



Speech By  
**Samuel O'Connor**


**MEMBER FOR BONNEY**

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**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project**

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.36 pm): This morning I asked the environment minister about the role her department has played in deciding why the Pioneer Valley is the preferred site for pumped hydro. Why was this chosen above all other options? What was the answer? There was no answer. The environment minister could not say what, if any, advice or assessments were provided by her department in choosing this location. That is staggering. What was this massive decision based on? Was she even consulted by the energy minister on this decision? Of course, all projects do go through environmental approval processes at different levels of government, but that should not prevent the Queensland government from working in a united way to properly plan projects transparently.

For the last two months we have heard the government talk big about their glossy brochure, and the Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro is the biggest part of that plan. On 28 September this year the Premier said—

A new dam in the Pioneer Valley near Mackay will supply half of Queensland's entire energy needs with clean, reliable and affordable renewable energy.

This was the centrepiece of their announcement. It understandably came as a shock to the people who live where this project will go. The first contact many of them had was when a property valuer knocked at their door. Yet when we look at the detail of the Energy and Jobs Plan it becomes clear that this was less of a plan and more of a sham. It is not funded. Not a cent was in the budget or in the recent unforeseen expenditure that this parliament passed. There is no detail. The government has failed to adequately explain why this site is the best. From the answer we heard this morning it seems the environment minister has not even been part of that decision-making process.

The Pioneer-Burdekin pumped hydro fact sheet is just two pages long and the second page has no specific information on it. One part of that second page is a description of the environmental and social assessments. Under 'environment' all it says is—

Understanding the environmental issues and impacts is one of the guiding principles in the development of PHES. Environmental assessments include existing tenure and use of land, impact on flora and fauna, hydrological assessments, water source and the impact on waterways, water supplies and requirements for environmental offsets.

Given this description and the close proximity to the Eungella National Park we would have thought that the department that manages and cares for that national park would have been part of the initial assessment process. I understand they are not the lead agency for this project, but surely the environment minister should be asked for input when major projects like this are proposed. Surely even some of the initial evaluations should have been completed by now or maybe they have not been.

Has this government gone all-in on a multibillion dollar project without even considering what the potential environmental issues could be? We have seen before the state government's inability to deliver. Near the electorates of the minister and me on the Gold Coast we have the long overdue second M1. Labor has not even managed to get the detailed designs done for this road in nearly eight years in

government. I was recently told by TMR that the designs for just one of the three parts of the government's first stage—that is another story—between the Bonney and Gaven electorates will not be completed until mid to late 2023. That is just the planning; that is not even the construction, which could blow out even more. If the government cannot even build a 16-kilometre road in a corridor that is 90 per cent owned by the state at the start of the process, how can it be trusted to deliver another major project of a far larger scale?

We support the transition to renewables—there is no argument about where our state is heading—but we continue to question this government's ability to deliver. We need genuine action to address climate change. We need ambition, but we also need honesty and to measure progress and delivery.

The environment minister's inability to see the importance of openness was again on display this month when she was faced with questions about contamination near the Linc Energy site on the Darling Downs. When the cyanide scandal first broke, the minister did not think it rated making a comment and kicked into media management mode. It took days of further questions before the minister backflipped and agreed to publicly release all of the water sampling results. Openness and transparency are important and, once again, this government has failed to respect Queenslanders enough to be up-front with them. It should not have taken brave whistleblowers from within—

**Ms ENOCH:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Obviously there are remarks being made on that side by members who are not in their own seats.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): I remind members that you need to be in your own seat if you want to participate in the debate.

**Mr O'CONNOR:** It should not have taken brave whistleblowers from within the environment minister's own department to leak this information. Why did they take that extreme step if there was nothing to see here?