

Submission
No 99

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 30 January 2025

Partially
Confidential

30 January 2025

Dear Chair

Inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Parliamentary inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones on rural and regional communities. We make this submission as a family of impacted landowners that have the transmission corridor for the New England Renewable Energy Zone traversing through our property a number of times.

In this submission we focus primarily on the Terms of Reference that broadly consider the impacts of the transmission lines and submit from lived experience of the transmission route proposal and our engagement with Energy Co.

Renewable energy generation has long been the subject of extensive consideration by government, private sector and the general public. We acknowledge and accept that there is a genuine need for alternate energy sources and appreciate that Australia has a rich resource holding for renewable energy. However, the planning and execution of transmission lines lacks comprehensive consideration for lifecycle costing, ecological impacts, socioeconomic impacts, and impacts on business operations in the agricultural and tourism sectors. It is evident that regional communities carry the burden for generation and transmission of renewable energy for the state of New South Wales.

Below are responses to set items in the Terms of Reference:

(b) a more evidenced based approach to fire risk must be employed by Energy Co. Current geographical areas that are in the proposed transmission zone have significant areas that have very limited access for ground crews and rely heavily on aerial firefighting operations to protect business and residential dwellings. Energy Co's assessment and consideration of fire risk continues to be ill aligned with independent expert advice from the NSW Rural Fire Service and the like. The projected increase in insurance costs due to increase in fire exposure risk is a financial impact that will negatively impact on business viability. Advice has been that some insurers may well not be willing to underwrite the risk due to the potential of future restrictive practices on fire management due to the transmission lines.

(c) the New South Wales government does not consider life cycle costing for significant infrastructure projects. Lifecycle costing should be undertaken and validated by independent bodies. Genuine and evidenced based consideration must be given to alternatives to the current transmission line proposal. Accessing existing transmission corridors are regularly undertaken in overseas countries to minimise impact to the wider community and new technologies such as undergrounding fit well within sound lifecycle costings. Undergrounding has financially manageable maintenance costs, eliminates the fire risk and ongoing ecological and industry/business impacts. New South Wales undergrounds electricity in many residential and industrial developments but fails to be able to consider the potential for

this practice for transmission lines. NSW government should consider a combination of overhead and undergrounding to manage impact and ongoing management.

(d) current compensation principles and practices required genuine consultation and reassessment. Financial impact for transmission lines does not reasonably or adequately compensate against negative financial impact. The NSW government's policy should be reviewed in line with the unprecedented size of the Renewable Energy Zones and the associated impact.

(e) We fail to see how LGA's should receive financial benefit, as this provides for biased approvals. This practice is not accepted in LGA's with developers and seems to verge on being potentially unlawful if the NSW government/Energy Co undertake a parallel practice with LGA's.

Energy Co's consultation and community engagement is tokenistic and from lived experience has failed to be genuine or factual. Energy Co is unable to respond to questions at community or landowner meetings and take same on advice. With responses taking from weeks to months to be received it places stress on impacted landowners and the wider community. Energy Co has pop up information session in locations far removed from impacted areas. We lodged a GIPA application. Information provided was limited with much being unavailable or redacted. This is ill aligned with transparency which Energy Co publically state they undertake. Maps are presented without land boundaries at meetings and the process is that landowners must engage directly with a staff member to gain access to usable information. The pressure and unreasonable stress this places on impacted landowners is having negative impacts on physical and mental health. Information in the one of the documented obtained through the GIPA application is nonfactual and we are able to evidence same.

We are in support of renewable energy, though are fundamentally challenged by the reactive way in which the NSW government has undertaken the planning for same. The planning, consultation and impact assessment have lacked thoroughness or comprehensive community consultative approach, evidenced through Energy Co lack of Social Licence.²

Regards