



Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2021


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Transport and Resources Committee, Report

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (6.38 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Transport and Resources Committee report on budget estimates for 2021-22. The committee was good enough to allow me, as shadow minister for natural resources, mines and energy, to participate in the hearing and put questions to the two relevant ministers regarding expenditure. I would like to thank the LNP's committee members: the deputy chair and member for Gregory, Lachlan Millar; the member for Toowoomba North, Trevor Watts; and the member for Callide, Colin Boyce. I would also like to thank the chair, the member for Kurwongbah, Shane King; the member for Mount Ommaney, Jess Pugh; and the member for Ipswich, Jennifer Howard, who substituted for the disgraced member for Mundingburra, Les Walker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. We will not be referring to members in that manner. I remind the member that the standing orders in relation to sub judice apply.

Mr WEIR: I commend the chair for the way he handled the committee hearings. It was better than some of his colleagues, I have to say.

It was very disappointing to have been allocated only 45 minutes for opposition questions to the Minister for Energy. What were we able to find in that limited time? We discovered that the minister has no plan to reach the 50 per cent renewable energy target. The minister was unable to answer any question on what the energy mix will be at any stage of the transition. We did discover that the minister does have a plan to develop a plan, but the minister was unable to inform the committee when the plan may be developed and made public. This is something all involved in the energy sector are crying out for—some confirmation that there is a plan or a road map to reach the renewable energy target or there is the very real possibility of chaos in the network.

One of the most significant announcements in the budget was the announcement of the \$2 billion Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund. Despite this commitment, the minister was unable to inform the committee how this figure was arrived at and how the money would be spent. To make an announcement of this magnitude with no idea of where at least \$1.5 billion would be invested is staggering. Indeed, when the minister was asked about the accountability and transparency around this fund, the minister claimed the question was 'completely outrageous'. Fancy that: the audacity of asking a question about the use of public moneys at an estimates hearing!

I will switch now to the session devoted to the resources sector. Once again, here we have a minister without a plan, but there is no need for concern as the minister is working on a plan or a team of consultants are working on plan as they work their way through the \$771,000 budgeted for their input, although the minister was unable to give the committee a date when that plan might be finalised. This is at a time when Western Australia is powering ahead of Queensland. Whilst mining investment has declined under the Palaszczuk government, Western Australia's has increased by 10 per cent.

It is a similar story regarding mineral exploration. Previously Queensland attracted one in four mining exploration dollars. For 2021 that was only one in every eight dollars. With rare minerals fuelling new technology, that number is incredibly low. This also places a question mark about how viable the budget revenue figures are in the long term as royalty revenue is a sizeable chunk of the revenue base for this government. We did hear that the minister still has no plan to approve the Acland coalmine and is happy to see that mine close along with all the job losses that will come with that.

During the estimates hearing I spent some time questioning the minister and department regarding some issues that have emerged as a result of Arrow Energy's CSG activities at Nandi just outside Dalby. The Nandi area is high-value agricultural land which also sits on top of a large deposit of gas in Arrow's tenement. This is the first time gas extraction has occurred on intensively farmed land and was always going to be a challenge. Unfortunately, things could have been done better, as was revealed during estimates. It also raises some questions as to the effectiveness of the Regional Planning Interests Act. We were informed that the GasFields Commission is conducting a review of this act. We await the findings of this review as amendments were always going to be needed, not just regarding resource activities but other uses that have emerged that conflict with agricultural uses. Resources are a vital part of the Queensland economy and we need to get that mix right.