

Community Engagement Review

Report to the Minister for
Climate Change and Energy

December 2023

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Letter of transmittal

The Hon Chris Bowen MP
Minister for Climate Change and Energy
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister

I am pleased to provide the enclosed report to you regarding the Community Engagement Review. The report details the Review's observations and recommendations for your consideration.

In undertaking this Review, we sought and received written submissions from a wide range of stakeholders, conducted a comprehensive survey, and held a significant number of stakeholder group roundtable meetings and individual interviews.

The Review identified a number of pragmatic recommendations to materially improve community engagement effectiveness and outcomes.

Most recommendations will require a collaborative approach between the Commonwealth and states and territories to implement successfully.

However, most of the jurisdictions have commenced or launched programs and initiatives that are well aligned with one or more of the Review recommendations. I therefore expect this positive alignment will help facilitate strong collaboration and the ability to successfully progress the recommendations in a timely manner.

The recommendations, when implemented or completed, are designed to achieve ongoing excellence in community engagement and, more broadly, excellence in the execution of the energy transition. To do this properly, leaders will need to focus on:

- **People** – motivate developers to be on top of their game, led by experienced, respected quality engagement staff and management.
- **Places** – identify and promote selection of the best sites and corridors for locating projects going forward.
- **Process** – implement efficient and timely approval processes to reduce the amount of engagement required of community members, as well as mobilise and accelerate projects in the pipeline.
- **Projects** – select only those projects that have all the key ingredients to be successful that will materially contribute to the energy transition.

In implementing the various Review recommendations, it will be helpful not to lose sight of the above framework to keep focussed.

The Review has been very fortunate to have had such strong interest from the myriad of stakeholders across Australia that this Review encompasses.

We are extremely grateful to all of the stakeholders that met with us, provided submissions and/or completed the Review's 'HaveYourSay' survey. I deeply appreciate their willingness to openly convey views on the important issues examined by this Review.

I would also like to acknowledge and record my sincere thanks to the management and staff of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEE) – in particular, the Secretariat team, who provided tireless support, dedication and professionalism throughout the Review.

Lastly, I would like to recognise the Office of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC), who have continued their excellent service to the community, industry and government while I have been focussed on this Review.

In closing, I trust this Review and resulting report will be a valuable input in your considerations for immediate actions that can be implemented now to address the live issues we observed, along with longer term initiatives that should commence their journey in parallel.

Thank you for inviting me to lead this important Review. I look forward to your feedback on the report and discussing the report with you.

Sincerely

Andrew Dyer

Lead Reviewer

18 December 2023

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Overview

Background to the Review

Australia's electricity supply system is undergoing a significant transition from traditional coal-fired thermal generation to new-build renewable energy generation.

To make this change, a significant amount of new renewable generation capacity needs to be built and connected to the transmission grid. Much of the required transmission grid also needs to be built to open up new transmission corridors for the new generation capacity to be connected to the grid and the electricity generated to then be transmitted to users.

Many of our remaining coal-fired generation assets are approaching end of life. These assets are becoming less reliable and more costly to maintain, and depend on the ongoing availability and cost of coal. They will not be replaced.

Therefore, to ensure the security of our future electricity supply, the current coal generation capacity needs to be replaced. Renewable energy generation is expected to play a large role in our future electricity supply.

The Australian Government has committed to increasing the proportion of electricity that is produced from renewable energy sources to 82% by 2030. To put this in perspective, in 2022, 32% of Australia's electricity was generated from renewable sources.

At the same time, Australia needs to 'decarbonise' to meet the challenges of climate change and has committed to a target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The energy transition required to achieve these targets presents both challenges and opportunities for regional Australia. By its very nature, renewable energy generation from wind and solar requires a highly decentralised portfolio of generation assets and accompanying transmission lines, compared to our centralised coal generation portfolio.

Many communities will therefore be impacted in some way – from the prospecting and development phases of generation and transmission projects, through to the construction phase, and to when the assets have been commissioned and are in operation.

However, many communities will also benefit greatly from being part of this massive transition as the associated investment and economic opportunities materialise.

The transition cannot succeed without community participation and effective engagement over a long and sustained period of time. This review examines a range of issues to be resolved, and provides pragmatic and implementable recommendations to address known and anticipated challenges facing communities across the country.

If adopted and implemented, the recommendations in this report will go a long way to materially improve community engagement and maximise positive outcomes for communities along the journey ahead.

Process for the Review

The Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, announced the Community Engagement Review (the Review) on 4 July 2023. The Review has been led by Mr Andrew Dyer, supported by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

The Terms of Reference for the Review can be found in Appendix A.

The Review process included the following:

- an online, public survey
- the ability to make a written submission to the Review
- roundtable meetings held with an extensive representation of key stakeholder groups
- interview meetings held with individuals.

The Review held over 75 meetings throughout Australia, with more than 700 participants in attendance.

- The Review received:
 - over 500 submissions
 - over 250 survey responses.

The majority of survey responses were received from landholders and community members living in close proximity to renewable energy infrastructure and new transmission infrastructure.

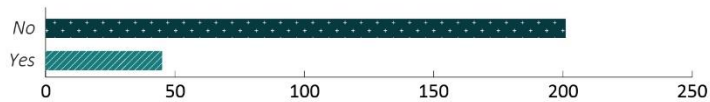
Approximately 20% of respondents currently host, or expect to host, renewable energy infrastructure.

Approximately 63% of respondents currently live within 5 km from an operating or proposed renewable energy or transmission infrastructure.

The relevant survey results are depicted in Image 1 on page 4.

Landholders and community members responded to these questions in the Review's HaveYourSay surveys.

Do you currently, or are you expecting to, host renewable energy infrastructure on your property?



What is the approximate distance of your home to operating or proposed renewable energy or transmission infrastructure?

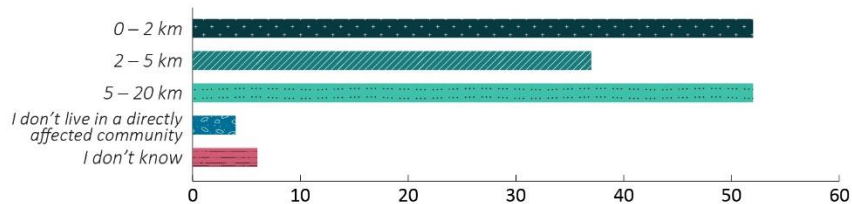


Image 1. Most landholders and community members who participated in the survey were not project hosts. However, they lived within 5 km of a proposed or operating project.

The Review Report was submitted to the Minister for consideration in December 2023.

Recommendations of the Review

This section documents the Review's recommendations, including observations from the consultation process and considerations for implementation. The recommendations are categorised into the following themes:

- **Theme 1.** Improve community engagement by motivating developers to achieve best practice and only selecting reputable developers for new project developments.
- **Theme 2.** Reduce and eliminate unnecessary community engagement by selecting the best project sites, and avoiding poor and inappropriate sites.
- **Theme 3.** Reduce and minimise the need for elongated community engagement by re-engineering planning and environmental assessment and approval processes.
- **Theme 4.** Reduce unresolved and lengthy complaints by ensuring best practice complaint handling, backed up with a new, relevant ombudsman scheme in each state.
- **Theme 5.** Improve community understanding of the need for the transition, including what is to be deployed in their region as well as where, when and why. Ensure appropriate governance is in place to manage the broader impacts of the transition as well as oversight of projects of national significance.
- **Theme 6.** Improve acceptance of the transition changes and impacts by engaging the community to identify opportunities and enable sustainable benefit sharing. These opportunities include local economic development in conjunction with numerous other opportunities that will benefit the broader community.

The following pages detail each recommendation, supporting observations and findings and implementation considerations.

A reference to *the Minister*, is a reference to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy.

A reference to *the jurisdictions*, is a reference to states and territories and, where applicable, the Commonwealth.

A reference to *a developer*, is a reference to a project prospector, project developer and/or project operator. That is, a reference to organisations that are involved in one or more of the life cycle stages of large-scale renewable energy generation, large-scale storage and new, long-distance transmission projects.

A *participant* is a person or group that participated in one or more of the Review's consultation activities, such as a roundtable, the survey, or made a submission.

Theme 1 – Developer performance and selection

Recommendations

The Review makes two key recommendations to improve engagement – by motivating developers to consistently deliver acceptable community engagement in the performance of their role, and by only selecting reputable developers who achieve these performance expectations for new projects.

Recommendation 1. The Minister to initiate a process to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced independent body or person to design, develop, implement and operate a developer rating scheme. The scheme would rate developers/operators of projects within the scope of this review. The scheme's design should be undertaken in consultation with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, along with peak bodies for local governments, industry, First Nations peoples and representative community groups.

The scheme should provide transparent, periodic ratings of developer engagement performance and capability. It should also be designed in such a way to motivate ongoing continuous improvement by the developers.

To expedite its launch, it is suggested that the scheme operate on a voluntary scheme basis, where developers can opt in or out at any time. The scheme would be open to developers and operators throughout Australia.

Recommendation 2. The Commonwealth, States and Territories to continue their deployment of programs to better plan and control development of new generation and transmission projects, whereby a developer is required to bid or apply to be selected to then prospect and develop a particular project at a particular site or location.

The Commonwealth and the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) to work with the jurisdictions to support the successful implementation of these programs, promote best practices across the jurisdictions and align federal programs and reforms, such as the Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS) and Rewiring the Nation (RTN), to further motivate adoption of these programs by developers and other project stakeholders.

Observations

In the HaveYourSay survey, the Review asked landholders and community members about their experience of engagement on renewable energy projects.

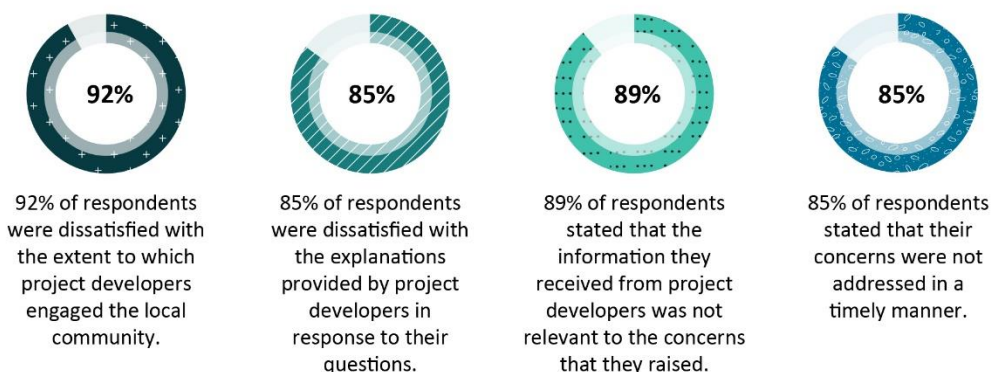


Image 2. Survey results indicate that landholders and community members were generally dissatisfied with the engagement that they received from project developers.

Poor engagement practices experienced by landholders and community members have led to a material distrust of project developers and, particularly, developers of new, long-distance transmission projects and prospective electricity generation projects along the proposed routes. There does not appear to be any formal scheme to rate or assess developers regarding their track record and capability in community engagement.

Further to the above, for many developers, the skills, experience and knowledge of engagement personnel and management are below community expectations, as are their supporting processes, collateral and the overall governance of the developer's engagement function. This ongoing situation limits the number of developers that are able to lead the energy transition and develop long-term, effective relationships with landholders, neighbours and the broader community. The community has been and remains quite vocal in their dissatisfaction with developer engagement to date through both traditional channels and extensive use of social media.

Land use planning frameworks, that clearly delineate areas that are ideal for energy infrastructure development, versus areas that are (or should be) prohibited, could be more transparent and may also need review and updating in some jurisdictions.

Development of projects in or near potentially inappropriate or marginal locations typically take years to obtain final approvals, and many are either still in the pipeline seeking such approvals or have languished.

The potential for new transmission lines and associated corridors has unleashed a plethora of wind and solar farm developers, descending on the planned routes to attempt to sign up nearby landholders with exclusive contracts over their land.

As a result, there are far more potential renewable generation projects being pursued by developers than the proposed transmission lines may actually accommodate, which can unnecessarily create uncertainty, anxiety and consultation fatigue. These scenarios can also lead to vigorous opposition to the proposed transmission lines, based largely on perception of the amount of generation it may enable, rather than the actual facts.

Landholders and the community have expressed concerns about the complexity of determining the payment and compensation amount for hosting transmission assets. While a potential host for a wind or solar farm is usually presented with the potential revenues in the first meeting with a developer, a potential transmission host may have to wait years before an amount is determined and an offer is made. Even then, it can be quite difficult to understand what payments will be received by the transmission host and when.

The typical perception in regional Australia is that landholders can earn significantly more revenue from hosting a wind or solar farm, compared to hosting an equivalent amount of transmission assets.

Entrepreneurial generation project developers are signing up landholders that have contiguous land parcels along a proposed transmission corridor. This could result in the generation project developer holding, effectively, control of a very large length of land along the transmission corridor easement. It may then impact negotiations to secure the easement, particularly if the proposed transmission route impacts the proposed generation project.

Generation developers can also leverage this, in effect, market power to secure much better terms and outcomes for the generation project and the associated landholders.

The recently launched Queensland Renewable Energy Landholder Toolkit¹ provides over 120 questions that landholders should ask prospective developers before deciding to continue discussions with the developer. The Toolkit's list of questions to ask is an extremely valuable set of insightful questions and a terrific resource for landholders. However, it begs the question of whether some of this due diligence could be undertaken more centrally rather than place this burden on each and every landholder.

Many Review participants were concerned about the quality of community engagement undertaken by developers and were eager to see developer capability enhanced.

The Review heard from some participants about a lack of trust in project developers, including government-owned corporations.

'The proponents simply cannot be trusted to tell the truth.'²

Local councils observed that greater consistency in engagement practices by developers would improve community confidence.³

Many participants advocated for an approach that enabled developers to be held accountable if performance fell below the expected standard.

'Proponents don't do the work because they are not required to do the work. There is no imperative or consequence to not doing it.'⁴

Some participants advocated for the establishment of a code of conduct or minimum standards.

'We would like a national, enforceable code to ensure that transmission infrastructure has enforceable guidelines.'⁵

Other participants suggested an incentive-based approach.

‘Providing incentive-based arrangements may be more likely to motivate companies to go ‘above and beyond.’⁶

Some developers expressed frustration about the wider negative impact that poor quality community engagement has on the reputation of the industry.⁷ They were supportive of a scheme that would enable communities to identify capable and quality developers and build community confidence with developers who are effective in engagement and have a culture of integrity and professionalism.⁸

There was acknowledgement by Review participants that industry and government are already taking steps to address these issues. For example, there was encouraging support and acknowledgement for the recent inaugural Land Agent skill development program, sponsored and developed by TasNetworks and the Tasmanian Government in June 2023. The Energy Charter has now replicated the program, which was recently held in Melbourne and intended to be held around Australia going forward.

First Nations peoples that participated in the Review, including the First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee, stated that there is a need for cultural change within the sector.⁹ They emphasised that developers should ensure that their employees and contractors have completed appropriate cultural awareness training prior to going on site.¹⁰ This is also reflected in the feedback received by the Review from the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy.¹¹

Also, First Nations peoples, including the First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee, emphasised the need for early, constructive engagement to establish long-lasting relationships with project developers and operators, commencing at the prospecting stage, and throughout the life of new infrastructure.¹² They described feeling that their interests were dwarfed by those of the majority township during consultation and that developers did not place sufficient emphasis on the interests of First Nations people.¹³

The Review also heard from a wide range of participants, particularly community groups and landholders, about consultation fatigue. Fatigue can arise because of multiple developers investigating potential projects within the same area. It also can arise from very long project timelines due to the extensive amount of time it can take to conduct, complete and submit environmental and planning assessments for approval. Both of these scenarios may require ongoing involvement and engagement with the community – particularly if there is a change in project circumstances, such as a change in project scope or transmission line route or rating.

As stated earlier, a proposed development of new transmission infrastructure opens up new geography with the potential for new grid connections. Developers often compete to acquire exclusive land access to investigate projects in proximity to the proposed route. Landholders in most jurisdictions stated that they had been approached by multiple developers – all seeking to gain access to their land to investigate a potential project.¹⁴

The number of developers prospecting within a defined area can give the local community the perception that they will be inundated with large-scale wind, solar and storage projects. It can also place a significant burden on landholders and surrounding community members to engage with many more prospective projects than will actually be developed and built.¹⁵

Many participants expressed the desire to see greater controls over project development with a view to reducing the consultation burden from projects that are unlikely to progress.

'We expect that many approved projects will never see the light of day. Why put the community through that?'¹⁶

Implementation

Recommendation 1

Renewable energy generation and transmission developers, and the industry more broadly, could materially benefit from some form of independent rating scheme to provide transparency on developer performance, track record and capability, particularly in relation to community engagement. The rating and the rating process also could become a significant motivational tool for the developer's management to further improve the developer's performance and their rating score.

Developer ratings could be used by jurisdictions as a part of their selection criteria and/or as a prerequisite for granting authority to a developer to prospect or develop a particular site or project.

To be eligible for an acceptable rating score to achieve and maintain/improve their rating, a developer would be assessed against a published set of criteria. The assessment criteria would be developed in consultation with key stakeholders including governments, industry and community peak bodies.

Developers with a current and acceptable rating may have access to a wide range of federal and state programs.

For example, emerging programs such as the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap Tenders, the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework (VTIF), Queensland's Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Management Plan, along with equivalent programs being developed in other jurisdictions, could include the requirement for bidders to hold an acceptable developer rating score, either as a criterion for selection or as a requirement for eligibility.

Key considerations for designing and implementing Recommendation 1 include:

- A rating scheme for developers may be best managed and provided at a national level. Views expressed to the Review by industry and government representatives gave the impression that industry and governments are supportive of a transparent rating scheme, but would prefer a single, national scheme rather than having to manage and maintain multiple ratings schemes across all state and territory jurisdictions.
- There would need to be an upfront effort to enable developers to apply for an initial rating, and to be assessed in a timely manner.
- The scheme could be either mandatory or voluntary. There is merit for the rating scheme to be a voluntary scheme for developers to establish the scheme and gain a critical mass of participants.
- Scheme participants would include developers of new generation and storage projects, owner-operators of generation and storage projects along with developers and operators of new transmission projects.
- Consideration should also be given to including construction companies that can have a significant presence and role with community engagement, along with consultants and contracting firms that are heavily engaged with communities and landholders in their roles.
- To establish the scheme in a timely manner and build critical mass, it may be preferable that the Commonwealth provide initial funding to establish the scheme, then move to a user pays model on a cost recovery basis once the scheme is well established.

Recommendation 2

The Review observed strong support across the board for programs that have controls to select developers to prospect and develop specified projects in a specific area (such as within a REZ). This is very much the case when it comes to offshore wind farm development controls.

Most jurisdictions are considering or implementing programs that give appropriate controls to the jurisdiction to select developers for designated onshore projects and locations, rather than the open-access developer prospecting model that has been in place for the last two or more decades.

For example, the recently passed *Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023* in South Australia would introduce a competitive tender process for feasibility licenses. The licenses are to be issued over pastoral (or other government-owned) land that has been declared after a consultative process involving government agencies, native title holders and other impacted stakeholders.

For privately owned land, developers would need to negotiate a commercial agreement with landholders to secure the land. Landholders could well benefit from limiting their discussions to only developers that have an acceptable rating score.

The overall development process would include the following licenses:

- **Renewable energy feasibility licence/permit** – Enables exploration for renewable energy, including construction of monitoring equipment.
- **Renewable energy infrastructure licence** – Permits construction, operation, decommissioning and rehabilitation of renewable energy infrastructure.
- **Renewable energy research licence** – Permits construction, operation, decommissioning and rehabilitation of renewable energy infrastructure for the purpose of researching the capabilities of a technology, system or process.

As discussed in the first recommendation, jurisdictions ideally should be able to select developers for projects that can clearly demonstrate their capabilities and approach to community engagement, as well as other essential criteria.

These capabilities would include demonstrating the effectiveness of the developer's management systems, governance, skills and training of engagement staff, and the ability of senior management and the board to obtain feedback from key stakeholders in the community. It would also include demonstrating their ability to act on material feedback and resolve issues as and when required.

Jurisdictions should also consider in their selection criteria a weighting towards developers that have an appropriate organisational culture that supports the ability to work effectively with communities and landholders. It is essential that developers demonstrate their capability for best practice engagement with First Nations peoples.

Additionally, developers should demonstrate an ability to work with diverse local communities. About half (49%) of the landholder and community members that completed the Review's online survey considered that information they had received about a project or projects in their area was not culturally appropriate.

The Commonwealth has numerous ways of supporting jurisdictions in implementing programs that allow them to select developers for appropriate projects at an appropriate location. For example, the Commonwealth could align programs such as the CIS, RTN, Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) project financing, and power purchase agreements (PPAs) with Federal entities, along with other mechanisms – potentially providing a suite of additional benefits and opportunities to the developer by participating in the program.

Again, the selection criteria for these programs could include a consideration or requirement that the developer holds and maintains an appropriate community engagement rating score (see Recommendation One).

The Commonwealth can also provide best practice advice and support to jurisdictions through the AEIC and other relevant market bodies and agencies.

Key considerations for implementing Recommendation 2 include:

- The Review was delighted to observe that most, if not all, jurisdictions have commenced, launched or started developing programs that align site selection, project selection and the selection of a quality developer. Done properly and well, these programs will pave the way for a quality portfolio of projects with effective engagement by those projects across Australia.
- The AEIC should meet with each state and territory to further understand the status of programs discussed in this recommendation.
- From these discussions, the AEIC may assist jurisdictions with advice and guidance including program design and ensuring the program will motivate developers to consistently deliver effective community engagement.
- DCCEEW, working with the AEIC, AEMO, CEFC and other federal agencies, can develop a list of programs and benefits that could be made available to projects or developers that have been selected by a jurisdictional program and, preferably, hold an appropriate community engagement rating (see Recommendation One).
- Progress reporting on these important programs could occur at ECMC.

Case study: Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023 (SA)

The South Australian Government has enacted the *Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023* (HRE Act). Pursuant to this legislation, the SA Government, after consultation with stakeholders, will identify government and privately owned land and state waters likely to be appropriate for hosting renewable energy projects.

The HRE Act will facilitate a straightforward, competitive, government-led approach to renewable energy development in the state. The HRE Act applies to both freehold and government-owned land, as well as state waters. It should ensure community and investor certainty and clarity, along with consistently reliable performance across the social, environmental and safety aspects of the industry.

On freehold land, proponents will need to secure access to land through direct agreement with landowners, preserving current arrangements. A new competitive system will be introduced to confer access and licences for projects on pastoral land and state waters, enabling the government to responsibly assign access to some of the state's prospective areas for renewable energy development.

The declaration of these release areas will only occur after a consultative process involving government agencies, native title holders, and other impacted stakeholders. The declaration will enable a competitive tender process for feasibility licences over that land and waters, with applicants to compete based on transparent selection criteria.

This will ensure the state only hosts those projects willing to embrace co-existence with current land uses and deliver community and environmental benefits through their projects.

Source: Department of Energy and Mining, South Australia 2023

Case study: NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap Tenders

Managed by AEMO Services, eligible renewable generation projects located across NSW, which will be connecting to existing transmission and distribution infrastructure, may bid via a tender process to be selected to develop the project.

Projects seeking to connect to new network infrastructure in declared REZs, which require both a long-term energy service agreement (LTESA) and an access right, must bid for both products simultaneously in a single competitive tender round.

The merit criteria used to assess the quality of projects seeking an LTESA, an access right, or both products simultaneously are substantially the same.

The roadmap emphasises regional development and positive outcomes for local communities.

Consequently, the merit criteria consider a range of aspects, including community engagement, shared benefits, First Nations peoples participation, benefit sharing and broader regional economic development growth. These merit criteria are a significant component used to identify suitable projects to be shortlisted.

These important non-price matters are assessed first – before a shortlist of proposals is progressed to the financial value bid stage.

More information can be found at:

<https://aemoservices.com.au/tenders/tender-round-4-generation-infrastructure>

Theme 2 – Selecting the best sites

Recommendations

The Review makes the following recommendation to improve community engagement through land use planning, optimal site selection and better transparency.

Recommendation 3. States and territories to support and expedite sourcing information that is necessary for contemporary land use planning. Mapping of this information will assist with better identification of highly preferred locations for new projects, as well as provide confirmation regarding ‘no-go’ or inappropriate zones. Planning authorities, developers and other stakeholders should carefully review this information and associated maps before commencing any prospecting or development activity at a site.

Information could be sourced from a diverse range of sources, including local and state governments, national parks, world heritage parks, First Nations peoples, peak agricultural associations and peak environment associations.

Observations

Relevant observations from the Review in support of these recommendations are discussed below.

- A poor site (or route) selection can quickly lead to community opposition to a project, causing delays and elongated project timelines. Throughout this period, communities may be in constant engagement with the project, from dealing with requests for land access surveys through to project update presentations. The time commitment alone to participate in engagement-related activities can be an enormous burden on community members and landholders. That, together with the anxiety surrounding the uncertainty of whether or not the project will proceed or when it will proceed, make for a poor engagement experience.
- There is a need for an integrated development plan for renewable energy generation and transmission infrastructure combined. Participants expressed interest in more transparent frameworks to identify the areas that are ideal for infrastructure development and those that should be avoided. Early identification of sites appropriate for development will

support developers to avoid marginal locations that may be subject to significant delays in the planning process.

- Review participants advocated for nationally consistent land use mapping to identify and address competing land use issues.¹⁷ Local councils sought visibility on how renewable infrastructure interacts with other overlays such as housing and national parks.¹⁸ Agricultural groups perceived the current development plan as sporadic and expressed concerns about the unintended consequences on food and fibre production.¹⁹ Some agricultural groups emphasised that there are a wide range of industries within the sector with varied land use needs and potential impacts.²⁰
- The First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee advocated for greater resourcing being applied to land use planning to better identify areas that are not appropriate for development due to cultural heritage.²¹ They sought collaborative, transparent top-down planning processes and emphasised that government and developers should demonstrate a willingness to take on their views during specific project planning and approval process.²²
- The First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee also emphasised the unique connection that First Nations people have to land, and they advocated for greater appreciation of the tangible and intangible impacts of development.²³ They expressed disappointment that their land rights are often perceived as a threat to a project rather than an opportunity.²⁴

Commonwealth, state and territory governments are taking steps to further develop their existing land use mapping programs and content. As an example, the Queensland Government is working with the Commonwealth's Regional Planning Initiative to develop three pilot bioregional plans so to better protect areas that matter for the environment and allow for faster development decisions through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC).

Queensland Government have a well-established function to map land uses for the benefit of government, the private sector, research agencies and community groups.

Implementation

As this recommendation relates to work already underway in the jurisdictions, to progress this recommendation, the Review suggests the following next steps:

- The AEIC should meet with each jurisdiction, including the Commonwealth, to further understand the scope and status of programs in place (or being developed) consistent with this recommendation. Examples of current programs include Queensland's integrated planning and mapping service, the VTIF and the Commonwealth's Regional Planning Initiative (RPI).
- From these discussions, the AEIC may suggest approaches the Commonwealth and jurisdictions could take to build on the work already underway that would lead to fulfilling this recommendation. The AEIC could also share and advocate for best practice processes across the jurisdictions.
- One approach could be for the Commonwealth to establish a working group with representatives from each jurisdiction to take leadership of this recommendation and help ensure consistency in process and outcomes across the jurisdictions where appropriate.
- AEMO is well positioned to provide information that would lead to producing and updating an integrated generation and transmission plan. In addition to the current Integrated System Plan (ISP), this map and supporting information would include guidance on new transmission line capacity limitations, as well as preferred generation locations along the transmission lines (type and scale) – from a system operator's perspective. State and territory governments could provide this mapped information via a jurisdiction-based portal, contextualised for the jurisdiction, that includes other jurisdiction-specific information.
- Local governments should be consulted in the development and deployment of land use planning and mapping information programs and are likely to be an essential source of local on-the-ground knowledge.
- Transmission developers also have a key role in publishing up-to-date online interactive maps. These maps should clearly display proposed transmission easements and the location of properties, houses, sheds, paddock boundaries, existing wind farm turbines, solar arrays, schools, airstrips – through to potentially sacred indigenous areas. Maps should also identify potential no-go areas that had not been previously picked up via the jurisdictional assessment process.

- The Commonwealth can support the jurisdictions in this essential activity by integrating any federal overlays with the relevant jurisdiction and, where practical, facilitating best practices and consistency in information and definitions. Further, the Commonwealth has established the RPI as part of the broader EPBC Act reform, providing an established vehicle to progress these matters.
- Project maps should be easily accessible and available online – at no cost to users.
- Functionality should include the ability to look up a property address and view its proximity to a proposed project, be it a proposed wind turbine or solar array locations, or a proposed transmission line corridor.
- Maps could include interactive capability where appropriate, allowing a user to highlight an area of interest or concern and provide further details if necessary.

Case study: Regional Planning Initiative

The RPI is one component of the Australian Government's response to the review of the EPBC Act and is included as an action under the *Nature Positive Plan*. The RPI will develop landscape-scale and/or seascape-scale regional plans with discrete regulatory zones that prioritise restoring and conserving environment and heritage values and facilitate priority development in places with lower environment and heritage values.

Priority areas for consideration under the RPI will be locations experiencing development pressure, including those with high biodiversity values, with a focus on urban growth, renewable energy, and critical minerals.

Case study: Victorian Transmission Investment Framework

The Victorian Government has proposed to address competing land use issues through the VTIF, as detailed in the VTIF final design paper. The VTIF includes a Strategic Land Use Assessment (SLUA) that would identify the lowest impact, most acceptable areas within REZs – where transmission could be sited – and a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA). The MCA would determine how investment could be allocated across Victoria's REZs in a way that balances environmental, heritage and social values with the need to deliver affordable, clean and reliable electricity.

The SLUA includes two processes:

- a technical, geo-spatial mapping process, to quantitatively assess siting options and multiple land use factors using a range of data layers.
- a social engagement process, to ensure that community and stakeholder values and feedback help to shape outcomes.

Importantly, engagement with the community would occur much earlier than it does in the current transmission planning process.

Victoria has derogated from the National Electricity Law to implement initiatives such as SLUA and MCA within recent transmission planning decisions associated with Victorian to New South Wales Interconnector West and the Western Renewables Link.

Theme 3 – Reform environmental and planning approvals

Recommendations

The Review makes the following recommendation to improve community engagement through more effective, time-efficient processes for environmental planning and approvals.

Recommendation 4. To progress, complete and expedite the deployment of process reforms currently being contemplated by the jurisdictions, which will materially improve processes and help reduce the time needed to obtain planning and environmental approvals for projects.

This recommendation would integrate current work being undertaken by the Commonwealth on reforms to the EPBC Act regarding assessment and approvals processes.

Observations

The opportunity exists to materially improve project planning and environmental approval processes, particularly those that need to be expedited for significant, priority projects. Such processes should be designed to fairly include the community's perspective and input.

As per Recommendation 3, potential no-go zones and preferred zones for development are to be identified by jurisdictional planning authorities in consultation with environment authorities, local government, First Nations peoples, agriculture and farming associations, and experts – including peak bodies such the National Farmers Federation, Victorian Farmers Federation, NSW Farmers Association, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and Queensland Farmers Federation.

Identifying the appropriateness, or otherwise, of a proposed site will help eliminate projects being developed that are unlikely to gain approval – removing a substantial burden on the community, local government and the relevant planning authorities.

Participants expressed frustration with the time taken for a project to progress through the planning process.²⁵ The Review heard from both host landholders and project opponents who conveyed that uncertainty about whether a project would proceed – and/or when it would proceed – was

having a negative impact on their mental health.²⁶ Additionally, participants expressed frustration with the short timeframes available for them to engage in the actual approval process when compared with lengthy periods they were required to wait for proponent responses.²⁷

The following image sets out the high-level general planning and approvals process steps for renewable energy and high-voltage transmission infrastructure projects. This illustrates the numerous stages of development and consultation, which occur prior to project approval. The entire process can extend over several years.



¹ For renewable energy projects, the initial agreement is usually a licence agreement for land access with an option to lease the land for the life of the project. For transmission infrastructure projects, the initial agreement is usually limited to land access for the planning phase of the project.

² This phase includes land access to complete field surveys including cultural heritage surveys, environmental surveys and feasibility studies.

³ For renewable energy projects, this phase usually involves the exercise of the option to lease the land included in the initial agreement. For transmission infrastructure projects, this phases usually involves a separate agreement for easement acquisition.

Image 3. Landholders and community members expressed concern about the complexity and duration of their engagement in the planning process. They emphasised the time they invest to participate and the impact of prolonged uncertainty about the outcome of the process on their mental health.

Case study: Community concern and project delays from poor site selection

The Review heard from community members concerned about a proposed wind farm at a nearby ridge location. The project was initially prospected by an early-stage developer, subsequently selling the project to a large multi-national development and operations company.

The proposed project has now been in the planning and approvals process for several years, which has created ongoing uncertainty for the local community – including potential host landholders. Due to its ridge-top location, the community has expressed concerns about the inability to use existing roads and/or build a new road to transport equipment to the site. Concerns have also been raised about potential soil erosion, possible changes to hydrology flows and the transmission line connection to the main grid.

The project has faced significant community opposition during the planning process. Due to the substantial number of objections received, the project has now been referred to the state's Independent Planning Commission for consideration.

Implementation

The integration and use of strategic mapping in the site selection process will provide jurisdictions with the opportunity to clearly identify no-go zones, along with 'go' or 'more information required' zones. This should help jurisdictions considerably when justifying the most appropriate areas for development of large-scale renewable energy assets and new transmission infrastructure. Equally, it should clearly identify areas to avoid, such as areas of high agricultural, environmental and cultural values.

To initiate the actions and activities to give effect to this recommendation, AEIC should meet with the jurisdictions and relevant local governments to further understand the scope and status of process reform programs currently in place or under development.

Consideration should be given to:

- opportunities to leverage the process reform work already underway across jurisdictions, including the Australian Government's RPI, various state and local government initiatives, and the reform of the EPBC Act currently in progress
- the evolution of contemporary mapping technology and how to utilise it to derive further process and timeline improvements to the planning and environmental approvals process
- an ongoing consultation program with key stakeholders, including environment, strategic, agriculture peak bodies and First Nations peoples with the view to examine ways to further reform, while maintaining appropriate levels of engagement with key stakeholders
- holding focus groups to gain detailed perspectives and insights on the current processes from various stakeholders, in particular from local government, community, landholders and First Nations peoples.

Similar to Recommendation 3, the Commonwealth to establish a working group, with representatives from each jurisdiction, to take leadership of this recommendation and help ensure consistency in process and outcomes across the jurisdictions where appropriate.

Theme 4 – Complaint management

Recommendations

The Review makes the following recommendation to improve community engagement through implementing effective external dispute resolution schemes.

Recommendation 5. State and, where applicable, territory governments to establish and implement a new ombudsman function focussed on handling complaints about the prospecting, development, construction, operation and decommissioning of renewable energy generation, large-scale storage and new transmission infrastructure.

The Commonwealth and the AEIC to provide advice and guidance, if requested, to support the jurisdictions in the design and implementation of this recommendation, as well as to provide a point of national coordination for systemic issues, best practice and cross-border matters.

Observations

Landholders and community members who responded to the Review's survey were generally dissatisfied with the way that developers handled complaints, including the timeliness of complaint handling, the information provided and the resolution of complaints.

In the HaveYourSay survey, the Review asked community members and landholders about their experience of complaints management by developers of renewable energy generation, storage and transmission assets.

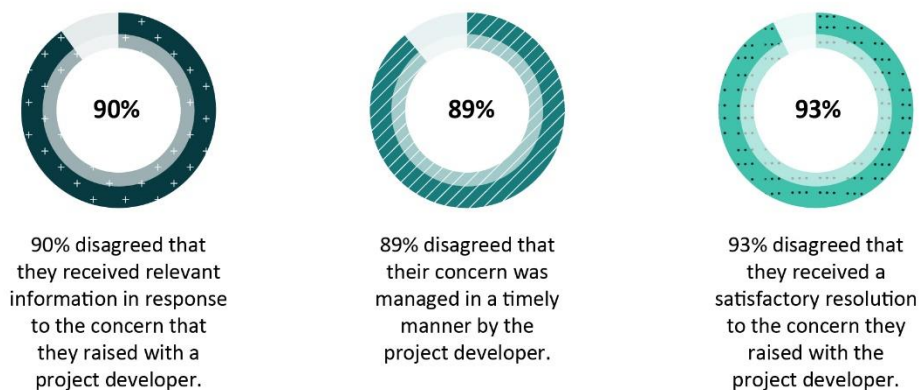


Image 4. Survey results indicate that landholders and community members were generally dissatisfied with developer responses to their complaints.

The Review observed that, in addition to making a complaint directly to the project developer, many landholders and community members forwarded or re-stated their complaint to other forums.

These forums included state-based Energy and Water Ombudsmen, the AEIC, state and federal ministers, members of parliaments, local government and, in some instances, tribunals and courts. Some complainants also engaged lawyers to represent them in relation to their complaint.

Local governments advised that they are often the first point of contact for community members with questions, concerns and complaints about renewable energy projects.²⁸

However, local governments are not well equipped to handle complaints about these matters as they generally have limited visibility of the planning and approvals process, or resources to handle complaints. Local governments are also often left with the responsibility for compliance and handling compliance complaints. It would be fair to say that most local governments are not well resourced to fulfil this important role, and this was a systemic issue raised by the shires and councils that participated in the Review.

Local governments generally have no powers to settle a complaint that involves damages.

As a result of these various constraints, local governments may have little choice but to refer the complaint to the developer or to either an external dispute resolution forum or to the responsible planning authority.²⁹

The AEIC receives complaints from community members about large-scale wind, solar and energy storage facilities, as well as new transmission projects. Typically, the AEIC assists the complainant to confirm which organisation is the appropriate respondent to the complaint. The AEIC then collects the critical information required about the complaint from the complainant and refers the matter to the respondent (usually the developer). Importantly, the AEIC seeks and captures from the complainant what practical outcome the complainant is seeking to resolve the complaint.

Respondents are required to advise the AEIC how they intend to handle the complaint and the AEIC may provide guidance to the respondent regarding their intended approach. If the complaint is not resolved through this process, the AEIC may escalate the complaint within the respondent's organisation, conciliate the matter or refer the matter to an external dispute resolution forum. The AEIC's complaint handling procedure and policy can be found at www.aeic.gov.au.

In some jurisdictions, Energy and Water Ombudsmen currently handle complaints related to the development of new transmission infrastructure. These complaints are usually related to land access disputes. However, the primary jurisdiction of these ombudsmen is energy and water retail and distribution related complaints, such as billing or tariff disputes, disconnections, reconnections and network outages. The inclusion of high-voltage transmission project complaints in current charters is usually limited to land access related matters. Complaints about renewable energy generation projects and large-scale storage projects are not currently within the scope of these ombudsmen.

Implementation

The primary options to consider for the proposed new ombudsman scope would include:

- expanding the jurisdiction of existing Energy and Water Ombudsmen to include community complaints about renewable energy generation, large-scale storage and new transmission projects
- establishing a new, dedicated ombudsman in each jurisdiction to handle the new scope
- expanding the State Ombudsman jurisdiction to handle the new scope
- expanding the role of the Commonwealth Ombudsman to handle some or all of the new scope on a national basis
- expanding a related industry ombudsman or commissioner to handle some or all of the new scope at a state or territory level, such as the GasFields Commission established by the Queensland Government.

Implementation of this recommendation would be consistent with the recent recommendation of the New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development.

‘That the NSW Government consider the creation of an independent ombudsman to oversee consultation upon, and rollout of, renewable energy projects and transmission infrastructure in New South Wales and to receive and handle complaints about these processes.’³⁰

Implementation by expanding the role of existing ombudsman where possible, would be consistent with the recommendation of the Productivity Commission, being:

‘Consideration should be given to subsuming new roles within existing ombudsmen rather than creating new bodies.’³¹

In considering how best to implement this recommendation, the Review suggests that the jurisdiction of the external dispute resolution body should include:

- renewable energy generation, large-scale storage facilities (including pumped hydro energy storage) and new, high-voltage transmission projects throughout the life cycle of these projects, including planning and development, construction, operation, decommissioning and rehabilitation
- handling complaints from community members, host landholders and neighbours throughout the project lifecycle
- matters arising from private agreements, such as access agreements (transmission), licence agreements (generation/storage), hosting agreements (generation/storage) and option for easement agreements (transmission). The ombudsman’s role would be primarily related to being a mediator or conciliator for disputes that arise from the agreement
- matters related to opposed entry (land access), compulsory easement or land acquisition, property damage and payment disputes
- sufficient powers to settle complaints up to a practical and reasonable financial threshold.

In addition, the Review suggests that:

- All developers should be required to become members of the relevant ombudsman scheme in the states they operate in.
- The developer should bear the cost of the services provided when a complaint is made.
- Consistent with Recommendation One, developers must have easily accessible complaint handling processes that conform to the Australian Standard.
- The ombudsman could entertain reducing fees to those developers that hold an acceptable developer engagement rating (see Recommendation One).
- The ombudsman should maintain a record of complaint data and provide public annual reports on complaint data and resolutions.
- The ombudsman should have the ability to track and compile information on systemic issues, and work with the AEIC and other ombudsmen to identify proactive solutions to the issue.

It will be essential for these schemes to appoint appropriate personnel with the necessary domain knowledge, skills and experience into key roles. They should have the ability to conduct site visits and work proactively with key stakeholder groups such as emergency services, local governments, agricultural associations, First Nations peoples, community groups, members of parliaments, industry and government.

Theme 5 – Messaging and governance

Recommendations

The Review makes the following recommendations to improve engagement-related transition communications programs and whole-of-government involvement in management of the energy transition and governance of the nationally significant transition projects.

Recommendation 6. The Minister to initiate a process for the development and execution of a communications program that provides local communities with a clear narrative about the pragmatic reasons for the energy transition.

The narrative should include articulating why there is an urgent need for new renewable energy and transmission infrastructure in their locality. It should also provide details of the likely proposed developments, such as location, type and scale of generation and storage projects, as well as proposed transmission routes and voltage rating (e.g. such as a 500kV transmission line).

The design of the communications program should include engagement with local community groups, local governments, local members of parliaments, First Nations peoples and other local stakeholders, where renewable energy infrastructure is being deployed.

Recommendation 7. The Commonwealth to work with state and territory governments to review and/or implement appropriate oversight governance arrangements that should be in place for transition projects of national significance.

The Commonwealth to work with state and territory governments to ensure appropriate governance and leadership arrangements exist, nationally and in each jurisdiction, to provide a cross-discipline, whole-of-government approach to deliver the infrastructure and resources required to support the energy transition.

Observations

The Review heard from participants about the need for a national overarching narrative about the energy transition.

‘There is not currently an overarching national narrative that gives households and communities the ability to see themselves as part of the energy transformation and to understand the critical need for transmission for energy security and climate action.’³²

One participant compared this to information campaigns that have previously been developed for efficient water use, cancer awareness and drink driving.³³

Various participants told the Review about the need for trusted sources of information for communities.

‘There have been ad-hoc attempts to fill the information gap with industry factsheets, state inquiries, and more. However, as of yet, not enough has been done to ensure communities have a trusted, reliable source of clear information about the transition to renewables.’³⁴

Participants also emphasised that communication should occur in both directions. Government should ensure communities are actively engaged in shaping and benefiting from the energy transition.

‘Communities need support in the form of education and information so that they can actively participate in shaping and benefitting from the energy transformation happening in their region.’³⁵

The Review heard from some state governments that they are aware of the need for a government-led narrative about the energy transition and are working to establish a coordinating body and ‘one-stop shop’ for information about energy infrastructure.³⁶

Local government said that they would like better education on the energy transition to better inform their communities and other levels of government with insight into local industry and economic development opportunities.³⁷

The Review heard from advocacy groups that better resourcing of local government and community organisations would improve community engagement and empower communities to make the most of the opportunities that may arise from the transition.³⁸

The First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee spoke about the importance of free, prior and informed consent throughout the energy transition.³⁹ They emphasised the need for First Nations people to have an equal stake in development negotiations through land rights that provide them with more control over the projects that occur on their land.⁴⁰

The Review heard from landholders and community members that there is a lack of clarity about the plan for the transition. Landholders felt persecuted by community opposition to projects and 'hung out to dry' by government.⁴¹ They told the Review that they would have benefitted from government engaging with the local community about the project and the energy transition.⁴²

Participants were especially concerned about the cumulative impacts for regions that would host large numbers of projects.

Implementation

Recommendation 6

The Review suggests that consideration be given to the following:

- Messaging is required in addition to the current narrative about international, national and state targets related to the penetration of renewable energy and also levels of emissions.
- The narrative should include information about why there is an urgent need for new renewable energy and transmission infrastructure in their locality. The information should also provide details of the likely proposed developments, such as the location for the project, the type (e.g. wind, solar, transmission etc.), the scale of generation and storage projects, and proposed corridors for transmission routes and voltage rating (e.g. 500kV transmission line).
- The information should also include messaging about the practical and pragmatic reasons for the energy transition, the limited time available to achieve these significant changes, and the benefits of the energy transition from a regional community perspective.
- Community members – including landholders, farmers, residents and First Nations peoples – as well as local governments, local members of parliaments, and local facilities (emergency services, schools, sporting facilities etc.) would likely benefit from being informed on these topics, with up-to-date information about what is planned for their locality.
- Such information will likely ease local anxieties, often driven by misinformation, and allow community members to have confidence that the plan is manageable and the end result will make a material contribution to the transition outcome.
- There should be communications targeted at the local area (e.g. REZ), as well as communications at state, territory and national levels.

- The mediums of communication could include:
 - local, regional and state media (print, radio, television)
 - advertising (as above)
 - information centres strategically located in appropriate localities
 - webinars
 - briefings to local community groups, local councils, local business community and chamber of commerce, local chapters of the farming and agriculture associations, schools, First Nations peoples and local emergency responders.
- Much of the local energy transition plan information could be provided and sourced from the relevant state body (such as VicGrid in Victoria, Powerlink in Queensland etc). AEMO may be able to assist the state bodies by providing a further breakdown of the ISP to the state, and REZ level including details of the type, location and scale of expected/required generation and storage assets – together with details of existing generation and grid assets.
- The Review also suggests consideration of appointing an eminent, respected and independent spokesperson to engage the nation and be the ongoing champion of the energy transition – a role not dissimilar to the one fulfilled by Sir John Monash as the leader, spokesperson and champion of Victoria’s massive energy transition in the 1920s.
- States may also consider the value and impact in establishing a similar role to the above at the State level.

Recommendation 7

Project oversight governance

A state government executive should be appointed to establish and lead an oversight advisory committee (or equivalent) to help oversee and provide advice to the major, nationally significant transmission projects being implemented in the state (or across multiple jurisdictions).

- An example is the Joint Oversight Committee for the Western Renewables Link (WRL) and VNI-West transmission projects in Victoria. This joint advisory committee comprises the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (Chair), the CEO of VicGrid, the AEIC, the executive general manager of networks at AEMO and the executive project managers for WRL (AusNet) and VNI-West (Transmission Company Victoria).
- Other examples include the Rewiring the Nation Advisory Committee and Marinus Link Ownership Group.

Whole-of-government governance

Appropriate governance arrangements should be established in each jurisdiction that provide a cross-discipline, whole-of-government approach to preparing for and executing the energy transition.

The structure may vary by jurisdiction, but it should encompass the ability to oversee essential issues to solve, including source/port to project transportation, contractor accommodation, human resources and skill development.

Jurisdictions should consider appointing a senior executive (e.g. at the Secretary or Deputy Secretary level) to lead and oversee the whole-of-government plan to enable and facilitate the transition. This should ideally be via an appropriate committee or taskforce with members who can execute on their part of the plan.

Some state governments have commenced various arrangements to tackle this significant component of the transition. For example, in NSW EnergyCo and NSW Transport have entered into a memorandum of understanding related to addressing the significant road infrastructure challenges in some REZ areas, in particular, Central-West Orana.

Queensland has put in place the institutional architecture and governance to support a coordinated energy transformation. An energy transformation interdepartmental committee has also been established with senior representation at the Director-General level to oversee the implementation of the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan, and to address emerging issues related to the energy transformation. Sub-committees have also been established to address matters at an operational level and share information across agencies.

The Queensland Government has also established new advisory bodies under the *Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023*. They are:

- the Queensland Energy System Advisory Board
- the Energy Industry Council
- the Queensland Renewable Energy Jobs Advocate.

Establishing a coordinated, cross-jurisdictional approach to oversee and communicate on key issues surrounding the energy transition will support communities to better understand and engage with overall transition occurring in their locality.

Participants identified a range of potential impacts to local communities due to the energy transition, that will need careful management – while also presenting local business and employment opportunities.

Potential impacts/opportunities include:

- **Roads and bridges** – the predicted high volume of oversize, over-mass (OSOM) vehicles necessitates either road widening or additional overtaking lanes (such as pullouts). There will also be a need for bridge repairs and maintenance, along with road service upgrades and repairs and sealing of gravel roads.⁴³
- **Maintenance of capital assets** – local governments expressed concern about the ongoing cost of maintaining upgraded infrastructure into the future, stating that the standard Local Planning Authority payment of 1.5% of project capital spend to fund road enhancement and restoration works would not be adequate funding.⁴⁴
- **Transport volumes** – during the Review’s roundtable with Muswellbrook Shire (NSW), the Shire indicated that it had forecasted that there would be an average of 10 OSOM truck loads every evening for the next 10 years on the Golden Highway to Dubbo.⁴⁵
- **Housing** – the large influx of contractor staff on renewable energy and transmission projects can quickly deplete accommodation for low socio-economic tenants. The influx is also likely to result in substantial increases to housing prices and property rents, which often leads to lower income households being priced out of the market.⁴⁶
- **Water resource depletion** – development projects often require substantial amounts of water and ready access to water supplies. This can pose a significant challenge for local water authorities, especially in regions where the climate (and/or current storage levels) requires strict conservative water management.⁴⁷
- **Waste** – development projects produce large amounts of waste, typically packaging waste during construction. Collection and disposal of project construction waste needs to be well handled on site and may have impacts due to the sheer volume of waste. This will likely place enormous pressure on waste management services provided by local governments.⁴⁸
- **Skilled resources** – development projects, particularly during construction, will drive up demand for skilled resources. Many regional areas do not have large local businesses with the capacity to take on this type of work.⁴⁹ Without a secure pipeline of opportunities, local businesses may not have the ability to take the forward risks to grow and meet the energy transition demand.⁵⁰ Short-term demand also puts pressure on other local industries competing for the same workforce and on long-term local customers who are unable to obtain service.⁵¹

Participants were especially concerned about the cumulative impacts on regions that would host a portfolio of projects, including non-energy related projects.

Case study: Managing overlapping infrastructure projects

A wind farm developer had started construction activities, including shipping turbine components from overseas and positioning special equipment at the site to assemble the turbines. As part of the development approval, a transport management plan had been developed with an approved route to deliver the turbine components from the port to the project site located inland.

However, when scheduling the traffic movements to transport the turbine blades, the developer had not identified that a major highway upgrade project was also taking place along a large section of the approved route, and that night-time roadworks along the highway would not allow the planned traffic movements to go ahead. As a result, delivery of the turbine blades was delayed for months as more than 350 turbine blades were stranded at the busy port while negotiations took place between the wind farm developer and the road operator to facilitate the traffic movements.

While the turbines blades were eventually transported to the project site, the delay resulted in a bottleneck in construction activities, which ultimately impeded the completion of the project by almost a year.

Theme 6 – Coordinated economic development and community benefits

Recommendations

The Review makes the following recommendations to improve community engagement through better coordination of opportunities for local benefits and economic development.

Recommendation 8. The Commonwealth to work with jurisdictions to ensure appropriate arrangements exist at state, territory and national levels to provide a cross-discipline, whole-of-government approach to identify, cultivate and generate tangible economic and investment attraction opportunities for regional businesses, including First Nations peoples and their enterprises.

Recommendation 9. States, territories and local governments to encourage local community groups to proactively identify opportunities for the broader community's benefit, as well as to take ownership of sound opportunities to secure support and funding.

When selecting a developer as part of a state-run bidding contest, weighting could be given to developers that have already established relationships with local government and/or community groups, and that have included details and their commitment to an agreed benefit-sharing program if successful in their bid.

Observations

Landholders and community members who responded to the Review's survey generally did not believe that local communities would benefit from large-scale renewable energy and transmission projects.

In the HaveYourSay survey, the Review asked community members whether they believed the local community would benefit from large-scale renewable energy projects.

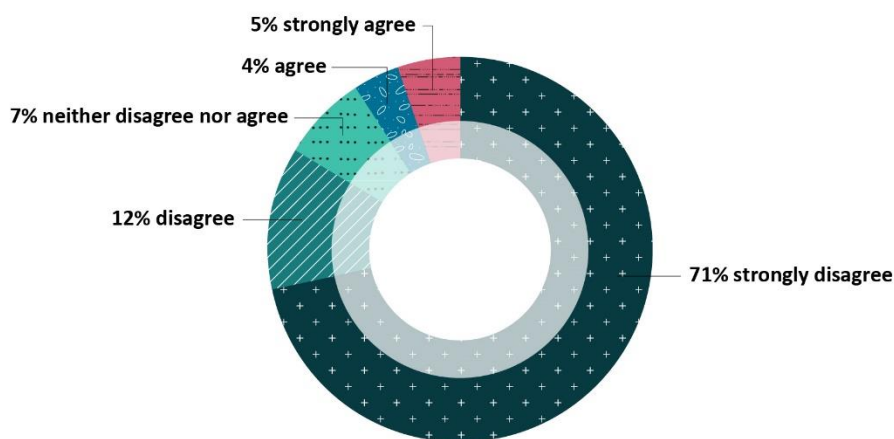


Image 5. Survey results indicated that most landholder and community participants did not believe that local communities would benefit from renewable energy projects.

The Review heard from many participants who were eager for the energy transition to leave a positive, lasting legacy for regional communities. However, participants were concerned that without a holistic plan, communities would be left worse off after the development activity concluded.⁵² One participant told the Review:

'When going into consultation we should not be asking how to get social acceptance right, we should be asking how to get regional development right.'⁵³

The First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee expressed concern about energy poverty and regional and remote community reliance on underfunded, inadequate local energy systems.⁵⁴ This is also reflected in the feedback received as part of the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy.⁵⁵

Other regional communities also expressed concern about energy security and described managing unplanned power outages as a challenge for local emergency services, business and community members.⁵⁶

There is a real desire, need and opportunity for the energy transition to deliver lasting benefits to First Nations peoples and regional and rural Australians through improved access to reliable and affordable electricity.

‘Benefit sharing is a term used to describe different approaches and mechanisms that aim to distribute the financial and other benefits of a project between the applicant and the impacted community through mutually agreed opportunities.

In the context of large-scale renewable energy projects, arrangements with landholders, councils and local communities provide opportunities for community members to directly share in the benefits from the location of the project and for the applicant to enhance social licence for its project.’⁵⁷

While many developers establish benefit-sharing programs as part of their community engagement activities, the Review observed that there is a much greater set of opportunities for communities and local businesses as a consequence of the energy transition and what is required across the board to make it all happen.

Some participants were concerned that the benefits currently available to communities were not sufficient:

‘Community benefits are inconsequential considering the size and value of the projects.’⁵⁸

The Review heard from participants who were eager to see a range of wider benefits realised in their region, including:

- improved regional and local infrastructure – carefully understanding what improvements and changes are required to infrastructure ahead of the need for the energy transition
- improved regional and local electricity networks – leveraging the investment and presence of electricity transmission and distribution businesses in the region because of the energy transition
- new business and economic development opportunities – including professional services, skilled contractor services, expanded TAFE and other vocational education offerings and facilities, a range of services provided by First Nations enterprises, and manufacturing and assembly opportunities
- expanded accommodation and housing – including opportunities to build new, integrated housing for project contractors that is then re-purposed as long-term housing for eligible occupants, including First Nations peoples.
- environmental benefits – including opportunities to preserve and even expand areas such as parklands and national parks (as recently evidenced at the Goyder South wind farm project in South Australia), and opportunities to further protect flora and fauna
- new agricultural innovation opportunities – such as co-location of new energy infrastructure with primary production areas to support new, innovative agricultural production (for example, the Sundrop Farms operation in Port Augusta, South Australia).

Opportunities for First Nations peoples

First Nations participants, including the First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee, emphasised the importance of the transition providing opportunities to train and employ First Nations people, especially giving opportunities to young people through initiatives such as scholarships and mentoring programs.⁵⁹ Participants were also enthusiastic about opportunities to access the economic opportunities provided by the transition by exploring partnerships with industry where First Nations peoples may host infrastructure on their land.⁶⁰

There are many opportunities for industry and government to partner with First Nations peoples in the delivery of the energy transition, including:

- early engagement of First Nations peoples representatives to advise on site selection and/or narrowing of transmission route options, while providing First Nations peoples with access to land that may otherwise be inaccessible to them
- partnering with First Nations peoples to develop projects on land over which they have land rights
- employment opportunities for First Nations peoples who can facilitate better industry engagement through delivery of cultural awareness training for developers, consultants and contractors, and development and delivery of reconciliation action plans
- employment opportunities for First Nations peoples who can provide expertise for cultural heritage assessments, cultural values assessments, cultural heritage management plans, contract services (e.g. easement clearance and maintenance), advice on Native Title and other land rights, and engaging Aboriginal Liaison Officers
- employment opportunities for First Nations peoples with expertise in engineering, commercial management and project management as well as apprenticeship and training opportunities across a range of trades – particularly electrical trades
- partnering with government and industry to identify and develop solutions to the impacts of the energy transition which provide lasting benefits to First Nations communities, such as initiatives to provide housing for contractors that is then repurposed for First Nations communities.

Implementation

Recommendation 8

In determining how best to implement this recommendation, the Review suggests that consideration be given to:

- establishing a leadership committee within state and territory governments to focus on the social and economic development and investment attraction opportunities arising, or anticipated to arise, from the energy transition
- engaging and supporting local government and regional development organisations so that they can be actively involved in identifying and pursuing opportunities
- identifying opportunities to accelerate local solutions to adverse impacts by leveraging existing capabilities and skills. The Review identified a range of local capabilities that could be potentially scaled up to meet energy supply chain needs (e.g. wind turbine tower manufacturing in Victoria, steel fabrication for transmission towers in South Australia, and composite materials expertise and blade design and manufacture in Victoria)
- seeking new opportunities that can shift manufacturing and assembly from offshore to onshore, particularly those items that could be problematic in transporting from port to project
- identifying and supporting 'regions of excellence' that are well positioned to play a major role in the energy transition – from TAFE skilled worker training and certification programs through to major manufacturing and supply chain logistics centres. Examples could include Dubbo (NSW), Port Augusta (SA), Portland (VIC), Toowoomba (QLD), Gladstone (QLD), Townsville (QLD), Tamworth & New England (NSW), Albury/Wodonga/Wangaratta (VIC)
- setting relevant key performance indicators for regions, states and territories, and nationally – and tracking progress.

Recommendation 9

State governments may consider inviting developers to include details of their proposed benefit-sharing program when bidding for a project in a tender process. The developer should provide evidence of support for the proposed program from local government and/or the community groups who would be involved and/or benefit if the program were to proceed.

The merits of the developer's benefit-sharing proposal could then be taken into consideration when assessing the developer and their tender proposal.

Local governments are ideally placed to lead activities to identify local and regional opportunities arising from the energy transition. Some local governments may choose to form an alliance with other jurisdictions in their region to pool limited resources and provide a one-stop-shop for investors and businesses to work with.

Below are some relevant case studies.

Case study: SuperGrid Telecommunications Program

The SuperGrid Telecommunications Program is a joint initiative between Powerlink and their subsidiary Queensland Capacity Network (QCN) to improve access to high-speed internet and mobile phone coverage to regional areas hosting transmission infrastructure.

Many Queenslanders in regional and remote areas have limited access to high-speed internet and mobile phone services. They often rely on satellite or copper connections, which can be slow, unreliable and expensive. This can affect their ability to access telehealth, online learning, emergency information, banking, e-commerce and other digital services.

The SuperGrid Telecommunications Program will use Powerlink's transmission towers, and the fibre optic cable they carry, to boost telecommunications services for communities in REZs and across the footprint of Queensland's SuperGrid.

Local engagement by QCN will provide an opportunity for communities to directly input their feedback on mobile phone black-spot areas that should be prioritised as well as areas with poor internet connectivity.⁶¹

For many communities, a locally administered community benefit fund enables members to have an active say in the types of benefits that their community receives. The Clean Energy Council's publication *A Guide to Benefit Sharing Options for Renewable Energy Projects* provides an overview of these types of arrangements.⁶² A recent example of large-scale community benefit-sharing is the community benefit funding for the Central-West Orana REZ.

Case study: Community benefit funding for the Central-West Orana REZ

Communities in the Central-West Orana REZ will receive \$128 million over the next four years to deliver community projects and employment opportunities.⁶³ The funding will ensure that benefits flow to communities before the construction of new transmission and renewable generation projects starts in late 2024.

The fund will be administered by EnergyCo. Upfront funding will come from the Transmission Acceleration Fund and, after 2028, funding will be through access fees paid by generators connecting to new transmission lines in the REZ.

The NSW Government will work closely with local councils, community and First Nations organisations, renewable energy companies and others to identify and fund community priorities and long-term legacy programs in the region. Projects could include public infrastructure upgrades, housing and accommodation, training and employment programs, health and education programs, support for energy efficiency and local rooftop solar, and initiatives for First Nations people.

Some communities are eager to take a more active role in the development of local large-scale renewable energy infrastructure. Locally owned or locally led developments provide these communities with greater control over the development and the benefits that flow into their community.

Case study: Community-led renewable energy projects

Some participants advocated for more community-led renewable energy projects. Where communities are eager to take a more active role in the energy transition, these projects have the capacity to empower local communities. There are a number of established community-led renewable energy projects in Australia, including Hepburn Energy (wind) and the Goulburn Solar Farm.⁶⁴

There are also several guides available on the development of community-led projects. The Local Power Plan is the output of a community co-design process to develop a national plan to unlock the benefits of community energy and accelerate community energy in Australia.⁶⁵ The NSW Government has published a how-to guide for community-owned renewable energy.⁶⁶

These are all examples of ways to enhance social licence for new renewable energy and transmission initiatives through benefit-sharing.

Other current transmission matters

In addition to the above recommendations of the Review, some recent issues have arisen related to transmission development and engagement. They are noted here for further discussion and action.

Powers of transmission network service providers

Transmission network service providers (TNSPs) are granted certain powers to assist them to operate and maintain the high-voltage transmission grid. The powers usually require the TNSP to hold a transmission licence in each state that it operates.

Powers include the right to access a host landholder's property for certain purposes and rights to compulsorily acquire, and create an easement on, a host or non-host landholder's property. Purposes include accessing existing transmission lines for maintenance, operations and emergency response. The TNSP may also need to acquire a small easement to accommodate a minor augmentation to the grid.

When developing new transmission projects, some TNSPs are relying on these powers to gain access to land for the purposes of surveys and assessments and, subsequently, to acquire land and easements.

The Review considers that land access to privately held land and compulsory easement acquisition for new greenfield developments are best achieved via a negotiated commercial agreement with the landholder. Only in exceptional circumstances should TNSP operating powers be utilised for development purposes.

State and territory governments may wish to consider the following suggestions to distinguish between the functions of new transmission infrastructure development versus transmission infrastructure operation and maintenance:

- Governments could create a separate transmission *development* license that provides powers, with the appropriate protocols and protections for landholders, specifically for the development of new transmission infrastructure.
 - Transmission development license may be held by a non-TNSP entity or company for the purposes of transmission development activities only.
 - TNSPs would be issued with a transmission development license and use that license for development projects.
- Regardless of the current or future licensing arrangements for transmission development, the Review strongly suggests that transmission companies should not use force to access land for development purposes. If a landholder refuses entry to a transmission developer (or their agent), an appropriate legal process should be then followed to resolve land access disputes.

Land access protocols

If not already in place, each jurisdiction should have an appropriate land access protocol that is transparent, available online and used by TNSPs and transmission developers when accessing private land for legitimate purposes.

Examples include Powerlink's land access protocol (developed in 2014) and Victoria's Code of Practice (launched in 2023 by the Essential Services Commission).

Protocols need to be fair and reasonable to the landholder and respect the dynamic environments of primary producers.

All TNSP and transmission developer access should be governed by the protocol. Breaches and disputes should be handled by the appropriate forum designated in the protocol.

Easement routes and negotiations

When acquiring an easement for a transmission line from a private landholder, transmission developers typically make a commercial offer to the landholder – with the objective of reaching a negotiated agreement. In some jurisdictions, this may also start the compulsory acquisition process under the relevant legislation.

However, the landholder may not be aware that the proposed transmission line route through the property may not be negotiable, only the commercial terms for the specified easement and related impacts.

Jurisdictions may wish to consider implementing a process that provides a specified period (e.g. 3–6 months) prior to making an offer where the transmission developer must provide a genuine opportunity for the landholder to review the proposed transmission route and raise any issues that may materially impact the landholder's property, operations or residence. The developer should also visit the property to inspect these issues on the ground.

Following these discussions and negotiations on the proposed route, the transmission developer should make best efforts to resolve material issues raised by the landholder and then prepare its offer incorporating any route revisions.

Agreements

There are several agreements to be negotiated between a transmission developer and the landholder. These may include access agreements, option for easement agreements, professional services fee agreements and acquisition of easement agreements.

To ensure that the agreements are fair, balanced and encompass all that needs to be dealt with by the particular agreement, the use of a standard and/or endorsed template would be beneficial to all parties.

Jurisdictions may wish to consider:

- a process whereby an agreement template is approved by the state or territory government
- that the relevant law society or institute provides and maintains the set of agreement templates
- that the state or territory prepares and issues its own template agreements (NSW Government has recently issued a draft template for consultation).

In any event, landholders should be given the opportunity to negotiate terms and conditions of any agreements presented to them and have them properly considered in an appropriate timeframe.

Correspondence and collateral

Transmission developers rely heavily on correspondence and collateral to conduct the development activity. There is certainly scope for improvements in the content.

Jurisdictions may wish to consider:

- encouraging review of correspondence at senior levels of the transmission company to ensure that correspondence is written in a manner that considers the recipient's perspective
- issuing directly any collateral related to state-wide topics, such as bushfire matters (e.g. the Victorian Government has issued such a document in early 2023), compensation and payments for hosting a transmission line and rules and guidelines for what activities can and cannot be done under the transmission lines
- approving any correspondence and collateral related to compulsory acquisition of easements, land, and land access.

Additional resources

AEIC Annual Report to the Federal Parliament, 2022

<https://www.aeic.gov.au/publications/2022-annual-report>

See, in particular, Appendix A, sections 1–4 that are most relevant to this Review.

A Guide to Benefit Sharing Options for Renewable Energy Projects, Clean Energy Council

<https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/advocacy-initiatives/community-engagement/benefit-sharing-for-renewable-energy-projects>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Best Practice Principles for Clean Energy Projects, First Nations Clean Energy Network

https://www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/network_guides

Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Developments, Clean Energy Council

<https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/advocacy-initiatives/community-engagement/best-practice-charter>

Better Practice Social Licence Guideline, The Energy Charter

<https://www.theenergycharter.com.au/better-practice-social-licence-guideline/>

Clean Energy Negotiations Guide for First Nations, First Nations Clean Energy Network

https://www.firstnationscleanenergy.org.au/network_guides

Community Engagement Guidelines for Building Powerlines for Renewable Energy Developments, Clean Energy Council

<https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/advocacy-initiatives/community-engagement/community-engagement-guidelines-for-building-powerlines-for-renewable-energy-developments>

Community Engagement Guidelines for the Australian Wind Industry, Clean Energy Council

<https://assets.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/documents/advocacy-initiatives/community-engagement/wind-community-engagement-guidelines.pdf>

Considerations for Landholders before entering into Commercial Agreements, AEIC

<https://www.aeic.gov.au/publications/considerations-landholders-entering-commercial-agreements>

Considerations for Offshore Wind Industry on Community Engagement, AEIC

<https://www.aeic.gov.au/publications/considerations-offshore-wind-industry-community-engagement>

First Nations Clean Energy Strategy, DCCEEW

<https://www.energy.gov.au/energy-and-climate-change-ministerial-council/working-groups/first-nations-engagement-working-group/first-nations-clean-energy-strategy>

Queensland Renewable Energy Landholder Toolkit, Queensland Farmers Federation

<https://www.qff.org.au/projects/renewable-energy-landholder-toolkit/>

Renewable Energy Landholder Guide, NSW Farmers Association

[https://www.nswfarmers.org.au/NSWFA/Content/IndustryPolicy/Resource/Renewable Energy Landholder Guide.aspx](https://www.nswfarmers.org.au/NSWFA/Content/IndustryPolicy/Resource/Renewable_Energy_Landholder_Guide.aspx)

The Local Power Plan, Dr Helen Haines MP

<https://www.localpowerplan.com/>

Appendix A – Terms of reference of the Review

Scope of the Review

1. The Review will consider community attitudes towards renewable energy infrastructure and provide advice on the best way to maximise community engagement and benefit in planning, developing and operating renewable energy infrastructure.
2. In conducting the review, the AEIC should have regard to the following:
 - a. Perceived or actual environmental impacts
 - b. Perceived or actual impacts on agricultural land, including:
 - i. Emergency management, including fire and biosecurity risks
 - ii. Increases in landholder insurance premiums
 - iii. Tourism impacts and other aesthetic and cultural considerations.
 - c. Perceived or actual impacts on Indigenous heritage and land rights
 - d. Community engagement and benefit sharing including financial, local infrastructure, knowledge sharing, and any other types of benefit.
3. The AEIC can advise on how to maximise community engagement within the existing regulatory and legislative frameworks, including the National Electricity Law, the National Energy Objectives and the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission.
4. The AEIC may also provide recommendations to the existing regulatory frameworks that would better enable community engagement in all stages of planning and development.
5. The AEIC may assess current relevant government, and industry, policies and reforms, and suggest changes that improve community support for the necessary and rapid expansion of clean energy generation, while:
 - a. Preserving and expanding Australia's unique flora, fauna and fragile ecosystems;

- b. Supporting agriculture and other land uses, including innovative colocation approaches;
- c. Respecting First Nations people and ensuring they have opportunities to benefit from the transition
- d. Delivering community benefits in consultation with communities including any financial benefits, local employment opportunities and skills development
- e. Supporting regional development.

Process for the Review

The Review will be led by the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, Mr Andrew Dyer.

Secretariat support will be provided by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

The report and government response to recommendations will be made publicly available.

Engagement and consultation to inform the review should include:

- Publication of a discussion paper seeking public submissions
- Regional and rural roundtables including community, worker, First Nations, environmental organisations, farmer and industry participation to discuss key issues
- Some of these roundtables should be held in Renewable Energy Zone communities.

The Review will collaborate with relevant energy market bodies, government agencies, and draw on relevant experts that are undertaking related work such as:

- Energy market bodies including the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), the Australian Energy Market Commission, and the Australian Energy Regulator
- State Government electricity and planning agencies such as NSW Energy Co and Vic Grid
- Non-government organisations and community groups involved in, or impacted by, the renewable energy transition
- Industry
- Relevant experts including the CSIRO and academics.

Where appropriate, the Review should seek to leverage existing groups and consultation processes to mitigate duplication. For example, the Review should seek to leverage consultation underway to develop a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy and work being undertaken by CSIRO on enhancing community support.

The final report will be delivered to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy by the end of 2023.

Appendix B – Glossary

Access agreement	A land access arrangement is a written agreement between a landholder and a renewable energy developer confirming the terms and conditions for conducting prospecting activities on a particular area of land.
Benefit-sharing	A term used to describe different approaches and mechanisms that aim to distribute the financial and other benefits of a project between the applicant and the impacted community through mutually agreed opportunities. ⁶⁷
Community	A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common (Oxford Languages).
Compensation	Something, typically money, awarded to someone in recognition of loss, suffering, or injury (Oxford Languages).
Compulsory acquisition	All levels of government (including state-owned corporations) can acquire privately owned land for a public purpose. They can acquire: • all or part of a property • interest in a property, including easements for power lines, sewer or water.
Crown land	Crown land is land owned by the state government or the Australian Government.
Developer	A developer is a person or a company that buys land and uses the land, subdivides the land, erects building/s on the land, carries out other works, including demolishing a building or work. In the course of this report renewable energy developer refers to developers of large-scale solar farms and onshore wind facilities.

Development	The process of converting land to a new purpose by constructing buildings or making use of its resources (Oxford Languages).
Firming	Maintaining the output from a variable, intermittent power source, such as wind or solar, for a committed period of time ⁶⁸ . Firming technologies include pumped hydroelectricity, batteries and gas generators.
First Nations land rights	First Nations peoples' rights and interests in land. This includes around 50% of Australia's land mass.
Freehold land	Permanent and absolute tenure of land or property with freedom to dispose of it at will (Oxford Languages).
Generator	An electricity generator is a machine that generates electricity from fossil fuels, nuclear power plants, hydro power plants (excluding pumped storage), geothermal systems, solar panels, biofuels, wind, etc. ⁶⁹
Green hydrogen	Green hydrogen is defined as hydrogen produced by splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen using renewable electricity. ⁷⁰
Landholder	A person who owns land, especially one who either makes their living from it or rents it out to others (Oxford Languages). In some circumstances this may include a person who occupies or holds another interest in land e.g. in NSW easement acquisition requires negotiation with all interest holders, such as other easement holders, tenants etc.

Large-scale development	In Victoria, large-scale solar projects are defined as greater than 1 MW in contrast to Queensland's definition of greater than 5 MW. NSW defines large-scale solar energy projects based on capital expenditure of over AUD \$30 million, rather than power generation capacity. ⁷¹
Large-scale generation certificate (LGC)	Under the Renewable Energy Target, LGCs are created in the online Renewable Energy Certificate Registry by renewable energy power stations. One LGC is equivalent to 1 MW per hour of eligible renewable electricity generated above the power station's baseline.
Long-Term Energy Service Agreement (LTESA)	LTESAs are options contracts and are a central element of the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap and will offer an option to access price guarantees for eligible generation, long duration storage and firming projects, structured as a series of derivative options over the design life of the asset. ⁷²
National Electricity Law (NEL)	The NEL is the schedule to the <i>National Electricity (South Australia) Act 1996</i> which establishes the governance and enforcement framework and key obligations surrounding the national electricity market and the regulation of access to electricity networks. The NEL is supported by further regulations and the National Electricity Rules (NER). The Northern Territory has also applied the NEL with a number of variations to cater to local requirements.⁷³
National Electricity Market (NEM)	The NEM is a wholesale market through which generators and retailers trade electricity in Australia. It interconnects the 6 eastern and southern states and territories, and delivers around 80% of all electricity consumption in Australia. Western Australia and the Northern Territory are not connected to the NEM. ⁷⁴

National Electricity Rules (NER)	The NER determine how companies can operate and participate in the competitive generation and retail sectors. The NER also govern the economic regulation of electricity transmission and distribution networks. ⁷⁵
Native title	Native title is the name Australian law gives to the traditional ownership of land and waters that have always belonged to Aboriginal people according to their traditions, laws and customs. The Commonwealth <i>Native Title Act 1993</i> sets out how native title rights are to be recognised and protected. ⁷⁶
Neighbour agreement	Neighbour agreements provide a commercial arrangement between the renewable energy project developer and neighbours that recognises the possible impacts of the project on the neighbours. ⁷⁷
Net zero	Net zero refers to a state in which the greenhouse gases going into the atmosphere are balanced by removal out of the atmosphere. The term net zero is important because – for CO₂ at least – this is the state at which global warming stops. The Paris Agreement underlines the need for net zero. It requires states to achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century.⁷⁸
Opposed land access	A situation where the landholder opposes access arrangements. This may occur with regard to new transmission line access arrangements.
Photovoltaic (PV) system	Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems generate electricity from sunlight. Solar PV cells that capture sunlight are placed in panels, which are in turn placed in arrays, to deliver solar power to homes and businesses. ⁷⁹

Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)	A PPA is an agreement between an independent power generator (or vendor) and a purchaser (often called the 'off-taker') for the sale and supply of energy. They can be used for the supply of any type of energy, but in more recent times they have often been used for the supply of renewable energy such as through solar panels or wind generators (Cambridge Dictionary Online).
Project	Development or construction of a renewable energy or transmission project or asset.
Proponent	Proponent is used interchangeably with development throughout the report
Prospective developer	An early-stage renewable energy developer. These developers may approach land holders, arrange land access agreements and or lease arrangements, before selling on the project to another (often more established) developer.
Renewable energy infrastructure	Infrastructure that is necessary for assessing the feasibility of generating renewable energy from a renewable energy resource; or has the primary purpose of exploiting a renewable energy resource. ⁸⁰ Examples include solar and wind facilities and may also include storage and firming infrastructure such as pumped hydro or batteries.
Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)	REZs are the equivalent of modern-day power stations. They combine: • new renewable energy infrastructure, including generators (such as solar and wind facilities) • storage (such as batteries and pumped hydro) • high-voltage transmission infrastructure.⁸¹
Social licence	The social licence to operate is a concept that reflects community support for the operations of an organisation or development. It is generally considered that social support from community is critical for the long-term sustainability of a development. ⁸²

Small-scale technology certificates (STCs)	A STC is equal to 1 megawatt hour of renewable electricity either generated or displaced by eligible small-scale renewable energy systems such as solar PV, wind and hydro and solar water heaters and air source heat pumps. STCs create a financial incentive to install small-scale renewable energy systems by reducing upfront installation costs. ⁸³
Transmission Acceleration Fund	A \$1.2 billion fund from the 2022-23 NSW Budget designed to fast-track critical energy infrastructure over the next 10 years. The Transmission Acceleration Fund will fast-track the REZs needed to replace existing power stations as they close by funding the development stages of transmission and other infrastructure.
Transmission developer	A specialised developer with capability to develop a transmission project.
Transmission infrastructure	The transmission network largely consists of high-voltage cables and towers to support them, as well as transformers. This infrastructure moved electricity from where it's generated to an electrical substation. ⁸⁴
Transmission Network Service Provider (TNSP)	TNSPs are network businesses that build, maintain, plan and operate the network transmission networks in the national electricity market. TNSPs are licenced and strictly regulated.
Energy transition	Energy transition refers to the global energy sector's shift from fossil-based systems of energy production and consumption — including oil, natural gas and coal — to renewable energy sources like wind and solar, as well as lithium-ion batteries. ⁸⁵

Endnotes

- ¹ Queensland Farmer's Federation, Queensland Renewable Energy Landholder Toolkit, June 2023
- ² Submission 526.
- ³ Australian Local Government Association Roundtable, 3 October 2023.
- ⁴ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 10 October 2023.
- ⁵ National Farmers Federation Roundtable, 6 October 2023.
- ⁶ Submission 141.
- ⁷ Clean Energy Council Roundtable, 31 August 2023.
- ⁸ Clean Energy Council Roundtable, 31 August 2023.
- ⁹ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023; Helena Stanley Meeting, 20 September 2023.
- ¹⁰ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023; Helena Stanley Meeting, 20 September 2023.
- ¹¹ DCCEEW, [*First Nations Clean Energy Strategy: Interim Feedback Report from Engagement to Date*](#), 2023, p 6, accessed 12 December 2023.
- ¹² First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023.
- ¹³ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023.
- ¹⁴ Wangaratta Landholder and Community Roundtable, 27 September 2023.
- ¹⁵ Local Government Roundtable (Wangaratta), 27 September 2023.
- ¹⁶ Local Government Roundtable (Wangaratta), 27 September 2023.
- ¹⁷ National Farmers Federation Roundtable, 6 October 2023; Queensland Farmers Federation Roundtable, 9 October 2023.
- ¹⁸ Linda Scott Interview, President, Australian Local Government Association, 4 September 2023.
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- ²⁰ National Farmers Federation Roundtable, 6 October 2023.

- ²¹ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023.
- ²² First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023.
- ²³ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023.
- ²⁴ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023.
- ²⁵ Winterbourne Windfarm Hosts Roundtable, 21 September 2023; Hills of Gold Preservation Inc Roundtable, 21 September 2023; Wangaratta Landholder and Community Roundtable, 27 September 2023; Voice of Walcha Meeting Minutes, 22 September 2023.
- ²⁶ Winterbourne Windfarm Hosts Roundtable, 21 September 2023; Voice of Walcha Meeting Minutes, 22 September 2023; Hills of Gold Preservation Inc Roundtable, 21 September 2023.
- ²⁷ Hills Of Gold Preservation Inc Roundtable, 21 September 2023.
- ²⁸ La Trobe City Council Interview, 13 September 2023; Local Government Roundtable (Wangaratta), 27 September 2023.
- ²⁹ New England Local Government Roundtable, 5 October 2023; La Trobe City Council Meeting, 13 September 2023; Local Government Roundtable (Wangaratta), 27 September 2023; Dubbo Regional Council Meeting, 20 September 2023.
- ³⁰ New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development, [*Report 51: Feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects*](#), Parliament of New South Wales, 2023, p x, accessed 12 December 2023.
- ³¹ Productivity Commission, *Access to Justice Arrangements: Productivity Commission Inquiry Report*, '[Volume 1](#)', 2014, p 336, accessed 12 December 2023.
- ³² Submission 141.
- ³³ Submission 86.
- ³⁴ Submission 141.
- ³⁵ Submission 141.
- ³⁶ Western Australia Government Roundtable, 5 October 2023.

- ³⁷ Local Government Association of Queensland Meeting, 10 October 2023; New England Local Government Roundtable, 5 October 2023; Local Government Roundtable (Wangaratta), 27 September 2023.
- ³⁸ Environment Organisations Roundtable, 28 September 2023; New England Local Government Roundtable, 5 October 2023.
- ³⁹ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023; First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 6 December 2023.
- ⁴⁰ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023.
- ⁴¹ Winterbourne Windfarm Hosts Roundtable, 21 September 2023.
- ⁴² Winterbourne Windfarm Hosts Roundtable, 21 September 2023.
- ⁴³ Environmental Organisations Roundtable, 28 September 2023; New England Local Government Roundtable, 5 October 2023; Muswellbrook Shire Council Meeting, 19 September 2023.
- ⁴⁴ Muswellbrook Shire Council Meeting, 19 September 2023.
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- ⁴⁶ Hills of Gold Preservation Inc Roundtable, 21 September 2023; Local Government Association of Queensland Meeting, 10 October 2023; Australian Local Government Association Roundtable, 3 October 2023.
- ⁴⁷ Australian Local Government Association Roundtable, 3 October 2023; Local Government Roundtable (Wangaratta), 27 September 2023.
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- ⁵⁹ First Nations Clean Energy and Emissions Reduction Advisory Committee Meeting, 14 November 2023; Helena Stanley Meeting, 20 September 2023.
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