




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 24 August 2023

TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (3.31 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution on the *Examination of Auditor-General report 5: 2021-22: Managing Queensland's transition to renewable energy*, which is the committee's report No. 26. It should be noted that the audit report was written on 25 November 2021 and our report was from December 2022. We are now in August 2023, so some of this is a little backward looking. I will briefly go through the recommendations that were put forward at the time, and others have also done that. Under 'Achieving the renewable energy target', recommendation 1 states—

publicly communicates its overall vision and objectives for the transition to renewable energy and sets out more information on its desired end state in its ten-year energy plan

We have heard about the plan that has been released. The one major weakness I see in that plan is addressing, particularly in areas just west of me, the impact on agricultural land of some of the processes of transition. I think the effects of solar panels and wind towers on the productivity of some of our prime agricultural land need to be strongly addressed as we go through this transition. Whilst recommendation 1 has a plan associated with it, that plan has not strongly addressed that area. Recommendation 2 was—

Conducts an interim review by 2025 to formally assess its progress towards the target—

Let's wait and see what happens there. It goes on—

These could include additional investment on network infrastructure—

Obviously it would be very interesting to see by 2025 exactly where the planned pumped hydro has reached and if we are going to be able to achieve any of the targets that have been set. Recommendation 3 states—

publishes a detailed public statement of how Queensland's renewable energy target is defined and measured

There is an important issue here because the auditor discovered that there were parts that were not being included. In calculating the figure, non-renewable energy that was being generated outside of the national market was not included. There is still around 1,000 gigawatts of diesel generation in Queensland. I think it is important to ensure we include that diesel generation in the energy target. Obviously diesel generation is not renewable. Therefore, it should be included in the generation of overall electricity. The total energy consumed also does not include energy generated by small-scale facilities. It assumes that all bioenergy generators achieve the same performance as the largest bioenergy generator. There are a few issues with calculating the target.

Importantly, the government needs to do a better job of being open and transparent. We know that is not their strong suit, but we can only hope that the people of Queensland will see some openness and transparency around the generation of the target, the measuring of the target and the calculation of the target. Probably most importantly for the people in my region, I would encourage the Auditor-General to go back and have a serious look at the transition plan and its effect on prime agricultural land and biodiversity in some of the regional areas of Queensland.

I think the report itself from the Auditor-General was a solid report. It highlighted some issues and made some good recommendations. I think it is timely that we go back to this because the effects on prime agricultural land are evident right now. That is what the protest was about this week. I think it is really important that the Auditor-General and the department look seriously at how we manage this transition and the impacts on the agricultural land. We look at the government Coat of Arms sitting above your head, Madam Deputy Speaker, and agriculture is a very important part of Queensland. It should not be put in jeopardy by renewable energy.

(Time expired)