

Submission  
No 74

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

To whom it may concern,

My wife and I are fifth generation farmers in the Dunedoo region of New South Wales. As lifelong farmers with deep roots in the region, we have dedicated our lives to stewarding the land and contributing to the agricultural legacy passed down through generations of our family. Together, we have worked tirelessly to sustain our family farm in the Birriwa area, where the land and its rhythms have been an integral part of our lives for over a century.

Our journey has been one of resilience and adaptation—balancing the challenges of running a productive farm while raising a family and operating a contracting business that serves other farming enterprises in the community. The love we share for the land and our pride in producing high-quality food and fibre products have always been at the heart of everything we do. It was our intention to pass this legacy on to future generations, providing them with the same connection to the land that has shaped our own lives.

However, the arrival of the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) has upended these plans and left our family grappling with profound challenges and heartbreak. In mid-2022, we were approached regarding the acquisition of our property, "Round Camp," for the construction of infrastructure to support the REZ. What followed was a consultation process that we can only describe as adversarial—characterized by a lack of transparency, misinformation, and tactics that sowed division within our family.

The prolonged negotiations, coupled with threats of compulsory acquisition, created a deeply stressful and emotionally charged environment. The lack of clear communication from EnergyCo and other involved parties not only strained relationships within our extended family but also eroded trust that had been built over decades. The final sale of the property—an outcome we felt forced into—left us not only without the land that had been our home and livelihood but also without the familial cohesion we had once cherished.

The loss of "Round Camp" in May 2024 was a devastating blow. It forced us to make difficult decisions, including selling our nucleus sheep flock, which represented years of careful breeding and investment. We faced the immense logistical challenge of relocating machinery, equipment, and essential resources, all while searching for alternative land in a region where properties rarely come on the market. The emotional and financial strain of these transitions has been overwhelming, requiring both of us to seek external income and diversify our remaining farming operations in order to make ends meet.

The broader community has been similarly impacted by the REZ developments. Promises of grants and financial support for affected communities have largely gone unfulfilled, and the lack of meaningful consultation has led to projects that do not adequately address the needs of small towns like ours. Mental health support for those affected has been promised but has yet to materialize in a meaningful way, leaving many in the community, including ourselves, feeling abandoned during one of the most challenging periods of our lives.

As farmers, we already face a volatile and demanding profession. The droughts, floods, and fires of recent years have tested our resilience, as have declining stock and wool prices and

inconsistent crop yields. The added pressure of competing with renewable energy developments for land and resources has only compounded these difficulties.

The environmental and social impacts of the REZ also give us great concern. The removal of trees essential for biodiversity and farming operations, increased traffic on local roads, and potential biosecurity risks all threaten the viability of agricultural land in the region. The lack of clear plans for the decommissioning of solar panels and wind turbines raises further questions about the long-term sustainability of these projects.

Equally troubling is the division that these developments have sown within our community. Neighbors and families have been pitted against one another as decisions about hosting renewable energy infrastructure create financial and ethical dilemmas. While some see the potential for off-farm income, others worry about the disruptions these projects will bring to their livelihoods. These tensions have strained relationships that were once the bedrock of our rural community.

Looking ahead, we are deeply concerned about the future of agriculture in this area. Will our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to carry on the farming legacy that has been so central to our lives? Will the community we've worked so hard to support still be a place where families can thrive?

We urge the government and those involved in the development of the Central West Orana REZ to reflect on the profound human and environmental costs of these projects. While renewable energy is undoubtedly an important part of our future, it cannot come at the expense of the families and communities that form the backbone of this region. Meaningful consultation, transparency, and a commitment to addressing the needs of those directly affected are essential if we are to move forward together.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We hope that by sharing our story, we can contribute to a more thoughtful and inclusive approach to these developments in the future.

Sincerely,