




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

MOTION

Electricity Supply

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (5.34 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendment. The Palaszczuk government knows that there is huge potential in the North West Minerals Province. The demand for resources such as copper, rare-earth minerals, cobalt, nickel and more that Queensland has in abundance is growing throughout the world. That is why the Palaszczuk government has invested more than \$30 million to identify the next generation of commercial deposits of these minerals and others in the North West Minerals Province. Just last year our government provided a one-off incentive payment to extend the operation of Glencore's Mount Isa copper smelter and Townsville refinery beyond 2022 as part of the North Queensland economic recovery plan.

Mr Harper: Save jobs.

Mrs GILBERT: Yes, it is all about jobs. Rebricking and other maintenance work will be provided for through the support package at the smelter for the next four years. An additional investment of more than \$500 million will be provided to Glencore to continue operation of its copper smelter and refinery. Our commitment sends a strong signal to the resources industry that the Palaszczuk government is investing in the North West Minerals Province, because ultimately that means more Queensland jobs. According to Glencore, this combined investment will help to maintain 750 jobs at the smelter and refinery on top of 1,000 indirect jobs.

Every member on this side of the House understands that cheaper, cleaner energy will deliver more jobs for Queensland. In fact, some of Australia's biggest employers have already chosen a clean energy future. Companies like Rio Tinto, Sun Metals, Wilmar Sugar and Agri-Corp with its meatworks have indicated that they can create more manufacturing jobs by going with renewables. In my community of Mackay, renewables and low-emission fuels will play a critical role in growing local manufacturing and sustaining our resource sector, along with the thousands of jobs they support.

In Mackay, Linked energy is fully off the grid. It is a solar powered engineering workshop. It produces its own solar energy, which it puts out onto mining sites. It services the mining industry through what it makes in its engineering workshops. This is an example of renewables, mining and manufacturing all working together to provide jobs.

Fortunately, since the Palaszczuk government was elected renewable energy development has been booming. Large-scale projects have come online and are being built, injecting \$8.5 billion into the Queensland economy. The investment has created over 7,000 jobs in construction alone. Almost all of these jobs have been in regional Queensland.

Queensland now boasts five of the top 10 solar suburbs in Australia, with rooftop solar being the biggest generator in the state. The great city of Mackay is shining bright. We have ranked fifth in Queensland and 10th in the country for rooftop solar, with over 10,000 systems generating over 61,000 kilowatts. Feeding this clean energy into the grid is our strong network of transmission infrastructure.

As Queensland expands renewable energy generation, it is infrastructure that will deliver our cleaner, cheaper electricity to homes and businesses across the state. That is what families want—cheaper power.

When the Palaszczuk government announced the establishment of our renewable energy zones we committed \$145 million to fund transmission infrastructure, with expressions of interest for a further 192 projects representing 60,000 megawatts of clean energy. We are encouraging even more investment by making it easier to connect to the National Electricity Market. If those opposite had their way, our publicly owned energy companies like Powerlink would not be working for Queensland but overseas multinational shareholders, because alongside Powerlink the LNP wanted to flog off Energex, Ergon, Stanwell and CS Energy to the highest bidder. If this were a debate on public assets, I know which side of the House I would rather be sitting on. Mums, dads and businesses want modern, clean, cheap power that delivers jobs. I commend the amendment to the House.