



Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**


**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2023

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT**

**Regional Queensland, Energy Projects; Housing**

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (2.48 pm): The government currently has \$20.8 billion of green energy projects which are either already underway or confirmed to commence between 2021 and 2025. Most of these projects are expected to land in Central and Northern Queensland, with the two hotspots being Gladstone and Mackay. Construction activities in these areas are expected to be some of the largest industrial deployments ever undertaken in Queensland.

Central Queensland, Mackay and the Darling Downs account for an estimated 50 per cent of the projects in the pipeline. Central Queensland alone will account for 20 per cent, or one-fifth, of the state's renewable projects by value. The vast share of projects—around 85 per cent—to be located in both Central Queensland and Mackay are only at the planned or possible stages, so the full impact is yet to be felt. It is going to be a huge undertaking. We are looking at an absolutely unprecedented scale of investment in infrastructure and renewables in Queensland. According to Construction Skills Queensland, 90 per cent of the labour needed to build these renewable projects will be in the regions. Highly skilled trades and technicians could account for one in five roles across the renewable construction workforce, and this could increase to almost 30 per cent for hydrogen projects. At a minimum, it is going to require significant workforce planning frameworks and deployable skills solutions for any of this to be at all feasible.

The other problem is: how do you attract workers to a region where there is nowhere for them to live and where existing services are already at breaking point just coping with the existing population? With a rental vacancy of just 0.7 per cent and population growth predicted out to 2040, the region urgently needs a raft of housing development incentives to reduce the enormous pressure on its increasingly tight housing market. Data from the Queensland Government Statistician's Office shows that housing stock across Mackay and surrounding regions has decreased 33.8 per cent in the past decade when compared to the previous decade. My electorate office in Mirani is regularly inundated with cries for help from people who have moved into the area for work and are unable to find accommodation. Amenities and services are already bursting at the seams and we have critical labour shortages in virtually every sector as well as near catastrophic shortages of doctors, teachers, police officers and emergency workers. The people I have spoken with say that they want more land released, but it is just not happening. Clearly the system is broken and the upshot is that we now have a chronic lack of housing supply, lack of investment, lack of skilled labour and a lack of just about every other essential service you could name.

Another issue is just how willing builders and developers will be to undertake construction where there are risks of house prices falling, especially when credit is a lot more difficult to secure and where planning rules are uncertain. We are in a bad situation. Mackay council is trying to do its best to give developers 100 per cent discounts. We just do not think that the land is being released fast enough.