




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Renewable Energy

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (12.13 pm): I rise to inform the House that the Palaszczuk Labor government is creating a whole new industry in Queensland: the renewable energy industry. This industry is surging ahead under the stewardship of the Palaszczuk government. When the budget is brought down next sitting week we will see even more jobs and investment flowing from our decisions. This will mean more jobs for Queenslanders.

The Queensland industry has made solar rooftops the second biggest power station in the state. In the past year we have doubled our renewable energy capacity. In the past year we have seen 16 projects commence or move into the pipeline. This is creating 2,000 jobs. These projects include the Collinsville Solar Farm—a \$100 million, 42.5-megawatt energy and jobs generator, bringing 120 jobs to the Whitsunday region. There is the \$380 million Mount Emerald Wind Farm, creating 150 direct jobs during construction. That project will generate enough output to power a city the size of Mackay. The Clare Solar Farm, near Ayr, will create 100 megawatts of power.

Let us look at the 42.5-megawatt Collinsville Solar Farm. This Ratch-Australia project demonstrates how the clean energy boom in Queensland is accelerating due to the Palaszczuk government. This Collinsville project will utilise existing local electrical infrastructure that was previously established for the old Collinsville coal-fired power station, closed during the term of the Newman-Nicholls government. We expect construction to start during May, with the project feeding into Queensland's electricity grid by mid-2018.

Powerlink and Edify Energy have finalised agreements for the Whitsunday and Hamilton solar farms near Collinsville to connect to Powerlink's network. That means Collinsville is again sending more power into Queensland's network, powering the homes of Queenslanders.

The Collinsville project is just one of \$7.8 billion worth of renewable energy projects proposed across regional Queensland because of the Palaszczuk government's energy policies. This wonderful boom did not happen by accident; it is happening because we have created a pathway for this industry. An important part of this pathway is the renewable energy target, RET. The RET could drive \$6.7 billion of new investment in this industry.

We have established an independent expert panel to investigate ways to achieve our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. The draft RET panel report shows that we can have an increase of between 6,400 and 6,700 direct and indirect jobs per annum on average between 2020 and 2030 in Queensland. The pathway for this industry also includes the solar rooftop program. We want to see one million solar rooftops in Queensland by 2020. We are halfway there.

Let us contrast this to the LNP's record on Queensland's renewable energy industry. You would think the LNP would be supportive of new enterprises, of a new component in our state economy, but under the previous government this industry was sent backwards. Some 1,300 jobs in this industry

vanished under the LNP's stewardship. The solar PV industry fell 41 per cent. Not one project was commissioned under the former treasurer, the member for Clayfield. Their dismissive attitude to this new growth Queensland industry can be summed up by the comments made by the now Leader of the Opposition—you know these comments—that the consumers of renewable energy are champagne drinkers and latte sippers. That is a great insult. The electorate of Murrumba has one of the highest uptakes of solar rooftops in Queensland.

What have we seen and heard from the LNP recently? We have heard nothing but great silence. I find that a great mystery and a great shame, because this industry is creating a new stream of employment right across regional Queensland. These are the full-time blue-collar jobs of the future. This industry also creates white-collar jobs in regional centres. It is an industry that Queensland kids can aspire to work within when they finish school.

It is a mystery why the LNP will not support an industry that brings jobs to regional Queensland. Then again, it is not a mystery when you realise that only the ALP has a credible plan to grow jobs in regional Queensland. We have a whole new industry here that has been ignored, derided and undermined by the state LNP. My message to those opposite is that you cannot claim to be natural stewards of the economy if you keep dismissing this industry.

(Time expired)