



Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen
Minister for Public Works and Procurement

Our Ref: MN04575-2023
Your Ref: A1092977

1 William Street
Brisbane Queensland
GPO Box 2457 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +617 3719 7270
E: epw@ministerial.qld.gov.au

19 MAY 2023

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
By email: clerksoffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petitions numbered 3890-23 and 3820-22. These petitions were tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 18 April 2023. I would like to thank the petitioners for their engagement with the process of transitioning Australia to a low emissions energy system.

The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan (the Plan) sets a vision to transform Queensland's electricity system to deliver cleaner, cheaper, secure energy for generations to come. The Plan will create 100,000 jobs by 2040 to deliver our Queensland SuperGrid and unlock opportunities in renewables, hydrogen, battery manufacturing, mining and refining our mineral resources. Our plan for Queensland will be crucial in meeting both state and federal climate targets as we reduce emissions from our grid by 96 per cent by 2040, playing our part in protecting the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef) and avoiding dangerous climate change.

A failure to reduce emissions also puts at serious risk the future of Queensland's and Australia's international competitiveness. This could include internationally imposed penalties on agricultural exports, undermining the viability of Queensland's farms, and across a range of commodities.

Additionally, without meaningful action to address climate change, scientists have demonstrated widespread and irreversible damage to natural ecosystems, seriously undermining biodiversity as well as major detrimental impacts to tourism. We have to act to protect our natural icons like the Reef.

Queensland's plan to transition to a renewable energy system, whilst ensuring reliability of supply requires new infrastructure. The construction of underground, clean energy power stations, served by gravity fed water storage reservoirs, will allow us to store large amounts of renewable energy.

To ensure we can put downward pressure on electricity prices, the deployment of large scale pumped hydro energy storage projects such as the Pioneer-Burdekin, will provide long duration energy storage to capture renewable energy and store it over days and weeks, providing electricity to Queensland households and businesses when they need it, during periods of peak demand. That means we can use solar power when the sun isn't shining.

Pumped hydro is the lowest cost form of large scale storage, is a well-developed and proven technology, and can be delivered in a way that protects surrounding ecosystems, communities and jobs, by ensuring careful attention is paid to minimising and/or resolving any impacts.

In 2023 and 2024, Queensland Hydro will be conducting detailed analytical studies to clarify and articulate the environmental, cultural, social, economic and technical qualities of pumped hydro development in the Pioneer Valley. Detailed studies will include engineering design, geological testing, hydrological modelling, cultural heritage, environmental and social assessments.

Detailed engineering design will deliver site optimisation and investigate reservoir type and location, tunnel design, pump and turbine selection, and auxiliary infrastructure such as connection to the electricity transmission network. Geotechnical studies are commencing to provide enhanced analysis of the underground conditions which will inform engineering requirements for reservoir foundations, tunnels and the power station. The project's engineering design seeks to minimise impacts to national park and the environment and will not result in the surface inundation of any national park tenure.

I wish to take the opportunity to address some of the statements made in the petition which have the potential to cause undue stress in the community. First, I wish to note the development of upper reservoirs in the Dalrymple Heights area will not be constructed by removing the top of Mt Dalrymple. In relation to concerns related to noise, dust and vibration, I wish to assure residents that the project's construction would comply with rigorous health and safety standards required of any large-scale infrastructure. Further, the powerhouse and pumps for the project will be located approximately 700 metres underground so there will be no surface impacts of vibration and noise arising from the project.

Furthermore, the project does not propose infrastructure at Eungella, or in close proximity to the platypus habitat of Broken River. The project will consider how it can potentially support improved outcomes including enhanced local conservation values, tourism or small business opportunities and community legacy outcomes. These initiatives will be considered and developed in consultation with the local community through the Stakeholder Reference Group.

Hydrological studies will, in the context of the relevant water plans, assess the sustainable yield of the catchment, timeframes for filling of the reservoirs, reliability of the pumped hydro energy storage (PHES) once operational, impact on other water users, and the impact of climate change on the PHES. Design of the project will be required to demonstrate no loss of water quality or availability to downstream communities.

Environmental impact studies will assess the project and address potential options to minimise and offset environmental impacts during construction and operation. Studies investigating flora and fauna surveys, and native title and cultural heritage assessments will be delivered in partnership with local stakeholders. Social impact studies will investigate how the proposed scheme will affect the local area and seek to understand how unavoidable impacts can be mitigated and/or managed.

Local input to the detailed studies is key to developing a project which manages impacts while delivering the significant local benefits associated with large scale infrastructure developments. Queensland Hydro will engage local community members on the design of detailed studies and provide the community with regular opportunities to contribute their insights to the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project. The Stakeholder Reference Group, comprised of organisations representing traditional owners, local residents, diverse environmental, business, agricultural and community perspectives, will also play a key role in the development of the detailed analytical studies. Working cooperatively with landholders will be critical to ensuring the project protects important values. By engaging constructively with Queensland Hydro, the community is already providing unique insights that have been beneficial to the project.

The results of the above mentioned studies will enable the government to decide whether the project progresses to the next stage of development. If the project were to advance to the next stage, a comprehensive environmental impact statement will be undertaken in accordance with all relevant laws.

I hope this information clarifies your enquiry. If I can help with other matters within my portfolio, please contact my office on (07) 3719 7270.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Mick de Brenni', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mick de Brenni MP
Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen
Minister for Public Works and Procurement