

Answers to questions on notice – Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
Transcript of evidence - Sustainability of energy supply and resources in NSW

Question 1 – Page 5

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: When you talk about the regional benefit study that will examine the net employment outcome, when is that being done and when will that being completed?

Mr O'REILLY: The department is in the process of commissioning that study. I can take that on notice and give the Committee an update on its progress.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment has commenced a tender process to engage professional services to undertake the study.

The first stage of the study is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

Question 2 – Page 5

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: And will this be part of the commission of the study that the department is examining in terms of the assistance through the transitioning phase? Will that be a focus of the commissioning study?

Mr O'REILLY: I understand it has been more focused on opportunities, but I am very happy to take that question on notice and come back to you.

The study will investigate opportunities for regional jobs and development and focus on opportunities to maximise regional benefits through the NSW Government's Renewable Energy Zones program.

Question 3 – Page 5/6

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: It would be worthwhile. It is great that we have this opportunity that people cannot just skip from the current skill set that they have to a new one overnight. Not only that, if the training is going to take time then there has got to be an examination of their income through that particular stage because families have got to live and the communities have got to survive. I am hoping that the study that has been commissioned would actually examine that as well.

Mr O'REILLY: I am sure there would be many parts of government to consider this, but we will take this on notice.

See answer to Question 2. The Liddell Taskforce which I referred to in my evidence considered relevant issues such as these and on 15 September, 2020 the summary version of the report was made publicly available by the Commonwealth. It can be viewed at <https://www.energy.gov.au/publications/liddell-taskforce-terms-reference-report-statement-and-response>

Question 4 – Page 6

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: As part of the new energy world, what thoughts have been given towards the manufacturing aspects of the new energy. For example from some of the reading I have done with wind generation, a lot of the parts are not even made here locally. Are we looking at assisting whether it is seed investment or training in those skills to allow us to take another slice of the new energy world to allow to create jobs?

Mr O'REILLY: Again, I will take that on notice. There will be work done on opportunities but there is a balance here as well because many of these industries have global supply chains and you do want to make sure that you are getting the lowest cost of energy.

The scope of the study includes an assessment of the opportunities for stimulating new and diversified industries such as advanced manufacturing, agri-business and recycling, as well as building local skills to undertake clean energy jobs, and opportunities skills and training.

Question 5 – Page 7

Mr NATHANIEL SMITH: Have you been looking at waste-to-energy in certain areas, especially for the south-west of Sydney where a lot more homes are going in over the next 10 to 30 years?

Mr O'REILLY: There will be a portfolio of technologies that come forward as a result of this energy transition. We would be very mindful of the fact that the market will dictate the outcomes going forward. We are looking in this report at economic opportunities and we will take it on notice where we are up to with that study and come back to the Committee and take on notice your interest in that area.

The market is responding to energy from waste opportunities available across NSW. There are currently a number of energy from waste proposals under consideration for western Sydney. These proposals will be assessed against the relevant planning and environmental criteria before they are approved.

The NSW Government is also exploring opportunities for energy from waste in at the Parkes Special Activation Precinct. The precinct will have a focus on sustainability as Australia's first UNIDO Eco-Industrial Park, where businesses will work together to achieve environmental, economic and social efficiencies through onsite energy-generation, such as through energy from waste.

Question 6 – Page 7

Mr O'REILLY: In terms of the rebates program Government funding to ensure that energy affordability is addressed and now increasingly access to solar is enhanced by programs such as the solar for low incomes trial.

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: How much is that program worth?

Mr O'REILLY: I will have to take that on notice. It is not in my direct area of responsibility, but we can come back to you on that.

Response - The total funding amount allocated for the Solar for Low Income Households Trial is \$15 million.

Question 7 – Page 8

Mr ANOULACK CHANTHIVONG: And if you can, how many households have accessed that particular program? Whilst we are all for clean green energy I do note that in the industry, particularly in the solar rebate schemes we have had in the past, they have actually favoured those that already have the means to do it, which means the cost has been borne by those who are on the lower income scale and that is fundamentally quite unfair from my perspective. As we move towards the more renewable mix how does that work on royalties, because I do not think we have royalties on wind and solar at the moment. What does that mean for the public coffers in terms of the royalty scheme and our income? How do we replace that?

Mr O'REILLY: I will have to take that on notice. I would suggest that you direct that question to the resource area of the department rather than the energy area. In terms of royalties there is no knowledge in terms of how it would apply to renewables, but I understand that royalties come from coal which is why I suggest that you direct that question to the resources area.

Response - As of 16 September 2020, the program has received 1,348 applications and has installed 301 solar systems, with a further 174 systems approved to be installed over the coming weeks.