

A New Energy Future – Renewable Energy

# Election Policy Agenda

Driving investment for Queensland's next regional economic powerhouse industry

April 2024



**QREC**  
Queensland Renewable Energy Council

## Driving investment for Queensland's next regional economic powerhouse industry

The Queensland Renewable Energy Council (QREC) is a not for profit, member driven representative organisation for the large-scale renewable energy industry in Queensland. We firmly believe that regional Queensland is at the centre of a successful transition to a modern energy system, and this needs to be reflected in how the industry organises and advocates.

The Queensland renewable energy sector has grown exponentially since 2022. Renewables now contribute almost 27% of the state's energy generation and we are on target to achieve 50% renewable energy generation by 2025. This growth will continue with soon to be legislated targets for both renewable energy production and emissions reductions.

The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan provides a clear signal to investors. Powerlink received three times the previous year's number of connection enquiries in 2023, totalling 27GW of new large-scale capacity. This figure has reached almost 100GW in 2024. The scale of projects is also increasing, with the average renewable energy project now over 500MW, a 58 per cent increase from just under 350MW in 2023. This significant scaling is essential to meet the state's renewable energy targets.

QREC sees Queensland's economic prosperity, energy and environmental objectives underpinned by three renewable energy pillars:

1. being Queensland's dominant domestic energy source
2. enabling innovation, productivity and decarbonisation of Queensland's major export primary industries, agriculture and resources (including mineral processing)
3. the rise of a Queensland clean energy export market through renewable fuels (including Sustainable Aviation Fuel).

Industry development and policy support is required for each of these renewable energy pillars, to deliver jobs, community support and increase investment, as well as ensuring traditional industries can remain competitive in a low carbon world.

QREC's advocacy centres on the transition delivering reliable, sustainable and affordable energy that benefits all Queenslanders. Regional Queensland is at the centre of the transition to a modern energy system, both in the consideration of the impacts of broadscale renewable developments, as well as the significant opportunities to create more resilient regional communities.

This Election Policy Agenda seeks to align government with industry on how to responsibly realise the full potential of the energy transition for regional Queensland communities, as well as those of the state and nation.

## What industry needs from Government

The renewable energy industry seeks policy stability and certainty as a priority. A focus on outcomes-based approaches which allows for timely, efficient and fair assessment processes will be a key enabler for Queensland to meet its targets and ensure stability and prosperity for our regions. Further, it is part of the suite of actions that need to be taken to address the current cost of living and energy affordability pressures.

The renewable energy industry does not seek special treatment in this regard but rather a system that supports both communities and industry in achieving timely and sustainable renewable energy development.

The QREC Election Policy Agenda focusses on two broad recommendations, with specific recommendations/actions under each-

### 1. Policy stability and certainty

- (1) Bipartisan support for the key elements of the *Energy (Renewable Transformation & Jobs) Bill 2023* and the *Clean Economy Jobs Bill 2024*, as Queensland's first proposed legislative framework to deliver on the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. The targets in this Bill must be maintained in order to ensure investor confidence in Queensland development. QREC understands that there may be different political and policy approaches to achieving targets, so it is important the underlying intent of the Energy Bill is retained, such as the mechanisms for coordinated development, network connections and timely transmission investment e.g. the Renewable Energy Zone framework.
- (2) Government collaboration at all levels to ensure the best and most efficient use of the REZ framework and enable and assist delivery of renewable energy generation, transmission and storage infrastructure both within and outside of REZ areas -
  - i. a focus on ensuring the rollout of renewable energy development across the state is coordinated across government departments and is managed in way that is beneficial to both communities and industry
  - i. establishing a Renewable Energy Cabinet Committee to focus on the infrastructure, planning and economic development required to achieve the roll out of renewable energy in Queensland
  - ii. investing appropriately in transport logistics such as road and bridge infrastructure so as to ensure sufficient capacity for renewable energy development and existing industrial and agricultural users. This includes urgent implementation of the recommendations of the Queensland Transport and Logistics Council (QTLC) report into the *Review of Oversize, Overmass Wind Farm Arrangements*
  - iii. predictability in local government rating practices for the renewable energy sector and clarity on industry investment in local government areas.
  - iv. delivery of required connection infrastructure and connection approvals to support both REZ and non-REZ development.
- (3) A regulatory framework that balances the need for accelerated investment while minimising and managing environmental and social impacts –
  - i. strong State government advocacy and support for collaborative reform to the assessment of renewable energy proponents under the federal government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act)
  - ii. development of a consistent, risk based, Queensland environmental regulatory framework that considers requirements from the beginning to the end of project life
  - iii. the establishment of a centrally coordinated and pooled community benefit scheme funding by industry and government for the renewable energy sector which provides enduring value for host communities. Local community involvement, including local governments, in the assessment and distribution of allocated funds is essential. QREC is able to facilitate the industry input into the

design of a scheme to ensure existing leading practice approaches by industry leader's continue to be supported and recognised within a scheme.

## **2. A strong social license to operate for renewable energy development and growth**

Within a **strong social license to operate for renewable energy development and growth**, the QREC Election Policy Agenda is guided by two overarching principles:

- (1) Developing leading-practice frameworks for industry, government, and communities that are trusted and keep the industry accountable. QREC seeks government support for the following industry-led leading practice opportunities and frameworks to be developed by QREC and its members-
  - i. QREC, in partnership with The Energy Charter, will establish a collaborative and outcomes focussed working group of key stakeholders from agriculture, community, First Nations and conservation to develop a tailored approach to leading practice community engagement for industry.
  - ii. Commit to expand the remit of the current GasFields Commission to include the renewable energy industry. QREC seeks the earliest possible establishment of the components of this expanded remit and assurances of accompanying adequate resourcing.
  - iii. QREC strongly supports a standardised, industry developed and proposed, risk-based approach to decommissioning that provides assurance and confidence to the community they will not be held liable in the event of stranded infrastructure on their land.
  - iv. QREC seeks clarity on the development and operating frameworks for the renewable fuels industry's development.
  
- (2) Working with communities and First Nations to realise the equitable transition to a low carbon economy with local and regional benefit-
  - i. building equity into Queensland's energy transition policy and advocacy through a focus on supporting access to affordable and reliable energy for regional and remote and vulnerable communities.
  - ii. government support for shared renewable energy and agricultural sector policies that sees renewables and related technologies as an enabler for increasing productivity.
  - iii. government, industry and philanthropic support for financing establishment of local businesses that can provide services to renewable energy projects and related infrastructure, including biodiversity and other nature positive initiatives related to the energy transition.
  - iv. supporting the collaborative development of circular economy industries, including recycling and repurposing end-of-use renewable energy components (such as wind turbine blades and solar panels).

**QREC works with industry, communities and all levels of government to deliver a thriving new energy sector for Queensland.**

We are a not-for-profit industry body that represents solar, wind, pumped hydro, electricity transmission, battery storage and hydrogen proponents, operators and their suppliers.

Our role is to be a leader in policy development and ensure best practices and successful coexistence with communities. With this focus, our exciting new industry will support the regions and Queensland's economic development while ensuring we all have access to clean and secure energy.

## Contact

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