

Queensland Renewable Energy Expert Panel
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Submission on Draft Report: Credible pathways to a 50% renewable energy target for Queensland – Steps towards a Renewable Future

The North Queensland Conservation Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Queensland Renewable Energy Expert Panel's Draft Report.

NQCC is the regional conservation council for the area from Cardwell to Bowen, and from the Reef to the Northern Territory border. Established in 1974, it falls under the broad umbrella of the Queensland Conservation Council and focuses on education, advocacy and policy development.

NQCC commends the State Government for developing a plan to transition Queensland to 50% renewable energy by 2030. The report demonstrates the potential positive impacts of renewable energy, with a predicted net increase of 6,400 – 6,700 jobs along with \$6.7 billion investment in renewable energy. It is vital that we have a clear economic framework for transitioning our economy to renewable energies both as a means of reducing our carbon emissions and ensuring that the transition is fair and equitable for all parts of our community. A clear framework is also necessary in order to combat the ideological misinformation spread by opponents of renewable energy, such as the Federal Energy Minister's comments on the Draft Report as a threat to energy security and the Courier Mail's condemnation of the report as a threat to energy jobs.

Emissions Target

Whilst the aim to reach 50% renewable electricity by 2030 is commendable, it does not fully satisfy the emissions targets requirements agreed upon at the 2015 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, being 30% by 2050 in order to avoid dangerous climate change. Research has demonstrated that in order to reach the Paris target we will have to get to 100% renewable electricity by 2035.¹ The Panel needs to consider the 30% emissions reduction target in its recommendations and develop a clear path to 100% renewables by 2035. This is a non-negotiable goal

¹ Ernst & Young and the Climate Council of Australia Renewable Energy Jobs: Future Growth in Australia, June, 2016, available here:
<https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/uploads/7b40d7bbefbdd94979ce4de2fad52414.pdf>.

and we need a clear framework for achieving this goal to ensure a fair and just transition.

As other nations move to achieve the same emissions targets, the financial viability of fossil fuel industries will continue to decrease, and our reliance upon these industries will be an economic liability. The State Government needs to outline how and when it will close coal-fired power plants and coal seam gas operations and its plan to provide just transitions for communities currently reliant upon these industries. The Queensland Government should act to secure more than the 400MW of electricity proposed by the panel for renewable energy generation before 2020.

Australia is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change; lowering productivity and increasing the risk of natural disasters.² Minimising the impact of climate change is in our best interest economically and environmentally, any plan for our economic future needs to take emissions targets into account.

Providing a Resilient, Fair & Affordable Renewable Energy Mix

The transition to renewable energy needs to occur in a way that is just and fair. The panel should provide a plan for the communities and employees that currently rely on the fossil fuel industry. This would include reskilling programs and a focus on developing renewable energy job alternatives in place of fossil fuel employment. The priority should always be for Queensland-based projects to meet the State's renewable energy targets so that the economic benefit of these projects remains in Queensland.

NQCC recommends that a mix of community, public and privately owned renewables is pursued to avoid total privatisation of the electricity sector. A strategy to provide rooftop solar to low-income households, renters and apartment dwellers would help prevent a stratified system of renewable 'haves' and 'have-nots'. A mixture of small, medium and large renewable energy producers will also help ensure energy system resilience in the face of unprecedented demand or natural disaster.

There are several models of community energy which the State Government could emulate in its plans. The Federal ALP has adopted the Community Powerhouses policy advocated for in the GetUp! Homegrown Power Plan. The plan would see communities gain access to legal and technical expertise, tools and funding through a local Community Powerhouse. Modelling has projected that for every

² <https://www.climatecouncil.org.au/no-more-business-as-usual-for-australia-as-climate-change-hits-economy-for-8bn>

dollar of Government funding the program could leverage \$10-\$17 of community investment.

Legislating the Renewable Energy Target

In order for the recommendations in this report to be effective, the Queensland Government needs to ensure a whole-of-government response to the renewable energy target. This can be achieved by legislating the target into a Renewable Energy Bill, committing the different departments and future iterations of government. As stated previously, 100% renewable energy by 2035 is necessary to meet our emissions targets and avoid dangerous climate change. Five year reviews should be built in to the Bill to set greater targets and goals as economic and technological change increases the viability of renewable energy.

The Renewable Energy Bill should facilitate the removal of barriers to the renewable energy industry in Queensland, including amendments to relevant legislation to remove hurdles currently found through land use legislation, tariffs, title, solar access and other issues. This legislation will provide the assurance required by communities and industry for greater planning and investment for new renewable energy technologies.

The Draft Renewable Energy Plan is a step in the right direction but it is not enough. We must have a plan to transition to 100% renewable energy that reflects our emissions targets and the needs Queensland's diverse economy.

Yours faithfully,



Jacob Miller
Community Campaigner