




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR HILL**

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Record of Proceedings, 18 April 2024

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

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (12.09 pm): I will start by reading from the explanatory notes. It states—  
This pathway will see the State achieve 50% renewable energy by 2030, 70% renewable energy by 2032, and 80% by 2035.

...

The Bill aims to enshrine key commitments from the Plan in law; create the infrastructure frameworks needed to build the Queensland SuperGrid; and establish the governance and advisory functions for a smooth, coordinated transformation that ensures workers and communities are supported.

I believe that is a load of crock and it has nothing to do with supporting communities.

**Honourable members** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Kelly): Thank you.

**Mr KNUTH:** It has nothing to do with supporting those communities because the government cannot support communities through privatisation by stealth. We saw what happened with the Collinsville power station. It was closed down and the generation was exchanged for solar panels. Foreign workers came in to set up those solar panels and now there are no profits going back to the state. When the coal-fired generator was in operation, profits were going back to the state that would go into our hospitals, schools and our roads. Now we are seeing wind farms going up everywhere funded through the Renewable Energy Target scheme by the taxpayers of Queensland. All these wind farms that are being set up are destroying our natural habitat all in the name of saving the planet. Those profits then do not go back to hospitals and schools; they go overseas.

We have seen this type of thing before. It is very similar to the debate we were having when the Beattie government made the wonderful decision—and the LNP cheered them on—to privatise the retail arm of our energy sector. There was a massive big push for it, just like trying to save this planet. It was said that if we privatised the retail arm of the energy sector electricity prices would decrease through competition. There was no decrease through competition, and within 10 years electricity prices had tripled all in the name of privatisation. I agree with the minister that the Newman government made a very bad error. They held 78 seats in the parliament which was reduced to 42 after they put up their hand with glee to privatise our energy-generating assets. Once privatised, those assets would have returned nothing to the local communities, power prices would have increased and, likewise, profits would have gone overseas. We have seen the Labor government wiped out in the name of privatisation, particularly with Queensland Rail, and we have seen the LNP wiped out over privatisation of our energy assets. One thing we have learnt is that governments should keep away from our assets.

We hear the arguments for and against what this bill is going to achieve with regard to renewable energy, but reading from the NEM Data app shows how we are heading into oblivion with this bill. Using that app, people can see exactly what supplies our energy grid, broken down into coal, gas, wind, solar,

hydro and others. It says that generally over a 24-hour period coal and gas provide anywhere between 60 to 85 per cent of our energy to the grid with the balance made up of renewables. Based on this data, the government fails to explain how renewables will go from 10 per cent to 70 per cent in just eight years and 80 per cent of supply in under 30 years. It took four years to build the cassowary bridge near Tully, so I cannot see how it is possible that this target will be fully achieved.

There is something that is very important to consider in regard to the energy jobs target. We are seeing countries like China getting a free pass. In 2022 China released 11.4 billion metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere, making it the world's largest emitter. Here we have Australia which contributes one per cent of emissions on the global scale. I believe the government through this bill—if this is really down pat, and I cannot see it—will destroy the state economy, destroy regional communities and destroy regional jobs. If the government is closing down energy-generating assets and going into renewables, we are not going to see the benefits going back to the community, just like what happened with the solar at Collinsville.

We have seen what is happening with the Chalumbin Wind Farm, and thankfully the federal minister has stepped in to say, 'Go back. We believe this is beyond the scope that can cater for that region.' We are seeing all these wind farms and solar farms being established that are destroying our natural habitat while at the same time they are getting a free pass in relation to the vegetation management laws. Farmers have to go through a massive process just to clear their land so they can grow some fruit and vegetables. When it comes to wind farms, they get a free pass; they get a free tick. There is no accountability whatsoever.

I go back to Collinsville as an example and a proposal to restart it. It is believed that power station would have a capacity of 180 megawatts if it were to be restarted. That 180 megawatts would have covered almost all these renewable energy projects from Collinsville to the Atherton Tablelands and it would have provided more reliable and efficient power than all these projects. Just keeping that one project operating and alive would have saved tens of thousands of acres and hectares and the destruction of natural habitat.

Two factors come into this. Collinsville power station had a capacity of 180 megawatts. It produced jobs in the regions. There were hundreds of homes. It supported businesses and supported the coalmining families in providing those jobs. There was also the Tully-Millstream hydro-electric scheme. That was approved and would have provided 600 megawatts of clean, green energy. I wish to point out that a lot of protesters back then stopped that project going ahead. However, when the announcement of Chalumbin was made, which was going to destroy almost 3,000 acres of sclerophyll forests and threaten our native species, those protesters were nowhere to be seen. They were there to stop the hydro-electric scheme that would have powered 10,000 homes. We would not even have had to worry about any renewable energy projects because that hydro-electric scheme would have achieved enough power with the continuation of the Collinsville power station.

I am very concerned about these figures in the bill. I am very concerned and I remember this privatisation by stealth process. In the same way we are now seeing these wind farms and solar farms, a lot of them having been set up by foreign companies, paid for by the taxpayer of this state and country. We are also seeing that the profits are returned to the state government or whomever it may be—profits that would have looked after our children, our schools and our roads. I cannot support this bill.