




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (12.39 pm): As shadow environment minister, my contribution to this cognate debate will focus on the bill within my portfolio which sets out our state's overall emissions targets and creates the framework for a pathway to a cleaner economy. We are committed to getting the shift to renewables right, especially when it comes to regional community benefit and the impacts on our environment. The shadow energy minister's contribution on the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill, immediately following mine, will outline our position on the government's proposal before us. Today I can confirm that the Liberal National Party will not be opposing the Clean Economy Jobs Bill.

Around 92 per cent of the world's GDP is covered by commitments to net zero. Investment in the low-carbon energy transition surged 17 per cent in 2023. Queensland is in a fierce competition locally and internationally to secure as much of that investment as we can. The LNP's decision today will provide certainty to the market about the direction in which our state is heading. Our support today sends a signal to investors that under a future LNP government Queensland is open for business.

The shift to a cleaner economy is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring jobs, long-term industries and new wealth to Queensland. Putting aside the strong economic arguments for our position, I also recognise the threat of climate change to our environment and our state's unique and precious biodiversity. We must do all we can to become more sustainable so Queenslanders for many generations to come can continue to enjoy the unrivalled natural beauty by which our state is defined.

For several years the LNP has committed to achieving the end goal of net zero. Our decision to support the targets outlined in this bill is significant and it has been carefully considered. Reducing our emissions by 75 per cent by 2035 is ambitious, but it is achievable. To date, Queensland's emissions have reduced by 29 per cent on 2005 levels according to the latest data available from 2020-21. This gives the LNP confidence there is a pathway to reaching what this bill proposes.

We must also take care to ensure this is not done at the expense of Queenslanders in our regions. It will take hard work and innovation, but these are well-known traits of the people and industries of Queensland. The regional communities and industries who are so important to our state's economy must be partners on this journey—not opponents or obstacles as they have been treated by Labor. It is these industries and communities that are leading the way to deploy cheap, clean energy and that are looking for ways to be part of new industry supply chains. They are creating jobs in regional communities that will last for generations to come. We have seen small, medium and large businesses getting on with the job of reducing emissions, with many signing on to their own industry targets already. Similarly, we have seen councils set their own ambitious emissions targets.

Brisbane City Council is one of Australia's largest carbon-neutral certified organisations, a massive feat and a demonstration of the commitment of this local government to take the steps it needs to for the sake of our environment. Across our economy we have seen moves to become cleaner

through ingenuity, innovation and a dedication to reducing emissions across all sectors even where that reduction will be complex. This bill follows the work these Queenslanders are already undertaking and provides a framework for accountability so we can properly measure our progress overall.

When it comes to our environment, outcomes are what matter. If elected in October, an LNP government will listen to and work with these Queenslanders to develop sensible, practical and consensus-based plans to deliver emissions reductions in the key sectors of our economy. Urban and regional Queenslanders alike will benefit from a cleaner economy and the jobs and investment this will bring.

The overwhelming majority of submitters giving their feedback to the committee on this bill were in favour of reducing our emissions. Some wanted more ambitious targets while others wanted a different approach altogether. A common theme was wanting to work in partnership. There was a concern the government's approach is too top-down. We need instead to see consultation and collaboration. That is how we will maximise the opportunities which come with a cleaner economy.

While the requirement to consider the economic, financial, social and environmental impact any interim target may have in Queensland, including any impacts on the communities, industries and rural and regional areas is welcome, there must be follow-through. Local communities which could be impacted deserve to be listened to. It cannot be just that a minister sits with the Premier and the Treasurer—as this bill requires—making guesses about the impact these targets could have. There must be genuine engagement with the sectors which will have to do the heavy lifting on emissions reduction. They must be given sufficient time and notice to do this—not hidden on a government website with a two-week turnaround. The Local Government Association of Queensland submitted—

A successful transformation needs to be coordinated across government departments at a state level, but driven and delivered locally. Each of Queensland's resource communities is unique and different. They need tailored long-term economic and social sustainability plans. Without these, these host resources communities will be left behind. As local leaders, Queensland councils know what policies are needed to ensure the liveability of their communities comes first. They have developed tangible solutions—supported by the council colleagues from across Queensland—and they want to partner with the State in this transformation journey.

No two Queensland communities are the same. This diversity is a strength. They each have grown uniquely and transformed since they were established. Each holds their own identity. They each have taken their own approach to the protection of their local environment and they should be respected and their voices should be heard.

Our LNP members proudly represent most of regional Queensland, particularly outside of the major cities, with communities of people who have legitimate questions about how the energy shift will occur and what it will mean for them. Regional Queenslanders have done the hard work to get us to the 29 per cent and likely higher reduction that we have achieved so far. They will be vital partners as we seek to more than double this progress over the next decade.

It was telling that the submission from Western Downs Regional Council contained questions of how the interim targets would be reached. This council, which is trademarked as the energy capital of Queensland and has had 24 solar farms approved since 2016, two operational wind farms and a renewables-based hydrogen demonstration plant, still has major questions over how the state government will deliver the targets outlined in the bill and whether they will be consulted. Its representatives said—

While there is an existence of targets, it is yet to be understood in what manner the interim targets will be developed across the lifetime of the Bill at the Minister's discretion. While the interim targets are important to reach the final goal of net zero by 2050, it is important for Council to understand what measures are in place to ensure that regional consultation will occur prior to the targets being set as per Section 6 of the Bill.

There were similar concerns raised regarding consultation with other areas of the bill, particularly when it comes to putting together emissions reduction plans. There is no guidance as to which sectors will be included in these plans but, more concerningly, there is no clarity in the bill about how these plans will be determined. These are going to be essential. They will outline an analysis of the emissions trends of Queensland's key sectors and ascribe actions the Queensland government is taking to reduce emissions produced in each sector and how that will contribute to the achievement of the state's broader emissions reductions targets. The only provision this bill has in terms of the making of these plans is that the minister determined to be responsible for that sector must ensure the emissions reduction plan is published on the Queensland government's website.

While it is understood these are the actions the Queensland government will take, it is naive to think that government operates in a silo. These plans will be vital for investment confidence and to give the market an idea about the direction the government wants industry to take. Again, this is a failure of this government to listen to the experts on the ground, the people who know their industry better than anyone, and to work with them. They rightly should be treated as genuine partners in achieving emissions reductions and must be first in line for the jobs, local contracting opportunities and community

investment. Similarly, the clean economy expert panel should be required to have a minimum standard of membership which includes representatives from the sectors required to have a plan under the bill and from local government.

We need to listen to the organisations that are figuring this out within their industry. They should be part of the body setting the broader settings on the path to a cleaner economy. I will be moving simple but important amendments to make this a legislated requirement which I table now for the benefit of the House.

Tabled paper: Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024, amendments to be moved by Mr Sam O'Connor MP [598](#).

Tabled paper: Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024, explanatory notes to Mr Sam O'Connor's amendments [599](#).

Tabled paper: Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024, statement of compatibility with human rights contained in Mr Sam O'Connor's amendments [600](#).

These will require the panel to include a representative from each sector required to have an emissions reduction plan as well as a representative from local government given the important role our councils will play in this transition. It is expected that these sectors could include energy, resources, manufacturing, transport, agriculture, construction and tourism. My amendment offers a point of difference to the top-down approach proposed by Labor. It means that more informed voices will have a seat at the table instead of the limited approach before us which requires at least two, but not more than five, panel members in addition to the Chief Scientist.

The annual statement on the measures taken to reduce emissions is an opportunity for transparency and to review and adjust our policy settings as needed, something which happens far too infrequently under this government. It will be an opportunity to provide real, measurable insight into what has made a difference in terms of reducing our emissions and to give clarity on the path forward. The annual progress reports should also address any impact these policies are having on local jobs, regional and rural communities and Queenslanders' cost of living. Too often discussions on environmental action are removed from the everyday reality of what most people are experiencing and that does not help us work towards our goal as a community. These reports need to be exceptionally clear about the progress made, how it was measured and what actions led to the emissions reduction.

Whilst we have spoken a lot today about numbers and targets, we cannot forget what this is all about. This bill sets an economic imperative and aspiration, but it is all to conserve our natural environment. Queensland is a haven of biodiversity. Our natural assets are key to our tourism industry, and we will feel the impacts if we see a decline. This cannot become about ticking a box. It must be about action on the ground: protecting, increasing and better managing our conservation estate; safeguarding and restoring biodiversity; reducing our waste; increasing our recycling rates; and decreasing the impact we are having long term.

Too often we have seen this government make big environmental announcements and comprehensively fail on delivering key outcomes. In 2015 the now Premier, as the then environment minister, committed to a 17 per cent target for our protected estate—vital sanctuaries of biodiversity across Queensland. At that point, almost a decade ago, 7.8 per cent of Queensland was protected. The latest data shows the estate is at 8.39 per cent—just a 0.6 per cent increase in a decade. In 2019 the government released their Waste Management and Resource Recovery Strategy and set targets on the path to 2050. Their draft review report, which I note we have had no follow-up on over a year after being released, revealed that just two of the nine targets were on track to be met. Again, what good is having a target if you cannot follow through? Containers for Change has also fallen woefully short of its legislated targets. Action on threatened species has slowed, with just two of the seven recommendations implemented according to the follow-up report to the Auditor-General's 2018-19 *Conserving threatened species* report. Targets cannot just be set; they must be followed through with actions and accountability.

It is on this basis that we are supporting this proposal. It is the work behind those targets and this framework which will make the difference, and that is what an LNP government is committed to doing. The LNP wants to see a pathway to a clean economy which involves listening to industry and working with them as genuine partners; empowering individuals to make choices that will reduce their energy bills as well as cut their household emissions; and ensuring regional communities across our state can make the most of the opportunities this shift in our economy presents. We will not be opposing this bill, but we emphasise the need to work with Queenslanders across our state and urge Labor to support our sensible amendments.