

**Submission
No 81**

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

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BUSHFIRE RISK OF RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS IN THE CWO-REZ

Time for a little perspective.

If it was suggested that a nuclear power station be built in a known bad earthquake zone the decision would be widely ridiculed. Yet the prevailing mentality deems it acceptable to build renewable energy projects and associated powerlines in bad bushfire zones. This is particularly relevant in the CWO-REZ for which the AEMO has given a bushfire rating of E. This is the worst score available on a scale of A to E.

The Victorian Black Saturday Bushfires in 2009 provide an example of how catastrophic these fires can be. A coronial enquiry found that 6 of the 11 most catastrophic fires on that day were started by high voltage power lines. Of the 173 deaths recorded on that day 159 were attributed to the 6 powerline fires. Information on the danger posed by renewable energy projects relative to powerlines is limited at this stage due to the novelty of these projects. However there already has been a major fire (April 2023) at the Beryl Solar Farm, which is within the CWO-REZ.

The extreme weather events that precipitated the Victorian fires are predicted to become much more common due to climate change. This will exacerbate the existing likelihood of major bushfires occurring in the CWO-REZ. Placing renewable energy projects and associated powerlines in this zone would appear to mimic the "we must destroy the village to save the village" mentality of the Vietnam War.

In addition not only will renewable energy projects increase bushfire risk, but will also limit the means of fire control. Water cannot be used on lithium battery BESS fires. It is too dangerous for RFS crews to attempt to control fires within solar farms. And finally wind turbines and powerlines restrict the use of aerial water bombing for the control of these fires.

A recipe for disaster.

In the event of a coronial enquiry into deaths caused by a fire started by renewable energy projects or associated powerlines, accountability must be established. This must be directed at the persons who planned and approved these projects in an known high fire risk environment.