

Submission  
No 127

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

**Organisation:** Edward River Council

**Date Received:** 14 February 2025

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14<sup>th</sup> February, 2024

To Whom it may Concern:

Submission on behalf of Edward River Council, completed by the Acting Manager Community and Economy to the [Inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones on rural and regional communities and industries in NSW](#)

### **Opening Statement**

Edward River Council fully supports the submission to the Inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones on rural and regional communities and industries in NSW as prepared by the NSW Office for Local Government.

The announcement of the South West Renewable Energy Zone has seen a significant impact on Council resources to meet the demands of continuous engagement and preparation of responses for over 15 State Significant Development projects.

Council requires substantial ongoing financial support and resources to help manage and administer processes to meet legislative requirements, as well as fulfil our role as advocates and representatives of our communities.

To maximise benefits and positive outcomes for communities and industries that will be impacted by the South West Renewable Energy Zone it is evident that all associated LGA's will benefit greatly from collaboration. Resources and support to foster and facilitate this will be required.

The ongoing impacts during project construction, commissioning and decommissioning are yet to be fully determined, so there must be ongoing monitoring and support for all LGA's and their communities.

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Current and projected socioeconomic, cultural, agricultural and environmental impacts of projects within renewable energy zones in New South Wales including the cumulative impacts**

##### Housing/Accommodation

Edward River Council has a short supply of housing to currently meet community needs. Additional demand on existing stock will negatively impact our community, particularly if the price point for affordable housing is affected by an increase in demand.

There is a limited supply of short term accommodation with our local supply estimated at a current capacity of 800 people with occupancy averaged at 65% across the 2023/2024 period. Local accommodation suppliers will need to meet existing tourism and business demand during peak visitation.

Housing availability is affecting the ability to attract and retain workers in the Edward River Council, having significant impacts on regional economic and population growth.

##### Recommendations:

1. *Development of strategies and initiatives to support increasing the availability of affordable housing in the short term for regional areas impacted. Work with local Councils to develop.*
2. *Accommodation providers will require proponents to have in advance for bookings to ensure that our local tourism and business industries that rely on access to short term accommodation are not interrupted.*
3. *Requirement for SSD proposals within the South West Renewable Energy Zone to supply temporary housing for worker with the intent to where possible repurpose the housing infrastructure for use within local regional communities that are impacted by construction.*



#### Essential Services

Existing shortages of doctors, dentists and emergency service providers will be exacerbated with the influx of workers expected during the construction phase of the transmission lines and renewable energy projects until commissioning is completed. Travel distances from locations where emergency services are housed to locations of possible emergency call outs must be taken into account given response and turn around times.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. *Review of possibly impact on essential services for regional communities.*
2. *Proponents of renewable energy projects provide essential service resources to alleviate pressure of limited resources in surrounding regional areas. Eg. Provide GP/nurse*

#### Traffic, Roads and Road Closures

There will be a significant impact on roads and traffic that is quite difficult to quantify at this point until project locations are announced and port to project routes determined.

Increase in traffic movements and road closures are expected to impact many in the community including the following (not limited to) road users/movements:

- Road transport service providers (Local/Interstate routes)
- Agricultural businesses and support businesses
- Movement of stock and grain to markets
- School bus movements
- Emergency Services
- Travelling Stock Routes

Given the sparse nature of our road network throughout the South West Renewable Energy Zone there will be additional pressure on our local roads that must be considered. Alternate routes are not necessarily available or useable (seasonality) so this impact will greatly affect communities in the region, not only the designated South West Renewable Energy Zone boundary.

Any local roads that are upgraded by proponents to access project sites will need to be maintained into the future past the life of the project. This cost should not be carried by Council rate payers.

#### *Recommendation:*

1. *Council should have additional financial support to maintain local roads beyond the life of the proposed projects (30 year +)*
2. *Communications regarding road closures and traffic movements must be planned well in advance and have the input from local communities in the region as the impact will affect businesses and services throughout the region.*

#### Waste Management Plans

Waste management plans must be provided in details encompassing commissioning, operation and decommissioning phases of renewable energy projects. Consultation with council must be conducted recognising current and future plans for waste management withing the LGA.

#### Water

Water requirements must be detailed in plans encompassing construction, commissioning, operation and decommissioning phases of renewable energy projects. Water consumption should be identified as potable and non-potable supply.

#### Impact area

The impact of the renewable energy projects for communities and local government assets will extend well beyond the boundary of the South West Renewable Energy Zone. Community members that are currently living within this boundary access a myriad of essential services from town centres that are not within the designated boundary. This is a critical point that must be addressed for accessing funding for impacted communities via the EnergyCo administered Community Employment and Benefit Fund.

#### *Recommendations:*

1. *EnergyCo's Community Employment and Benefit Fund must be accessible to support projects to be delivered outside the boundary of the South West Renewable Energy Zone.*

#### Monitoring Impacts



Impacts at a LGA level will need to be monitored ongoing. This will need to be funded and supported through allocation of funds and resource.

**Current and projected considerations needed with regards to fire risk, management and containment and potential implications on insurance for land holders and/or project proponents in and around Renewable Energy Zones**

Fire Risks

The Rural Fire Service relies on volunteers and it is not practical to solely rely on this service to manage and mitigate fire risk. Specialist training and equipment upgrades will be required to deal with fire risks associated with renewable energy projects.

Additional services should be available to service the Renewable Energy Zone and supporting developments to ensure quick response times can be achieved during bush fire events across the remote portion of the LGA.

Recommendation:

1. Specialised training and equipment supplied to Rural Fire Service staff and volunteers.
2. Additional specialised response teams established within the South West Renewable Energy Zone.