



# All power to renewable energy

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ON my first visit to North Queensland as the Minister for Energy in the Palaszczuk Government, one of the first questions I was asked by media was “when will North Queensland get its own power station?”

Only two years later, under our Labor Government, North Queensland has more than half a dozen power stations in the pipeline, all them generating 100 per cent renewable energy including large scale solar farms at Townsville, Ross River, Clare, **Kidston**, Lakeland, Collinsville, Normanton and a massive wind farm at Mt Emerald.

**Within 12 months, we're likely to see investment in Kidston stage 2, a pumped storage hydro project, adding to the North's Barron Gorge and Kareeya hydro generators.**

So how did this clean energy boom happen and what does it mean for North Queensland?

Firstly it means more than a thousand renewable energy jobs in the next 12 to 18 months across construction, transport, ports, design and planning at a time when North Queensland needs them after the Palmer nickel refinery closure.

Secondly, it means a range of new, privately owned clean energy generators competing with each other and existing generators, putting downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices close to where it will be used in North Queensland. That's good news for

electricity consumers and businesses in North Queensland after electricity prices surged 43 per cent in the three years under the record majority Newman-Nicholls government.

A crucial driver is the falling cost of renewables. Solar costs are down 80 per cent since 2009 and the International Energy Agency and CSIRO are among many credible groups that say they will continue to fall. Combined with some of the best and most predictable solar resources in the world, it makes sense for Queensland to convert our excess sunshine into usable solar power.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has been working closely with the Australian Renewable Energy Agency from day one to make up for the three years lost under Campbell Newman and Tim Nicholls when not a single large scale renewable project was commissioned anywhere in Queensland, 1300 renewable jobs were lost as unemployment climbed and solar users were attacked as

“latte sippers” and “champagne drinkers”.

Our election commitment to support 40MW of renewable energy via reverse auction was spectacularly surpassed more than seven times over, with more than 300MW of renewable energy announced as part of our Solar150 policy and partnership with ARENA.

What about when the wind doesn't blow or sun doesn't shine? North Queensland is also leading the way in new technology solutions involving battery technology on both a large and small scale.

Ergon is trialling battery storage equipment at a number of Townsville homes to learn more about how Queenslanders can use battery storage to save money and have more control over their energy bills.

The Lakeland Solar Farm under construction in the Cape has a battery storage capability which will mean 24-hour despatch of 100 per cent renewable energy. While battery storage is not yet economic on a large scale, we know it's the way of the future as costs fall 6-7 per cent per year, mostly driven by mass production in the car making industry.

Finkel's preliminary review of the National Energy Market, supported at the December COAG Energy Council, made clear that all the technology needed to fully integrate renewables into traditional power grids already exists and is operating effectively in the European Union,

Texas, the Nordic countries and New Zealand, with Australia well behind.

It is in this light that we turn to recent news of an unfunded idea put forward by the LNP to build a new coal-fired power station in North Queensland. If it's such a great idea to build a new power station, why didn't the Queensland branch of the LNP use their record majority to build one when they were in power?

The simple answer is that investors and the energy industry won't fund a new power station because they know that over the 40 to 50-year life of a new coal-fired power station, whether the latest technology is used or not, money will be lost because it has been superseded by renewable energy.

In fact, peak business body the Australian Industry Group is concerned that new coal power station construction will double electricity prices for consumers which would be a disaster for jobs and for our economy. The fact is the great crossover is happening now where falling renewable energy costs are making it cheaper and much faster to construct renewable energy.

It's easy to try to woo people with back to the future fantasies but the past is not a pathway to the future. The future of electricity in North Queensland is renewable, it's happening now and this private sector driven boom has a lot of momentum and jobs unfolding in 2017 for North Queenslanders.