

**Submission  
No 93**

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

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My name is Noel Hicks and as a private citizen I thank the committee for considering my submission.

I am a resident of Griffith located within The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area acknowledged as one of the major food producing areas of Australia.

My first and major objection to REZ's is that Australia has at 2022, only 4.1% of its land area considered arable. Historically from 1961 to 2022 this figure is 2.8%.

This should be compared with a world average of 189 countries of 14.5%. This makes any arable land within Australia extremely rare and valuable and within an established irrigation area, particularly during drought, invaluable. Yet governments have allowed these areas which were constructed early last century at enormous cost to an emerging nation to be violated by Solar Industrial Complexes ( S.I.C's) and then having the temerity to call them farms. On top of this, having a serious impact on productive land these complexes are being heavily subsidised by the taxpayer, with no lessening of the price of power and resulting in a serious negative impact on this productive land.

This situation is representative of the whole Renewable Energy thrust of the present Federal Government at an estimated cost to the taxpayer as at yet unknown, whilst blighting rural and regional Australia with a heavy burden. Sadly with all the batteries in the world Renewables presently or in the near to medium future can not provide a reliable power source.

Dissension is being caused amongst land owners and therefore the community in The M.I.A. where a farmer who has a S.I.C. installed is pitted against neighbours who do not. The neighbour who has the installation is made relatively wealthy on heavily funded taxpayer subsidies provided by the installing company, whereas the neighbours have to put up with the S.I.C, along with the power lines and even huge unsightly pylons emanating from the installation. A visit to the M.I.A. will show where the installing companies have chosen land close to the transformers making the whole area look like a S.I.C. There are many other matters to be considered along with the fact that the M.I.A. has a substantial income from tourists wishing to see the vineyards, rice farms, orchards of various kinds etc. and not S.I.C's. However it is the loss of potential agricultural land which would normally provide and will continue to bring income in to the area and permanent jobs, whereas the installation of S.I.C.'s brings a one off reward for some, instead of an on going food production for the nation and continuing employment and wealth production for the area. Unfortunately the situation is going to get worse, particularly as many of the S.I.C.'s planned for installation in the sea will never take place because of people and political power. This will put even more pressure on rural and regional areas to accommodate these installations. The other problems facing the area at the moment are the Federal Governments proposal to buy back water normally used for irrigation and the extremely low prices for some commodities now being experienced. Whilst these factors could assist some farmers who are able to sell or lease their land for S.I.C.'s, overall it spells disaster for The M.I.A.

It is interesting that most of the companies installing these S.I.C's in Victoria, South Australia and N.S.W. are substantially foreign owned. This means that rural and regional areas in those states have to put up with the detrimental situation that is occurring whilst the profits are sent off shore. This is not to mention security risks and making other nations wealthy whilst it could eventually impoverish Australians.

There are a myriad of issues I could touch on, such as The United States under President Trump pulling out of the Paris Accord leaving all of the major Co2 emitters to carry on their merry way while countries such as Australia, a very small emitter, will continue to waste billions on this farce.

We live in the nuclear age and the longer we put off its use, the comparatively poorer we will be, first financially, causing a drop our standard of living, the impact it will have on our productive capacity, our quality of life particularly in regional and rural areas and it goes on and on.

I have passed, not intentionally, a number of S.I.C. Installations in places like Broken Hill, Goulburn, Coleambally, Wagga Wagga and as an Australian I despair that Australians of the future will have much less to appreciate from the sentiments of the writings of Dorothea McKellar, Adam Lyndsay Gordon, Mary Gilmore, Banjo Paterson, Henry Lawson and others who spoke of the scenic wonders of our country and what it means to us as Australians.

The least that can be done to alleviate the load that Rural and Regional Australia is facing is to introduce Nuclear power and gas as soon as possible and a mixture of renewables where it is impractical to supply the former two power sources.

Thankyou for your patience and I wish you well in your deliberations.

Sincerely

Noel Hicks. A.M.