




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro; Flora and Fauna, Auditor-General's Report

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (2.36 pm): Queenslanders have embraced renewables and we need a clear path forward to ensure our state has reliable, affordable and clean energy. It took six years from committing to targets for the government to come up with their Jobs and Energy Plan, released only last year. The centrepiece of this announcement was the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro project. A couple of weeks ago I took the time to go up and visit the site. High rainfall and topography, while clearly showing why it is being considered for pumped hydro, also make this an incredibly beautiful and richly biodiverse part of our state. It was a privilege to meet with the residents there and to see the pride they have for where they call home. That is why when they heard on the news the announcement of the project, they described it as though a bomb had been dropped on them. They are angry, they are frustrated and they have many genuine questions. Many of those questions surround environmental concerns.

A sign on the side of the road at Netherdale, the town that is set to be flooded, proudly states that it is a 'key biodiversity area for flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world'. One landholder, who was so scared they had not let any outsider onto their property before my visit, has rainforest covering 60 per cent of their land. They want to know what the justification is for this site having been chosen. We must show respect to these residents by being open and transparent.

I would like to know from the Minister for the Environment whether she has visited the area and spoken to locals about the project, especially about their environmental concerns. The minister is very happy to talk about this plan in the south-east, but is she happy to go and talk to people on the ground? Will the minister visit Eungella?

In December, I asked what role the environment department has had in the assessment of that project and, in the answer, they confirm that the site had been chosen with a 'high-level desktop review' of the site's environmental values.

Mrs Gerber: Desktop?

Mr O'CONNOR: That is it! For a \$12 billion project with no business case and no delivery timetable, that is a staggering lack of detail.

On another very important environmental matter, today the Queensland Audit Office released the *Protecting our threatened animals and plants* report. It is a damning assessment of a conservation crisis under a Labor government who care more about announcements than outcomes. The department's database has a backlog of 10 million records, and 79 more Queensland species have become threatened since the last report was released. Only two of that report's seven recommendations have been fully implemented in the four years since it was released. Some 366 animal and plant

reassessments are outstanding, and population status and trends are unavailable for 90 per cent of the listed animals and plants. Lack of targets and no time frames for delivery: it is the same story we hear time and again from this Labor government.