

## Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023

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## RE: Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023

Environmental Advocacy in Central Queensland (EnvA) welcomes and supports the *Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023*. EnvA commends Minister Mick de Brenni (Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and Minister for Public Works and Procurement) for introducing this Bill into the Queensland Parliament.

Environmental Advocacy in Central Queensland (EnvA) is a Central Queensland association concerned about the risks associated with coal mining, coal seam gas and climate change.

EnvA believes that opening new or expanding existing coal and gas projects:

- is contrary to meeting Australia's emission targets and Queensland's emission targets,
- is likely to result in irreparable damage to our local landscape and result in stranded assets,
- will put our local community at further risk of extreme weather such as increasing the intensity and frequency of storms, floods, droughts and bushfires,
- will damage our significant coastal resources including our beaches and the Great Barrier Reef through storm surge and increased coral bleaching events,
- will further degrade wildlife habitats of state and national significance through both habitat loss and climate change, and
- rarely take into consideration the views of Traditional Owners and local communities who are concerned about protecting their land from fossil fuel development.

EnvA is strongly supportive of a well-planned transition to renewable energy and considers that the Bill presents a sound framework to create a just transition to renewable energy. We are particularly supportive of the legislating Queensland's renewable energy targets.

EnvA also note that the implementation phase will be critical in ensuring a just transition that considers the environment, communities and Traditional Owners.

### Proposed changes to the Bill

#### Reducing greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming

The renewable energy targets in the Bill are not consistent with a path to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. For Australia to meet a [1.5 degree aligned pathway](#), we need to reach at least 67% reduction on 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2038.



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Queensland must step up their commitment to reduce emissions which will require a planned transition to renewable energy **in conjunction** with phase out of fossil fuel energy facilities.

We therefore recommend that the Bill addresses the phase-out of government owned coal-fired power stations and provisions to prevent the future development of privately owned fossil fuel-based power plants.

#### Environmental impacts in the development of renewable energy facilities and transmission lines

EnvA acknowledges that the environmental impacts of renewable energy development are typically less than the impacts posed from coal and gas production, but we also note that renewable energy projects still have significant real, and perceived impacts, on the environment. Renewable energy projects are often proposed in areas that have escaped clearing and development in the past, and hence contain intact (or minimally disturbed) vegetation which are the stronghold for many important plant and animal species. Hydropower projects, including pumped storage, cause permanent detrimental changes to land within the inundation area and to downstream river systems.

Many communities around Queensland, including here in Central Queensland, are already seeing renewable energy developments progressing ahead of the Renewable Energy Zone framework.

An effective Renewable Energy Zone framework can provide the leadership and direction needed to deliver the best outcomes for nature and communities in the renewable energy transition.

EnvA urges the Government to fast track the development of Renewable Energy Zones, with due consideration to existing land use, biodiversity (including cumulative impacts), cultural heritage and landscape values. The identification of Renewable Energy Zones must be completed as a matter of urgency, with specific consideration to using previously disturbed lands (i.e. rehabilitated coal mines) or where it can be incorporated into a multiple-land-use agreement (i.e. low-stocked grazing lands).

We therefore recommend that the Bill addresses development outside of Renewable Energy Zones which will cover the interim arrangement, and any future proposed developments outside of designated zones. Specifically, we recommend that the Bill requires renewable energy developments outside of legislated Renewable Energy Zones be required to demonstrate that meaningful environmental assessment and community consultation has been undertaken and considered in making a decision on the project's suitability. The principles of the Regional Energy Transformation Partnerships to empower communities, build local industry and protect nature needs to be implemented and this Bill may be the way forward to ensure the principles of justice are met.

#### Acknowledgement of community contributions

The large-scale renewable energy zone framework set out in the Bill is critical to Queensland achieving the renewable energy targets, and we appreciate that customer energy resources have been explicitly included in the calculation of progress towards the target.

EnvA also notes that the contribution of individual households and businesses are already making a significant contribution to the renewable energy transition. It is critical that the Queensland Government continues to support and encourage local renewable energy generation to the same degree as large-scale renewable energy. Encouragement to further scale up small scale community renewable energy, combined with increased local battery storage facilities will be important in achieving emissions reductions from power generation as quickly and cheaply as possible.

EnvA considers that a State Planning Policy requiring new commercial developments and large estate developments to install solar and battery systems would be a positive step in reducing reliance on grid-based electricity and will greatly contribute to locally-based electricity generation.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in support of the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023. We look forward to its implementation in a manner that is in the best interest of all Queenslanders.

Kind regards



**Dr Claire Gronow**

Member and supporter

Environmental Advocacy in Central Queensland Inc