

**Submission
No 163**

SUSTAINABILITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY AND RESOURCES IN NSW

Organisation: Solar Citizens

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Dear Environment and Planning Committee,

Solar Citizens' submission to the Sustainability of Energy Supply and Resources in NSW

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. Solar Citizens is an independent, community-based organisation bringing together millions of solar owners and supporters to grow and protect renewables in Australia. Together, we take action to protect the rights of Australia's two million solar homes and businesses, and pursue the largest opportunities for a fast and fair transition to clean, renewable energy.

Four of NSW's five coal-fired power stations are expected to close in the next 17 years. To maintain an adequate supply of electricity and ensure that consumers are not stung with higher electricity prices when these stations retire, new replacement generation needs to be built in preparation. To lower power bills and air pollution, this replacement generation should be renewable energy backed by storage.

Unfortunately, the amount of large-scale renewable generation being commissioned across the country is stagnating now that the national Renewable Energy Target (RET) has been effectively met. The latest analysis by the Clean Energy Council found that across the country, where quarterly investment commitments in new renewable energy projects reached over 4,500MW in late 2018, in the first two quarters of this year investment has collapsed to just 800MW¹. Without national or state level energy policy to continue to drive investment in large-scale renewable generation post the RET, NSW is jeopardising its energy security and at risk of failing to reach its net zero emissions by 2050 goal.

As it stands, research by Green Energy Markets in May 2019 found that NSW is not on track to reach its 2050 emissions goal as the state is projected to only reach 28% renewable share by 2030². This is a missed opportunity for NSW, given that new renewable projects can lower wholesale electricity prices and provide job opportunities in the regions. **The same report identified that as of May there were 3,773MW of large-scale renewable generation under construction in NSW and the ACT, which created 6,767 full-time equivalent job years.** Without a policy like the national RET to continue to encourage investment in new renewable generation, the majority of these construction jobs will cease to exist.

NSW has world-class renewable energy resources, which is demonstrated by the fact that in May more large-scale renewable generation was under construction in NSW than in any other Australian state or territory. The Repowering Our Regions report, written by the NSW Nature Conservation Council, identified that transitioning to 100% clean energy would bring \$25 billion in investment and growth to

¹ Australia's Clean Energy Investment Outlook, Clean Energy Council, 2019.

<https://www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au/resources/resources-hub/australias-clean-energy-investment-outlook>

² Renewable Energy Index May 2019, Green Energy Markets, 2019.

http://greenmarkets.com.au/images/uploads/Resources/RE_Index/Renewable_Energy_Index_-_May_2019.pdf

regional NSW and create 22,000 full-time jobs in NSW³. The same report found that the rooftop solar revolution could create and sustain an average of 14,000 direct, full-time jobs a year from 2017 to 2030.

Continuing to support the rollout of small-scale solar and household battery storage is another key solution for improving energy security, lowering pollution, and helping consumers to take back control of their electricity bills. Australia's Rooftop Real Estate report, commissioned by Solar Citizens, found that Australia has the rooftop potential to increase residential solar capacity to a staggering 43GW-61GW – well above the approximate 6GW that's currently installed⁴. While the economics of rooftop solar have never been better for Australian households, there are barriers that make it harder for renters, people living in apartments, and low-income households to invest in the clean technology. These barriers can be addressed through government incentives.

³Repowering Our Regions, NSW Nature Conservation Council, 2017.

http://greenmarkets.com.au/images/uploads/Resources/RE_Index/Renewable_Energy_Index_-_May_2019.pdf

⁴Australia's Rooftop Real Estate report, Australian PV Institute, 2018.

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/solarcitizens/pages/3012/attachments/original/1544490573/Solar_Trends_Report_for_Solar_Citizens_FINAL_11-12-18_2_logos.pdf?1544490573