

Submission
No 247

**INQUIRY INTO PLANNING SYSTEM AND THE IMPACTS
OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND
COMMUNITIES**

Organisation: Solar Citizens

Date Received: 26 July 2024



Parliament of New South Wales
Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning And Environment

26 July 2024

To the Committee,

Solar Citizens appreciates the willingness of the Committee to accept this late submission to the *Inquiry into the planning system and the impacts of climate change on the environment and communities*.

Solar Citizens is an independent, community-based organisation working to grow renewable energy and clean transport in Australia to bring down bills and reduce household emissions. Since our launch in 2013, we have gathered support from over 180,000 Australians, including many who have adopted Consumer Energy Resources (CER) such as solar PV, behind-the-meter (BTM) batteries and clean transport including electric vehicles (EVs), to bring down their household's energy and fuel bills whilst doing their bit for the planet.

Our vision is for an Australia powered entirely by renewable energy, and we actively advocate for increased access to rooftop solar, household storage, efficient appliances and electric transport to ensure that as many people as possible can benefit from an energy system that is cleaner, fairer, and more affordable for all Australians.

We have moved on from the time when housing stock and the energy grid could be considered as separate systems, whereby homes were passive receivers of a unidirectional flow of electricity provided by the National Energy Market (NEM). Today, a growing number of households are actively participating in the generating and storing of electricity, and provide support to the NEM

by way of low-cost renewable energy supply, peak demand shifting and other ancillary services. This new reality is increasingly being recognised by policymakers at the national, state and local level, as evidenced by the NSW Minister for Energy's development of the Consumer Energy Strategy.

It is critically important that our planning system delivers quality housing stock that is prepared for the new role that households will be required to play in our energy system as we transition to a Net Zero economy. We emphasise that this is particularly important given the disproportionate costs borne by households and governments to achieve retrofits compared to getting it right in the first place.

We further highlight the role of supporting communities - not just with housing stock that is efficient, electric and affordable - but also with the necessary infrastructure to support accessible and safe transport. We recommend that the Committee considers the role of active transport infrastructure within the current planning system, and the unrealised potential it may have in reducing emissions, improving health outcomes, and addressing increased congestion in urban areas.

We submit to the Committee that the recommendations in the attached submission, produced for the *Inquiry into the Development of the Transit Oriented Development Program*, are also relevant to this Inquiry, specifically as they address clause 'c' of the Terms of Reference:

'Short, medium and long term planning reforms that may be necessary to ensure that communities are able to mitigate and adapt to conditions caused by changing environmental and climatic conditions, as well as the community's expectation and need for homes, schools, hospitals and infrastructure.'

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback to this Inquiry.

Heidi Lee Douglas, CEO, Solar Citizens