

NSW Government Response to Recommendations from the June-August 2023 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for Renewable Energy Projects

On 22 June 2023, the NSW Standing Committee on State Development was tasked with inquiring into and reporting on the *feasibility of undergrounding the transmission infrastructure for renewable energy projects* (the Inquiry), by the NSW Legislative Council.

The Committee considered evidence gathered through 301 public submissions and five hearings in developing the [Standing Committee on State Development Report No. 51](#) (the Report), which was published on 31 August 2023.

The Report found “*That, in considering all the evidence, the current plan for constructing HumeLink as a 500 kV overhead transmission line is the correct approach especially given the applicable regulatory environment and the lack of any action to date in progressing the undergrounding option.*”

The Report also contains two recommendations, which are the focus of this Government Response (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. NSW Government responses to June 2023 Undergrounding Inquiry recommendations

No.	Recommendation	NSW Government Response	Lead Agency
1.	<p>The NSW Government consider the viability of changing the New South Wales planning framework to require:</p> <p>a) a comprehensive cumulative impact study to be undertaken before any renewable energy zone (REZ) is declared, and</p> <p>b) Community consultation on any proposed REZ to start at the scoping stage to allow adequate consideration of viable alternatives.</p>	<p>Support in-principle</p> <p>The NSW Government recognises the importance of effective and transparent community engagement and is committed to working closely with communities on the planning and rollout of renewable energy zones (REZs) and associated renewable energy infrastructure.</p> <p>The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) has conducted detailed cumulative impact assessments for the Central West Orana (CWO) REZ and is working with stakeholders to develop and implement a range of measures to mitigate impacts. A cumulative impact assessment for New England (NE) REZ is also being developed.</p> <p>The NSW Government accepted recommendation 48 of the recent Electricity Supply and Reliability Check Up (the Check Up) regarding the need for coordinated approaches to benefit sharing, complaints and community engagement in the REZs.</p> <p>The NSW Government also accepted recommendation 53 of the Check Up, committing to consider the findings of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner’s Community Engagement Review, when they are published in early 2024.</p> <p>All the planned NSW REZs identified in the Electricity Infrastructure Investment (EII) Act 2020 have already been declared. A declaration establishes a geographic area, intended network capacity, and the infrastructure planner. It does not determine what network infrastructure is required, where projects are located or their capacity (information which is needed to inform a cumulative impact study).</p>	Office of Energy, Climate Change (OECC)

2.	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.	<p>Support</p> <p>The NSW Government will work with stakeholders to explore establishing an effective complaints handling body to support the rollout of renewable energy related infrastructure in NSW.</p>	OECC
----	---	---	------