

Question on Notice

No. 1138

Asked on Wednesday, 26 October 2022

MR S ANDREW ASKED THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF AND MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND YOUTH AFFAIRS (HON M SCANLON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to renewable windfarms, solar farms and some Hydro projects not delivering for countries who have had them established over many years—

Will the Minister advise if the ‘offsets’ which legally allow large corporations to clear, destroy and remove habitats, and change the source of upstream waterways has been risk assessed, discussed, and approved by communities and our tribal people against the long term effects on rare site specific flora and fauna?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

Countries with established renewable energy sources have seen a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and lower consumer energy prices. The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan will deliver around 100,000 jobs across Queensland’s economy, with 95 per cent of the Plan’s investment expected to be directed into regional Queensland, and will see the State benefit from secure, clean, and affordable energy.

The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, (EPBC Act), is the environmental legislation that protects and manages matters of national environmental significance such as nationally protected wildlife and ecological communities or World Heritage sites. If a proposed development is likely to have a significant impact on such matters, it must be assessed under the EPBC Act. Most large-scale projects, including renewable solar, wind energy and hydro are assessed against and require offsets in accordance with the EPBC Act. Where development proposals also have potential impacts on matters of state environmental significance, they are also assessed for possible offsets under Queensland’s *Environmental Offsets Act 2014*.

Environmental offsets are conservation outcomes to compensate for significant residual impacts on environmental values arising from development activities. Their goal is to achieve in situ, measurable outcomes that can be expected to result in no net loss of significant environmental matters at a project level.

Offsets are intended to be implemented only after reasonable steps have been taken to avoid and minimise biodiversity loss at a development site. The ‘avoid, mitigate, offset’ approach underpins both the Queensland and Commonwealth’s assessment and decision-making processes in relation to prescribed environmental matters.