

Our ref: OUT26/875

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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 4338-25, tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 3 March 2026, about Opposition to the proposed Mt Challenger and Crystal Brook/Kelsey Creek Wind Farm project.

To date, no application has been lodged with the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning's State Assessment and Referral Agency (SARA) for any wind farm applications in the Whitsunday region.

However, I note the petitioner's concerns regarding potential impacts on amenity, noise, property values, tourism, wildlife and fire risk from wind farm proposals and their concern that the community consultation on these specific projects has been limited and inadequate.

Under Labor, regional communities have been playing host to large scale wind farm development for a decade and have been victims of a weak planning framework that was not fit-for-purpose, including community consultation being optional, and appeal rights not being afforded.

It's only fair that regional Queensland communities are properly consulted on any new renewable energy developments in their backyard, like many suburban communities are afforded when it comes to high rise development in their neighbourhood.

That's why the Crisafulli Government promised at the election to require all renewable projects to be impact assessable and subject to the same rigorous approval processes as other resource projects.

The Crisafulli Government's nation-leading renewable energy planning reforms delivered in July 2025 are intended to ensure that the renewable energy sector only undertakes development in a way that ensures that proponents build social licence, identify and respond to social and development impacts and leave positive legacy benefits for communities.

Some of the ways that the reforms achieve this purpose include:

- Making wind farm, solar farm and battery storage facilities 'impact assessable' (except for small scale solar farms), meaning public consultation is mandatory so that communities can have their say on the development proposal and submitters have appeal rights.
- Requiring a proponent to enter into a community benefit agreement (CBA) with the relevant Local Government before lodging a development application for large-scale renewable energy projects to ensure community benefits will be delivered.

- Making SARA the assessment manager (decision-maker) for large-scale renewable energy projects with a consistent assessment undertaken against a State Development Assessment Code that applies state-wide. Proponents will not need to navigate different Local Government planning schemes for development approvals, as development applications will be assessed and decided by SARA.

In relation to the adequacy of community consultation, proponents are now required to enter into a CBA with the local Council. To guide the development of the CBA, proponents are also required to complete a Social Impact Assessment (SIA). Both the CBA and SIA are undertaken in consultation with the local Council. Local Government has many options in the SIA process, including facilitating or actively participating in community consultation, and reviewing and contributing to the finalisation of SIA reports and social impact management plans.

The purpose of the CBA is to use the SIA to identify and determine how to manage, mitigate or counterbalance social impacts, identify types of community benefits that can be considered and methods for consideration and methods for developing measurable, actionable and enforceable CBA requirements.

In relation to potential impacts from any proposed wind farm, a set of standardised assessment benchmarks will be used by SARA to assess any application, once lodged.

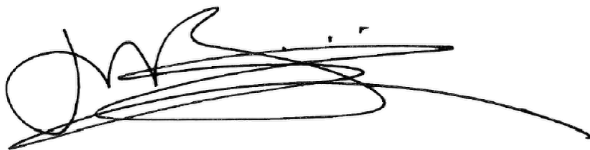
These benchmarks address a wide range of potential impacts, such as, noise, electromagnetic interference, shadow flicker, bushfire and other natural hazards, vegetation clearing and protecting areas of high ecological value, protection of areas of high scenic amenity, transport networks, aviation safety and decommissioning.

Further to these assessment benchmarks, all wind farm applications will be subject to impact assessable provisions, which includes the requirement for all applications to be publicly notified. This will afford members of the public an opportunity to make a submission about the proposal, something that was not afforded under the former Labor Government. Submissions lodged will be considered by SARA as part of their assessment of the proposal. Any properly made submitters will also be afforded the opportunity to lodge an appeal with the Planning and Environment Court if they do not agree with the decision made on the application. Again, this was not afforded under the former Labor Government.

As stated above, no application has been lodged with SARA, to date. However, prior to any lodgement of an application, the Whitsunday Regional Council (the Council) will need to enter into a CBA with the proponent. If you wish to seek further information on the status of the CBA, I suggest contacting the Council.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising this matter with me and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



JARROD BLEIJIE MP
DEPUTY PREMIER
Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning
Minister for Industrial Relations
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