

**Submission  
No 85**

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

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Jenny Bailey

January 27, 2025.

**To the Inquiry into the Impact of Renewable Energy Zones on rural and regional communities and industries in NSW.**

Renewable energy projects in NSW are ripping rural and regional communities apart, pitting neighbours against each other, and creating trauma, mental anguish and stress.

They are causing massive discrepancies in financial benefits/impacts, while covering productive agricultural land in tonnes and tonnes of concrete, gravel, conduit and wiring, steel and glass.

Trees are being cut down to make way for renewables, which is ironic when stopping farmers from removing trees helped Australia meet previous carbon commitments in the 1990s. Habitats are being damaged, vast areas are being surrounded by security fencing, and solar panels are leaving no way of managing soil erosion.

Large swathes of land are being taken out of agricultural production, at a time when the world population needs more food, and Australian farmers make a

substantial, sustainable contribution to our GDP. *“The Australian food and agribusiness industry could be worth \$250 billion by 2030 if growth can continue at historical rates (~2.4% per annum),”* CSIRO.

Rural views are being destroyed, long term income and jobs are being taken away from rural and regional communities, all so an industry almost solely driven by overseas companies with no commitment to the future of Australia or the communities they are destroying, can make millions of dollars in short term profits.

I am aware of neighbours completely opposed to wind farms in the Walcha area having to consider hosting turbines purely so they don't suffer all the negative impacts and get none of the gains. Negative impacts including loss of views, social breakdown of their community due to the fight to stop the development, construction noise, traffic, dust, loss of local supplies of materials diverted into building the towers, the large influx of temporary workers that will draw on already stretched medical and other government services.

All this pain and anguish for a 25 to 30 year project that leaves that land damage forever. The concrete pads (2000 tonnes of concrete are used for a 150 metre wind turbine) can never be removed. All the wiring and conduit underground connecting thousands of solar panels and inverters will never be removed. How do you plough a paddock with all that underground and guarantee zero contamination in the food produced there?

The government keeps telling rural and regional communities the renewable industry is benefiting them. I am currently fighting to help prevent an almost 1500 hectare solar factory (Lambruk Solar Project) literally on the doorstep of

Tamworth in north west NSW. One of a similar size has already been approved 10 minutes drive south.

Yet we are NOT even in a Renewable Energy Zone.

While only 5 landholders stand to gain enormously from the income derived from hosting the Lambruk development, 59 landowners immediately surrounding it will be negatively impacted in the following ways:

- Rural views destroyed in a very picturesque area where people have paid extra for those views
- Loss of real estate value from their land or being left struggling to sell, putting their life on hold while this proposal is uncertain and causing mental health issues
- Fire risk - We won't be able to enter the site due to security fencing to fight a fire, assuming it's even possible to put it out. Rural Fire Service has indicated it will not fight battery fires.
- Insurance - we haven't be able to get a guarantee that our insurance premiums won't be impacted by the added fire risk of a solar development that includes 4 hectares of battery storage.
- Loss of long term jobs and income, with 1500 hectares no longer in agricultural production needing seed, fertilisers, fencing, water infrastructure, buying and selling livestock, using contractors, etc.
- Loss of local agricultural production that currently supplies grain and fodder to the equine, chicken and feedlot industries, and produces lamb and beef for the local community and beyond.
- Loss of long term development - Some of this land has the potential in the medium to long term, as Tamworth grows, to be developed into smaller allotments, providing jobs for builders, tradies, landscape gardeners,

fencing and water infrastructure contractors, and all their associated suppliers.

- If this solar factory is built, it produces very few jobs. Most of the construction jobs will almost certainly be fly-in, fly-out because it is highly unlikely all the skills will be available locally. Even if it does produce local jobs, it's only for the two year construction period. There are very few long term jobs.
- Removal of infrastructure at end of life - there is currently no legislative guaranteeing this will happen. But the reality is, it's not possible to completely restore this land because wiring and conduit used to link the 850,000 solar panels and 178,000 inverters is below 500 mm and under current regulations, will not be required to be removed.
- No genuine consultation - it is obvious from our experience that the developers are purely ticking boxes when they meet with community members and the government is pushing ahead with developments, no matter how many objections and issues are raised, to please city voters.

This is just one project that impacts me personally. My experience is replicated across many, many projects, including those in Renewable Energy Zones.

Why, when many Australians are enthusiastically putting solar on their house roofs aren't we capturing that power at peak times with battery storages in our cities, where the power is needed. That would be sharing the burden and benefits more equitably across the population, rather than the current policy which is creating a tiny number of big winners and a large number of losers in rural and regional areas, forcing large scale renewables upon people who don't want it....and leaving city dwellers with all the benefits and none of the burdens of meeting our climate change commitments. Despite the fact many

of them are happy to put solar on their roof structures and do their bit like everyone else.

Solar could also be placed on apartments, high rises and industrial buildings, car parks and between freeways with no detrimental impact on communities, the environment, or agricultural production...not to mention the massive cost of transmission lines that continue to blow out.

It's time to stop this mad, unplanned and reckless dash towards renewables wherever an international company can find a landholder willing to put money before all other considerations. We must start planning a long term strategy that is fair and equitable for all Australians, before we destroy our rural and regional areas forever.

Yours sincerely,  
Jenny Bailey.