

Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023

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Committee Secretary
Transport and Resources Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
By email: trc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

RE: Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023

On behalf of QEM Limited, please accept our comments on the *Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023* before the Committee.

Introduction

QEM Limited (ASX:QEM) is focused on the exploration and development of the Julia Creek Vanadium Project. It represents one of the single largest Vanadium deposits in the world. The globally significant vanadium pentoxide resource together with the potential for other valuable products, contained within oil shale at the Julia Creek Project, represent a highly-feasible opportunity for development. The Project is intersected by the main infrastructure corridor of the Flinders Highway and the Great Northern Railway, connecting Mount Isa to Townsville, and most recently the CopperString 2.0 project to connect the North West Minerals Province with the National Electricity Market near Townsville.

QEM has been actively engaged in the development of the CopperString 2.0 project, not only for the energy requirements of its own project but to harness renewable resources QEM has identified.

In March 2023, the Premier announced the Queensland Government would deliver and own the CopperString 2.0 project and that:

“CopperString will be the largest expansion to the power grid in the nation. It will connect to the nation’s largest renewable energy zone and the world class North West Minerals Province.... By providing access to reliable, affordable and renewable power, CopperString opens up Queensland for the next resources boom in critical minerals. With estimated benefits of an additional \$133 billion in mining production and thousands of jobs in North and North West Queensland. A resources boom that will mine critical minerals and will process those minerals with renewable energy. CopperString opens up an entire new supply chain from Mount Isa through to Townsville to manufacture renewable technologies with renewable energy. To make flow batteries from minerals mined and processed in North Queensland.... When asked what the single most important factor for investment in battery factories is, the answer was clear, energy. And also crucial is access to raw materials. Queensland has the copper, cobalt, vanadium, zinc, bauxite and rare earths needed for the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan and to support our trading partners. It’s estimated that there are over \$500 billion dollars of known critical minerals in the North West Minerals Province.”

Following the Premier's announcement, in July 2023, QEM announced shortlisted non-binding indicative bids to develop, own, and operate a minimum of 1 gigawatt of renewable energy, consisting of a hybrid of wind, solar farms and BESS, immediately adjacent to the vanadium project at Julia Creek. It represents one of Queensland's largest renewable energy projects, and the project has the potential to provide cheaper long-term power to the QEM project and contribute to decarbonisation and the Queensland and Australian Government's renewable energy and emission reduction targets.

Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan and Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023

QEM welcomes the Queensland Government's commitment to CopperString to deliver the objectives of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan including renewable energy targets to reach 80% by 2035.

As the Bill's Explanatory Notes on page 3 states: *"Key to achieving the vision in the Plan is the construction of critical new transmission to support the coordinated, efficient investment and delivery of renewable generation."*

Therefore, QEM welcomes the statutory mandate in the Bill for the Minister to develop the "Queensland SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint" to identify and plan significant electricity and infrastructure projects.

The first Blueprint that released in September 2022 and it did refer to the "North West Minerals Province Connection". On page 4 of the 2022 Blueprint, it identified *"a 370km line to connect Townsville to Hughenden (there is an opportunity to extend this connection to the North West Minerals Province)"* as one of *"Four new high-voltage (up to 500kV) backbone transmission projects will be constructed by the mid-2030s, connecting the two 24-hour PHES assets and areas of strong renewable resources with Queensland's demand centres."* The 2022 Blueprint does not reflect the significance of the Premier's announcement in March 2023 and the Government's commitment of \$1.3 billion to allow for start of CopperString's construction in 2024.

It is proposed the first update of the 2022 Blueprint will be in 2025.

Under Section 16(1) of the Bill, the Minister must review the infrastructure blueprint:

(a) by 31 May 2025; and

(b) at further intervals of 2 years

QEM notes Section 16 also provides for:

(2) However, subsection (1) does not prevent the Minister from reviewing the infrastructure blueprint at any time.



QEM
ASX : QEM

Recommendation

With the significance of the Premier's announcement regarding the Government's ownership, delivery and investment in CopperString since the release of QEJP and the 2022 Blueprint, QEM recommends that the requirement for the Minister (Section 16(1)(a) to review the infrastructure blueprint be brought forward from 31 May 2025 to 31 May 2024, with biennial reviews from that date.

Gavin Loyden

Managing Director
QEM Limited