




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (6.17 pm): Mr Speaker, before I start my contribution, I refer to your statement of 16 April concerning correspondence from the Leader of the House. This was the first time that the matter had been drawn to my attention. In response to your request, I correct the record and advise that I should have referred to the fact that 18 of 19 ministers did not make a ministerial statement on that question. I have also deleted the social media post.

I will make a brief contribution to the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill and the Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024. These are important bills because a vast tract of land will be affected. How we power our businesses, homes and everything else will be affected as we go through this transition. There are a couple of issues I want to address in relation to the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill. In terms of public ownership, we have heard about the proposed amendments to change the public ownership of energy assets. Whilst we support the ownership of energy assets, the introduction of a percentage is seen as a backwards step because, at the moment, we own our energy assets. Is the government planning to divest from these?

Government members: You are.

Mr WATTS: I hear the 'you are' and the 'you are' and the 'you are'. The reality is that even the last time that was proposed we consulted with the people of Queensland and they rejected that offer. We have absolutely no intention of doing—

Government members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, members!

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Buderim!

Mr WATTS: When it comes to the Job Security Guarantee and the proposed fund, I suggest that the eligibility of who can be included in that will cause some great difficulties in regional areas. I believe that the proposed amendment would help in that regard. There will be a transition and it will be uncomfortable in regional areas. We should be doing all we can to ensure we do that in a sensible way.

There are a couple of issues that I need to clear up. One is the amendments put forward today. There seems to have been no consultation. Obviously, they have been rushed in here. It is a massive change. Can the minister explain how the Powerlink scheme can spend money without the approval of the Australian Energy Regulator? What does that do to our regulated base asset calculations when the national regulator is working out the various bills that will be applied and the amount that wholesalers will be able to charge? How will that impact businesses and others? In the minister's wrap-up, I would like a bit more detail and a better understanding around that Powerlink statement and the ring fencing just so we are very clear that we are not going to cause difficulties in terms of power bills in the future. I would be keen for the modelling around that to be tabled.

I now refer to the public briefing for the Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill. One of those who briefed us was Ms Stutz. She stated—

In the Queensland SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint, independent modelling indicated that Queensland will require approximately 25 gigawatts of total large-scale renewable generation capacity by 2035. It does give indications: just under three gigawatts of existing operational wind and grid scale as at June 2022 and a further just over 12 gigawatts of new wind generation. The total land area—

and this is the bit that I want people to listen to—

for this is approximately 540,000 hectares.

So people can get their heads around it, that is 5,400 square kilometres. She goes on to say—

Then there are approximately 10 gigawatts of new large-scale solar capacity, which equates to just over 40,000 hectares.

We will end up looking at a lot of square kilometres to do this. To give you some idea, I thought I would do a comparison so people can understand what that means. If we covered these electorates with wind towers and solar panels and nothing else, the electorates we are going to cover, the land mass of Queensland that is going to go under, includes: McConnel, Greenslopes, Stafford, Millar, Bulimba, Mount Ommaney, Sandgate, Aspley, Toohey, Woodridge, Stretton, Nudgee, Capalaba, Ferny Grove, Inala, Waterford, Cairns, Cooper, Murrumba, Lytton—I am halfway. These are the electorates that would go completely under: Algester, Morayfield, Mansfield, Bancroft, Gaven, Mackay, Ipswich, Macalister, Springwood, Bundaberg, Redlands, Murrumba, Kurwongbah, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Redcliffe, Caloundra, Townsville, Thuringowa, Jordan, Pumicestone, Logan and, for the record, Pine Rivers as well. When we are talking about land management, just so the people of Queensland understand the size of the area we are talking about, that is the equivalent size.

The people who live in the areas where these wind towers are going to go up and where these solar panels are going to be positioned are very concerned about land management in their area, and members opposite need to grasp how much land we are talking about. Over 40 of their electorates in size will be lost to renewable energy.

I am not opposed to renewable energy; I am just saying that it should be managed appropriately. As we find in all of the members' electorates I just discussed, land management is a very important matter. That is why we have local council regulations and various other things to control land management in those areas. Why do the people who live in regional Queensland, which will supply the future energy for this state, not deserve the same level of consideration? Why do they not deserve to know that the land will be fully rehabilitated?

All of the environmental groups we spoke to want the land to be rehabilitated at the end of its use for renewables. All of the environmental groups we spoke to want to make sure that the government has some bond so that if the people who are generating that energy go bankrupt the land can be put back as it was. People want to know what is going to happen to the water supply. What is going to happen to the open spaces that are covered, and how is that all going to be rehabilitated? This bill is very scant on detail as to how we are going to do that.

In my contribution I want to make it very clear that as this transition happens it needs to be done sensibly and with open consultation. It needs to be done with transparency. It needs to be thought through and it needs to be done well, because we are talking about a massive chunk of the Queensland land mass, and the people who live in those areas deserve the same respect as everybody else when we are talking about land use in their area.

If we are going to have a credible pathway we should not cognate this debate, cut it short, make sure that people do not get to have their say, and bring in really serious amendments that have the potential to change the way the national regulator regulates energy to people in Queensland. This is fundamentally important and it should be put through the committee process. I believe that the minister should adjourn this debate and put that amendment through the committee process. Let us bring some transparency to it so we can be assured that we are going to get cheap, reliable energy.