



Speech By

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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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ENERGY ROADMAP AMENDMENT BILL

GREENHOUSE GAS STORAGE AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (8.05 pm): I rise to give my contribution on the so-called Energy Roadmap Amendment Bill. I will say at the outset that this bill is clearly a great deal for fossil fuel execs but an incredibly bad deal for you and me and the rest of Queensland. The LNP is pitching their road map as pragmatism, but I am pretty sure pouring billions more taxpayer dollars into keeping aging coal-fired power stations open for longer while delaying the transition to renewable energy is not pragmatism; it is plain stupidity. I do not think this government is being honest with Queenslanders, either. To bring some transparency back into this place I will move amendments that will give them the opportunity to rename this bill accurately. This is not an energy road map; this is a plan to spend billions of Queensland taxpayer dollars propping up coal and delaying renewables, and we should call it just that.

This bill repeals Queensland's renewable energy targets. Do not get me wrong, I said when Labor set them they were not sufficiently ambitious and I retain that position. Under Labor's targets we would have at least achieved 80 per cent energy generation from renewables by 2035. Almost 30 per cent of Queensland's energy is already generated from renewable sources. One afternoon in August this year we set a new record of 77 per cent of our energy being generated by solar and wind. Yet the government wants us to believe that 80 per cent renewables in 10 years time is unrealistic. I call bollocks. Between 2017 and 2024 Queensland attracted around \$9.9 billion in investment in large-scale renewable energy projects and has over 10 gigawatts of installed renewable capacity. By 2030 we already expect a further 6.8 gigawatts of renewable capacity from committed projects. This just lays bare the incredibly unambitious proposal the LNP has put forward which forecasts precisely 6.8 gigawatts of new renewable generation by 2030. That is right: there is not a skerrick more in their Energy Roadmap than what is already committed in Queensland.

Any target is supposed to be moving towards where we want to be, not simply mapping out where we can already expect to get under current settings. Targets are not just a wish, they also create the right market conditions for investment by providing confidence and certainty. They encourage long-term planning by investors, businesses and communities. Our free-marketeering LNP want us to say that government has no role to play in the way the market fills our energy needs, but in the same breath they are more than willing to hand out subsidies and royalty deals to fossil fuel companies like Adani. I am well past trying to convince the morally bankrupt LNP members why the transition to renewable energy is necessary to prevent climate change. Either they have rocks in their heads or they are too greedy to give up whatever lobbying job they have been promised after they leave this place. Hearing them claim that somehow this road map, so-called, is good for Queenslanders' hip pockets, I mean, give us a break. It is enough to make you want to walk into the sea—the measurably warming, objectively rising sea.

With this bill, the LNP consigns us all to higher insurance costs, more hail damaged cars, longer queues at the sandbag depot and anxious nights watching the BoM radar as ever more serious hailstorms roll through. The Treasurer's own electorate of Toowoomba South has the fourth most expensive home and contents insurance premiums in the state, averaging \$8,958. The fourth most expensive might not sound so bad but, when you consider that Queensland has the highest insurance premiums in the country, it works out to be more than three times the national average. There is some good news for him to take back up the hill to Toowoomba!

An alarming proportion of this bill is about changing a bunch of government terminology around the energy system, so this is what the government have ended up doing now they have finished their rebrand from maroon to blue. Navigating Labor and the LNP's minefield of buzzwords leaves the explanatory notes to this bill bordering on unreadable to anyone who is not an energy policy adviser. I have attempted a little bit of translating here.

The Queensland SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint is now going to be the Energy System Outlook. Instead of a plan, we have a prediction of what will happen if the market is left to its own devices under current policy settings. Renewable energy zones are now regional energy hubs. There are no surprises there at all: the LNP wants to continue propping up the fossil fuel industry, and I will get to that in a second. Can anyone help me with this one? It is extraordinary. Optimal infrastructure pathway objectives are now going to be strategic infrastructure path objectives. I think your guess is as good as mine on what that is supposed to actually achieve.

As I said, this bill is focused on coal and also renames existing legislation to the Energy (Infrastructure Facilitation) Act. We can translate that one very easily: instead of supporting Queensland communities to transition to renewables, the LNP plans to pour billions of taxpayer dollars into keeping Queensland's dirty, aging, unreliable coal-fired power stations open. It will cost Queensland taxpayers at least \$1.6 billion in maintenance costs over just the next five years, and lord knows how much more we will need to spend to keep those same plants open up to and beyond 2046. Queensland has eight coal-fired power generators ranging in age from 49 to 18 years old. As they age they become increasingly unreliable, requiring significant maintenance and upkeep costs.

I am sure we all remember in 2021 when an explosion and fire at the Callide power plant caused widespread power outages, hundreds of thousands of homes were without power and the spike in power prices lasted weeks. In 2022, a cooling tower collapsed and in April just this year its operation was impacted by another explosion. In the summer of 2024-25, on average, 25 per cent of Queensland's coal capacity was offline—and they want to crow about it keeping the lights on. What utter rot! Across Australia, coal-fired power plants experienced 145 outages between October 2024 and March 2025, causing flow-on effects to Queensland's power prices. Let us assume the LNP do not care about adding an extra 310 megatons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere after 2050. Maybe they are not big fans of the Great Barrier Reef or the tourism industry and the income it brings into the state. However, they simply cannot say with a straight face that this bill is really about affordability.

Let us dispel some myths about renewable energy, for the government members who are here if nothing else. First, renewable energy is reliable—yes, even when the sun don't shine and the winds don't blow. It is not a matter of waiting for new technologies. We already have all of the technologies we need, a diverse range of renewables including solar, wind, hydro and biomass plus storage in the form of batteries, pumped hydro and heat storage. That is how you get clean, reliable energy.

Second, renewable energy is affordable. Yes, according to any credible source, it is cheaper than coal—just ask those Queenslanders who are saving big on their power bills through the combined benefits of home solar and battery systems and careful power usage. In July this year, research from the International Renewable Energy Agency found that 91 per cent of new renewable projects are now cheaper than fossil fuel alternatives.

Third, the market wants renewables. We might have got there quicker than everyone else but, no, it is not just the woke Greens saying this. Here in Queensland, Rio Tinto has been actively decreasing its reliance on fossil fuels for the operations of its smelter and refineries and it is contracting with renewables energy providers to remain globally competitive and continue operating in Australia. They think Rio have it wrong, that they are much smarter than that company—

Mr Vorster: We are.

Mr BERKMAN: The member for Burleigh is going to claim he is smarter. This clown! He does not care about facts—

Mr VORSTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I take personal offence at that. I ask that the member withdraw. I am deeply offended.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Member for Maiwar, I will get you to withdraw that comment.

Mr BERKMAN: Withdrawn. Again, the LNP do not care about facts. Obviously, one way to keep prices stable and to support reliable, clean energy is to keep electricity in public hands. We have heard plenty already about how this bill fails to do that.