




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 24 August 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (3.23 pm): It has been a long time since we did this, and I thank the chair and the committee for the examination into managing Queensland's transition into renewable energy. However, this was tabled in December 2022, so I had to go and re-read the committee report. There are some recommendations there that we need to absolutely follow. One thing that has changed over the last six to eight months is the concern from agriculture. I am glad the minister for agriculture is in the House to hear this, and I am sure he is aware of this. The renewable energy programs and the renewable energy infrastructure that are going out have a lot of farmers and a lot of agricultural industries worried about the taking up of A-grade agricultural land. I will give you an example, and this is something we should have looked at and we have to look at into the future.

I come from the town of Emerald. Having been a part of the Emerald irrigation area all my life, I can say it is a fantastic thing built back in the 1970s and has basically made the Central Highlands, both in agriculture and in mining. However, you only need to go to the west of Emerald where you will see a massive solar farm placed on top of an Emerald irrigation block. This is A-grade land that is producing food and fibre for our country which now has a solar farm over the top of it. That has caused huge concerns. How did that get there? It did not even go through the council process or through the council chambers. It went through the DA process and was automatically given the opportunity to be put on this fantastic land. That is the sort of thing we need to be looking at.

We saw only on Tuesday a rally out the front of Parliament House of concerned people from the agricultural industry from all over Queensland when it comes to the renewable energy targets that have been put in place in Queensland. They are not against renewable energy, but what they are concerned about is taking away prime agricultural land from food and fibre production. We need to make sure when managing the Queensland transition to renewable energy, we are also managing it in a way that does not take away valuable agricultural land which provides important food and fibre not only for Queensland but also for those countries with which we have trade relations. It is a concern. I think we need to certainly look at that.

One of the issues we have with renewable energy that has been much talked about is that once the renewable energy projects are built—and there are great jobs there; you only need look at Camden Park in Longreach where we have a major solar farm—you only have one person working there doing the whipper-snipping and wiping down the solar panels. Therefore, we have to look at what jobs there will be going forward when it comes to our transition to renewable energy.

The other matter—I know the member for Whitsunday would know and sees it all the time—is pumped hydro for the Pioneer-Burdekin. No plan, no business plan and nothing is happening. You have a lot of concerned people in Finch Hatton, in that beautiful Pioneer Valley area, who have property there

and are very worried about their property values. These are people's livelihoods. There is an announcement that is made that we are managing Queensland's transition to renewable energy, as this report says, but what is actually happening? What is happening to those people?

We have to do a lot more on this. I recommend that we revisit this Auditor-General's report very soon to make sure we include the impact of renewable energy on agriculture and what it is doing to people who are trying to get ahead and get on with their lives of producing the valuable food and fibre that Queensland does. Thank you.