

Submission  
No 119

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 31 January 2025

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Partially  
Confidential

## **Submission to the Inquiry into the Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on Rural and Regional Communities and Industries in New South Wales**

**Name:**

**Date:** 31/01/2024

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Dear NSW Government,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities, with my experience relating to the Central West Orana REZ. The planning and development of these energy zones are causing significant distress and disruption to local communities, farmers, and businesses.

One of the consequences of the REZ development is the division it has created within regional communities. These zones are pitting neighbours against each other, with some landowners being pressured into selling their land or entering agreements with developers, while others face the threat of compulsory land acquisition. The tension has strained relationships and created an environment where communities are suffering for the sake of infrastructure projects that do not adequately consider local needs and perspectives.

The REZ development has had a particularly devastating impact on farming businesses and families. The multiple developments being proposed in these REZ zones mean that landholders are no longer able to plan for the future with any level of certainty resulting in reduced investment in on-farm infrastructure or long-term business plans. This is impacting the ability to maintain profitability, plan for droughts or invest in environmental projects.

The stress imposed on entire communities is profound. Families in these REZ zones are experiencing a deep sense of uncertainty about the future, with the majority of people I have spoken to feeling as though their voices are not being heard in the decision-making process or that decisions are made before consultation has even begun. The concern surrounding the potential compulsory acquisition of land or the impact on land values because of these projects is creating resentment towards the government and having a significant impact on the mental health of landholders. This situation is causing real harm to the mental and emotional well-being of residents.

A critical issue with the REZ process is the massive imbalance of power between EnergyCo and private landowners. The introduction of state significant infrastructure legislation, combined with the threat of compulsory land acquisition, has left landowners with little recourse or bargaining power. EnergyCo, a government-backed entity, wields an overwhelming amount of influence in these negotiations, while landowners have been left with little say in how their land will be used or impacted. This imbalance has resulted in a sense of disenfranchisement and injustice among rural landowners, whose land could be irreparably harmed along with their livelihoods and futures.

It is clear that EnergyCo has failed to adequately assess and address the risks that the new transmission projects will have on landowners, local businesses, and the broader rural community. EnergyCo's approach seems to be focused on meeting renewable energy targets without fully understanding the consequences for the people who live and work in these regions.

Our transition to renewable energy should not come at the expense of rural communities that provide the food and fibre for our nation. The approach taken by the NSW Government must be reassessed, and more meaningful consultation with affected landowners and local communities is essential.

I strongly urge the NSW Government to reevaluate the planning and development processes for REZ projects, with a focus on ensuring that landowners have a stronger voice in decisions that will affect their land, businesses, and way of life. The number of projects in an area needs to be capped to manage the impact on communities and their local resources. For example, in the small area between Dunedoo, Cassilis and Mudgee there were 28 projects proposed at the last NSW Farmers meeting I attended where this issue was discussed. This is too many for an area this size already struggling to provide resources such as doctors and childcare to existing residents. Not to mention the immediate impact on amenity and property values.

In conclusion, the current approach to the Renewable Energy Zones is putting rural communities, farmers, and businesses at significant risk. The lack of meaningful consultation and the overwhelming power imbalance between landowners, EnergyCo and development companies is leaving us feeling powerless and vulnerable. It is vital that the NSW Government reassesses its strategy to ensure that the concerns of local communities are genuinely considered, and that the negative impacts on their way of life are mitigated. A more balanced and transparent process is needed, where local voices are heard, and where the sustainability of both our energy future and rural communities can be achieved.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Regards,