

# AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATED PRESS

TRUSTED  ACCURATE  IMPARTIAL

## Shock at call for moratorium on ‘reckless renewables’

Marion Rae

February 6, 2024

The coalition has been accused of being out of touch with families and the climate for change by backing anti-renewable energy activists.

The Rally Against Reckless Renewables in front of Parliament House on Tuesday marked the start of the 2024 federal parliamentary year.

Calling for a suspension of wind and solar farms and an inquiry into whether the rollout of clean energy is in the national interest, the day-long demonstration featured a line-up of coalition speakers.

Carrying signs such as “Who pays for the cleanup? You will”, “Platypus Killers” and “No farmers, no food”, more than 500 protesters travelled to Canberra to have their say.

“Toxic rhetoric from Barnaby Joyce and other Liberal and National Party MPs at the rally today are stark reminders that the energy policy that lost the coalition the last federal election is alive and well,” Smart Energy Council CEO John Grimes said.



*Protesters hold signs during a rally against renewable energy at Parliament House in Canberra. Image by Mick Tsikas/AAP PHOTOS*

He said it was “outrageous” that Nationals leader David Littleproud backed the call for a moratorium on renewables, putting more than 60,000 Australian renewable energy jobs under direct threat.

Rally co-ordinator Sandra Bourke from Hawks Nest in NSW told AAP she wants to stop “generations of damage” to agricultural land from the construction of wind and solar farms.

The main demand is an inquiry into the rollout of renewable energy and high-voltage transmission lines, and a check on uncapped spending, she said.

Nor should offshore wind farms be a foregone conclusion in waters off the Hunter and Illawarra regions in NSW, Ms Bourke said.

[The groups involved in the protest](#) are concerned about compulsory land acquisition and land clearance for transmission lines.

There should also be an end to the “archaic” ban on nuclear energy so it can be part of Australia’s future energy mix, they say.

Others believe a failure to rapidly build sufficient renewable energy, transmission and batteries will leave Australia dependent on more expensive and less reliable gas and coal-fired electricity.



*A car with Australian flags drives past during a rally against renewable energy at Parliament House. Image by Mick Tsikas/AAP PHOTOS*

Clean Energy Council chief Kane Thornton said renewable energy projects in regional communities were helping drought-proof farming communities, provide revenue and income, and ensure jobs where they are needed most.

“The renewable energy industry is proud to partner with farmers, as well as the wider regional and rural communities across Australia,” he said.

Forty per cent of the nation’s energy is already provided by renewable sources and the vast majority of Australians want more, Mr Thornton said.

“It’s essential they do. Coal plants are reaching the end of their technical life, they’re closing and renewables are needed to keep the lights on.”

But Mr Littleproud said Labor’s “reckless” pursuit of 82 per cent renewables by 2030 was driving up costs.



*The Rally Against Reckless Renewables protest came on the first day of parliament for 2024. Image by Mick Tsikas/AAP PHOTOS*

“We need to know how much agricultural land is earmarked, where is it earmarked and when will the projects be forced onto local communities,” he said.

“We also need to know how much these projects will cost taxpayers and what are the protection rights of property owners.”

Climate Capital Forum founder Blair Palese said the coalition’s campaign to suspend investment in decarbonisation was “reckless and shortsighted”.

“There is no time left for these delaying tactics and disinformation about the renewable transition,” she said.

Climate and Energy Minister Chris Bowen said the federal government was working with regional communities and local landholders to ensure they benefit from cleaner, cheaper and more reliable energy.



*A protester walks past signs during a rally against renewable energy in Canberra. Image by Mick Tsikas/AAP PHOTOS*

He said everyone has a right to protest but rejected the opposition's attempt to "whip up a scare campaign" on energy transition.

Ms Bourke said she was not a climate sceptic and not backed by a political party or bankrolled by oil or gas lobby groups.

"Yes, we need to phase out (fossil fuels) but we can do better than this," she said.