

Queensland Labor 'won't be bullied' to dig Shorten out of Adani hole

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20 COMMENTS



Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, left, and Deputy Premier and Treasurer Jackie Trad. The Queensland Labor Government will not be "bullied" over the Adani mine, says Ms Trad. Picture: AAP

Queensland Deputy Premier Jackie Trad says her government won't be "bullied" into making a quick decision on Adani's approvals, despite Labor insiders saying delays to the coalmine were damaging Bill Shorten's campaign in the state's regional seats.

Adani's Carmichael project in central Queensland has cleared all federal approvals to start construction, but the state has not approved two crucial management plans involving groundwater and the endangered black-throated finch. Senior Labor insiders have told The Australian their regional campaign was "going backwards", with state delays to Adani emerging as "the big issue" in key seats.

Ms Trad, when asked for her response to those concerns, said her government was "not going to be bullied" to green-light the mine's construction.

"Every single person in Queensland knows how precious our water resources are and we are going to make sure we do this properly. We're not going to be bullied," Ms Trad, who leads Queensland Labor's dominant Left faction, said.

The delays to Adani are especially damaging in three Nationals coalmining seats — Dawson, Flynn and Capricornia — and Townsville-based Herbert, which Labor won by 37 votes in 2016. An alliance of business groups yesterday urged a swift decision on Adani, saying the delays were "weighing heavily on investor sentiment" in Queensland.

Ms Trad said there were "very challenging and complex" issues that still needed to be assessed by the state's Environment Department.

Labor previously championed the Carmichael project. Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk heralded the project in 2016 as offering a "new dawn" for Townsville, where unemployment is high at 8 per cent. Ms Trad, asked if regional voters should feel angry at Labor's diminished support for Adani, said voters would expect the government to thoroughly evaluate the mine. "I know there will be a lot of Queensland voters who will be very, very angry if they wake up the day after the federal election and Scott Morrison is the prime minister," she said.

The Infrastructure Association of Queensland and Queensland Major Contractors Association both yesterday called on the state government to make decisions on Adani's mine and rail projects.

"The Galilee Basin projects have been a political football between the state and federal governments for far too long despite having apparently complied with the appropriate regulatory approval processes," QIMCA chief executive Jon Davies said.

"The longer these projects are delayed, the greater the impact in terms of jobs and economic activity in the regions."

The lousy year performance in regional Queensland could be countered by higher-than-expected gains in Brisbane and its fringe. Labor last month put the Liberal-led seat of Brisbane on its target list. Polling has boosted hopes for three other Coalition marginal seats — Peter, Bowen and Foveaux — and possibly Dickson, held by Peter Dutton.

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The looming poor performance in regional Queensland could be countered by bigger-than-expected gains in Brisbane and its fringes. Labor last month put the Liberal-held seat of Brisbane on its target list. Polling has boosted hopes for three other Coalition marginal seats — Petrie, Bonner and Forde — and possibly Dickson, held by Peter Dutton.