

**Submission
No 86**

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

Name: Dr Martin Scurrah

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I am making this submission as a resident of Lake Macquarie in the Hunter Renewable Energy Zone and a person concerned about the possible impacts of the transition to renewable energy on a region which has historically been reliant on coal mining and coal-fired electricity generation. In doing so, I wish to make clear that I fully support the transition to renewable energy as do, I believe, most of my fellow residents in the region.

Furthermore, as an active member of the Hunter Community Alliance, I was pleased to hear that the federal government will finance the upgrading of the TAFE in Tighes Hill and support the proposal to create a local energy hub in our region to help communities to understand and engage with the renewable energy transition and to share in the benefits that the transition can deliver.

The hunter region has a long and proud history of adapting to economic opportunities and contributing to the industrial development of the country. Although the BHP steel works closed some two decades ago, the skills and traditions associated with manufacturing have not disappeared and workers, businesspeople and local authorities are willing and able to take up the challenges and opportunities associated with the energy transition and the creation of a REZ in our region.

Transitioning to renewable energy will allow us to decarbonise our energy system so that we can meet our emissions reductions targets and keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the single most impactful thing we can do to slow climate change, reduce the incidence of climate related disasters, protect nature, and ensure a safe future for all NSW communities. The transition presents an unprecedented opportunity for us to create an energy system that, as well as being low-emissions and low-cost, delivers tangible benefits to communities including local jobs and investment, income streams for landholders, and shared community benefits.

Achieving positive outcomes for both communities and the environment will require the development of good policy, including meaningful consultation and the employment of co-design principles for large-scale projects, the creation of a transition authority to plan, with community participation, the transition from a fossil-fuelled regional economy to a renewable one while advancing community ownership and people-centred models that give people greater agency over their power.

In this context, the focus of the NSW government should be to work together with communities in our region to continue rolling out renewable energy as quickly as possible, ensuring the reduction of emissions in line with our targets and deliver energy reliability as coal power ages out.