




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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FOREST WIND FARM DEVELOPMENT BILL

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (12.35 pm): I would like to make a few remarks about the Forest Wind Farm Development Bill 2020, and the title really does say it all. It is a proposal to allow a massive wind farm in state forests. Given the Greens' support for renewable energy, there is a lot that I would like to welcome about this proposal. That said, I also want to echo some of the concerns raised by submitters in the inquiry on this bill.

As others have already said, the bill basically provides tenure within three state forests to enable the Forest Wind project to occur. To be clear, this is a project brought by private proponents in the renewable sector. Without this bill, the Forestry Act prohibits this project since the grant of tenure for a project of this kind is currently an inconsistent and incompatible use with the plantation licence over the area. The submission from Timber Queensland noted assurances that the main impacts for the plantation timber in question would be a reduction in plantation forest area of around 493 hectares. There is a commitment from Forest Wind Holdings for a no net forestry loss approach through a land offset for matched tree planting. State forest might seem like a pretty weird location for renewable energy infrastructure of this scale, but it seems clear enough that the project does not unduly interfere with the forestry operations.

Given the urgency of the climate crisis and the renewables transition, I welcome any investment in renewable energy infrastructure. What does concern me about this bill and more broadly is the fact that this government is allowing the bulk of new renewables projects to be built by private corporations, which means the revenue will continue going towards private corporate profit rather than public good. Electricity is undeniably an essential service and the Greens want an energy system run for people, not profit. We propose \$25 billion of government investment over four years in productive, clean energy generation and storage capacity. We can fund this sort of investment by making mining corporations, big banks and developers pay their fair share and by taking advantage of record low interest rates for debt funded infrastructure investment.

The Greens' bold investment in renewable energy is part of a strategy to transition away from this state's dependence on fossil fuels, with the urgency that climate change demands of us, by investing in the jobs of the future. This project is yet again an example of the private sector stepping in and doing the kind of work that governments should. This project represents the kind of persistent, stealthy and pervasive privatisation that the Greens have so consistently warned against in our energy sector.

The other thing I took from this is just how pathetic it makes the government's CleanCo and its targets look. The Forest Wind project will provide up to 1,200 megawatts of renewable energy. At 12 per cent of Queensland's installed energy capacity, this does make a pretty substantial contribution towards the Queensland government's renewable energy target. By contrast, CleanCo—which is supposed to spearhead the government's renewables investment and maintain public ownership—has less ambitious targets than just this one project. CleanCo's entire thousand megawatt generation target is

eclipsed by this one project. This really puts in context just how unambitious the government is in its own investment in publicly owned renewables. In those projects, we need to deliver ongoing jobs and revenue and publicly owned electricity for all Queenslanders.

Government members interjected.

Mr BERKMAN: They are unhappy with this, aren't they?

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Comments will come through the chair.

Mr BERKMAN: I will take that interjection. It is fascinating the way the Labor Party likes to rewrite history and reflect persistently on the Rudd government scheme and completely turn a blind eye to the fact that, when the Greens actually had power in federal parliament alongside the Gillard government, we negotiated and introduced what would still be world-leading emissions reduction legislation.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): The member has taken the interjection and is responding to it. I ask members to hear the response in silence.

Mr BERKMAN: This is a rewriting of history that we hear over and over again. If we could just focus for a moment on the productive outcomes from genuine negotiation between the Gillard government and the Greens when we had that power-sharing arrangement in the federal parliament, we could see what successful climate policy looks like.

Finally, some submitters raised concerns about the level of consultation for those living nearby, and this has been raised by others. To be honest, the lack of consultation seems to have become a fairly consistent habit for this government. As we have heard, according to submitters, project planning began in 2016 and community engagement began in late December 2019. Some local households received a letter about the project just before Christmas and others got it as late as 20 January this year. Public consultation sessions occurred in February 2020 and the Queensland government issued planning approvals in the same month.

I am well on the record about deficiencies in our state planning process, and this consultation process is no exception. Profits and corporate interests are being put before people under this process and under this government. A project this big, one that requires our parliament to change the law just so it can go ahead, is worthy of much better community consultation, a much better look at alternative sites—if they exist—and a much better look at the environmental impacts.

I welcome the investment in renewable energy and the jobs of the future, albeit from the private sector rather than by public means. However, the community has enough concerns about this that the government should have shown its workings better and engaged better with the community.