




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BANCROFT

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ENERGY ROADMAP AMENDMENT BILL

GREENHOUSE GAS STORAGE AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (4.27 pm): I rise to address my contribution to the Energy Roadmap Amendment Bill. I will begin by echoing what has already been said by our speakers: this bill allows the privatisation of our energy system. It not only opens it up to privatisation; it makes it inevitable. The Treasurer said yesterday that having private operators in the system was the 'Queensland way'. It is not the Queensland way; it is the New South Wales and Victorian way. They have partially or fully privatised their systems. Private operators in New South Wales and Victoria get the dividends and not the people of New South Wales or Victoria. This is the kind of privatisation we are facing under this road map. The Brigalow peaker is 80 per cent sold, so for 25 years we will have to buy back the energy produced by a plant that we once owned. I would point out that Labor's plan was always to keep it in public ownership. The LNP said it was in our plan, but since when does 'partnership' mean selling off your assets to the highest bidder? That is not a partnership; that is a sellout.

We heard from submitters that with this bill the door is open to construct, build and operate transmission lines in Queensland. That would be a first. That is shameful, but do not take my word for it because it is in the committee report. The report states—

In effect, the state will be required to retain the generation assets it already owns, but it will not be required to invest in new ones. Queensland Treasury advised the committee that this change is motivated by a concern that 'the existing target could potentially crowd out private sector investment and place pressure on the state's fiscal position.'

Treasury also advised the committee that—

... the government expects relevant Government Owned Corporations to 'focus on existing assets and core business to supply ... energy—

They said 'focus on existing assets and core business', and we know what these weasel words mean from the LNP. It is a sneaky way to say, 'Get out of the way of private owners. Let the private owners in.' It is very clear that the field is being cleared to abandon that public ownership of our system. Once again, do not take my word for it; let's look at the committee report. It states—

... for the benefits of public ownership to be realised, it must be maintained only in relation to the right assets, and in the right circumstances.

Mr Boothman interjected.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Members for Theodore and Pine Rivers, cease your quarrelling.

Mr Lee interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Hervey Bay, I can hear you up there.

Mr WHITING: I repeat the quote—

... for the benefits of public ownership to be realised, it must be maintained only in relation to the right assets, and in the right circumstances.

What a caveat. They will only keep public ownership in the right circumstances, and who gets to decide what are the right circumstances? It is the LNP. They think public ownership is a rigid approach that will deter the private sector from investing. Once again, the field is being cleared for private sector ownership. The dividends will go to the private sector; they will not go to the citizens of Queensland. If we look back in a generation we will see that the day this bill passed is the day the ownership of our electricity system started to slip away from the people of Queensland.

We also heard that the bill will lead to higher electricity prices. Let me make this clear to the climate change deniers on the other side: renewables are the cheapest form of energy. I repeat: they are the cheapest form of energy. They should think about that every time the Deputy Premier cancels a wind farm project.

As an aside, can I say that cancelling renewable projects and wind farms is a trope in right-wing politics. It is sending up an ideological flare to your supporters in a so-called cultural war. What we see here is the member for Kawana following the example of Donald Trump, and I will read these headlines: 'How Trump is targeting wind and solar energy—and delighting big oil' and 'Trump halts construction of big wind farm off New York coast'. I table those articles.

Tabled paper: Bundle of media articles regarding Donald Trump and renewable energy projects [1986](#).

I think the member for Kawana is channelling Donald Trump. It explains a lot about what he has been saying; it also explains his new hairstyle.

Mr KEMPTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. This cannot be relevant.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): That is not really a point of order. I would remind members to maintain decorum and use correct titles when they refer to other members.

Mr WHITING: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Treasurer said something yesterday that I do not think anyone else will say. He said that the government stand by their commitment to net zero by 2050. I am predicting that no-one else over there will lay claim to that statement; only the Treasurer will say that. When the Treasurer was talking yesterday he actually sounded reasonable during some parts of his speech, but let's face it: we know that he is not in control of this and that someone else is pulling the string on government policy in this area.

Let me make it clear to the climate change deniers and the cooks on the other side. Extending the lives of the coal-fired generators beyond their life puts pressure on electricity prices. It means increased costs and increased unreliability. We heard the opposition leader talking about that earlier.

This bill tears down energy targets and the frameworks and swaps them for an uncertain plan. Other speakers will talk about this. It undermines investment confidence in the sector. The lack of detail in the Energy Roadmap will not lead to good decision-making. No-one is sure how this decision matrix will work, and we heard from submitters about that. The bill gets rid of targets which drives investment. I cannot believe we are seeing a modern government in Australia getting rid of renewable energy targets. That is absolutely unbelievable.

What we have here is the LNP's ideological obsession about climate change and renewables. They do not believe that climate change is real. They do not want to believe that climate change is real and that we need renewable energy. I want to refer to a quote I found recently from the author Upton Sinclair which I think is very relevant. He said—

It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it.

We could actually change that slightly: 'It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his donations depend on his not understanding it.' It is clear that the LNP oppose renewable energy because they deny climate change. It has been the core of their belief for 20-odd years and repealing these targets sends a terrible signal.

I want to finish by saying that the LNP have shown a complete disregard for accountability in relation to this bill. Under the LNP-led committee, no hearings were held on this bill after the submissions closed—no hearings—and only four of 41 submitters had a chance to be heard on this. We went nowhere; we heard from barely anyone on this bill. In the hearings we asked for modelling but we were told that it was not available or it was in the road map, but all there was were assumptions and parameters; we did not get to see the modelling on this. The examination of this bill is a new low in how the LNP treats the committees in Queensland, in this unicameral system. Under the LNP, our questions were shut down or not taken and motions were ignored. This can all be seen on the public record. Under the LNP we have no accountability again and the committee system has become a hollow sham. It is just a rubber stamp to pass the bills as they are waved through our committees.