

Our ref: WR26/9090

16 APR 2026

Mr Neil Laurie
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Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 4467-26, tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 24 March 2026, about the proposed Mount Challenger and Crystal Brook/Kelsey Creek Wind Farm Project being advanced by Alinta Energy in close proximity to residential homes, productive agricultural land, and environmentally sensitive areas of the Whitsunday region.

For almost a decade, the former Labor Government ran roughshod over local communities and Councils and left Queensland with an outdated planning framework for renewable energy projects. This denied people in the community the ability to have their say in the decision-making process, treating regional Queenslanders like second class citizens.

In July 2025 and December 2025, the Crisafulli Government introduced significant reforms to strengthen social licence requirements for renewable energy projects including wind farms, solar farms and battery storage facility development through the commencement of the *Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2025* and the *Planning (Battery Storage Facilities) and Other Legislation Amendment Regulation 2025*, which amends the Planning Regulation 2017.

I can confirm that as the development application for the Mount Challenger and Crystal Brook/Kelsey Creek Wind Farm is not lodged with the State Assessment and Referral Agency (SARA), and any new project lodged for assessment will be subject to the new regulatory requirements. These include requiring the proponent to undertake a social impact assessment and enter into a community benefit agreement prior to lodging a development application to SARA. This new approach ensures renewable energy projects respond to identified social impacts of development and are responsive to feedback from local communities, empowers regional Queenslanders to have their say.

The regulatory changes make wind farms impact assessable, meaning formal public consultation is mandatory to ensure that communities can have their say about a development proposal and submitters have appeal rights in the court. These changes also make SARA the assessment manager (decision maker) for large-scale renewable energy projects with a consistent assessment under the State Development Assessment Codes (SDAP), which applies Statewide.

When a development application is lodged for a wind farm project, a rigorous assessment of the application is carried out against the relevant benchmarks including SDAP. Specifically, SDAP *State code 23: Wind farm development* (State code 23), provides fit-for-purpose assessment benchmarks designed to ensure the renewable energy project is appropriately designed and suitably located. State code 23 contains an array of assessment benchmarks, including outcomes relating to ecological matters, agricultural land and natural hazards, among other things. Specific technical reports that must be provided for assessment include:

- Bushfire Hazard and Management Plan
- Natural hazard and extreme weather risk assessment
- Agricultural land assessment
- Scenic amenity impact assessment
- Noise assessment
- Stormwater management plan and flood assessment
- Ecological assessment report
- Fire safety report
- Preliminary hazard assessment
- Traffic impact assessment.

Our nation leading planning reforms are intended to ensure that approval is only considered if proponents build social licence, address all impacts of the development including hazards and nearby land uses and leave positive legacy benefits for the community.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jarrod Bleijie', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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