

**Submission  
No 180**

## **SUSTAINABILITY OF ENERGY SUPPLY AND RESOURCES IN NSW**

**Organisation:** Geni Energy

**Date Received:** 15 September 2019

This is a brief submission to express our support of renewable energy's role in the future sustainability of rural and regional communities.

The north west of NSW has seen waves of development enter the region within the last two generations. In the seventies the cotton industry began, in the eighties a flurry of activity established the irrigation industry, in the two thousands coal mining was established and in the last few years a Coal Seam Gas industry has attempted to establish. Each of these (and others) have created a certain level of upheaval to the community, changed the demographics of the area and left a legacy for future generations.

Renewable energy may be the next wave of development for the north west of NSW.

This time, the founders of Geni. Energy will be proactive in ensuring the maximum benefits possible from this industry remain locally, the negative impacts are minimised and the legacy left provides positive returns for generations to come.

In July 2018 the Renew Narrabri report was launched. It quantified the renewable energy opportunities for the North West and helped crystallise a whole of community vision for the future. Please find this report attached to this submission.

The Renewable Narrabri report clearly showed that over 500 jobs could be created by a renewable energy scenario compared to 120 ongoing jobs from CSG. These are locally based jobs, not FIFO, that are long term and sustainable.

Large scale developments (including renewable energy developments) rarely begin with community at the centre and equally engaged at all levels. Models for gaining community engagement and acceptance have included hiring a FIFO (fly-in-fly-out) community engagement consultant (lowest level of engagement) or hiring an in-house FIFO or locally based community engagement staff member.

However the model presented by Geni. Energy embeds the social acceptance and engagement fully in the community, ensuring the power balance is equal and the community needs are front and centre.

Geni. Energy partners with the developers to support the community in this economic transition towards greater sustainability.

Geni. Energy is a not-for-profit social enterprise that seeks to:

- create sustainable regional communities
- utilise larger numbers of smaller developments to achieve bigger results
- place community at the centre of developments in their town or region
- create genuine social acceptance of these developments
- utilise principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) in the creation of new projects
- grow small scale, democratised and decentralised industries

We strongly believe that there are very good capacity and economic opportunities in the renewable energy industry. Rural and regional areas are best positioned to take part in this industry due to the availability of land area, wind, sunshine and other renewable energy sources.

Governments must support locally based organisations such as Geni. Energy to ensure the benefits of this industry are maximised locally and the negative impacts are minimised as much as possible, learning from the impacts created by the fossil fuel industry to rural and regional communities.

Support may take the form of:

- legislative tweaks that clear the way for large numbers of small scale renewable projects to be able to connect to the grid
- financial support for the soft infrastructure of projects such as organisational structures, skill development, vision making etc – it is easier to access financial support for the hard infrastructure (solar farms, battery etc) as there is a clear return on these elements. However there is much work in the soft infrastructure that is not supported and does not create a direct return, yet this is where the real value will lie in capitalising on the benefits to regional and rural communities. Without local leadership and organisations, much of the benefits of these projects will continue to be sucked out of our communities. This would be counterproductive.
- Increased support to solving the issues still outstanding with renewables such as establishing facilities for recycling end-of-life products and commercialising other renewable energy technologies.
- Supporting local businesses with skills development to participate in the upcoming boom in renewable energy technologies.

In particular we note that the NSW government has developed a strong vision development as articulated in the New England North West Regional Plan 2036, particularly Direction 5 on page 25 and the Implementation Plan on page 11 which outlines the New England Northwest Energy Policy. We would see that further funding of this policy would also be useful.

We thank you for establishing this Inquiry and we look forward to the outcomes from it.

**Attachments included with submission:**

*Renewable Narrabri Shire: Solar and Wind versus Gas in North-West New South Wales*, UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures, 2018.