




Speech By
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ENERGY (RENEWABLE TRANSFORMATION AND JOBS) BILL; CLEAN ECONOMY JOBS BILL

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.55 pm): I rise to speak to the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023 and the Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024 in a cognate debate as a member of the Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee. Let me start with the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023.

In September 2022, the energy minister released the then Palaszczuk government's Energy and Jobs Plan. This bill proposes to legislate the key components of that plan into law, including renewable energy targets of 50 per cent by 2030, 70 per cent by 2032 and 80 per cent by 2035. The bill also includes 54 per cent public ownership of energy assets, renewable energy zones, a Jobs Security Guarantee Fund, a Queensland Energy System Advisory Board, an Energy Industry Council and a Queensland Renewable Energy Jobs Advocate, amongst others. I will attempt to speak to as many of these as time allows, but I will not be able to speak to them all.

I will begin with the renewable targets. While a number of submitters noted their support for the renewable energy targets, others called for more ambitious renewable energy targets, including seeking a target of 100 per cent renewable energy generation by 2030. In contrast, Master Electricians Australia submitted that the targets are overly optimistic and potentially unachievable due to capacity constraints in the labour market and issues around grid stability and the reliance on the delivery of pumped hydro energy storage assets. This is a very valid point and reflects the contrast between reality and ideology.

The worker shortage is affecting every business in this state and indeed the nation—not just a worker shortage but a skills shortage that will be needed to deliver the energy transition. It was quoted during the committee hearings that we need an extra 35,000 electricians across the NEM to deliver on these targets. That is just one example and one area of a trade shortage. All tradies are in short supply.

Where are these workers going to come from? Are they going to be flown in from overseas? This was a concern that was raised by the MEU during the committee hearing in Brisbane by Shane Bruncker when he stated—

At the Coopers Gap Wind Farm at Kingaroy they were all fly-in fly-out workers from New Zealand. I am unsure where the labour will come from to be able to do this construction work. It is going to be fly-in fly-out, unfortunately, or DIDO.

The minister needs to explain to the Queensland public where these workers are going to come from. He cannot continue to fob this off. They have a right to know. If this was the only major project happening in this state perhaps there may be some slim chance that these targets may be met, but it is not. There are a number of new hospitals that have been announced to be built in that same time period, as well as new schools to keep up with the increase in population. There are a number of major road upgrades to the M1, the Bruce Highway, the Warrego, the Gore and the Flinders, to name just a few, that cannot be delayed any longer.

We are the host state for the 2032 Olympic Games and, due to the incompetence of this Steven Miles government, we are already way behind where we should be at this point in time. This is going to be another burden on an already strained workforce, racing to meet a target. We are suffering from a housing crisis in this state as a result of the failures of this government. We need builders and civil contractors building new houses to house those who cannot find a home here already.

Where are all these workers who will be needed to build all these renewable projects live? Are we going to put them in tents? This is an issue that the regional mayors are concerned about and believe has been largely overlooked. These projects will create a lot of jobs in the construction stage but not many in the running and maintenance stages. Those of us who were close to the early stages of the CSG industry remember the chaos that our regional towns endured in that building stage. These mistakes cannot be allowed to be repeated. These construction sites will necessitate the need for work camps to accommodate the temporary workforce to avoid unnecessary building in regional towns with houses left empty after the workforce moves on. The establishment of these work camps will present challenges for council with changes to land use, access, traffic and all the public services that will be needed.

Adding to the challenge of meeting the targets is the reliance on two large hydro projects to underpin the necessary storage. Part 3 of the bill outlines the public ownership strategy and the public ownership report that the minister must prepare for each reporting period. The public ownership strategy sets the public ownership targets to be achieved by 2035, which are: equal to or more than 54 per cent ownership of generation assets; 100 per cent ownership of transmission and distribution assets; and 100 per cent ownership of deep storage assets. Deep storage assets are defined to mean pumped hydro energy storage assets that can generate at least 1,500 megawatts of electricity for 24 hours and that are prescribed by regulation.

This entire plan is reliant on two large-scale hydro generation projects that fit into that category. The proposed two gigawatt Borumba Pumped Hydro Project is estimated to cost \$14 billion and the proposed five gigawatt Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project is estimated to cost \$12 billion. These cost estimates can be taken with a grain of salt. I am informed by those in the construction industry that Pioneer-Burdekin will not come in under \$20 billion. Neither of these projects have a business case or any environmental or planning approvals in place. The detailed analytical study for Borumba was due to be released by the end of 2023. We are still waiting to see this report.

Every project that this government touches is plagued with cost blowouts and delays and these hydro projects will suffer a similar fate. Under this government, we regularly see projects blow out to double the quoted cost. I well remember the conflict between landowners and resource companies in the early days of CSG. We are seeing a repeat of the same conflict, particularly those in the path of powerlines. This will be very challenging for local government, particularly those in REZ areas. Local government, AgForce, QFF and Canegrowers—among others—stress the need for early engagement with the affected stakeholders.

Renewable energy will play a huge role in our future energy mix. The LNP acknowledge that and are not opposed to renewable energy, but it needs to be done in a considered and affordable manner. Both sides of the House agree that crime needs to be reduced in this state but we do not agree with the government's policy to achieve this because they are failing. It is the same with health, the housing crisis and the cost of living, among others. This is the same with the rollout of renewable energy. We support renewable energy but we do not trust this government to deliver these projects on time—

Ms RICHARDS: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance to the two bills before the House. I am not sure how talking about crime and health has any relevance to the energy bills.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Member for Condamine, I will ask you to remain focused on the bills.

Mr WEIR: This government is known for causing chaos and crisis. This is not something we can afford with our energy network. This government have a long history of failure to deliver. They are big on announcements and spin but lacking in substance and delivery. The whole Energy and Jobs Plan is about winning the election in October. This government will do and say anything to achieve this goal, including misleading Queenslanders. There is no greater example of this than what is happening in this chamber today.

This is arguably the most significant bill that has come into this parliament this term, yet this debate will be guillotined and there will be no debate on the clauses because this government knows this bill will not stand up to scrutiny. To confuse matters further, this bill has been made cognate with the Clean Economy Jobs Bill which sets emission reduction targets that are largely reliant on

technologies that do not yet exist. This bill is basically in line with federal commitments that are aspirational and not binding. They will not be opposed by the LNP, as stated by the member for Bonney earlier. Both of these bills should have been debated as standalone bills and subject to the full scrutiny of the House. This government does not want this to happen as they know that this legislation will not stand up to that scrutiny.

If the transition to renewables is not done in a coordinated way, we will have network failures which will see increased power prices for households and business closures. This transition will not be delivered by media spin, glossy brochures and social media posts about projects and technologies that do not yet exist. I am quite stunned by the amendment that the minister has circulated because in the bill it says at clause 84—

It is also the intention of Parliament that the national electricity laws continue to apply in relation to the REZ transmission network or REZ controlled assets for a REZ to the extent the national electricity laws are not inconsistent with this part.

If that is the case, why do we have an amendment? This amendment worries me because I think it is a significant amendment. This should have gone before a committee. He should put this to the committee. We should be able to review this. It is a disgrace that it will be moved and we will not be able to debate it during consideration in detail. That tells you that there is something seriously wrong with this clause. We support renewable energy, but we do not trust this government to deliver it in any capacity.