



Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council
PO Box 97, Maryborough, Queensland, 4650
25 November 2022

Senate Economics Legislation Committee Inquiry: National Energy Transition Authority Bill 2022

Dear Committee Secretariat,

On behalf of the Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc (WBPEC), thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the National Energy Transition Authority Bill 2022 (the "Bill").

WBPEC is an apolitical not-for-profit member-based environmental advocacy organisation in the Wide Bay Burnett region of Queensland. Further information about WBPEC and its activities can be found at <https://wbpec.wordpress.com/>.

Our submission is as follows.

Summary

WBPEC considers the proposed National Energy Transition Authority (the "Authority") a necessary solution to address the lacuna in energy transition planning that is the future for workers, businesses and communities dependent on industries that will necessarily cease operation as the energy transition progresses.

Recommendations

WBPEC recommends that this Bill be passed.

Submission in Detail

Australian State Governments are already planning for replacement of coal and gas-fired power generation with renewably generated power harvested from wind and sunlight, transmission and energy storage to ensure power availability during times of low availability of wind and sunlight. Queensland has its Energy and Jobs Plan (<https://www.epw.qld.gov.au/energyandjobsplan>) for example, and Tasmania has its Renewable Energy Action Plan (https://recfit.tas.gov.au/renewables/tasmanian_renewable_energy_action_plan).



Other States and Territories have similar programs, and the Australian Energy Market Operator has developed its Integrated System Plan (ISP; <https://aemo.com.au/en/energy-systems/major-publications/integrated-system-plan-isp/2022-integrated-system-plan-isp>) as a “comprehensive roadmap for the National Energy Market” (States other than West Australia plus the Australian Capital Territory).

However, none of these consider what is to become of the workers, businesses and communities that in the past have prospered from and have been dependent upon mining of coal and gas, and generation of power from these fuels. With to cessation of demand for coal and gas, and the replacement of coal and gas-fired generating assets as planned under the various State Government Plans and AEMO’s ISP, the outlook for such prosperity is clearly under threat.

The Mayor of one such affected community, Sue Moore of Singleton in the centre of NSW’s coal-mining Hunter Valley, when asked by an inner-city councillor from Sydney what it would take “to get the people of Singleton off coal” is quoted¹ as saying:

“You’ve got to tell them where their jobs are going to be. It’s got nothing to do with opposing climate action.”

According to Senator Allman-Payne’s Explanatory Memorandum, the Bill specifically allows consideration of such workers, businesses and communities; the Information About the Bill² link at the Inquiry homepage summarises the Bill as establishing the National Energy Transition Authority as

“a statutory authority to plan, coordinate and provide advice on the transition to renewable energy, focusing on the facilitation of new economic opportunities for workers and communities who are currently involved in fossil fuel production and associated industries.

The focus on new economic opportunities for workers and communities is crucial, since it directly addresses the concerns in affected communities.

That said, there might be aspects of planning and coordination where the work of the Authority overlaps with or duplicates some or all of AEMO’s ISP and State Government Plans such as those mentioned above. Due consideration of such aspects should be given when the Bill comes before the Parliament, and where

¹ “Where are the jobs? NSW coal towns cling to the past until a better future emerges”, Elias Visontay, Guardian Australia 15 November 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/nov/15/where-are-the-jobs-nsw-coal-towns-cling-to-the-past-until-a-better-future-emerges>; downloaded 23 November 2022

² https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Bills_LEGislation/Bills_Search_Results/Result?bld=s1352

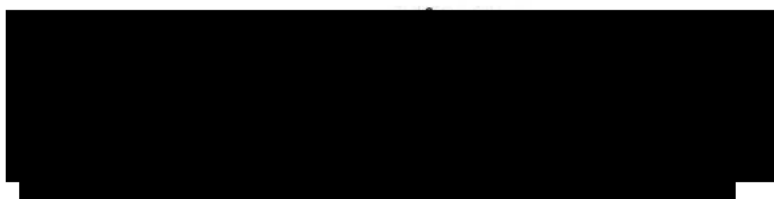


necessary amendments may be required.

WBEC nevertheless considers the facilitation of opportunities for affected communities to be essential to Australia's successful energy transition, and recommends that the Bill be passed.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Yours sincerely



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