




Speech By
Stephen Andrew

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

MOTION

Electricity Supply

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (5.30 pm): I rise to support in its entirety the private member's motion moved by the Katter party. Now is the time to rebuild Queensland's economy after the devastating impact of the pandemic. In order to do that, we need the government to invest in North Queensland, not just in businesses in the south-east corner. The CopperString project is a massive project that starts in the electorate of Herbert and runs all the way out to Mount Isa. It will connect Townsville and Mount Isa as well as all of the generators along the line. The project has the capacity to totally transform the North West Minerals Province by adding more supply to the market and driving down power prices for locals, businesses and the mining industry.

The province has some of the largest copper, lead, zinc and silver deposits in the world as well as massive deposits of rare-earth and new economy minerals. It also has some of the most reliable and consistent renewable energy resources in the whole country. It has the potential to deliver thousands of new jobs and billions in royalties for the entire state. However, in order to achieve this the area desperately needs the cheaper energy prices the CopperString project will bring.

This motion calls on the government to support the project and to support the North West Minerals Province. It asks the government to commit to: supporting the North West Minerals Province and its one trillion tonnes of proven reserves that are able to be accessed and utilised and the new minerals that are held in the region; ensuring the CopperString project proceeds; and building the great water projects that have already been identified in North Queensland. I refer to Big Rocks Weir at Charters Towers, Urannah at Mackay, the Hughenden Irrigation Project, the Richmond irrigation scheme, Cave Hill at Cloncurry, Nullinga at Cairns and the water project at Laura. There are lots of opportunities for North Queensland, provided government regulators support companies that are ready to invest in and build our regions. It is in our regions that we grow our food and fibre and mine our best minerals. They also give us the revenue to run the state.

I call on the government to guarantee that future renewable energy generation projects are built, owned and operated by the state government. We do not want to see what we saw in Dysart, with talk of backpackers coming in and doing the work. It was not a good thing. Queensland has fought long and hard to keep our public electricity assets in public hands. We will not sit back and see our state's electricity generation network privatised by stealth or by any other means. We need to support our electricity workers and all the electricity assets we have. We need the government to commit to build, own and operate our renewable energy future.

Increasingly we see governments in Australia bowing down to the neoliberal framework that transforms government from a provider to an enabler of private provision of service. This has to stop. We should not be outsourcing or privatising Queensland essential services. In effect, that is what we are doing. The government should be investing directly in the construction, ownership and operation of renewable energy projects. There are billions of available funds in the publicly owned CleanCo budget that the government could use to do this.

In September last year, the Queensland government announced \$500 million in new funding to set up a renewable energy fund. The Treasurer said at the time that the moneys would be used to increase the public ownership of commercial renewable energy projects and supporting infrastructure. I would like to see some of that money, hopefully, put into the Mount Morgan region to shore up its water supply. Perhaps a power generator could be established as well. The government needs to show the workers and the community that it is investing in the future of Queensland and jobs and training, investing more in the renewables projects themselves.

It would be nice to see some of the renewables projects manufactured here in Queensland instead of them being outsourced overseas. Wouldn't it be lovely if the big wind turbines and our solar panels were built and installed by Queensland workers? The government must also reinvest, with strict conditions, the profits of CS and Stanwell to construct renewable energy generation assets. Doing this would provide a clear path to a fair transition for workers currently employed in the coal-fired generation sector and within the electrical industry in Queensland.