

**Submission
No 91**

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

Name: Mrs Anne Bowman

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To whom it may concern

I am married to a fourth generation farmer residing in the CWOREZ, having grown up in a farming family in the Dunedoo district. Since my marriage I have been actively involved in running the property and in the community as well as raising our three daughters here; two of whom are now farmers.

We are semi retired but remain living on the property and help out when necessary and are still involved in the community. We have a wonderful view from our house and decided to retire here as we could not imagine any better place to wake up in the morning and look out across the countryside with our expansive views. Now we will have to look at wind turbines on the hills and put up with solar factories everywhere. I was not expecting to have to endure the pressures that Renewable Energy has put on individuals, families and the community as a whole at this stage of my life. A lot of time now is taken up supporting family and friends affected by the Renewal Energy takeover of our district.

The planning of the CWOREZ was well under way before most of the community became aware of what was happening. Since then, Renewable Energy is always on our minds one way or another.

Rural people generally do not like confrontation and that is why I think a lot of people have not spoken up to say they are against what is happening and especially that viable agricultural land being used as Renewable Energy Factories. We drove to Western Australia last year and there is a lot of unproductive land in Australia which would be much more suitable for Renewable Factories than the productive land they are stealing.

No one will listen to our concerns. One of our many requests was that the name of the Merotherie Energy Hub be changed because the name was causing stress to the owners of the property Merotherie. We were told it would be looked in to and assured something would happen the many times we queried EnergyCo (surprise surprise nothing ever happened!). So, if small things cannot be fixed what chance is there of the big issues being rectified. There have been many other suggestions that have been made but we are just dumb farmers so why listen to us. If I hear "we understand your frustration" one more time I will scream! It is all just charging ahead with no foresight. They have put the cart before the horse in many instances. If our farming business put a business plan together with no answers and no forward thinking, as EnergyCo has, we would be knocked back immediately – but not EnergyCo.

EnergyCo has had a stand at the local markets during 2024 but anyone there has no authority and most times say it is not their area of expertise or they cannot answer my questions. Not one person has come back to me with any answers even when they say they will.

I attended my very first protest rally ever in Tamworth in August 2023 Sydney at the age of 70. Then travelled to Sydney in November 2023 and then Canberra for the next Rally outside Parliament House. All this takes time and energy plus it is at our own expense but this shows how much this means to us.

EnergyCo and all the Renewable Energy Companies can threaten our livelihoods and way of life every day but the minute someone speaks their mind against what is happening they are reported to the police for being threatening. ACEN did not even have the guts to call the police there and then at a meeting in the Dunedoo Hall on 5th June 2024, they sent the police to our property the next day and my husband had his gun licence suspended and guns confiscated. This has cost much time and solicitors fees to try and get them back with no result to date.

The Golden Highway which runs through our property east of Dunedoo is not capable of carrying all the oversize overmass loads from Port to REZ and there is no way it can be upgraded in the timeframe needed. The Golden Highway is nowhere near the standard of a highway and is the gateway to Newcastle for produce and freight to and from western NSW. There will be many more accidents caused by these loads

because of frustrated motorists being held up by the oversize overmass loads as well as b doubles and semi trailers. We were told by a RMS representative at the Dunedoo Markets in December 2024 that they were putting layover bays in but did not know where but they would not compulsorily acquire any land to do so.

Our property has been off the grid for about 2 years. It is good when the sun shines but without a backup generator burning diesel we would regularly have no power. So how efficient are these Factories going to be?

Mental health is another problem now and it will only get bigger as these projects move forward. EnergyCo agreed to help with mental health services but the only option currently available, to my knowledge, is the Property Acquisition Hotline which means you can't see your regular health provider continuing an existing relationship.

The cost of all the construction, property acquisition and associated costs should be taken into account when calculating the cost of renewable energy.

How much more can our community endure? We had the Cobbora Coal debacle a few years ago now is it going to be the Renewable Energy debacle?

I have never in my life time seen an event that has divided our community as Renewable Energy has. Many hours have been spent by many people for no compensation and to no avail. The frustration is palpable.

With all this in mind it is time rural voices are heard and alternative options are considered in an attempt to preserve rural and regional landscapes, the environment, communities, industries, businesses and families. I urge this committee to thoroughly consider the feedback received throughout this submission process.

Anne Bowman