

18 May 2023

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

Submission Regarding; Inquiry into Australia's transition to a Green Energy Superpower.

We wish to express our thanks for the opportunity to be part of the hearing held in Gladstone on the 17th May 2023.

We wish to table the following in alignment with the terms of reference which the Joint Standing Committee on Trade & investment have outlined as part of the inquiry into Australia's transition.

Where trade and investment activities are already having a positive impact;

The current appetite is seeing large investment in numerous wind & solar projects. Unfortunately, overseas companies are taking advantage of our country's hast to build renewable energy in the form of wind and solar. A large percentage of these projects is owned by overseas companies which would beg the question, is this really in the nation's favour? Does it lead to lower power prices for Australian consumers or are profits going off shore?¹

Emerging and possible future trends;

An emerging trend with wind and solar projects throughout the east coast of Australia, is that they are causing great disturbance to the landscape. The destruction of vegetation, some of which is remanent and never disturbed previously, is posing a great risk to the Great Barrier Reef with increased sediment run off.
(Appendix 1)

Along with the vegetation, there are many threatened fauna species at risk due to the habitat destruction caused by these projects. In particular, the survival of the koala, an Australian icon and recognised throughout as one of our tourist attractions, is at great risk outside south-east Queensland. There is deep concern throughout communities that the appropriate level of environmental regulation and governance is not in place to protect both flora and fauna in these developments, and are not explicitly listed as an 'environmentally relevant activity' under the Environmental Protection Act 1994 (Subdivision 4.18), as agriculture and mining are.

We believe the future of Australian energy should include the use of nuclear power. It is free of carbon emissions, provides, reliable, baseload power, energy dense and can utilise the existing water heating components of existing coal-fired power stations via small modular reactor (SMR) systems. Australia is one of only a few leading developed countries which does not use nuclear power despite having around one third of the world's uranium reserves. A transition to nuclear power would give Australia energy security and remove our reliance on China and other countries for our renewable energy infrastructure. Currently about 10% of the world's power comes from nuclear.² Canada, a country with a similar government system and social construction as Australia, gains 15% of its electricity from 19 nuclear power reactors and plans to extend its nuclear capacity even further over the next decade. They are a leader in nuclear research and development and system export³.

The role of key commonwealth agencies including Austrade, in identifying new trade and inward investment opportunities, and assisting Australian companies to access these opportunities, including through whole of government coordination of investment;

The development of a nuclear industry would be a great opportunity as a career path for Australians. Trade opportunities would exist with current partners and lead to the establishment of a genuine clean energy option for the country.

Utilising existing energy production zones, we can repower these areas with a genuine long term reliable power solution for the country.

Without the intrusion of solar or wind in agricultural land, it provides our agriculture industry the ability to feed and clothe the world, and still deliver on our predicted goal of agriculture becoming a \$100 billion industry by 2030⁴. World population is predicted to increase 20% by 2050 and Australia could position itself in the box seat to take advantage of this and build further trade partnerships around the world.

Areas of growth, and how can these be accelerated and/or assisted, including through the use of Commonwealth Special Investment Vehicles; and how

Australia can capitalise on existing and future trade agreements and economic frameworks with countries or regions around the world.

A nuclear industry can be developed with the assistance of the CSIV. We have the required minerals that plays a part of the industry and can build trade agreements to bring the required knowledge and professionals into the country to establish our power generation.

In inquiring into this topic, the Committee will have particular regard to the areas that play to Australia's strengths, as identified by the Australian Government in consultation with the states and territories including: renewable energy, battery storage, energy supply and infrastructure, electric vehicle industry, infrastructure; advanced manufacturing, and services and technology.

Our strength would be to utilise existing infrastructure and technical expertise, Australia's energy production would remain a strong reliable industry. All renewable wind, solar & hydro energy projects across the country should be governed by the same framework across the board, which takes communities and environment into account to provide better outcomes from those living adjacent and preserve the wild life and wilderness that already inhabit these areas.

As renewable projects move into regional and rural areas, continued development is limited by the restrictions imposed by setback limits from solar and wind turbines. As current regulations require turbines to be a minimum of 1.5 km from sensitive land use sites (e.g. homes, schools, aged care facilities), rather than neighbouring property boundaries, future development on these neighbouring properties is then made impossible as local councils will not approve any development within the 1.5km setback rule. Regulations must be changed to require the 1.5 km setback to be from neighbouring property boundaries instead.

Development of these projects in regional and rural areas will also have significant impact of the water resources in these areas during the construction period. Wind turbine construction require enormous volumes of water for concrete in the foundations, as well as dust suppression on local roads. Analysis of the sources of these water requirements must be included in any considerations by the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Kalapa-Wycarbah Local Action Committee

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References

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2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_power_by_country
3. <https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-a-f/canada-nuclear-power.aspx>
4. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/farm-food-drought/ag2030>



A2 map showing all proposed 'renewable' projects in QLD.