

Mr McCALLUM: In reference to the public ownership provisions which are in the bill, CS Energy owns the Callide Power Station. The provisions of this bill and indeed the entire Energy Roadmap—the government's key policy around the energy maintenance guarantee which will form part of this bill and the policy—go directly to the question. I would submit to you, Chair, that it is entirely relevant.

CHAIR: I do not believe that is the case. I will ask you to move on to questions that are relevant to the bill before us today and not ask questions relating to matters that have just occurred in the marketplace.

Mr McCALLUM: It is a sad day for transparency, Chair, but I will move on.

CHAIR: Order, member.

Mr McCALLUM: Given the bill's change to public ownership requirements from both public and private generation assets to just existing public assets, is it correct that as the existing publicly owned generation assets wind down Queenslanders could have zero public ownership of generation assets under this bill?

Ms Reeves: Amendments to the public ownership provision support the government's commitment to retain 100 per cent public ownership of existing operational generation assets and also facilitate new private sector investment in generation. That does replace the existing generation target of achieving at least 54 per cent public ownership of generation investments by 2035, noting potential impacts around discouraging private sector investment in new generation.

Mr McCALLUM: Could you answer my question directly? Is it correct that under the provisions of this bill as existing public ownership generation assets wind down Queenslanders could have zero public ownership of generation assets?

CHAIR: I am wondering whether or not that is something you can answer. I am concerned about some inferences in the question. I think we should move on to something that relates directly to the bill. I think we should move on to questions that are able to be answered by the people who are witnesses this morning rather than asking for hypothetical responses. Move on, please.

Mr McCALLUM: Thank you, Chair. In the explanatory notes under the subheading 'public ownership' it states—

... the targets for generation assets to confirm the State will retain 100 per cent public ownership of its existing operational generation assets.

My question is: as we move forward and those existing operational generation assets are withdrawn from service, if they are replaced by private sector investment, as has been acknowledged in the opening statement and as the minister has said on the public record and in the parliament, under the provisions of this bill that are referred to both in the clauses and in the explanatory notes I have just referred to, will Queensland have zero publicly owned generation assets in the future and will the provision in this bill still be satisfied? Can we have zero publicly owned operational generation assets under this bill?

CHAIR: You still have not convinced me that you are going down the appropriate road in relation to this bill. I will ask you to move on to another question or I will move the questions to the government side.

Mr WHITING: Chair, can I point out that the officers in front of us have talked about the government commitment to 100 per cent ownership of those public assets, but we have identified that there is a pathway to dilute that 100 per cent ownership over coming generations. I think it is a very legitimate line of questioning—

CHAIR: It is also a very hypothetical one and not one that these officers are able to respond to in this public briefing. Member, do you have any more questions?

Mr McCALLUM: I do, Chair. Has the department done modelling on the workforce impacts of privatisation?

Ms Reeves: I can only comment on the provisions in the bill related to delivery—

Mr McCALLUM: With respect, my question is whether or not your department has done modelling in relation to the impacts of privatisation.

CHAIR: It is a straightforward question, whether or not modelling has been done. The question is not asking you to reveal anything at this stage. If you are able to answer the question, please do so.

Ms Reeves: I think Treasury undertakes a range of modelling to support delivery of government policy including the Energy Roadmap and this bill. What I cannot comment on though is any matters related to consideration by executive government.

Mr McCALLUM: I have a follow-up question, still on modelling. Has your department modelled the impact to household and small business energy bills if energy generation assets are privately owned going forward?

CHAIR: Again, if there has been some modelling, by all means answer the question in that regard. I do not expect you to go any further.

Ms Reeves: Again, Treasury undertakes a range of modelling and that occurred in terms of the development of the Energy Roadmap and consideration of the bill. I cannot comment on matters that are put before executive government.

Mr McCALLUM: Thank you. We will take that as a yes.

CHAIR: Member, please do not make comments of that sort in the briefing. You are putting something in that is potentially argumentative and I would ask you to refrain from doing that.

Mr McCALLUM: Thank you. I have another question, Chair. I understand that the Energy Roadmap provides for a decision matrix for state owned coal assets. Can I clarify, using the criteria in the policy, if a coal generator was required to shut down would it be the department's recommendation that it do so, so there would be advice provided to the minister?

Ms Reeves: Yes, you are right; the Energy Roadmap includes a decision matrix to inform executive government consideration around the operation of coal assets. Those factors relate to system need first and foremost, asset integrity and economic viability. In terms of the department's briefing, those factors would be considered and weighed and would inform advice to executive government.

CHAIR: Thanks, member. I call the member for Caloundra for the next question.

Ms MORTON: How does the bill facilitate new investment to meet Queensland's energy needs?

Ms Reeves: Supporting the road map, the bill provides planning, infrastructure and investment frameworks that facilitate new investment in energy infrastructure to deliver Queensland's energy system needs. Clarifying legislative settings provides certainty for investors in industry as well as workers and communities. Under the bill, the Energy System Outlook outlines energy system needs and the strategic infrastructure path including key energy projects the government has identified as being required to meet its strategic energy objectives of affordability—that is the long-term minimisation of the cost of electricity for Queensland consumers—reliability; the provision of a safe, secure and reliable supply of electricity to Queensland consumers and sustainability; and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from the generation of electricity in Queensland rather than the objective of achieving targets focused on renewable energy production. The road map is the first Energy System Outlook which forecasts new operational capacity in Queensland's energy system of up to 0.6 gigawatts of gas-fired generation, up to 6.8 gigawatts of wind and large-scale solar and up to 3.8 gigawatts of storage. It also outlines the government's approach for the operation of state owned coal assets based on the capacity needed by the energy system and supported by the market.

Further, through the priority transmission investment framework, planned investments enable the market to understand where additional transmission capacity will be unlocked, facilitating new investment to meet Queensland's energy needs. Similarly, regional energy hubs show the market where new transmission network infrastructure will be developed to enable the coordinated connection of generation and storage projects in a way that optimises network capacity and maximises benefits. New provisions in the bill also support delivery of the CopperString project.

Ms MORTON: Further to that, how does this bill support the government's commitment to deliver the CopperString project?

Ms Reeves: The bill introduces a new legislative framework to support the efficient and coordinated delivery of the CopperString project in line with recommendations from QIC and government commitments. The bill enables the economic regulation of stages of the CopperString project as declared by government. In providing its assessment to government, QIC recommended establishing a new regulated entity as the project proponent to deliver the project, maintaining a commercial and value-for-money focus across design, procurement, construction and maintenance, and delivering the Eastern Link as a regulated asset to secure value for money enabled through legislative and regulatory amendments.

The next phase of work will prioritise establishing a new regulated entity, aligning project costs with industry benchmarks focused on design and competitive procurement, and progressing broader development activities for delivery of the Eastern Link. Subject to future regulations, the declaration of a project stage can provide a pathway for the identified transmission network service provider to earn a regulated revenue allowance to recover the efficient costs associated with construction and operation and ensure compliance with national and state legislative requirements. The amendments in the bill are an initial step in providing a tailored, legislative and regulatory framework to support the CopperString project in line with QIC's recommendations. Further legislative and regulatory amendments may be required as QIC undertakes further work and the delivery model for the project is finalised.

As announced by government, QIC will deliver the Eastern Link of CopperString with major construction commencing by 2028 and commercial operations by 2032 subject to approvals. The road map also confirms that while work progresses on the Eastern Link, the government is committed to deliver for customers on the Western Link in the immediate term with QIC working with generators, developers, investors, industry and communities on the north-west through the \$200 million North West Energy Fund to support local generation and storage solutions.

Mr BAROUNIS: My question will be about the benefits for the community from renewable energy projects. Before I ask you the question, I would like to say that these targets were set in the past and they were probably based on ideological aspects and obviously they are not going to be able to be met. My question is: what community engagement processes are in play—

Mr McCALLUM: Point of order, Chair. I would submit that that question and preamble contain clear inferences and opinions. I would ask for the member to just state the question.

CHAIR: You are saying the question and the preamble—

Mr McCALLUM: The preamble contained inferences.

CHAIR: He was putting his views. Yes, I take the point of order. Please move on.

Mr BAROUNIS: Sorry, Mr Chair. What community engagement processes are in place to ensure local benefits of renewable energy projects are maximised?

Ms Reeves: The bill articulates a coordinated planning and development approach to energy projects that seeks to minimise impacts on communities and optimise associated benefits for local communities, landholders, the environment and Queenslanders. For example, the regional energy hub's framework will provide benefits to communities and the private sector and incentivise new investment in Queensland by sharing scale-efficient transmission network infrastructure, eliminating the need for developers to build individual connection assets and reducing costs; providing a strong locational signal for energy development in relation to community resource and grid interests; giving projects increased financial certainty through tailored connection and access arrangements and protecting projects from excessive curtailment; and ensuring value to projects with the careful assessment of associated infrastructure like roads and waste infrastructure.

The bill also complements the state's planning and approval frameworks. Amendments to the Planning Act made earlier this year, including those that require proponents of proposed wind farms and large-scale solar farms to undertake mandatory social impact assessments and establish community benefit agreements, continue to apply to proponents seeking to connect to Queensland's transmission network. Local governments remain the primary negotiating entity for proponents seeking to execute a community benefit agreement as required under the planning legislation.

The regional energy hub framework enshrined in this bill also provides that the minister must have regard to the impact that the development and operation of a hub transmission network would have or is likely to have on local communities such as Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander communities. This ensures that assessing the impact of hubs on communities remains a precondition to any hub declaration.

Mr BAROUNIS: This bill establishes a key role of the Energy System Outlook. Why is this important to Queensland's energy industry?

Ms Reeves: The road map aims to provide certainty to market on the Energy System Outlook and the role of the private sector in new energy infrastructure. The bill amends the system planning framework in the act to establish a flexible and market-based electricity system planning framework for Queensland. It does this by repealing the renewable energy targets, replacing the Queensland SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint with the Energy System Outlook and replacing the optimal infrastructure pathway objectives with revised strategic infrastructure path objectives. The Energy System Outlook is important for facilitating private sector investment by clearly signalling to the market what investments are required across the sector to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.

It also introduces a range of provisions to support delivery of the road map as the first Energy System Outlook, including planning, infrastructure and investment frameworks to support market certainty. Per the road map and under future energy system outlooks, the minister will be able to include estimates on the operating life of state owned coal assets and capacity estimates of energy infrastructure required to achieve strategic infrastructure path objectives. In combination, these amendments provide a legislative framework for clear information to market about what investment is required to deliver energy system needs.

Mr McCALLUM: Following on from my previous question about the decision matrix and the advice that would go to executive government, is it correct that coal generators could, in fact, be closed much earlier if the decision matrix dictates it?

Ms Reeves: Through the decision matrix and the advice, that would be a matter for government consideration. In terms of the coal asset timeframes in the road map, I think that is why it is framed as indicative operating timeframes because there are those factors that need to be considered in terms of any decision.

Ms ASIF: We know every private company in the country is making the switch to renewable investment for the sake of their shareholders. Why are Queensland's government owned energy corporations not allowed to do so in the interests of Queensland taxpayers?

CHAIR: I am not sure that we are on a relevant path with that question, member. If you would like to move on to another question. There were inferences at the beginning of your question that cannot be verified. I ask you to move on to a new question, thank you.

Ms ASIF: This is relevant to energy for Queenslanders. However, I am happy to move on to assist the committee. Has the department done any modelling on the value of Queensland's government owned energy corporations by 2040?

CHAIR: I do not think we need to go down the modelling path again. All we are going to hear from Ms Reeves is that there has been some modelling done and they cannot then go forward to make any comments about what might have been provided to executive government. Can we move away from modelling and back to the bill? There is nothing in the bill regarding modelling.

Ms ASIF: Respectfully, I want to check—and this can be a 'yes' or 'no'—if any modelling has been done on the value of Queensland's government owned energy corporations.

CHAIR: With respect, member, the previous answers have indicated that a range of modelling has been done—a range of modelling. You are asking for specific information about a specific area. It is not part of the bill. I will ask you to move on to another question.

Ms ASIF: I am happy to. The road map cites modelling from Powerlink. Could that modelling be provided to the committee for consideration as part of this bill?

CHAIR: Ms Reeves, can you indicate whether or not there is some possibility of any modelling that is mentioned in the bill being made available to the committee?

Ms Reeves: The Energy Roadmap does refer to modelling. Powerlink was commissioned to undertake energy system modelling, supported by Queensland Treasury and Queensland Treasury Corporation. The modelling approach and results are outlined in the road map, including a discussion of assumptions and key sensitivities that generally align with industry standard approaches, particularly with reference to the Australian Energy Market Operator. I would refer you to the road map that does detail the modelling scenario sensitivity and approach.

Mr McCALLUM: Is it correct that under this legislation a private transmission company could own the Western Link of CopperString?

Ms Reeves: The CopperString provision in the bill is designed to support QIC's recommended model for the delivery of the CopperString project.

Mr McCALLUM: Is it correct that under this legislation the Treasurer would have the power to apply a regulation to adjust the regulated asset base and revenue for a private transmission company?

Ms Reeves: Yes, it is effectively an economic regulation provision to support the delivery of CopperString and it is very much mirroring the approach for the Priority Transmission Investment framework delivered by Powerlink.

Mr McCALLUM: Under this legislation, can we end up in a position where we would have infrastructure regulated for profitable return that is not publicly owned?

Ms Reeves: In terms of the objectives of the Priority Transmission Investment framework and the CopperString provision, they are designed to support delivery of priority projects identified as meeting a system need and in terms of timeframes being progressed sooner than through a national framework. The Priority Transmission Investment framework applies to Powerlink. The CopperString provision is designed to support QIC's recommended delivery model, so that is QIC in terms of delivery.

Mr McCALLUM: Has a projected date for Western Link's construction been canvassed with industry to inform whether or not there is any interest from the private sector?

Ms Reeves: QIC is undertaking a lot of work post release of their assessment and advice to government on 10 October. Those dates are outlined in the road map in terms of delivery of the Eastern Link by 2032, subject to approvals, and with work on the Western Link commencing, including through the development of local generation and storage solutions supported by the North West Energy Fund, also being delivered by QIC.

Ms ASIF: I want to confirm. We were talking about the modelling. Does that mean you will provide that to the committee, what you have just referenced?

CHAIR: I believe you have already indicated that the modelling is in the road map as it is. We already have that information. We just need to read it as a committee. Was that your question?

Ms ASIF: I was referring to the modelling done by Treasury. I am happy to ask another question if you do not want to provide that.

CHAIR: Excuse me.

Mr BAROUNIS: Point of order, Chair.

CHAIR: I understand your point of order. Once again, I ask you not to be inflammatory in your comments about the way things are going. You might not be hearing what you want to hear, but please refrain from making those inflammatory comments before moving on to the next question.

Mr WHITING: Chair, just on that, we have asked a number of questions about seeing modelling so we can use that for the consideration of this bill. We have a briefing paper from Treasury that is three pages long. We need some more information about this bill so we can consider what we do.

CHAIR: My understanding is that the road map, as provided to the committee, has all of the information in it. If you want to rely on a three-page briefing paper from the secretariat—in fact, it is more than three pages; I think you were a little bit disingenuous in making that comment.

Mr WHITING: No, it was from Treasury.

CHAIR: The road map is the broader document and I would suggest that we as a committee need to properly read the road map as opposed to casting aspersions and suggesting that the information is not there. Do we have another question?

Ms ASIF: I do have another question. What is the difference between a renewable energy zone and a regional energy hub?

Ms Reeves: We reviewed the renewable energy zone section and considered alignment with government objectives in the road map. It has been a change of names. 'Regional energy hub' is intended to reflect that the provision supports new generation and storage solutions aligned with the system needs outlined in the road map, including gas for example. That was a significant system need identified in the road map. We also undertook a broader review of the practical operationalisation of that provision to identify some opportunities to streamline and better support that process.

Ms ASIF: Has the department been tasked with attracting different investments now that the name has been changed or will you seek to attract renewable energy?

Ms Reeves: The work is still completely market led so it is really based on what renewable energy or other energy generation and storage proponent project interest there is in a region. Then it looks at opportunities to provide more efficient infrastructure solutions for the connection of those developments. Yes, it is very much market led based on investor interest and also significant involvement of Powerlink in terms of looking at those areas and advising government around the most efficient approach for connection.

Ms ASIF: So it is market led, as you have said. Can I confirm if the department has been tasked with attracting different investments?

Ms Reeves: The department does not have a specific role in those regional energy hubs.

Ms ASIF: So it is market led; okay.

Ms MORTON: Has there been any change to the Job Security Guarantee for regional workers, either in policy terms or in terms of the value of the fund?

Ms Reeves: The Job Security Guarantee remains unchanged. It is a \$150 million commitment to support workers at publicly owned coal-fired power stations and associated mines. As outlined in the road map, the Job Security Guarantee has been retained in the legislation without amendment and will continue to be available as needed to support affected workers. This is intended to provide certainty to workers in those communities.

More broadly, the government has outlined in the Energy Roadmap that coal will continue to play a role in Queensland's energy mix for as long as it is needed in the system and supported by the market. The road map resets indicative operating timeframes for state owned coal assets to their technical lives, with options to extend in the future if needed. The government has already decided to extend the operation of Callide B to 2031. By resetting operating timeframes for state owned coal assets, the road map supports employment security for those workers whilst also supporting

opportunities for new employment in the construction and operation of future energy projects across renewables, storage, transmission and distribution. There are around 40,000 direct employees in Queensland's coalmining sector and more than 800 employees directly working at state owned coal-fired power plants.

The government is also providing increased funding of \$50 million over two years to deliver the critical skills needed by many industries and ensure Queensland can meet the growing demand in apprentices and trainees. Other agencies and bodies at multiple levels within government, including the Department of Trade, Employment and Training, also continue to provide advice on employment opportunities in the sector.

Ms MORTON: I have one more question. The bill removes governance bodies which do not need to be enshrined in legislation. Do you know how many stakeholders have been consulted as part of the replacement energy round tables to date?

Ms Reeves: As you have highlighted, the bill does repeal provisions that establish governance bodies under the act. That includes the Queensland Energy System Advisory Board, the Energy Industry Council and the Renewable Energy Jobs Advocate. The objective in repealing the board and other governance bodies is to remove unnecessary complexity, duplication of functions and administrative costs. Importantly, the government and the energy minister can still seek independent technical advice on system planning issues through non-legislative means that do not require significant administrative processes and costs. This is more consistent with approaches across other jurisdictions which employ non-legislative governance and advisory functions in relation to energy sector interests, noting there are no other directly comparable approaches to current legislation.

In developing the road map, the government undertook extensive consultation with four energy round tables and several workshops across energy industry participants with a range of interests, including renewables and gas; consumer, community and industry peak bodies; and government owned energy businesses. Approximately 113 participants from around 89 different organisations provided input into the Energy Roadmap development consultation processes, and key themes included: stability in policy and planning; investment signals and market confidence; the role of government and GOCs relative to the private sector; effective community engagement and social licence; transmission planning and coordination; and technology and resource diversification. The government has sought to address these issues in the road map in the bill.

Mr BAROUNIS: This bill recommits to the PTI framework. Why is the Gladstone PTI project so important for Queensland's energy system?

Ms Reeves: The retention of the PTI framework reflects its important use in delivering strategic transmission projects that help meet the state's energy objectives. It includes the delivery of the Gladstone project, which is a major transmission project to replace and strengthen a critical part of Central Queensland's electricity transmission network and ensure ongoing reliability and security of energy supply in the Gladstone region, which is one of Queensland's largest industrial hubs. The Gladstone project is intended to upgrade that area in terms of transmission capacity to accommodate new generation and also strengthen the network in anticipation of the potential closure of the Gladstone Power Station.

In June 2025 Powerlink submitted its assessment of the Gladstone project under the Priority Transmission Investment framework for government consideration. In performing the role of a suitably qualified person under the PTI framework, the Australian Energy Regulator is now reviewing the investment proposed in Powerlink's assessment for prudence and efficiency. The AER's advice will help to inform the Queensland government's final decision on the Gladstone project, expected in 2026. It is important because on 1 October 2025 the owners of GPS formally notified the Australian Energy Market Operator of its potential retirement by March 2029. This does underscore the importance of continuing to progress the assessment of the Gladstone project under the PTI framework.

The government recently reiterated the criticality of the project in the Energy Roadmap, which also identified the Gladstone project as: a no-regrets, government-led investment; critical for system security and reliability; and supporting Queensland's industrial loads and economic growth. The bill revises the Priority Transmission Investment framework to improve flexibility and operational efficiency. It also introduces transitional provisions for the Gladstone project that allow the project to be delivered under this revised framework. The transitional provisions allow the project to leverage and benefit from the efficiencies embedded in the revised framework, while ensuring continuity of the project and avoiding disruptions.

CHAIR: If there are no more questions from this side, we will go back to the deputy chair.

Mr WHITING: Ms Reeves, considering CopperString is now being transferred to QIC, who will be the hub design body for the energy hub around Hughenden?

Ms Reeves: The Hughenden hub will be progressed through a close working relationship between QIC and Powerlink. Investigations are continuing in terms of the next phase of work on the project.

Mr WHITING: So the hub design body has not been identified?

Ms Reeves: In terms of the hub design body, the CopperString provision in the bill does provide the ability to support QIC's recommended model, which includes delivery of the Eastern Link and the Western Link and the stages of CopperString, including the Hughenden hub, which Powerlink is progressing at the moment, in terms of significant substation development, with further work to occur around the market interest in terms of the connection of that region.

Mr WHITING: Clearly, design work is underway now for that hub. The question was: who will be or who is doing that design?

Ms Reeves: At the moment, Powerlink is doing a lot of work in terms of progressing the hub. The government is continuing to work through QIC's recommendations for delivery.

Mr WHITING: The bill claims that it will not prevent any government action on climate change, and that is in the statement of compatibility on page 2. Climate change has not been mentioned once in either the bill or the explanatory notes, and 'greenhouse gas' is mentioned once in the bill at clause 8. My question is: how will Queensland's energy system be tasked or driven to take action on climate change and reduce those energy sector emissions and greenhouse gases if the bill or the pathway does not address those actions?

CHAIR: Are you in a position to answer that question, or will you be suggesting that it is in the Energy Roadmap again?

Ms Reeves: There is a lot of detail in the Energy Roadmap in terms of the new investment required to support the energy system, particularly the role for renewables and storage, which is outlined. I would just note that reducing greenhouse gas emissions remains an objective of this bill and the legislation, so that is clearly there. The only change in terms of the legislation is the removal of the renewable energy targets, which is just reflecting the government's position of a market-led approach to new investment in the energy system.

Mr WHITING: Once again, the answer is that it is all in the road map; it is not in the legislation.

Ms Reeves: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is an objective, as stated in the legislation.

Mr WHITING: Reducing greenhouse gases is stated very briefly there, but the words 'climate change' are not actually in the bill or the explanatory notes. My question is: how could this be driven by the government or legislatively if this bill does not even mention the words 'climate change'?

CHAIR: Are you suggesting that there is no mention of climate change in any way, shape or form in the road map or in the bill, or are you suggesting that the bill should mention climate change?

Mr WHITING: My question is: how do we address actions on climate change if it is not addressed in the bill or in the explanatory notes?

Ms Reeves: I would also note the Clean Economy Jobs Act remains in place in terms of emissions reduction.

CHAIR: So other legislation covers the issues that are being spoken about here now?

Ms Reeves: Yes. That bill talks to emission reductions.

Mr WHITING: I have a further question.

CHAIR: Just a moment. Other legislation has that covered. It is not relevant to this bill in that regard, member.

Mr WHITING: Certainly, but my question was: has the department commenced work on amending that particular act? I just asked a question.

CHAIR: I am going to rule on the question, member. You are now going down the road of asking opinions of the witnesses. I caution you on doing that. I ask you to come back to the bill. I will also mention to you that, for your benefit, we have now uploaded the Energy Roadmap to the papers that are available to you. It was not uploaded in the first instance because it is a publicly available document and one would have assumed that you may have spent some time perusing that before coming in and talking about the content of it here. It has been referenced—

Mr WHITING: Chair, it is 56 pages long and I am still looking for details of modelling.

CHAIR: It has been referenced several times by our witnesses. I am not going to allow the witness to answer questions that are asking for an opinion. I ask you to move on to questions that are relevant to the bill.

Mr WHITING: Thank you, Chair. The member for Bundamba has a question.

Mr McCALLUM: With reference to coal generators staying open longer and the government's announced \$1.6 billion in funding for the Electricity Maintenance Guarantee, can you tell the committee how much it will cost to keep the existing publicly owned coal generators open until their closure dates, which are stated in the Energy Roadmap on page 29?

Ms Reeves: The Electricity Maintenance Guarantee does reflect the cost of maintaining coal assets over the next five years. The system cost estimates and differentials in the road map do outline the difference in system investment needs over the next 10 years—to 2035—under different scenarios and factoring in the cost of investing in existing coal assets. That differential is in the road map and it is to 2035.

Mr McCALLUM: Is that funded by government?

Ms Reeves: The system cost differential in the road map is a total system cost estimate. Under different scenarios that will include the investment needed by government and also by the private sector. Obviously, if it is related to state owned coal assets then that is funded by government and is also reflected in the budget.

Mr McCALLUM: Thank you for that. Just confirming, though: beyond the Electricity Maintenance Guarantee's existing funding, has any further funding under the road map in relation to keeping coal generators open longer been made by government yet?

Ms Reeves: In terms of funding, I can speak to the budget and the forward estimates period. It is fully funded and budgeted over that period.

Mr McCALLUM: But not beyond that?

Ms Reeves: I think the government—

CHAIR: Thank you. You do not need to go beyond that. The forward estimates is as far as you need to go.

Mr McCALLUM: The road map goes beyond that, Chair.

CHAIR: We have half a minute to go. I will round the questions out by asking a question of my own. How does the bill support the delivery of the Queensland Energy Roadmap? You have about half a minute to give me a run-down on that.

Ms Reeves: The bill supports the delivery of the road map through provisions that provide planning, infrastructure and investment frameworks and deliver certainty for investors, industry workers and communities. The bill does introduce and recognise the Energy Roadmap as the first Energy System Outlook, meaning that the road map is supported through system planning and infrastructure frameworks enshrined in the bill.

It provides a market-based planning infrastructure and investment framework overview to support certainty and provide signals to the market to facilitate the new energy investment requirements to meet Queensland's energy system needs. The outlook will be reviewed every two years to ensure it remains responsive to changes in the market and the evolving requirements of Queensland's energy system. The bill requires that the first review be delivered by 31 May 2027.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. That concludes this briefing. Thank you to everyone who has participated today. Thank you to our Hansard reporters. A transcript of these proceedings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. I do not believe there were any questions taken on notice. I declare this public briefing closed. Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 11.31 am.