



## Speech By **Jennifer Howard**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2021

### **TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

#### **Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (3.10 pm): I rise to speak on the Transport and Resources Committee's report titled *Examination of Auditor-General Report No. 11: 2020-21—Energy 2020*. I am fairly new to the committee, but I have thoroughly enjoyed the role so far. There are so many exciting things happening in that space and we have a wonderful chair. I thank the committee secretariat and the Queensland Audit Office for their assistance with the committee's examination.

The committee was tasked with considering the findings in the Auditor-General's report. The committee is satisfied that Queensland's six state owned energy agencies have taken appropriate action to address the Auditor-General's recommendations as per the financial audit. The committee is also satisfied that Queensland's energy sector remains viable at this point in time, despite a number of challenges facing the sector including the growth of renewables entering the network over the next decade.

The Queensland government energy entities are supplying affordable, reliable and efficient energy to households, businesses and industry right across the state. Just last month more than two million Queensland households received another \$50 off their power bills—the fifth dividend we have delivered in four years. We are able to deliver these dividends because we kept our power assets in public hands.

Renewable energy sources are also driving down the price of electricity for households and delivering cheap, clean power to the state. Our government is heavily investing in renewable energy and technology. We are partnering with industry to transition our state into a green energy superpower. Our recent \$2 billion investment in the Queensland Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund will create jobs, boost manufacturing and deliver cleaner, cheaper energy to Queenslanders. Our announcement on Sunday of our partnership with Fortescue Future Industries will see Queensland become a dominant player in green hydrogen energy and manufacturing.

Our publicly owned power assets can play an important role in our transition to 50 per cent renewable energy by 2030. Our coal-fired power plants are scheduled to be retired over the next 26 years, and during this time they will need to adapt and shift to a changing energy mix. In response to this transition, our generators are entering agreements to purchase green energy. For instance, CleanCo is purchasing 400 megawatts from MacIntyre Wind Farm on the Darling Downs and 320 megawatts of solar energy from Neoen's Western Downs Green Power Hub. Stanwell is purchasing 343 megawatts from Clarke Creek wind farm, and CS Energy is purchasing 162 megawatts from the Columboola Solar Farm. CleanCo also has plans to build its own 18-turbine wind farm at the MacIntyre Wind Farm, and CS Energy and Stanwell are investing in hydrogen projects.

I am also pleased to hear that the Queensland Audit Office will be undertaking an audit to look at how the state government is managing the transition to renewable energy. I understand that this audit will be tabled later this year.

I also note that the Auditor-General included a recommendation for the energy agencies to strengthen security to their information systems. It is a welcome recommendation. In a time of increasing ransomware and cyber attacks on our public utilities, we have to do all we can to secure our state's electricity generation and distribution. On this point, the Transport and Resources Committee has noted that the minister has indicated that aspects of this matter required immediate action and that they were resolved in a timely manner by the energy agencies.

The Transport and Resources Committee is satisfied that the energy sector remains viable at this point in time, while noting that there are some challenges facing the sector—challenges like the increasing number of renewable energy sources, replacing coal-fired power, the integration of renewables into our electricity network and the change to rules for wholesale energy prices. Otherwise, Queensland's publicly owned agencies are doing a good job in continuing to deliver cheap, reliable energy to Queensland's households, businesses and industry. This is vital to our post-COVID economic recovery and for powering jobs growth in emerging industries and those industries that rely on cheap and clean electricity. I commend the report to the House.