




Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (3.17 pm): I congratulate the member for Ipswich West on a fabulous first speech. Congratulations to the member for Ipswich West.

I rise to speak to the cognate debate but will speak specifically to the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023. My colleague the member for Bonney has contributed to the other bill, but I put on record that it is quite disappointing that these two distinctly different bills are being debated in a cognate debate. I am also extremely disappointed in the fact that this whole debate time has been truncated for such an important area, that is, the future of energy supply in this great state.

I firstly want to thank the members of the former Transport and Resources Committee, which had the majority of carriage for the review of the bill I am speaking to. In doing so, I specifically want to acknowledge the member for Condamine as acting deputy chair, the member for Gregory, the member for Callide and the member for Toowoomba North who are now part of the newly formed committee which tabled the final report. I also put on record and acknowledge the work of my predecessor, the former shadow minister and member for Condamine, who has listened and consulted with community and industry on this bill for some time, and continues to do so. I thank the member for Condamine very much for his stellar work in this regard.

Queenslanders want a government with aspiration, but they also want a steady hand to guide the state through a transition that ensures affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. In contrast, Labor has chosen to legislate for political reasons, and that decision embeds far higher risks for higher energy bills because it is founded on one major project, the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project, which even the Labor Party is starting to move away from. Today we are voting on Labor's plan, if you can call it that, centred on the multibillion dollar Pioneer-Burdekin project which, like I say, even Labor appears to be walking away from.

The risk that Labor's plan poses to the energy bills of Queenslanders is far too great, and in Queensland's cost-of-living crisis Queenslanders should not have to take that risk. They cannot afford to take that risk, especially at the hands of a government that has proven time and time again they cannot deliver on a single promised project on time or on budget. We should be guided by our aspiration to deliver affordable, reliable and sustainable energy: affordable—ensuring we keep Queenslanders' energy bills down; sustainable—ensuring we can transition with a steady hand through the long term; and reliable—long-term reliability in our mix to prevent brownouts and keep the lights on. These are the priorities that should drive us towards our aspirational targets, always listening to Queenslanders along the way. The legislation shackles Queenslanders to higher bills and unreliable supply, handcuffing the state to the decision instead of allowing us to be guided by aspects that actually impact Queenslanders. Labor instead wants to drag Queenslanders down the road when it cannot provide a tangible plan to get there. Legislation forces Queensland down this river without building a boat first.

To make it really clear, the LNP does support renewable energy. Queensland is the Sunshine State, but we are also lucky to have windy ranges and many of the local critical minerals and rare earths that the future economy will need. The state of Queensland can continue to be a player in the domestic and global markets for generations to come. We can create well-paying regional jobs, take advantage of the green minerals mining boom, develop and manufacture new technologies right here and power local businesses with clean energy. The LNP supports the targets, but we cannot support to legislate them when there is no credible pathway to achieve them. In fact, this bill is predicated on that one major project. We want to see more investment in renewable energy and new opportunities to manufacture energy technology such as batteries and electrolyzers in our state. That is without question.

We also want to see Queenslanders continue to benefit from rooftop solar on their own homes, giving them energy independence whilst driving down their bills. That is why the LNP announced our 'supercharged solar for renters' plan to make sure Queensland can continue to lead the nation in rooftop solar. For renewable energy to have the brightest future in Queensland, it needs to be done the right way, and rural and regional Queenslanders must benefit and be treated with the respect they deserve. We do not want to miss the once-in-a-generation chance to create new careers and keep our brightest kids in the bush. We do not want those energy careers going across the border or to another country. The bill as written will not, in our view, see state and local communities make the most of the state's energy opportunities. I will be moving amendments, which I think have been circulated, that seek to address those concerns. In doing so, I call on the government to join with me in supporting these amendments in the best interests of Queenslanders and our renewable energy industry.

As this chamber has heard me say on many occasions, the LNP's vision for energy supply is affordable, reliable and sustainable. Like I have always said, the LNP supports a balance in the mix of generation sources. Secure base load supply continues to be critical to the reliability of our network. This chamber has heard me say on countless occasions how critical it is to get Callide C back up and going. We again ask for the independent Brady report to be released so Queenslanders know what went wrong at Callide—a failure which has driven up the cost of electricity for Queenslanders, as evidenced by the Auditor-General's—

**Government members:** It's not true.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will take those interjections. I would ask those members not to mislead their constituents, who have ridiculously high power bills. The Auditor-General and the Queensland Competition Authority debunked the myths those over there are trying to peddle. This is critical in providing reliability to the network and underpinning a shift to those renewable sources. When it comes to affordability, it is no secret that Labor's cost-of-living crisis is having a real impact on people's lives. Every day I speak to families that are struggling to pay their power bills. We know from the latest CPI data that Queensland electricity bills increased by 19.9 per cent—the worst increase in the nation, triple the national average.

Given those severe cost-of-living pressures, the LNP is seriously concerned that the purpose of this bill does not include affordability. As I said, that is why I moved amendments to rectify that. It is a glaring omission by an out-of-touch Premier at a time when Queenslanders need cost-of-living relief more than most. By omitting to include affordability in the bill, the Premier has shown how deaf he is to the needs of everyday Queenslanders. The bill neglects to consider the extraordinary costs of the infrastructure proposed and its impact on taxpayers.

We do not support the 10-year Labor government's addiction to cost blowouts that will add to our ballooning power bills. When you look at the costs for Borumba, they have blown out from \$6 billion to an eye-watering \$14.2 billion, and that is what we know about. History shows that major infrastructure projects are almost always over time and over budget under Labor. I am also concerned when I read reports about significant environmental hurdles, not just at Borumba but also at Pioneer-Burdekin. Those significant environmental approvals need to be overcome. The Pioneer-Burdekin, the great hydro hoax, is still a complete unknown. It was first announced as \$12 billion, but we know from reports that that is more than likely to double. In the chamber today we heard the difference between the Treasurer and the Premier. They have no clue when it comes to the cost. The Premier thinks the cost is \$18 billion. The Treasurer says it is \$12 billion. The locals are asking how much this project will cost, and the government refuses to answer. What is the real cost of this project? The people of Queensland, who are paying their electricity bills, deserve to know the cost.

There are so many sensitive environmental issues that whistleblowers tell me an EIS may not even proceed. As recently as last week the Premier could still not answer the most basic questions. Who is paying for this? Is it taxpayers? How much will the project cost? Tell us today what other infrastructure and services you are going to cut to pay for it. Say goodbye to new hospitals, schools and

infrastructure projects, if that is the case. The only way GOCs are going to be able to pay back the massive piles of debt they will be forced to take on is by charging their customers, Queensland families, more. During this cost-of-living crisis we really think the government should be focusing on people's bills and how much it is going to cost.

We have seen an admission of the adverse impacts the Premier's hydro hoax has had on the mental health of people in the Pioneer Valley community. With this bill, today the Premier is asking Queenslanders to just trust him and sign two blank cheques: one for Borumba and one for Pioneer. This cannot be overstated. We know the Premier is completely reckless with the taxes paid by voters. The Premier has proven to himself, to this parliament and to Queenslanders that he cannot be trusted when it comes to the electricity bills of Queenslanders.

We need to consider transmission costs as well. The Queensland Electricity Users Network was very clear in saying the bill will not provide affordable electricity bills. When a commodity is in short supply, the price goes up. The AER report last month said that poles and wires costs are a large component of retail prices, comprising around 40 per cent of the price.

The bill also allows Powerlink—through part 5, division 2, proposed clause 24(3)—to build transmission infrastructure at any cost, even if there is no economic benefit. This completely removes the protection provided to consumers by the National Electricity Objective and the National Electricity Rules. Concerningly, proposed clause 72 of the bill states that the minister may declare that costs from the establishment, operation and assessment of a REZ can be recovered through the transmission network charges directly to the consumer. This government has not considered the impact of this plan on household electricity and is obviously out of touch, and I will go to the minister's amendments in a moment.

We do support the amendments in relation to social licence. This is something that we in the LNP have been screaming out for for a long time. It is too late. It should have happened already. We need to see the detail, and the devil is always in the detail, but it is important that this looks after the people of rural and regional Queensland. We know the government have been completely asleep at the wheel when it comes to managing the tranche of issues and opportunities. Who can forget the former premier standing at the LGAQ conference over nine months ago announcing the policy and then forgetting to ever legislate it? We still do not have that legislated. The poor GasFields Commission are screaming for some assistance because what is going on out there in the regions is really impactful. Impacts such as construction, road and infrastructure usage, property resumptions and the effects on local amenities like noise, water, competing land uses and, in some cases, property values and other social impacts are very real. This is something that mayors, councillors and community members constantly raise with me. Unlike the Premier, unlike the energy minister and unlike the member for Cairns, who are all city-based MPs, my own electorate of Nanango sits smack bang in the middle of the Labor government's southern Queensland renewable energy zone.

**Mr Healy** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My electorate, like others, have been living with these pressures and issues for some time now. I have spent countless hours listening to my constituents who have been affected. There are renewable energy proponents who are out there doing the right thing, and I commend them for it. There are those who create local benefits and those who have established neighbourhood benefit funds. I would like to see proponents go further such as improving local internet or creating legacy through scholarships, contributing to local health services or even offering cheap electricity to locals or having supply agreements with businesses in town. Then there is road infrastructure. How about they start contributing to serious road infrastructure after the impacts of construction? It is not hard to get your head around that concept.

If there is wind and solar near you, then you should benefit from that cheaper power. For example, in the UK, Octopus retail customers get 100 per cent renewable electricity at the same price as any other Octopus customer but with a twist—any electricity you use while your local turbine is spinning means an automatic benefit of a 20 per cent discount. If the energy is really flowing, you get a 50 per cent discount. These are the sorts of opportunities that Queenslanders obviously deserve. However, at the moment, we are experiencing amongst the highest prices across the country.

**Mr Healy** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** As I said, the social licence is extremely important, but the reality is that there are some proponents making a complete mockery of our rural and regional communities and taking advantage of the fact that there is no clear framework out there, and that needs to stop. The people of regional Queensland supply the city with the food, water, fibre and minerals required to sustain

life, yet they feel disrespected and ignored by this government. As legislators, we can both drive investment and create new careers for regional Queensland and protect the livability and amenity of our rural and regional Queensland communities that are host to the renewable energy infrastructure.

**Mr Healy** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Cairns is consistently interrupting. Would you mind—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Bush): Thank you. I remind all members that the noise is getting a little bit loud in the chamber. If we could just keep it down, it would be appreciated.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am not taking his interjections. They are trivial.

**Mr Healy** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I understand the member just said some unparliamentary language and I ask him to withdraw.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I did not hear the language, but if a member did make unparliamentary comments I would encourage them to stand and withdraw that; otherwise, member for Nanango, you have the call.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Without reflecting on your ruling, the convention in this House is that, when a member takes personal offence and asks the member to withdraw, the member withdraws.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I believe that your point of order went to unparliamentary language, which I did not hear. I have asked the members, if there was a comment that was made, to withdraw. If no member is standing to that, I would suggest, member, that you write to the Speaker and he can review the footage.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker; I shall be doing that. As legislators, we can both drive investment—

**Mr Brown** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Capalaba! Member for Nanango, you have the call.

**Mr HART:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The member for Capalaba just interjected while on his feet leaving the chamber, and you called him and he did not come back. There needs to be some action taken about that.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. I did not call him back in. I will give the call back to the member for Nanango. I will get some advice and if a correction is required I will certainly do that.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The reality is that the legislated targets do not necessarily guarantee success given that this government consistently sets targets that it fails to meet. One target that comes to mind is the container deposit scheme where Queensland legislated a recycling target of at least 85 per cent of bottles and cans by 2021-22 but just over 60 per cent was achieved by that date. Who could forget that it was this government that has missed seven of its own deadlines in getting Callide C back up and running following the explosion that occurred well over 1,000 days ago? This government promised that the GasFields Commission would be expanded to include the social licence. It has missed that.

The LNP believes in openness and transparency and the Labor government's 10-year plan to review these targets twice a decade defies the openness and transparency that Queenslanders expect, so our amendments will seek to change that to see the targets reviewed every two years. Transparency and accountability and more frequent measuring of progress is essential if the government is serious about meeting those targets.

I want to talk about the public ownership of our energy assets. The requirement of the government to have 54 per cent ownership of generation assets is a limitation on private investment. Let me be really clear: the LNP supports all state owned electricity assets remaining in our public hands. Unlike the former Labor government, we will not be selling off our assets. However, if the private sector wants to invest in Queensland's energy future, we should be supporting it, not saying that you cannot invest because of an arbitrary number within the legislation. All around the world we are seeing that private investors are keen to spend money driving the development of renewable energy and we should not be stopping the private sector from doing the same here.

Under this legislation, the government could sell 46 per cent of the current 100 per cent state owned generators. That is an issue. That is what the LNP are against because we want to keep them in our own hands. This bill fails to provide guidance on the amount of funding required for this co-investment over the years or the impact on consumer power bills. It is also unclear what would

happen if the government refused to continue investment. Would it mean that a new generator could not be approved if it breached the 54 per cent cap? This again emphasises that the government has not properly thought out the details of this proposal.

The bill creates a framework for the ongoing support of workers in coal- and gas-fired power stations. We support that. However, importantly, this guarantee and fund do support the communities that have an economic reliance on these facilities. Communities which have their own local butcher, grocer, RSL club or mechanic, just to name a few, would suffer if more high-paid local jobs were not brought into their town.

The government's plan also fails to support workers in Queensland's coalmines who supply thermal coal for domestic energy production, like the workers at Meandu Mine in my own electorate of Nanango. It is important to note the Australian Institute for Progress's submission, which rightfully points out that the bill's title itself when it refers to 'jobs' is a misdemeanour. These are important considerations which deserve proper consideration.

No energy shift can occur without the support of rural and regional communities—something I have touched on before when I have talked about social licence challenges. Making sure projects directly benefit rural and regional communities is the only way that these energy proponents can properly thrive in Queensland. Yes, there are the Queensland solar farm guidelines, but they are not worth the paper they are written on. They are not mandatory; they are just a guide to the minimum work that must be done. Communities are sick and tired of being treated like they do not matter. I note the government is now reviewing the wind farm code and I implore the government to have more consideration for direct community benefit and social licence—and I note the minister has moved an amendment today—and I mean consideration of legitimacy, credibility and trust. Queenslanders deserve to be respected, and we must be heard because the rural and regional concerns that are coming out are legitimate. Much more must be done within these renewable energy projects to earn their own social licence.

We are an opposition that not only raises concerns where required but offers solutions. In that spirit, today I circulate amendments in my name with solutions to the issues I have spoken about. I wanted to speak to them in greater depth during consideration in detail, but we know that the debate is being truncated. These amendments include the public ownership report and a requirement that the minister is to be transparent with the impact of public ownership on the electricity bills of consumers and the reliability of the network. As I said earlier, affordability should be front and centre, as should reliability. There is an amendment to the public ownership of energy assets to support continued public ownership of the existing assets but not an arbitrary limit on public or private ownership of new renewable energy developments.

The LNP wants to keep Queensland's electricity assets in our public hands. The Premier did his apprenticeship in the Bligh government, and that was the government that sold all of the assets in Queensland. It was a Labor government that actually sold those assets and they got punished for that. Under this Labor legislation, the Labor government could sell 46 per cent of currently 100 per cent state owned generators. They have done it before and, watch them, they will want to do it again.

Our amendment will stop Labor ever doing this. They sold off the motorways, the ports, forestry and the Cairns Airport. By contrast, the amendment will not put a limit on government investment in renewable generators. We want to widen the job security guarantee and fund to include eligibility for those who work in secondary industries in rural and regional areas, to look after those people as our energy source shifts. We want to provide better transparency around the targets and in the public ownership strategy. We want to see the government publish alternative scenarios to meet those targets if the proposed pumped hydro projects do not proceed.

We have been asking for this for some time, yet the government refuses to provide it. In order for us to support the legislation in good faith, transparency in this regard must be essential. What is their plan B? In the event a minister directs Powerlink to submit in relation to candidate priority transmission investment, the minister must include the impact on energy affordability and sustainability for consumers. We want to see these decisions published publicly on the departmental website. When it comes to a declaration of a renewable energy zone, the minister must outline how it will impact existing land uses with mandatory public consultation. I note the minister's amendment hopefully goes to that. These are all commonsense amendments and I call on the government to join with me today in the best interests of Queensland and our renewable industry and support them today.

I note that the committee has not been given the opportunity to review the government amendments that were put forward. These are serious amendments that were put forward by the minister today. Yes, we agree to the social licence—we have talked about that—but let us look at those amendments that the minister has just circulated.

**Ms Pease** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy to take that interjection if it had something to do with the fact that we were given them this morning. Thanks for the long consultation for the community! That is wonderful, thank you! I cannot wait for the contribution from that member. I am not sure she would understand what a renewable project looked like if she fell over one.

**Ms PEASE:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at those statements made by the member for Nanango and I ask her to withdraw.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I withdraw. In between Kingaroy and Jandowae, there are four wind farm projects in my electorate. Right near the township of Kingaroy and the township of Woolooga, there are massive solar farms. These have impacts on my community. We have got the massive transmission lines for Borumba pumped hydro. These are impacts that are real and they do affect the community. With the greatest respect to more city-minded members, they do not understand those impacts because it is not in their backyard. After years and years of talking about renewable energy projects, why hasn't the social licence been brought in before today, Minister? That is the question.

When we look at the amendments the minister just circulated, let me simplify it. They are taking the distribution network out of the Australian Energy Regulator's purview. They do not want to play by the national rules. The committee should have been given the opportunity to consider this massive change to the way Queensland's energy sector works.

I will ask my questions to the minister now in case we do not get time later. Does this mean that Powerlink can spend money without the approval of the Australian Energy Regulator? What does that do to the regulated asset base calculations, the amount it can recover from retailers, and what does that do to the energy bills of Queenslanders? We asked the government to release the modelling on the deep storage projects. Obviously the government is trying to hide the real impact and price through this amendment. They would only put this amendment in because they know that it will increase what energy consumers are going to pay. Their energy bills will go up. If that was not the case, why do we need this amendment that basically removes us out of the national energy rules? Those are questions to very important parts of the amendments that the minister has circulated. We would like to see that.

Again, I say that we support any avenue towards decent social licence and acting in community, but the devil is in the detail. We would like to be consulted in relation to how that goes. I would like to see that the GasFields Commission, or whatever it is called, gets expanded immediately so they have the resources to be able to deal with the incoming correspondence they are already getting from the impacted landholders from the transition in our energy markets. These are simple requests.

How much are these projects going to cost? What is the government's plan B? What is the government going to do when the federal environment minister kiboshes these projects? What is the government going to do when it cannot get an EIS because of the environmental impacts and social impacts of these projects? We ask the government: what is plan B? How much will these projects cost? The Premier is now fighting with the Treasurer. Goodness knows what the energy minister thinks these projects cost because the Premier thinks it is \$18 billion and the Treasurer thinks it is \$12 billion. We know that the Treasurer has no regard for Queensland taxpayers' money. We have just seen the debt bomb grow out even bigger today but he says, 'That's okay. Debt's a tool.' Right now, today, energy users in Queensland are going to be paying more for their electricity because this government is kneecapping all Queenslanders because of this recklessness.

What will Pioneer-Burdekin cost? Can the government be honest with Queenslanders? What is the plan B? What will these projects cost? It is a simple question. What will the impact be on Queenslanders' cost of living? We are in a crisis, and the only way to fix it is to show Labor the door in 2024.