
From: Daniel Wild
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To: Portfolio Committee 7
Cc: Saxon Davidson
Subject: RE: Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill 2023 - Post-hearing responses - 30 October 2023 - Institute of Public Affairs
Attachments: Question on notice for The Hon. Jacqui Munro.docx; Question on Notice for The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE.docx

Dear Ms Newlands
Please see attached our two QoNs

Kind regards
Daniel

The CHAIR: No, that's not correct. Mr Wild, what we understand is peer review is analysis and conclusions made based on analysis then being sent to other experts in the field to review that material. Generally speaking, that would be a range of experts from other institutions that can review that material, the methodology used for the analysis and there can be a rigorous process of how conclusions were drawn. I think Mr D'Adam's question was simply is that material peer reviewed? I'm not sure exactly whether the answer was yes or no. I think you said yes, but it was not clear.

DANIEL WILD: All of our work is peer reviewed. I mean, I said that before.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: We've only got these gentlemen for a few more minutes. Let's not get bogged down on semantics.

The Hon. ANTHONY D'ADAM: I'm happy to.

DANIEL WILD: I'm not sure what the confusion is. I mean, all of work is peer reviewed. I said that before. I don't understand.

The CHAIR: But peer reviewed internally, I think, is the question.

DANIEL WILD: We have an academic advisory body. I don't understand what the confusion is. I mean, it appears to be the case that rather than actually asking a specific question about where the analysis is considered by those on the Committee to be erroneous, it seems that we're just going in these circles to discredit work that you don't agree with. I don't understand the confusion.

The CHAIR: Mr Wild, I really don't think that's what the Committee's doing here, and I have a good insight as to what the Committee's trying to do here. Can we finish on this point? Is it possible that the Committee can be provided some evidence about who is on that body and who reviews your analyses and conclusions drawn? Is that something you could provide to us?

DANIEL WILD: We're very busy. I don't want to be running in circles for documentation.

The CHAIR: All right. We've got some other questions.

DANIEL WILD: I've said we peer review it.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Thank you so much for appearing and also for putting together a submission at such short notice. I want to ask one question about something you mentioned in your opening statement, but that I couldn't find in your submission, about litigious green groups and their capacity and willingness to go after governments, essentially. I want to understand if there are any examples of that happening in other jurisdictions around Australia at the moment or historically?

DANIEL WILD: That's a good question. The area that we've looked at this most is at the Federal level, with section 487 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, which provides specific standing to green groups to challenge projects through a litigation process. Adani is the exemplar of that process. That's the area where that's happened most evidently.

The Hon. JACQUI MUNRO: Are there any other examples at a State-based level that you're aware of?

DANIEL WILD: I don't have that in front of me, but I'm happy to provide you with that on notice. We have done work on the lawfare, including in a New South Wales context. I just don't have it in front of me, so I'm happy to provide that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: Thank you, gentlemen, for coming along and for providing us with the most rational presentation we've had so far. Other jurisdictions around the world have been more advanced on a "net zero carbon economy". I'm thinking of California, Germany and other parts of northern Europe. How has that unfolded in other jurisdictions? I see endless reports that electricity prices are going through the roof and that some of these jurisdictions are even reversing some of these net zero goals. I would be keen to hear your thoughts on that.

DANIEL WILD: There are a couple of things there. In the United Kingdom, for example, they went probably further down this road than other comparable nations under the Boris Johnson prime ministership. They've pulled back on a couple of key areas of their net zero commitments, particularly in relation to the phasing out of petrol cars, as an example. You mentioned Germany, which is a very interesting case, which is really a warning to the rest of us about energy security. As you'd be aware, they had a heavy reliance on importing their energy supplies, particularly from Russia. Given the conflict, they've been basically rebooting some of their coal-fired power stations in order to, essentially, keep the lights on and keep industry going. What we're seeing around the Western world is a reconsideration of net zero targets and mandates, particularly in the context of

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Answer: An example would be the legal challenge to the Narrabri gas project by the Environmental Defenders Office in 2020-21 after it was approved by the NSW Independent Planning Commission in September 2020.

energy security, because everything we have relies on our energy security and our sovereign energy sources. One of our main concerns is around that matter. As you know, a significant share of solar panels and wind turbines are manufactured overseas, which leaves us very vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, unlike, for example, if we use our own coal, gas or uranium sources, which we have sovereign control over.

The Hon. JOHN RUDDICK: What about electricity prices for consumers and businesses in those jurisdictions that have gone the furthest down the net zero carbon economy?

DANIEL WILD: We've seen prices go up. There's a clear relationship between the penetration of renewables into an energy system and increasing prices of that system. The reason for that is very straightforward: Solar and wind are intermittent and unreliable, and they need a significant amount of money spent to what's called firm them up. All of that, at the end of the day, is passed on to consumers in one form or another. We're seeing that in Australia, where prices have risen rapidly. As you rightly mentioned, other nations around the world that have gone down this path probably faster and earlier than Australia are seeing very negative consequences of what it is that they're doing and are actively reconsidering those policies.

The CHAIR: Mr Wild, I think there is contest around the idea of what is actually the cause of increasing power at the moment. My understanding is the majority view around that is that we are relying on declining, older, less reliable coal technology, and that is the actual cause at the moment for increasing prices. Is there something you would say to that?

DANIEL WILD: You say it's a majority view. What makes you say that?

The CHAIR: I think that is the view of the Australian Energy Market Operator and the Australian Energy Regulator. Their prediction is that it is because we're relying on this older, less redundant, very old technology. The understanding is that the reason our coal-fired power plants are coming to end of life is because they're literally coming to the end of their life—they're old, they're inefficient and they're not reliable anymore. Hence the industry's investment and desire to bring on more renewables to assist in driving prices down as the transition reaches that momentum. Is your understanding different to those operators in the field?

DANIEL WILD: I'm not sure it's the majority view. You've named two institutions. Look, there's no doubt that there's a lack of investment in coal-fired power. That's very clearly the case. We would share that assessment that we should be having more investment in base load power. One of the reasons you're not getting the kind of private investment into those energy sources is because of policies like this. Very clearly, it's the policy of a number of State governments and Federal governments to proceed with policies such as net zero, and they've made it clear that there's not a future for coal, or there's a very limited future for coal, in the energy network. So if you're a private operator, that's not an enticing public policy environment for you to invest in.

This is the fundamental cause of the problems we have, which is that for years governments have been actively discouraging—either through the direct subsidisation and public policy favouritism of wind and solar, or the active discouragement of coal-fired power through various regulations—base load power supply, and now we're seeing the consequences of that with rapidly rising prices and a deterioration to the quality of our energy infrastructure. So I share the assessment that there's a lack of investment, and it is not quite an explicit objective of government policy, but it's certainly a direct consequence of government policy, which is one of the reasons why we don't recommend that this bill proceed.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: In relation to clause 8, the guiding principles in the bill, are there any of those principles that you would support?

DANIEL WILD: Can you remind me what they are, please?

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Clause 8 is a whole page. I assumed you may have it in front of you, given that we're commenting on the bill.

DANIEL WILD: I don't have it in front of me.

The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE: Can I ask then that you please take it on notice? Are there any of those guiding principles that you would endorse? I would appreciate that.

DANIEL WILD: Sure.

The CHAIR: We are out of time. Thanks so much for coming to give evidence today. I know it was a short time frame, so we are very grateful that you have accommodated it.

(The witnesses withdrew.)

Question on Notice for The Hon. PETER PRIMROSE

Answer: No