




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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**ENERGY (RENEWABLE TRANSFORMATION AND JOBS) BILL; CLEAN
ECONOMY JOBS BILL**

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (4.12 pm): I want to start by seconding the comments made by the members for Bonney, Nanango and Condamine, who made great contributions. I would have loved to have covered a lot more in this debate, but given it is a cognate debate there is only so much detail we can go into. The reality is that over 8,000 jobs across the Callide electorate are impacted by these bills, so it is really appalling that we lose half our debate time on this because that is the opportunity to go into the detail about how we can make sure this pathway is done correctly.

Why do we only get 10 minutes to speak on this bill? Apparently Minister de Brenni has a lunch to go to. That is right: we are debating two of the most significant pieces of legislation that Labor has introduced, according to Premier Miles, but it is not as important as the minister's lunch. I also want to point out the irony in Premier Miles—or Premier 'Air Miles'—flying to Gladstone today during debate on an emissions bill to announce more so-called clean, green things on behalf of 'Airbus' Albo.

Mr KELLY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Firstly, the member is not using the Premier's correct title. He is also referring to the absence of a member from this chamber and I believe there is a convention against doing that.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): I am getting advice on that at the moment. Member for Callide, I will remind you to use correct titles. What I heard was not a reflection on the member's absence from the House, but I will come back to your comments. They may have aroused some other issues for us. I will give you the call and I will continue to seek advice.

Mr KELLY: With respect, Madam Deputy Speaker, the member was referring to the Premier's trip to Gladstone today. Perhaps you missed that while you were seeking advice.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I did not actually capture that. Member, if you did refer to any member as being absent from the House, there is obviously a custom to not do that. I ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr HEAD: Thank you for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. I withdraw.

This bill being part of a cognate debate is a slap in the face to the 8,000 workers across Callide who are expected to be impacted by these two separate pieces of legislation. That is right: there are two pieces of legislation and only one speech we can make. This is yet another insult to our processes and democracy. Nevertheless, I will continue with the time that I have remaining.

The Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023 seeks to introduce a new act that sets out renewable energy targets, establishes the framework for renewable energy zones, rules out private investment opportunities for deep storage assets and establishes a so-called Job Security Guarantee. Firstly, with regard to the renewable energy targets, will these targets be met by nameplate capacity or actual generation? Will the output of battery storage be included, counting the same generation twice over? We know that renewables typically only produce around 30 per cent of their

nameplate capacity annually. This means that much more needs to be installed to make up for existing generation. The opposition would like to see a commitment from the government to be fully transparent and publicise more information regarding their targets and current generation figures.

I also ask the minister: what guarantee is he giving that consumers will see genuine power bill relief with this energy transition push? We know that Queensland has seen the highest power hikes in the nation. On my own electricity bill the price per kilowatt hour went up a whopping 50 per cent on 1 July last year, literally overnight. This is the reality of a Labor government in Queensland. They might try to blame completely irrelevant factors, but the reality is the government operate the majority of the electricity grid and generation in the state. Labor is responsible for the cost-of-living crisis gripping Queensland.

These power prices come off the back of significant increases in solar and wind generation across Queensland and yet we are told this electricity generation is cheaper. Clearly, there is a fallacy being told here or Labor have completely stuffed up our grid and the market.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, that is unparliamentary language and I ask that you withdraw.

Mr HEAD: I withdraw. Labor have completely messed up our grid and market. Perhaps it is because our coal-fired power generators have been run into the ground. We know the Callide Power Station C unit has been offline for most of the last few years thanks to Labor's failures. We also know that this has directly contributed to higher electricity prices in Queensland. This is why the LNP is proud to back our coal-fired generators and, if elected, we will ensure our fleet is maintained to provide affordable and reliable electricity into the future.

At the public hearing into the renewables bill, Shane Bruncker from the MEU made the following comment—

... there are no jobs in renewable energy. People within government admit that now, too.

Apparently the government even admits there are no jobs in renewable energy.

This bill establishes something called the Job Security Guarantee. This in itself is evidence that the government knows that regional and rural communities will be left with no future if we do not drastically change the current approach of closing our coal-fired generators. This guarantee is nothing but a pitiful attempt to appease the union movement, but it will not protect the communities in Callide such as Chinchilla and Biloela. Further, it does not offer a guarantee to the coalmine workers beside the power stations and to the contractors and many indirect jobs in these communities.

I do question the need for amendments circulated today by the minister to exempt Powerlink from the Australian Energy Regulator's ring-fencing mandatory codes. These codes are meant to allow for healthy competition for the benefit of consumers. Does the government have other sinister motives? I know that this should have been brought before the committee so it could be properly scrutinised and we would have more insight into the reasons why. The member for Nanango circulated significant amendments we intend to make to the energy bill. If the government intends to be bipartisan and ensure there is transparency, due process and protections for workers in rural communities, then it will support us in these amendments.

The Barfield Road Producer Group from Banana in the great electorate of Callide raised several important and very well-considered points in their submission. They are not against renewables but believe a robust process that considers social and economic impacts and opportunities for the region should include local landholders and contractors to allow for open dialogue, information sharing and collaboration. This group also highlights the fact that, as a landholder, they are accountable for the land and vegetation management. They suggest adding a clause to this bill to make it clear that it is the responsibility of energy companies as well.

Further, thorough investigations should be undertaken at the suggested site prior to a renewable energy project being established. Those investigations need to assess the baseline natural capital before the projects are developed. I note the government has moved amendments regarding social licence and has flagged a mandatory code for energy developers. I certainly look forward to seeing the details that come from that. When solar and wind projects are developed across Queensland, it needs to be the right project, the right process and the right place.

It is important to crack down on rogue operators who are harassing landowners and not appropriately engaging with neighbouring or impacted properties. Companies should not be lulling landowners into false claims and agreements by land banking without the intention of following through on the build. Transmission lines are obviously an important part of an electricity grid. Unfortunately, those who face having transmission lines built on their land are getting the short end of the stick in this journey. Those landholders get next to no or little say in what happens and, for that, the compensation needs to be appropriate and substantial.

These renewable energy targets rely heavily on major infrastructure actually being built and not just spoken about, like the Borumba and Pioneer pumped hydro projects. Still no business case has been released for either of those projects. How can Queenslanders trust that the estimated costs published for those projects are accurate? How much are they really going to cost? The government will not tell us because then it will be obvious that the projects are nothing but a hoax—a hydro hoax. Meanwhile, locally there is a great pumped hydro project to replace the Mount Rawdon goldmine, but the government has not even given that a mention. It is clear that they are determined to keep their blinkers on and not support good private projects in small rural communities. It is also clear that many road upgrades need to be undertaken before the government continues on this pathway because it has failed to invest in rural and regional roads for far too long.

With the bit of time I have left I will turn to the emissions bill. As I said at the beginning of my speech, there are 8,000 jobs at risk because of these bills and, specifically, the emissions bill. In my maiden speech I said—

Do not ever turn up and pretend you care about my electorate. ... if your very next breath is about shutting down our towns. Do not claim that there will be alternate jobs for them—

that is, those communities—

into the future unless they are real and exist today ... I will not accept a raw deal for my electorate.

I stand by those comments. It is important that we know where we stand into the future. I reiterate the comments of the member for Bonney when he called for industry plans and annual reporting on the progress of these targets to outline the impacts on rural and regional towns, communities, jobs, the economy and the cost of living. Plenty of people say that into the future there will be lots of jobs in these new industries. Now it is up to the government and industry to explain where those jobs will be and what they will be.

I will not accept my communities being shut down because there is no industry and there is no future. In their submission, the Western Downs Regional Council raised concerns about adverse repercussions that emissions reduction plans will have on regional communities, workers and the environment. Any negative impacts on employment opportunities will have implications for our regional communities. They will only exacerbate Labor's cost-of-living crisis. We also need to ensure communities, councils and industry are represented on advisory boards and all pathways moving forward. I note that much of the technology needed does not exist. Show Labor the door in 2024.