

Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023

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Transport and Resources Committee
Parliament House

Sent via email: trc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

RE: Submission - The Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023 (The Bill)

Formed in 2019, The Barfield Road Producer Group (BRPG) represents sixteen multi-generational beef and grain producing families who mostly reside along Barfield Road. Our group collectively manages 27 000 hectares of grazing land, 2200 hectares of farming and over 10,000 head of cattle.

The aim of our group is to lead the way in best practice agriculture through caring for our land, our people and our animals. We believe that by adopting this approach we help to build a vibrant, sustainable community and region. Organisations we work closely with are: Landcare, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA), and The Department of Agriculture & Fisheries (DAF).

In providing this submission, The BRPG confirms support for a transition to renewable energy however have concerns about renewables on productive agricultural land and the impact to our rural community.

SUBMISSION

1. We believe The Bill does not address its main purpose “to provide support and advocacy for... communities affected by the increased generation of electricity from renewable energy sources” (pg. 10).

There is sufficient detail provided for the support of affected workers however minimal information is provided to support affected communities. Affected workers form a minority in a community. More emphasis needs to be placed on the community as a whole as this is a larger portion of people and the effects will be forever.

Further, we have concerns of the absence of local issues including key social and environmental impacts. We believe renewable energy in Queensland communities can be planned and implemented in a holistic and sustainable manner, taking into account the unique characteristics and requirements of our region.

We ask the Committee to consider the following points for inclusion in the Bill:



- The formation of a dedicated Community Engagement group, one that adequately addresses social, environmental and economic aspirations, interests and concerns. This group could be made up of diverse community members including local businesses, neighbouring landholders including indigenous landholders, government agencies, environmental organizations, and energy industry experts ensuring equitable representation. It is crucial the agricultural industry is represented in this group.
 - Annual Environmental Impact Assessments: these aim to evaluate the potential effects of renewables on ecosystems (soil health, flora and fauna disruption, biodiversity, water resources and air quality). This assessment should also initially consider whether the presence of renewables will affect cattle markets such as the Organic Beef market.
2. We also have concerns in Part 6 of the Bill: Renewable Energy Zones (REZ). The purposes of the REZ are to “ensure the impact of the declaration of renewable energy zones on Queensland communities is appropriately considered”. No information has been provided in The Bill as to how this will be achieved.

The BRPG would like to see economic and social opportunities maximized as per below.

- *Economic development opportunities*: local job creation, and local business growth such as inviting local landholders to contract their services and/or equipment during the construction phase of the project and enjoy lower energy costs due to the close proximity of the generation of electricity. A local Investment Fund could be established that allocates a portion of the revenue generated from renewables to invest in local priorities.
 - *Social development opportunities*: upgrades and improvements to infrastructure such as roads, health, communication, housing and education, agricultural land valuations, and personal security all due to an increase of population during construction phase.
3. In Section 155 one of the Functions of the jobs advocate are:
- “to help foster relationships between members of the community in a particular area and persons involved in carrying out an electricity infrastructure project in the area” (pg. 110);
 - “to facilitate sharing of information between the members of the community...” (pg. 111);
 - “to promote to the community in which a particular electricity infrastructure project....is being carried out;
 - the benefits of the project for the community.

We believe the following inclusions should form part of The Bill to ensure social acceptance amongst the community is achieved.

- Robust and regular meetings: these meetings need to have stringent controls and form part of a communication roadmap. This will allow for open dialogue, information sharing, and collaborative decision-making. So far Community Consultation Meetings held by Renewable companies have been minimal and poorly communicated.
- Expert Support and Resources: technical expertise, access to relevant data on energy planning, economic impacts, environmental considerations all need to be provided by the Qld Government to ensure the community are informed in decision-making;
- Recommendations and Influence: Empowering the community to make recommendations on local investment priorities and shape outcomes based on collective expertise. Recommendations should be given due consideration by relevant decision-making bodies and incorporated into the overall planning and decision-making processes.



By implementing a coordinated scheme that invests in local priorities, communities can benefit from the positive legacy of renewable energy development. This approach ensures that the economic benefits are shared, local needs are addressed, and the long-term sustainability of the communities are prioritized.

In summary we ask The Committee to consider the following points:

1. The proposed Bill will have negative consequences on communities as there is an absence of a clear plan in how community engagement and support will be achieved.
2. Producers are held account for land and vegetation management. Renewable energy companies need to be as well.
3. Food security in partnership with sustainable land management needs to be a priority over renewable energy companies.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023.

Please feel free to contact me on [REDACTED] should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Melanie Shannon
Facilitator
On behalf of The Barfield Road Producer Group

