




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2022

ADJOURNMENT

Pioneer-Burdekin Hydro Project

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (7.19 pm): The Queensland government's proposal to build the world's biggest hydro power project at Pioneer Valley in my electorate will devastate this precious region and its pristine subtropical landscape and ecosystem. It will also devastate the homes, lives and livelihoods of the many residents, farmers and local communities that live there. This five-gigawatt mega project will involve the construction of two high dams in the Burdekin catchment and another massive one in the valley below with a 60-metre wall. It will completely inundate the town of Netherdale and the surrounding valley up to the base of the Eungella Ranges. Its construction could mean cutting down thousands of hectares of evergreen and broadleaf forest and the clearing of thousands of mature trees and subtropical vegetation. Clearing so much of the area's trees and vegetation in this region will also make thousands of vulnerable and endangered species homeless. The population of many migratory species may even collapse or disappear.

Farmers in the region will also be greatly impacted. The construction of these three new mega dams will trap sediments critical for maintaining biophysical processes and soils downstream. This sediment-rich soil helps farmers to grow crops. It also gives life to marine animals. The flooding of the upper valley's forests, rivers, streams and agricultural lands will fragment the river catchment, raise methane emissions in the region and over time create methylmercury contamination. All this will cause the surrounding land to become less fertile and add many new pollutants to the waterways. It will also require an unsustainable volume of water from the Pioneer and Burdekin River catchment, adversely impacting the region's water entitlements.

There are also real concerns the project will end up using more energy, including coal-generated, than it creates, as is the case with every other hydro project in Australia. The Snowy 2.0 project has experienced significant delays and its cost is now more than double its original budget. Queensland's \$777 million Kidston pumped hydro project has taken nine years to complete and received more public funds than its total capital costs.

Another major concern is the huge new network of transmission towers needed to transport the project's electricity. According to the Premier, a new transmission supergrid will be constructed to connect the project's renewable storage to regional centres throughout the state. The government has provided no trajectory for the Pioneer-Burdekin transmission corridor. Given the project's size, it is likely the transmission corridor will slice through many areas of the state's forests, national parks, wetlands, streams and rivers, posing a threat to vital wildlife habitats, not to mention its many local tourism and recreational attractions. Massive transmission towers and lines will also need to be built throughout many local towns, communities, rural properties and some of the state's most fertile agricultural lands. If allowed to proceed, this unique region will be lost forever to the people of Queensland and future generations. Surely the idea should be to live in harmony with nature, not industrialise it.