


Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023

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Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023

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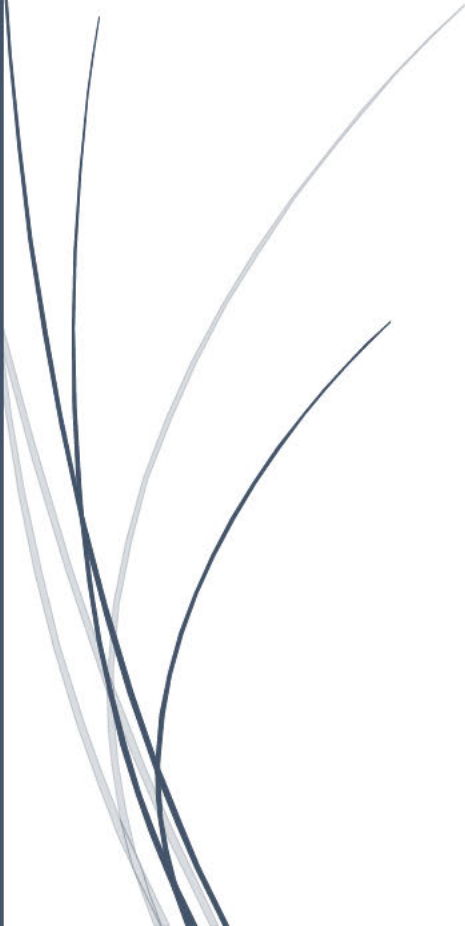
Colin Boyce MP

Federal Member for Flynn



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FEDERAL MEMBER FOR FLYNN



I am writing to express deep concern regarding the rushed and reckless pursuit of renewables and the mandated switch to renewable energy, particularly in the context of the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023. It is imperative to assess the potential consequences of this rushed transition from affordable and reliable energy sources, such as coal and gas, to intermittent and not-so-renewable sources like solar and wind.

IMPACTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In my electorate of Flynn, I recently visited graziers to see first-hand the impact renewable projects will have on the region's local communities. It comes amid concerns that projects such as the Smoky Creek solar factory will have the potential to ruin the livelihoods of local communities.

My visit included meeting with food producers and graziers affected by the Smoky Creek project as well as a tour of a property at Ulogie situated near the Mount Hopeful project which is proposing the installation of 170 wind turbines.

Minister Plibersek and the EPBC decision to approve the Smoky Creek solar factory is a major disappointment for the local community, with the real possibility it will ruin their livelihoods and lifestyle and render useless the prime agricultural land beneath this project.

IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The renewable energy sector is not governed by any legislation including reef regulations, tree clearing guidelines or environmental protocols that are placed on the agricultural, mining and resources sectors.

I call for both State and Federal Governments to introduce legislation that governs all the regulations for renewable energy projects just like the proposed solar factory at Smoky Creek.

The Smoky Creek project is situated at the head of a major watershed that flows into the Fitzroy River, (Rockhampton's water supply) and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Conservation area. How is this environmentally appropriate?

There is a significant irony of the Smoky Creek solar factory being approved on the same day that the Bouldercombe Battery project caught on fire. These are exactly the dangers that concern me and the locals of these communities.

All of these projects directly correlate with the fact that the renewable energy sector is proposing huge infrastructure projects to meet the government's 82 per cent renewable energy target by 2030.

Australia is fortunate to possess abundant coal and natural gas, providing a reliable and affordable energy source that has long provided a significant competitive advantage. However, Queensland's rush towards 70% renewables target by 2032 threatens to upend this advantage, leading to a fundamental shift in our energy landscape. The transition to renewable energy requires a staggering investment in physical assets.

THE ENERGY (RENEWABLE TRANSFORMATION AND JOBS) BILL 2023 OFFERS A JOB SECURITY GUARANTEE:

(1) It is the intention of Parliament that the State will provide security and support to affected energy workers in relation to employment matters, including, for example, by— (a) providing training for, or access to, employment opportunities within the energy sector or another sector; and (b) providing other benefits or opportunities in relation to the effects mentioned in section 68(2)(b) or (3)(b). Exposure draft - May 2023 Page 51 [s 68] Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023 Part 7 Job Security Guarantee Fund

(2) The provision by the State of the security and support mentioned in subsection (1) is the job security guarantee.

How will the Job Security Guarantee and Fund provide comprehensive support and transition plans to workers who have built their lives around these reliable employment opportunities? How will it ensure that these dedicated workers not only retain their current earning capabilities but also have the means to continue residing in their hometowns? Hometowns where their families have lived for decades because of the work provided by the current Power Stations and Coal Mines. Considering the significant impact on local communities and the livelihoods of numerous families, failure to facilitate a seamless transition to equal pay in their local area will have devastating effects. The rush towards decarbonisation and the implementation of renewables does not allow sufficient time to ensure a reliable safety net is in place for these families and local communities.

Not to mention, this Job Security Guarantee offers absolutely nothing to employees of Power Stations like the Gladstone Power Station and Millmerran Power Station. Gladstone Power Station is Queensland's largest power station, who employ approximately 250 permanent employees and another 100-200 contractors, not to mention the many other services they support. Where is the recognition and support for these locals who will also need to transition to new forms of work if this unrelenting pursuit of "green" energy continues?

This Bill also ignores the numerous small businesses directly linked to these power stations, who will also be forced to sack their employees due to the reckless pursuit of renewables. What does the Government think will happen to these families? This will create another "boom and bust" cycle for cities such as Gladstone and Biloela.

TRANSPARENCY

Part 4 section (4)

However, the infrastructure blueprint must not include a description of proposed changes to operations of a publicly owned coal-fired power station mentioned in subsection (2)(c) to the extent the Minister considers—

(a) the description contains information that is commercial-in-confidence; or

(b) it is not in the public interest to include the description in the infrastructure blueprint.

The Queensland Government states that they are an open and transparent government. As a result of the public ownership of Government Owned Corporations like our publicly owned coal-fired power stations, public accountability and transparency is required without question. Who decides what is in the public interest?

NATIONAL SECURITY THREAT

Apart from the exorbitant cost, the pursuit of decarbonisation poses a severe and often overlooked threat to national security. Renewable energy infrastructure demands rare earth elements, crucial components for technologies like wind turbines and electric vehicles. The demand for these elements is expected to skyrocket in the coming years, raising concerns about Australia's reliance on a single nation for the supply of rare earths.

As of 2021, China accounted for over half of the globally mined production of rare earths and 85% of their refined production. Curtin University economic geology professor Brent McInnes said Australia was "under-explored" for rare earth elements. "Approximately 85 per cent of the world's rare earth elements are produced in China".

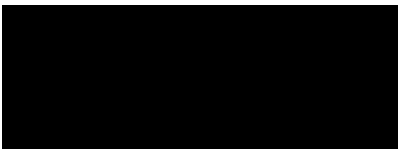
The undisputed dominance of China in the rare earth supply chain raises the spectre of potential leverage and weaponisation of this crucial resource. Historical instances, such as China's export ban on rare earths to Japan in 2010, underscore the vulnerability of nations heavily dependent on a single source for rare earths.

SUMMARY

Industrial scale reckless renewable energy proposals, and their associated transmission lines are economically, socially, and environmentally untenable.

In conclusion, I urge a thorough reconsideration of the current trajectory towards renewable energy and the associated risks to Australia's energy independence and national security. It is essential that the Queensland Government's approach to building their "Queensland SuperGrid" is done so with a clear understanding of the potential consequences and implements policies that safeguard our nation's interests.

Yours sincerely,



Colin Boyce MP

Federal Member for Flynn