

Submission
No 46

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY
ZONES (REZ) ON RURAL AND REGIONAL
COMMUNITIES AND INDUSTRIES IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Organisation: ReD4NE
Date Received: 31 January 2025



Submission ReD4NE

Inquiry into REZ impacts on rural and regional communities and Industries in NSW

Overview

ReD4NE – Responsible energy development for New England is an incorporated representative association representing a collective of 10 community groups from the New England. As its name suggests its purpose to promote on behalf of its constituents responsible development. As our web page <https://red4ne.com.au> confirms “*ReD4NE is a community based, not-for-profit, incorporated community alliance. Our organisation was formed in 2021. ReD4NE promotes responsible renewable energy development. It has been developed to provide a regional voice for concerned community and landowners as to what is proving to be an uncontrolled surge of wind and solar project development. ReD4NE is acting as an umbrella group for local communities impacted by large scale renewable energy projects. ReD4NE is proposing fair and responsible renewable energy development by accepting its share of projects but not saturation of our region. Our aim is to reduce the number of irresponsibly developed gigawatts for the NE REZ.*” Bushtricity provides strategic advice and representation to ReD4NE and some of its members.

ReD4NE operated as an unincorporated association from 2018, as such it predated the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Roadmap (‘RoadMap’) and the Associated EII Act 2020 and associated regulations. We believe our views on this policy and governance process reflect a general concern expressed across not only the REZ communities but also NSW rural and regional communities more generally. In short.

- The RoadMap was a ‘speed skating’ politically motivated exercise – a manifestation of the ego of the then Minister. Rural and regional communities don’t dispute the need to transition nor the obvious need to decarbonise energy production.
- However, REZ Communities and **do dispute** the manner in which the transition was rollout and the fact that their rights as landowners ‘food and fibre’ producers and the rights of future generations were ‘thrown under a bus’.
- REZ communities are conveniently misconstrued by city-based politicians and city based aspirationalist and left-wing media as ‘nimby’. REZ Communities by and large are realists they acknowledge that they can’t stop the inevitability of the transition.
- There are obviously many flawed elements associated with the RoadMap too many to list – Zero strategic land use planning – implausible Electricity Strategy underpinning a false and misleading claim as to electricity price reductions so on and so forth.

- Two of the most galling failures of the RoadMap – was **firstly** RE Zones were identified and prioritised from a desk top resource review conducted by ANU. What modern energy economy designs the most important industrial technological and infrastructure transition from an academic review ? **Secondly** the RoadMap was derivative of the successive Integrated System Plans (ISP) originating in 2018 and currently covered by 2024. This AEMO ISP continues to attract criticism as to its economic credentials GenCosts -and it was absent of any meaningful consideration of socio-economic impacts.
- Of particularly relevance to the Inquiry is the REZ Communities firm conclusion that the Government’s spin as to an abundance of social licence on offer – in reality nothing could be further from the truth. Secondly their claims as to economic nirvana -jobs opportunity -new industry -an illusion.
- Undoubtedly one of the biggest failures was the paucity of governance – last century regulatory regimes on Planning, Indigenous Heritage National Parks just not fit for purpose. Exacerbated by poorly managed and resourced by largely city-based institutions.

Terms of Reference

ReD4NE welcome the leadership of the SFF Party in calling for this Inquiry. We think it’s an unfortunate reflection on the other Government parties who have dodged their responsibilities to regional and rural communities. The current Government took the political bait with its bilateral compliance and some membership of the National Party who conveniently disguised themselves as Liberal Party moderates in their acquiesce of an unjust transition for their Bush constituents.

ReD4NE as with many of its members is, at this point of the transition submission fatigued. So, it is not our intention to put in a long and exhausting written response to the Inquiry - more words on paper that may never be read – we will highlight key **short** responses to particular points in the 12-point ToR. We will then offer our attendance at any scheduled hearing where we support our outlook and present for any inquisition from the Committee membership. We participated in good faith in 2024 Legislative Council - Transmission Undergrounding Inquiry -disappointingly we were left to conclude it was a complete waste of the public monies as Government had already predetermined the result.

- a) Projected socio-economic cultural impact agricultural and environmental impact – *Significant is a short answer – as referenced above the RoadMap REZ process was devoid of any real planning -land use , transport ,environmental etc. The list of unplanned impacts is exhausting. For 5 years, ReD4NE has advocating for independent cumulative impact studies. Zero commitment and reason are obvious no interest in constraining developers – position development ahead of people. Third world solution.*

- b) Fire Risk and Insurance Costs – are an increasing concern largely ignored. *Developments proceed under a cloak of secrecy where the liability really lies for the community . Who bears the risk on fire ? See Winterbourne Wind and Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.*
- c) Current and Future Financial Costs of Large-Scale Wind Farms in the REZ. *Very pertinent inquiry pursued by the ReD4NE in its October 3, 2024 -Is the REZ broken ? forum event convened in Armidale.(see Attachment A). Wind projects increasing present as unbankable as WTG acquisition cost have escalated by some 40% since 2021 . Construction costs have similarly escalated – Access Costs etc. So, combined with reducing Government subsidy and lower offtake prices -we looking at reduced bankability, increased community exposure to stranded infrastructure and no relief in electricity process for consumers -how is this in the public interest ?*
- d) Proposed compensation – we would say inadequate – too big a question to answer in a written submission.
- e) Adequacy of Voluntary Planning Agreements -*We would ask the Inquiry to consider more closely the compromised position the impacted LGA are faced with (See Walcha Council Winterbourne Wind Farm) . Financially fragile LGA's rely on State Governments for support for roads bridges and similar infrastructure. They are often forced to accept uneconomic VPAs to align with political influence.*
- f) Supply and Demand for raw materials and human resources – *A combination of lack of strategic land use planning and poor site acquisition has induced a poor supply profile of water gravel and landfill.*
- g) Visual Impact – *significant as turbines are 150m hub height up to 280M blade tip. They can't be hidden and the New England on its current REZ target of 8GW of installed capacity induces potentially 2000 WTG . The landscape can't absorb such an over build.*
- h) Suitable alternatives to LS Wind and Solar – *SMR nuclear and more CER Resources.*
- i) Adequacy of community consultation – *totally inadequate – community participation is supposed to be the cornerstone of our Planning Laws . Consultation is given lip service in a largely tick the box planning scheme.*
- j) Decommissioning Bonds – *there seems to be misunderstanding that there has been some progress – the Developers, largely project flippers, are still avoiding at every opportunity commitment to upfront decommissioning obligations. Attempts to by the NSW Government to determine through a schedule of financial liability is roughly 50% of the international experience.*
- k) Net Zero Commission/Commissioner - *a nonsense waste of public money.*

Thankyou please advise as to any points requiring clarification –

Deputy Chairman

Secretary

