

Portfolio Committee 4 – Regional NSW - Online questionnaire summary report
Inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

The purpose of the questionnaire

As part of its inquiry into the impact of renewable energy zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales, Portfolio Committee 4 – Regional NSW created an online questionnaire to encourage public participation in the inquiry in an efficient and accessible way.

The questionnaire was not intended as a statistically valid, random survey. Respondents self-selected in choosing to participate. This means that respondents are unlikely to be a representative sample of the New South Wales population. Instead, the responses represent a sample of interested members of the public who volunteered their time to have a say.

The questionnaire was complementary to and did not replace the usual submission process. The submissions process was available to individuals and organisations who wished to provide a more detailed response to the inquiry's terms of reference. In this regard, some respondents may have completed the questionnaire and also made a submission.

The online questionnaire was open from 2 August 2024 to 31 January 2025. The committee received 410 responses.

This report summarises the responses received by participants to both the quantitative and qualitative questions posed. These responses may help to inform the committee's views throughout the inquiry.

Questions asked

In this questionnaire, participants were asked 42 questions about their views and experiences with renewable energy zones and large-scale renewable projects proposed within these zones. The questions were divided across 8 sections and included a combination of multiple-choice questions (controlled input), open answer questions (free text) and rating scale questions (close ended).

In addition, certain sections aimed to categorise participants' views based on their lived experience either as a landowner, neighbour or part of a local community affected by REZ or related projects. These sections were not mandatory and participants were able to self-select which sections they could respond to.

- Section 1 (questions 1 to 2) contained mandatory administrative questions to collect basic details, such as name and contact details.
- Section 2 (questions 3 to 8) covered background information, including questions to determine a participant's occupation, if they lived in a REZ location and if they own land in a REZ. As part of this section, question 3 was a mandatory question to collect the respondent's postcode.
- Section 3 (questions 9 to 12) focused on participants' views regarding the implementation of REZ including its benefits and challenges to the community, and their awareness of community benefit schemes.
- Section 5 & 6 (questions 13 to 27) focused on participants who identified as 'landholders' and their experiences with existing and proposed renewable energy

projects, including their views on the adequacy of the compensation for the use of their land.

- Section 7 & 8 (questions 22 to 33) focused on participants who identified as 'neighbours/local communities' and their experiences with existing and proposed renewable energy projects, including their views on the adequacy of the compensation for neighbouring projects.
- Section 9 (questions 34 to 42) focused on participants' views on the NSW Government and energy companies' consultation process as part of the implementation and development of the REZ, and related renewable energy projects.

A summary of responses and a sample of the answers are provided below which represent the variety of views expressed by the participants.

Responses to questions

A summary of the responses and a sample of answers are provided in this report.

Section 2: Where do you live?

Question 4. Do you live in a Renewable Energy Zone?

If you are unsure, you can check on this website

<https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/renewable-energy-zones/renewable-energy-zone-locations>

Question 4 asked participants to select if they lived in a renewable energy zone, providing a current map of the REZ locations in New South Wales via the NSW Government website (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1 Renewable Energy Zone locations in New South Wales



Of the 410 participants, 298 indicated that they lived in a renewable energy zone and 112 said they did not.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 5. Which Renewable Energy Zone do you live in?

If you are unsure, you can check on this website

<https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/renewable-energy-zones/renewable-energy-zone-locations>

Question 5 asked participants to select which renewable energy zone they lived in, providing a map of the REZ locations via the NSW Government website (see Figure 1).

302 participants provided an answer to this question. Of the responses, 131 indicated that they lived in the New England REZ, 83 lived in the Central West Orana REZ, 44 lived in the Illawarra REZ, 35 lived in the Hunter-Central Coast REZ and 9 lived in the South West REZ.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Section 3: Tell us about yourself

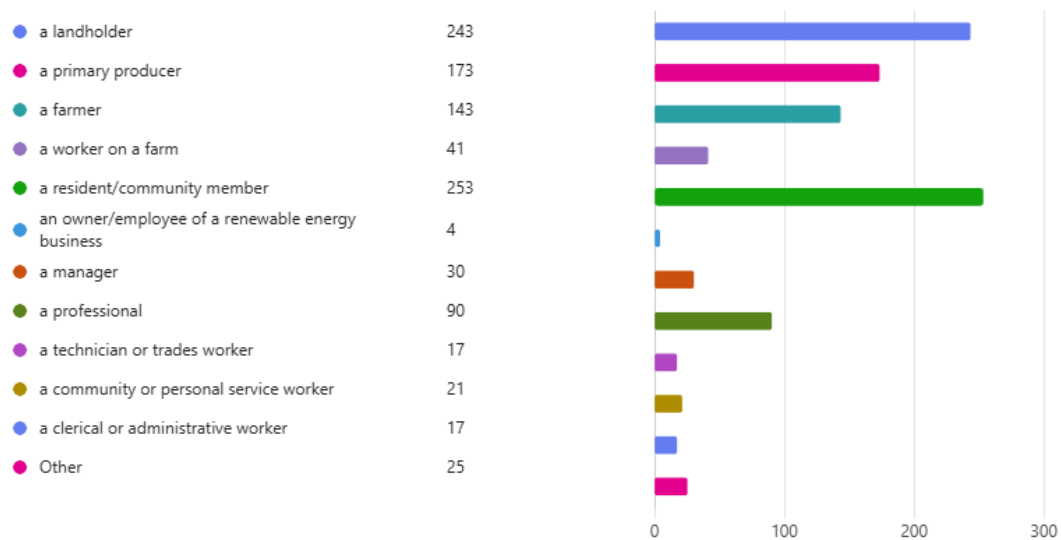
Question 6. I am:

Question 6 asked participants to select the capacity in which they were responding to the questionnaire, allowing them to choose multiple options. For instance, participants may have chosen both 'a landholder' and 'a resident/community member' in which case they would be counted in both categories.

Of the responses:

- 253 selected that they were 'a resident/community member'
- 243 selected that they were 'a landholder'
- 173 selected that they were 'a primary producer'
- 143 selected that they were 'a farmer'
- 90 selected that they were 'a professional'
- 41 selected that they were 'a worker on a farm'
- 30 selected that they were 'a manager'
- 25 selected that they were 'Other'
- 21 selected that they were 'a community or personal service worker'
- 17 selected that they were 'a technician or trades worker'
- 17 selected that they were 'a clerical or administrative worker'
- 4 selected that they were 'an owner/employee of a renewable energy business'.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 7. Do you own land in a Renewable Energy Zone?

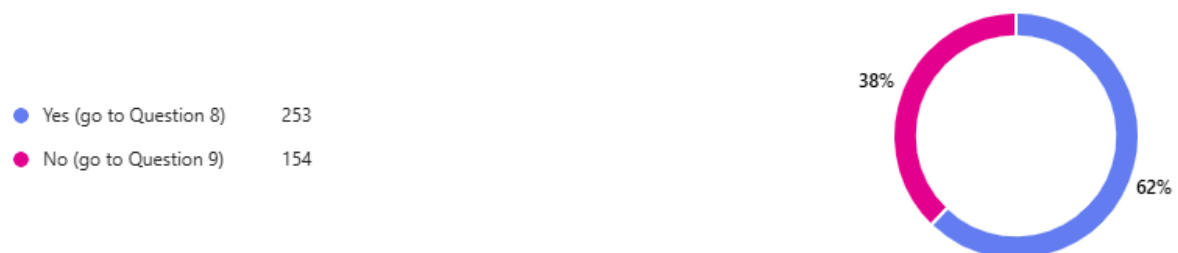
If you are not sure, you can check on this website

<https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/renewable-energy-zones/renewable-energy-zone-locations>

Question 7 asked participants if they owned land in a REZ, providing a map of the REZ locations via the NSW Government website (see Figure 1).

407 participants provided an answer to this question. Of the responses, 62 per cent (253 responses) answered 'yes' and 38 per cent (154 responses) answered 'no'.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 8. Which Renewable Energy Zone do you own land in? [You can pick more than one.]

If you are unsure, you can check on this website

<https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/renewable-energy-zones/renewable-energy-zone-locations>

Question 8 asked participants to select which renewable energy zone they owned land in, providing a map of the REZ locations via the NSW Government website (see Figure 1) and allowing participants to choose more than one response.

Of the responses, 151 indicated that they owned land in the New England REZ, 76 owned land in the Central West Orana REZ, 35 owned land in the Illawarra REZ, 27 owned land in the Hunter-Central Coast REZ and 9 owned land in the South West REZ.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Section 4: Benefits and concerns of Renewable Energy Zones

Question 9. What do you see as the benefits of Renewable Energy Zones?

There were 393 responses to this free text question. Of these, a sample of comments were reviewed. Several participants indicated that there were no benefits to REZ. Other participants expressed that the benefits to REZ included opportunities in local employment, diversified income for land owners, industry growth, reducing the impacts of climate change and better co-ordination between levels of government.

- 'They provide opportunities for proactively co-ordinating the activities of various renewable energy generators working with local communities, removing duplications and updating the transmission line construction efficiently.'
- 'Additional job diversification; cheaper power; Some host landowners will have secure income (not weather dependent) which may allow them to practice more sustainable farming activities and consider nature positive outcomes such as replanting the banks of creeks and rivers with riparian vegetation and fencing to exclude stock.'
- 'I believe renewable energy is a huge opportunity for our region and Australia to become a leading energy producer for the post-fossil fuel era. I am excited about this.'
- 'Economic growth, producing clean energy, diversified income for host land owners, community benefits, business opportunities.'
- 'REZs, by concentrating locations of renewable energy production, allow for maximising use and efficiency of transmission networks.'
- 'I am fully in favour of renewable energy zones. It is obvious to me, in my perception of the impacts of climate change and the realities of economic efficiency and environmental protection that the time for the rapid phasing out of coal and gas as power sources is now. Even though each has been crucial to the development of our

current level of affluence and development, there are now cleaner, more ethical and economically more efficient means to produce our power needs. REZ's would allow this transfer to happen in selected, localised locations with accessible and maintainable infrastructure.'

Question 10. What do you see as the concerns of Renewable Energy Zones?

There were 407 responses to this free text question. Of these, a sample of comments were reviewed, with common themes emerging. Many respondents outlined several concerns within their responses such as visual and noise amenity, ongoing cost and maintenance for the renewable energy projects, biodiversity concerns, lack of community consultation, inadequate support and development of local infrastructure, inadequate compensation, fire risk and negative social cohesion resulting from REZ.

- 'Where to start! 4.5 kms of dual 500kv lines cutting our property in half...and very close to our house. Significant loss of biodiversity. Community conflict. Lack of negotiation and lack of communication. Stand over tactics.'
- 'They are ruining our farming lands and property values. They are extremely inefficient. They will interfere with firefighting during bushfire season. They will injure our bird life. The mining that is involved in the sand and gravel for the foundations will be enormous and they can't tell us exactly how much or where from they will get it. They are an eyesore.'
- 'Degradation of productive, arable land. Destruction of native flora and fauna. Community division. Increased financial pressures on our council to maintain assets, particularly roads. Lack of transparency. Increased acute pressure to our already limited labour supply, health services and temporary accommodation. Poor consultation from government and developers. Potential health and safety issues i.e. OSOM vehicles travelling our narrow school bus routes and work commutes, fire control, blade throw, BPA contamination, infrasound, flickering, flashing red lights, toxic material contamination. Depositing of waste materials. Decommissioning. Subsidised foreign corporates ruining our community and our countryside without responsibility to line their pockets, power metropolitan areas and to provide expensive intermittent power.'
- 'Reduced agriculturally farmed area with the area of Dunedoo which in turn provides population and money towards our town - i.e. schools, small business and community. Lack of health services in our township of Dunedoo already at full capacity and unable to provide GP care for the already low numbers of population. At least half our [town's] population do not have access to a local GP and must travel. How can our health services accommodate this massive change in population. How will our emergency services cover this??'
- 'Fire hazards, insurances of farms to cover possible liability towards these companies. Lack of compensation to neighbour properties (ours included). As our residential home is within metres of a company decided 4.8kms to the nearest wind turbine we will not receive any form of compensation. Despite our property boundary being well within that. We are set to receive no compensation and will also deal with an obvious depreciation towards our property. This financial depreciation, visual impact and the unknown future of our property is simply devastating.'
- '1. Insurance: My primary production business would not be able to afford the Insurance.'

2. Fire: What departments would be in place? I'm deputy captain of Leadville brigade and we are the largest brigade in the area and we would not have the capacity for such events. There would be no aerial support if such a fire would break out.
3. Community fall out: The community would/is already in despair. Families will leave and neighbours will argue over these projects. Who's got paid and who missed out.
4. The scenery: The Leadville, Coolah, Dunedoo Areas hold beautiful rolling hills and land for productive farming.
5. Wildlife: Many native animals and plants are distinctively found in this area and would be at great risk.
6. Pollution from wind turbine/solar projects: The whole renewable zone would be Polluted from the turbine fibres as they start to breakdown, to the solar [panels] causing erosion for land
7. Light shadowing from turbines: Our family home in the morning would be subjected to the shadowing effect of one or more of the Valley of the winds project turbines'

Question 11. Are you aware of community benefit schemes or local benefits (jobs, training, infrastructure) that have been done by renewable energy companies to support your community?

This question was multiple choice with participants able to choose either 'Yes' or 'No'. About 57 per cent of participants (235) were aware of community benefit schemes or local benefits by renewable energy companies to support their community. 43 per cent of participants (174) were not aware of community benefit schemes or local benefits by renewable energy companies to support their communities.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 12. Do you know what kinds of projects are being funded?

277 participants responded to this question. Of these, a sample of comments were reviewed, with common themes emerging. Some respondents highlighted that the types of projects include funding to community groups and initiatives such as schools and sports clubs, community clubs, local infrastructure and training.

Examples of community projects

- 'Community benefit schemes are in place for current and proposed renewable developments in the New England, for such things as community facilities (swimming pools and sports clubs, community education, the arts, etc), and to improve regional housing including for more immigration to regional areas.'
- 'The Community Benefit Fund in our community has been established to share the benefits and rewards of the renewable energy development within our local community. The approach [is] designed to bring mutual benefit to our community,

the project and its owners and financiers. It aims to integrate development in the local community by contributing to the future vitality, sustainability and success of our region by creating some sort of legacy in the community. It is based on a desire to establish and maintain positive long-term connections to the area and to be a good neighbour. 17 [per cent] of the rent from each tower is being distributed to our community through the community benefit fund as well as a negotiated amount to our local indigenous community.'

- 'Yes – effectively these projects are aimed at benefits for the community in the villages and towns affected by the developments within the REZ. These include upgrades to community facilities e.g. Public Halls and community buildings. There is also some communication projects and tourism opportunities. Arts and culture is included in the mix as well.'

However, many respondents indicated 'no' or provided commentary and criticism regarding their views on the projects. Some respondents also indicated that the projects do not outweigh the negative impact of REZ. Others also described community projects as 'bribes'.

Criticism of community benefits schemes and projects

- 'Community benefit funds have been promoted extensively however as far as I am aware to date the only money that has actually been paid out was to [sponsor] a local football team to go to a football competition.'
- 'Propaganda. Renewable energy companies are offering up a very small community benefit fund to make it look like they are positive for the towns. When compared to the overall income of these councils, it is a negligible amount, and will make no real difference to the communities.'
- 'Not really, we just know there will be increased funds coming into the town and that most of the workers will be out of town people.'
- 'Yes. Proponents have different ways of distributing funds. Some local councils have [withheld] funding of local roads and community infrastructure for years, thinking the renewable projects will pick up the tab. The community benefit schemes are inadequate and in most cases are [administered] by people who do not have a real community connection to the community they are trying to benefit. Also, there are employment schemes being put forward but these are mostly aimed at training in the renewable industry [e.g.] electrical trades.'
- There are NO projects that can be used for the benefit of the affected landholders and their businesses that are directly impacted by the developments.
- 'I belong to the local development group and the only projects have been focused around people and organisations who support the [renewable energy] projects. I have not seen any project that delivered a long term benefit to the Community as a whole.'

I have also noticed that the local council, based in Coonabarabran, 5 of 9 council positions, has been using funds around their area rather than the areas that are actually affected by the REZ like Dunnedoo and Coolah.'

Negative impacts of REZ outweigh the benefits

- 'Yes at present. But I fear the so called "benefits" will not compensate for all the disadvantages.'
- 'They will not [compensate] for the damage being done.'

- 'No. No plans have been made as it is unclear as to when and how much money is involved.'
- 'No amount of money will be enough to compensate for the loss and damage caused by these projects.'

Section 5: Landholders: Tell us about your experiences of existing renewable energy projects

Question 13. If you are a landholder in a Renewable Energy Zone, do you host (you may pick more than one):

Question 13 asked participants, in their capacity as landholders, to select which renewable energy infrastructure they hosted, allowing participants to choose more than one response. Of the responses, 87 per cent (312) indicated that did not host any renewable energy infrastructure, 6 per cent (22) host REZ transmission lines, 4 per cent (15) host a windfarm, approximately 2 per cent host battery storage and solar farms (6 and 5 participants respectively).

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 14. How satisfied are you that you have been fairly paid for the use of your land?

This question allowed participants to select a rating scale ('Very satisfied', 'Somewhat satisfied', 'Neither satisfied or dissatisfied', 'Somewhat dissatisfied' or 'Very dissatisfied').

The question received 74 responses. Of the responses, the majority of participants (49) who answered this question selected 'Very dissatisfied'. 16 participants selected 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'. 5 participants selected 'Very satisfied'. Both 'Somewhat satisfied' and 'Somewhat dissatisfied' were selected by 2 participants each.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 15. If you were dissatisfied, why were you dissatisfied?

This question received 56 responses. Of these, a sample of comments were reviewed, with some common themes emerging. Most of the responses indicated that offers were refused due to low offers or inequitable compensation compared to what other landowners had been offered. Notably, some respondents stated that they were dissatisfied as they were not offered any compensation as the renewable energy projects were outside their property lines.

- 'We have been offered a pittance for the interference and have not accepted any offer'.
- 'As a neighbouring land owner the compensation offered is insulting.'
- 'I am dissatisfied because we are a close neighbour who was offered compensation if we signed a neighbour agreement. Which was [ridiculous] and was not only a gagging order for the whole 30 years plus of the project it had other ridiculous clauses. so no compensation and we will not be compensated for the devaluation of our land as a [neighbour].'
- 'Poor information and engagement by project proponents. Completely incorrect information (lying) passed to landholders at information sessions. Lack of understanding by proponents of government regulations for these types of developments. Poor [community] engagement skills (our information came from engineers who claim not to have engagement skills).'
- 'We are a direct neighbour and we have not been consulted about what we would see as fair remuneration , or paid anything. We have written to the company requesting consultation [and] received curt replies and no action. We are seen as troublemakers for standing up for our rights but it appears we have none. The development has been approved and construction has begun, and the company is silent, unavailable. They play dirty, they lie and they have no interest in working with us as a community. They are money hungry scumbags. It's forced us to put our property on the market, changing our life plans for our family [and] our farm.'
- 'Because none of it is in my land. It's all 400m- 7km surrounding my property.'
- 'our private evaluator put a figure on the table and the unfit just for terms act stuffed the whole offer and to add to that 48 cents in the dollar will have to be paid back as tax which is a big kick in the guts considering it is supposed to be a compensation pay out.'

Question 16. If you'd like to add any further comments about your experience, please do so here.

225 participants engaged with this free text question. Of these, a sample of comments were reviewed, with a key theme emerging. Most responses outlined participants' negative experience regarding REZ. For example, participants identified poor consultation and transparency from the government about the implementation of REZ. A common concern was that regional communities are burdened with renewable energy projects compared to the cities.

- 'The declaration of the REZ ... seems to have been a decision by politicians (LNP) as a knee jerk reaction to address their indecision and delay for a decade rather than being a result of a well thought out plan. EnergyCo and DPHI have had try to make it work after the fact, identifying infrastructure issues, preparing new guidelines for

solar and wind projects, and creating community benefit sharing schemes (all since the Labour was elected). This has made community acceptance much harder as there was no engagement in [identifying] the REZ boundaries or setting no-go areas within the REZ boundaries due to proximity to towns, high scenic landscape values, Aboriginal Heritage, Biodiversity etc). The actual projects are also ad hoc, some seem to be speculative to on-sell approvals and profit rather than build; hard to assess cumulative impact on the landscape, traffic generation, accommodation, waste generation etc when [it's] not clear how many projects will progress to construction and the timing of construction.'

- 'I'm [disgusted] the behaviour of EnergyCo the representatives of the government that myself and many farmers have been treated through this whole shambles and the only ones that will disadvantage from this is the farmers.'
- 'We recently stayed in Bondi on the 13th floor and looked across to the east and not one house had solar panels. Why should the regions pay for poor planning access use and overpopulated urban areas.'
- 'The NSW Government failed to adequately engage with and inform the local community of what these REZ developments meant for our region. I am outraged by the poor policy making process.'
- 'I am absolutely exhausted by the planning process and the lack of clarity provided by developers and government bodies that are meant to be over seeing the processes. It seems like planning rules that apply to all other developments get thrown out when it comes to renewable energy planning. There is no need to power the planet if we can't feed it.'
- 'There is an "us and them" almost combative environment around renewables due to "cloak & dagger" negotiations, NDAs and confidentiality contracts that create angst, uncertainty and discourse between neighbour and neighbour. There is a [distinct] renewable energy infrastructure fatigue from those who love open space without 200 metre structures disrupting natural landscape and disturbing the natural environment. Why should one industry creating green energy cause disruption and degradation of natural environment in another?'
- 'The Central-West Orana (CWO) REZ and infrastructure plans (including transmission lines and work camp sites) are dividing regional communities, disrupting farming businesses and forcing generational family farms to be sold. It has caused undue stress on whole communities including Merriwa, Coolah, Cassilis and Dunedoo. There is a massive imbalance in power in the planning and development of these projects between EnergyCo and private landowners due to the critical state significant infrastructure legislation and overriding threat of compulsory land acquisition.'

Section 6: Landholders: Tell us about your experiences of proposed projects

Question 17. Have you been approached by a renewable energy company to build infrastructure on your land?

This question was multiple choice with participants able to choose either 'Yes' or 'No'. Of the responses, 261 participants indicated that they have not been approached by a renewable energy company to build infrastructure on their land, and 99 indicated that they have been approached.

Question 18. What does the renewable energy company want to build on your land? You may select more than one option.

Question 18 asked participants to select which projects renewable energy companies wanted to build on their land, allowing participants to choose more than one response. Of the responses, 42 per cent (56) selected 'a windfarm', 28 per cent (38) selected 'transmission lines', 14 per cent (19) selected 'a solar farm', 13 per cent (18) selected 'Other' and 2 per cent (3) selected 'battery storage'.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 19. How satisfied are you that you have been offered fair pay for the use of your land?

This question allowed participants to select a rating scale ('Very satisfied', 'Somewhat satisfied', 'Neither satisfied or dissatisfied', 'Somewhat dissatisfied' or 'Very dissatisfied').

The question received 101 responses. Of the responses, the majority of participants (71 per cent) indicated they were 'Very dissatisfied', while 19 per cent indicated they were 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'. Five per cent selected 'Very satisfied', 4 per cent selected 'Somewhat dissatisfied' and 1 per cent were 'Somewhat satisfied'.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 20. If you are dissatisfied, why are you dissatisfied?

This question received 85 responses. A common source of dissatisfaction identified by respondents was a lack of transparency and alleged deceptive practices of renewable energy companies. For example, many landowners stated they did not trust the providers and so declined their proposals to host renewable energy technology. Others were aggrieved that the compensation offered was inadequate or unfair and feared they would be left to bear the costs of decommissioning. Others also highlighted community discord resulting from development of the zones. These sentiments are reflected in the following sample of responses:

- 'Renewable Energy companies use a divide and conquer approach which results in creating division amongst regional communities. They split the district in two and have no care or accountability for the damage they create. Their compensation schemes to the wider community are fundamentally inadequate and they pick out 4 or 5 landholders and make them rich and the rest of the community suffers. Despite all this feedback, they do not change their approach - so called consultation is just turn up, talk and drive off back to Sydney - they do not listen and change their offering/approach.'
- 'We do not want the infrastructure, no matter the payment. Despite saying no, developers repeatedly come back trying to peer pressure us into agreeing and signing non-disclosure agreements to hosting.'
- 'We were offered a 'one-time payment' to give the power company the option of building towers on our land. Although they drew a line on a map as to where the easement corridor would be the small print revealed that they could place the corridor wherever they liked after the access agreement was signed. We did not sign.'
- 'In my experience with the Merriwa Cassilis Transgrid project the compensation suggested was totally inadequate as it did no[t] compensate for potential future health impacts, visual impacts, impacts on internet and ability to adopt new technologies, it didn't compensate for the lost agricultural productivity on adjoining land or neighbours who were not offered compensation. Nothing can compensate for the potential lost future tourism. Nothing can compensate for the disharmony [among] neighbours. Just woeful.'
- 'Once the proponent gains critical mass, you have no option to opt out as you will be affected with limited recompense. As such, these companies work to split landholders from one another so people are afraid of being next to one without the financial benefits. As such they behave worse than mining companies who will buy land to allow you to move on if you are affected.'

Some respondents were apprehensive about the viability of farming their land, seeing little or no future for themselves and their families:

- 'We don't want this project on our property however we feel like this is our only option given we are surrounded by 3 proposed solar projects, Sandy Creek Solar, Cobbora Solar, Dapper Solar. The windfarm is our financial option to leave. Why would we stay here, there is no future for our children. This whole process has been very sneaky, developers playing us against other developers - minimal information and most information we have actually found out about via the grapevine. The

community is breaking out here, all as a result of the CWO REZ. We could not feel less supported right now. We don't even want to stay in the [agriculture] industry as a result, we have no confidence that we will be supported if we continue elsewhere

- 'Because once this is completed, we won't have a farm left. We won't be able to survive when they take the groundwater we depend on. Most years, we teeter on the edge of drought—we've only just endured one—and now we're being betrayed by our own government, facilitating foreign investment at the expense of our survival. You should be ashamed.'

Question 21. If you'd like to add any further comments about your experience, please do so here.

There were 141 responses to this free text question and a sample appears below. While a small number of responses expressed optimism about the opportunities offered by renewable technologies in their area, most were highly critical. A key theme was the lack of transparency in consultations and negotiations, which left residents feeling consultation was token, rather than genuine. Respondents also mentioned the mental health and stress impacts and the potential increased bushfire risk from the proposed renewable energy projects.

Consultations and negotiations are marked by a lack of transparency and tokenism

- 'Negotiations need reviewing. NDAs and confidentiality agreements during assessment creates discourse and angst between neighbours. Community consultation needs to improve.'
- 'The whole planning process for REZ planning seems like a glorified tick - a - box exercise. Developers saying that they have communicated with a community when they have only communicated with the agreed hosts. Government bodies stating that social licence is paramount but the irony is that social licence refers to those who want the power not the people who are going to be affected by the risks to their community and livelihoods.'
- 'This disregard for engaging with the local community not only undermines transparency but also raises questions about RES's commitment to understanding and addressing the concerns of those directly affected by their projects. Furthermore, reports of RES's limited knowledge of crucial project details are deeply troubling. It is unacceptable that a company entrusted with such large-scale projects displays a lack of expertise or awareness of essential components integral to the success and safety of the windfarm. This oversight not only jeopardises the efficiency of the project but also puts the well-being of nearby residents at risk.'

Impacts on mental health and stress

- 'We are at breaking point. We have never felt less supported by the government.'
- 'I don't have property with infrastructure on but I have many friends who have had to seek mental health care.'
- 'I sold my property which was located directly across the road from the proposed site and have moved further out, (a)lthough I'm still in the Loomberah area and I witness firsthand the stress on all the other residents everyday.'

Bushfire risks

- '[There is] a very high bushfire risk due to the dangerous and massively expensive high voltage transmission lines attached to the wind turbines, solar farms, lithium-ion battery facilities, as well as Marinus Link (if it goes through), where bushfires could and have already broken out from wind turbines, solar farms and lithium-ion battery facilities, which could potentially lead to another Black Saturday where 173 lives were lost due to 6 out of the 11 fires being caused by high voltage transmission lines.'
- 'How can the government be allowed to put public infrastructure in a category 1 bushfire area and put human life at risk. They will have blood on their hands if someone is killed and they are not listening to this.'
- 'Transmission lines are unwelcome in our category 1 bushfire area. Community is united in our quest to have the proposal moved.'

Renewable energy zones are an opportunity for the community

- 'I'd be very appreciative of the opportunity if a renewable developer took an interest in our land. A diversification of income streams would be a great result.'
- 'Landholders need to know about the wide range of benefits that flow from hosting a wind or solar farm in their community - cheaper power, independence from main grid in event of a black out, (and) community feed-in options to centralised battery'
- 'Would love to host a solar + sheep farm, but too far from transmission lines'
- 'The Community Benefit Fund for this project is one of the most generous CBFs for a wind farm in Australia. This fund will assist our community to create legacy projects that will benefit us, our children and generations to come. By incorporating a wind farm into our business, we are not only assisting with climate change mitigation, we are drought-proofing our family farm as well as ensuring that the family farm can survive commodity downturns and world upheavals. I am also mindful of establishing a consistent and reliable stream of income for my children, grandchildren and potentially my great grandchildren. This project has the capacity to supply 360,000 homes with renewable power.'

Section 7: Neighbours/local communities: Tell us about your experience of existing projects

Question 22. Do you live near a wind farm, or a solar farm, or REZ transmission lines, or battery storage?

This question invited people to indicate 'Yes' or 'No' as to whether they lived close to a renewable energy development, such as a wind farm, a solar farm, REZ transmission lines, or battery storage. Of the 386 responses received, 156 (40 per cent) responded Yes and 230 (60 per cent) responded No, as indicated in the diagram below.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 23. Approximately how close do you live to the project?

There were 180 responses to this free-text question, with most respondents (approximately 81) living between 2 and 10 km of a project. The next largest group were the 26 respondents living within 1 km of a project, while approximately 16 respondents live between 11 and 20km from a project, and the remainder living at greater distances or in proximity to projects still at the proposal stage. A small number of respondents indicated they lived close to multiple projects, on their own or neighbouring properties.

Question 24. Have you been provided with or offered compensation or payment as a result of the nearby project?

Of the 200 responses to this question, only 15 indicated they had been provided with or offered compensation or payment as a result of a nearby project. The majority (185 responses) indicated they have not been provided with or offered compensation or payment.

Question 25. How satisfied are you that you have been offered fair compensation or pay?

This question allowed participants to select a rating scale ('Very satisfied', 'Somewhat satisfied', 'Neither satisfied or dissatisfied', 'Somewhat dissatisfied' or 'Very dissatisfied').

This question received 152 responses, with only 3 respondents indicating they were 'Very satisfied' they had been offered fair compensation or pay. The majority (103) indicated they were 'Very dissatisfied' with the compensation offered, while 4 respondents were 'Somewhat dissatisfied' and 42 were 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 26. If you were dissatisfied, why are you dissatisfied?

This question allowed free text and followed up question 25, receiving 110 responses. Similar to previous responses, participants reiterated criticisms of the existing renewable energy projects such as noise and visual impacts, and inadequate compensation compared to the overall impact. These themes are reflected in the sample responses below:

- 'Lack of parity between the compensation offered and the cumulative costs and impacts. An insulting offer was made that would not help cover us for the disruption and time we have spent, or the disruption to roads and the destruction of water ways and native habitat'
- 'It is a ridiculously small amount for what restrictions they put in the contract. I would need a lot more money before I signed the contract. The money they offer does not even pay to fill our farm fuel tank. How much would it be in 30 plus years? They said the money could even reduce after we signed. We had to pay our own money to get a solicitor to look at the contract. '
- 'We were subjected to capital gains tax on the compensation so we lost 30 [per cent] of the payout which was in [itself] inadequate. We have been promised an annuity payment but nothing has been put in writing. There is talk of further transmission lines dissecting our property and unique landscape.'

Others also noted that those who benefit are far fewer than those who are impacted. For example, one respondent wrote 'The wind farm will be directly visible from my home and also the transmission lines. I will get no benefit from either.'

However, not all respondents were critical of the renewable energy projects, with a small number providing positive responses. For example:

- 'We are happy living next door to the wind farm. It is quiet, beautiful, has had no impact on land values or insurance. When this wind farm was built, there were very

few neighbour agreements. This has improved. If we lived next door to the proposed wind farm at Limerick, we would be making \$60k per year. This would be very welcome!'

Question 27. If you'd like to add any further comments about your experience, please do so here.

There were 122 responses to this free-text question. Of these, a sample of responses were reviewed and, as with other questions, a portion of responses expressed scepticism around the need for renewable energy and rejected renewable energy zones in their locale outright. Others saw the zones as a political box-ticking exercise to meet sustainability targets, with irreversible impacts on agricultural land (10).

Concerns about environmental impact and meeting sustainability targets

- 'You are allowing international companies to destroy culturally rich prime agricultural land all to tick a political box and say we are meeting our sustainability target. Yes, the box will be ticked however in doing so, the environment will be destroyed wildlife will be extinct and farmers will be no longer as land is torn apart and contaminated and not viable for effective production. We have one issue, however you are creating many more that will ultimately have irreversible effects.'
- 'The community want honest transparency of the decisions being made and how they have been vetted and researched. That was not provided on the previous government information nights. Just generic pro-wind farm points. Nothing to inform us how the site was chosen or why this is the best possible green energy over other options. It very much appears to be a quiet deal to feed the local Steel producers forsaking all green climate advice to reduce fossil fuels and emissions.'

Concerns about the consultation process from developers

- 'So many proposed in our local area it is difficult to keep track of which ones have been approved. The 'secret' dealings with developers is very off-putting to all in the district. Very unethical and not very professional at all.'
- 'The developer we have been meeting with (RES) are hopeless!! They never have any up-to-date information, they don't ever stick to their timelines and in one meeting a host had to get up to point to the area the transmission lines were in! They simply do not know what they are doing!'
- 'Elecnor who are constructing the transmission line on our property have been very reasonable in respecting our rights as the owners of the property. We have had no problems with the various contractors working on the project so far.'

Although some respondents offered suggestions for a more equitable approach to compensation:

- 'This is an opportunity for the NSW Government to demonstrate its commitment to strategically planning for a renewable energy future with thoughtful regard to reusing existing infrastructure corridors, consolidating impact on already-disturbed land, utilising public land for public objectives, and preventing harm to rural communities. The community must be able to trust our government will not sacrifice the collective long-term interest by choosing options which appear to be the quickest, cheapest or easiest in the short term.'

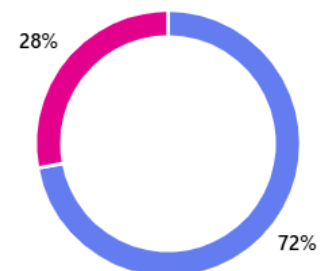
- 'A lot of the backlash against renewable energy projects appears to occur when the person with the project on their property is well-compensated, but their neighbour who lives outside the "impact area" is not. This could be addressed by having a sliding scale of payments which take into account distance from [infrastructure] and amount of land affected.'

Section 8: Neighbours/local communities: Tell us about your experience of proposed projects

Question 28. Do you live near a proposed wind farm, or solar farm, or REZ transmission lines?

This question received 376 responses, with 271 respondents indicating they live near a proposed wind or solar farm, or REZ transmission lines, and 105 indicating they did not.

● Yes (go to Question 28)	271
● No (go to Question 33)	105



Question 29. Approximately how close do you live to the project?

This free text question received 268 responses. Of these responses, participants who responded with a numerical response were categorised in the following groupings:

- Approximately 146 participants indicated that they lived within 5 km of a project
- Approximately 42 participants indicated that they lived between 6-10 km of a project
- Approximately 29 participants indicated that they lived between 11-20 km of a project
- Approximately 13 participants indicated that they lived between 21-30 km of a project
- 4 participants indicated that they lived more than 30 km from a project.

Other participants simply noted that they lived 'close' or 'within the boundary of a project'. Some highlighted that they lived on the coast where wind turbines are proposed to be built such as in the Hunter and Illawarra region.

Question 30. Have you been provided with or offered payment?

This question was multiple choice with participants able to choose either 'Yes' or 'No'. Of the respondents, about 88 per cent of participants (243) indicated that they were not provided with or offered payment, and about 12 per cent of participants (34) indicated that they were provided with or offered payment.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 31. How satisfied are you that you have been offered fair pay?

This question allowed participants to select a rating scale (Very satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Neither satisfied or dissatisfied, Somewhat dissatisfied or Very dissatisfied).

The question received 155 responses. Of the responses, the majority of participants (71 per cent) indicated they were 'Very dissatisfied', while 21 per cent indicated they were 'Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'. Equally, 3 per cent selected 'Somewhat dissatisfied' and 'Very satisfied'. 1 per cent selected 'Somewhat satisfied'.

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 32. If you are dissatisfied, why are you dissatisfied?

Question 32 was a follow up question to Question 31, with 146 responses to this free text question. Of these, a sample of comments were reviewed, with common themes emerging similar to previous responses. For example, many respondents highlighted the disproportionate compensation offered compared to the future value of the property, the disruption to the current use of agricultural land and negative noise and visual impacts associated with living close to a renewable energy project. Others also noted how they were not offered any compensation and reiterated the lack of trust and transparency in the process.

- 'The compensation that other landholders have so far been is NOT FAIR, it is a pittance. We don't want money [anyway], no matter how much, we want our [prime] farm land, our peace and quiet, our visual beauty, our lifestyle, our property prices to remain the same, our investment to rise not fall, our children's [inheritance] to remain intact. We do not want something forced upon us with no choice. We have paid a small fortune for our piece of paradise, worked 50 [years] to get it ... we all feel totally betrayed!!!!'
- 'The money offered will never solve the disruptions and impacts on our farm and business.'
- 'Because this will impact the value of my property because the future pool of buyers who like looking at wind farms is much lower than the people who like natural vistas ...'
- 'The company "renewable energy solutions - RES" initially stated it was not their practice to offer any payment to project neighbours. We were then approached with an offer which would require us to sign a contract agreeing not to comment on visual impact. The offer made was insufficient to undertake the necessary mitigation activities. The contract contained many unreasonable demands, one example RES wanted to have unlimited access to our property for the life of the project. We are 3kms from the project - why did they need this level of access? As converting to renewable energy is a National priority why [isn't] there a standardised approach to payment and compensation? ...'
- 'The visual impact on my property is massive. It would greatly devalue the property. It's a generational property that has taken the better part of a century to develop.'
- 'Dealing with Energy Co we found them to be pushy while withholding basic information. They provided us with misinformation which is confusing and costly.'
- 'Renewable energy projects will affect the entire community. Only direct neighbours are offered compensation. The community benefit fund is ridiculously low, and will have no real benefit to the community.'

Questions 33. If you'd like to add any further comments about your experience, please do so here.

This free-text question received 131 responses. Similar to previous responses, common themes were reiterated such as the opposition to renewable energy projects, dissatisfaction of the consultation process (or lack thereof) and impacts on the use of agricultural land and the negative visual impacts in the landscape. Other respondents also highlighted the negative impacts on the mental health and social cohesion of the local communities from the development of REZ and associated projects.

- 'Through many years of hard work, resilience, and overcoming numerous challenges, including natural disasters, we have built a highly productive farm focused on rice cereals and livestock. Having had five generations on this land and now 2 parents, four adult children and their families. We have recognised the evolving needs of society and we are actively diversifying our farm by incorporating tourism initiatives. However Transgrid's proposed project will ultimately destroy our families future in agriculture and tourism. It has already caused immense mental stress on us all.'
- 'Not everyone can afford to sell and move to escape this solar farm and there property prices are effected already just from the proposed site you can ask the Tamworth real estate agents about this.'

- 'Proposed wind farm companies have split our community and tried to buy their way back into favour. The only people happy with the proposed wind farm are the hosts and the rest of the community are very aware of how much the rest of the community will be affected.'
- 'The effect of mental health and social upheaval in the [affected] areas is severe.'
- 'This has caused mental anguish for the Mitchell's flat residents stress we didn't ask for or want.'
- '... We have lost two of our very good neighbours because they did not want to be under the impact of known windfarm effects on health. We have stayed on because we love our community; our farm with its abundant water resources ... the devaluation of local property market, the risk to our livelihood, the disintegration of our community, just the quiet neighbourhood, low traffic movements for moving stock safely, everything about country life - ALL GONE ...'

Although one participant stated that they were 'Not dissatisfied at all. Not all local residents can/should be financially compensated.'

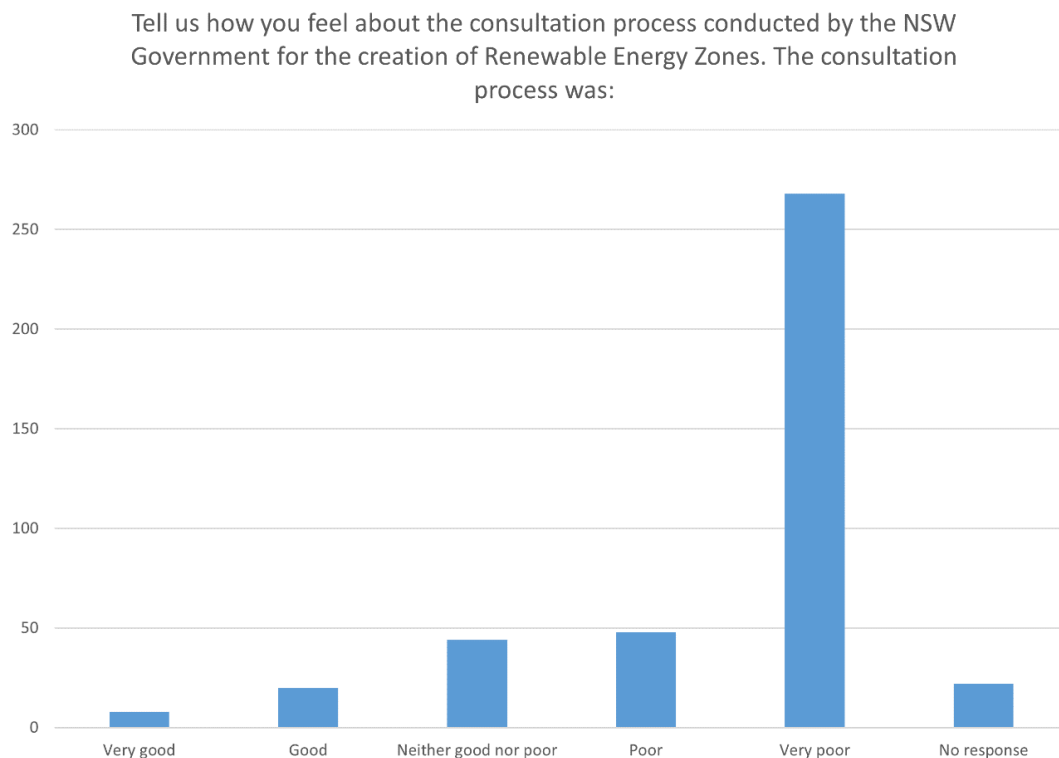
Section 9: Consultation process

Question 34. Tell us how you feel about the consultation process conducted by the NSW Government for the creation of Renewable Energy Zones.

There were 388 responses to this question. Participants were able to choose the following options: 'Very good', 'Good', 'Neither good nor poor', 'Poor', or 'Very poor' to describe how they felt the consultation process conducted by the NSW Government for the creation of the REZ.

A majority of participants indicated that their experiences were 'Very poor' (69.1 per cent). 12.4 per cent of participants indicated that they had a 'Poor' experience and 11.3 per cent indicated that their experience were 'Neither good nor poor'. The remaining participants indicated that they either had a 'Good' or 'Very good' experience (5.2 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively).

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 35: Please comment on the aspects of the consultation process which worked well.

Question 35 was free text and a follow up question to Question 34. There were 259 responses to this question. From these, a sample of comments were reviewed and a majority of participants disagreed that there were any aspects of the consultation that went well. Some simply stated that there were no consultations or were unaware of any consultations that took place. Other participants remained critical of any consultations and noted that the process was a 'tick a box' exercise.

- 'What consultation process?? There was none, the community learned it was happening when it was announced by the government!'
- 'Honestly the only part that worked well was when we organised a community meeting ourselves.'
- 'The consultation with the Transgrid Merriwa Cassilis project started as a tick the box exercise and our sense is that is how the process operates. We were just fortunate in our case that there was a by election happening which gave the community some leverage. ...'
- 'The consultation process was a lie, designed to placate people by giving them money and telling them everything will be ok.'

Others commented that while community consultations worked well, there were still scepticism about the outcome of the process:

- 'The extent and success of consultation has depended on the particular project. Recently there have been improvements to consultation and recognition of the importance of local community support for these massive projects.'
- 'Town Hall meetings that allowed public question and answer time. This worked well ONLY when those with the knowledge were present to answer. Often this wasn't the case.'
- 'The information given at a public meeting in Walcha was comprehensive but created a hornet's nest with some members of the community.'
- 'Should have started earlier.'

A small number of respondents provided positive examples with the consultation process. For example:

- '[It's] good there has been a designated period of time to collect [submissions] from the community to voice their concerns and opinions.'
- 'consultation committees and providing actual examples how communities will benefit/ increased opportunities from wind or solar farms.'
- 'Online information has been good.'

Question 36. Please comment on the aspects of the consultation process which could have been improved.

Similar to question 35, Question 36 was free text and a follow up question to Question 34. There were 271 responses to this question. From these, a sample of comments were reviewed and the responses reiterated similar themes from previous questions. A majority of respondents highlighted their negative views and experiences regarding the consultation process. The key themes were: a lack of transparency from the government regarding the announcement of REZ in the community, lack of community consultation with many respondents simply noting that there were 'no consultation' or 'were not aware of any' and highlighting the need for community involvement in the process.

Lack of transparency

- 'Lack of honesty, attempts to minimise number of people included in communications, intentions of projects & ongoing impacts not shared with all NSW residents only limited propaganda provided to those directly impacted if they cared to research on line information for themselves. No media release to general public at a statewide level to gauge public support.'
- 'Don't lie outright to our faces.'
- 'Dealing with EnergyCo we found them to be pushy while withholding basic information. They provided us with misinformation which is confusing and costly.'
- 'To make an informed decision on the best site for RE projects, the Government must be confident they have: met industry standards in its application of a constraints matrix; used accurate and up-to-date data; comprehensively assessed the associated costs, benefits and risks; conducted effective engagement with relevant communities; completed a preliminary social impact assessment prior to selection of a study corridor I believe none of these requirements have been adequately delivered by Government or TransGrid's project team. Many examples in my dealings of; Inaccuracy of key data. Biased constraints matrix. Imprecise and non-transparent cost

comparisons. Lack of Effective Stakeholder Engagement. Insufficient timeframe for community consultation.'

Lack of consultation

- 'There has been no consultation and no respect has been shown to residents when these zones were announced.'
- 'To have had some consultation or information would have been appreciated. We found out about REZ once renewable energy projects were announced.'
- 'Unfortunately consultation was after the fact and very low key - were landholders ever actually directly consulted? The NSW REZs had been proposed by AEMO many years before NSW [Government] finally started doing anything, by which time the private developers were already throwing their weight around on finding sites and bullying landholders and communities. As above EnergyCo etc could actually get out there and do some engagement (i.e. they won't even talk to other agencies about what is going on, how REZs are to be rolled out, what lessons have been learnt, what does the future look like.....)'
- 'It felt like it was a done deal. Consultation was just advising us of what will happen.'

Community involvement

- 'The community should have been informed at the very beginning before the years of ground work by government were put in place.'
- 'Community should have been INVOLVED from the beginning, allowed to democratically choose whether they embraced a REZ or said no. Communities could have been empowered to delivery local energy generation projects all around the state. The REZ model was not run past the NSW public in a transparent and forthcoming way.'
- 'Letterbox drop to all householders in renewable energy zones. Most people have [no] clue what is going on.'
- 'It wasn't really a consultation - it felt more like information about how our region was volunteered for development and nothing was going to change that.'
- 'More forward logical planning and consultation with locals. Listen to what is viable and not totally ignore local knowledge of the local environment.'
- 'Not sure how well advertised but it would be good to increase the visibility of the submission to ensure everyone impacted by REZ has a say.'

A small number of participants had positive comments suggesting that consultation was 'reasonable and appropriate'. Others were more neutral and provided some suggestions to improve consultation.

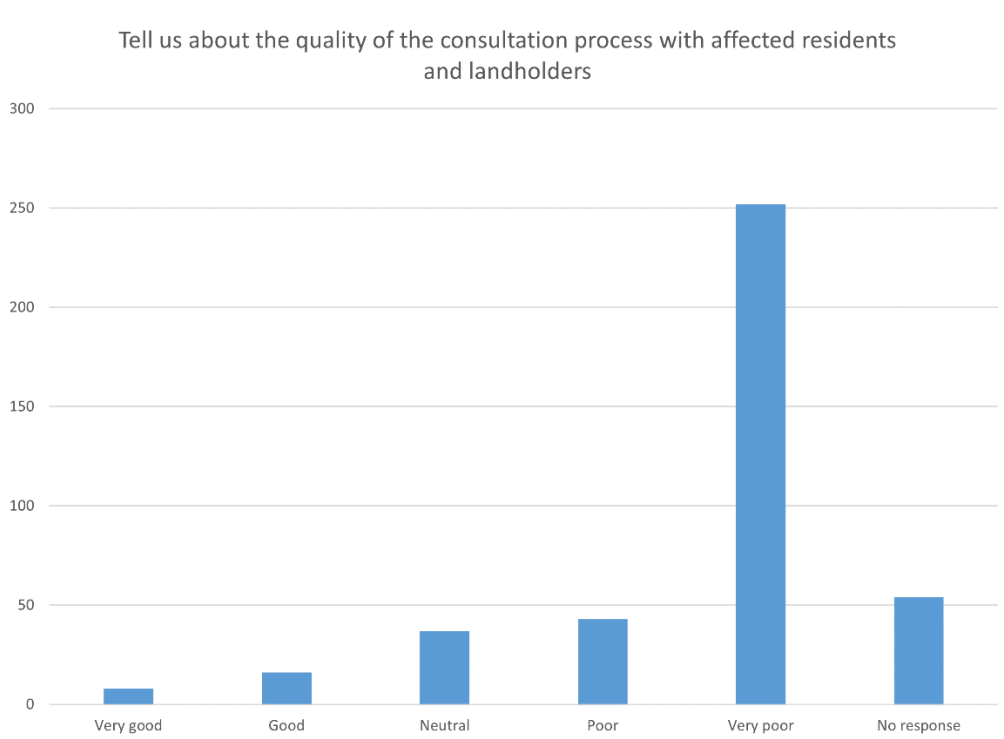
- 'There are sectors of the community that aren't on board, and more should be done to build understanding about the national importance of the work.'
- 'Additional commitment to First Nations / community buy-in with clear demonstration of how projects will provide tangible benefits to local communities and a greater emphasis on projects that actively involve local communities and First Nations.'
- 'Copying the campaign in the South West REZ, where (I believe?) the council were onboard and approved. Sell the idea to the community leaders to show how the community can benefit.'

Question 37. Tell us how you feel about the consultation process conducted by the energy companies for their proposed energy projects.

There were 356 responses to this question. Participants were able to choose the following options: 'Very good', 'Good', 'Neither good nor poor', 'Poor', or 'Very poor' to describe how they felt the consultation process conducted by the energy companies for their proposed energy projects.

A majority of participants indicated that their experiences were 'Very poor' (70.8 per cent). 12.1 per cent of participants indicated that they had a 'Poor' experience and 10.4 per cent indicated that their experience were 'Neither good nor poor'. The remaining participants indicated that they either had a 'Good' or 'Very good' experience (4.5 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively).

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 38. Please comment on the aspects of the consultation process which worked well.

Question 38 was free text and a follow up question to Question 37. There were 221 responses to this question. From these, a sample of comments were reviewed and similar to previous responses, the majority of respondents responded with negative views about the consultation process. Many respondents wrote 'none', 'nil' or 'as above' with one commenting 'none, tick & flick'.

- 'The offshore wind farm companies have not interacted with the community at all.'
- 'None there has been no consultation from ACEN, there has only been a dictatorial approach from TILT! Absent! Terrible! Pointless! Waste of time and money because the companies heard nothing!'

- 'It was condescending and the tone was as if the conclusion was already set in stone and consultation was just a box ticking exercise.'
- 'Too little too late.'
- 'Very poor didn't know any answers to questions they didn't even know how the wind turbine turns on.'
- '[O]nly worked well when media started reporting lack of community consultation that the local members organised more meetings but still not answering residents valid questions or concerns.'
- 'Initially none I am aware of later some improvement took place.'

There were a small number of participants who provided an answer on the aspects of the consultation process which worked well.

- 'We were invited to meetings.'
- 'My community [liaison] officer answers the phone and always gets back to me.'
- 'Shopfront and concierge services have at least given community members an opportunity to have face to face consultation and question time.'

Question 39. Please comment on the aspects of the consultation process which could have been improved.

Question 39 was free-text and a follow up question to Question 37. There were 237 responses to this question. From these, a sample of comments were reviewed and similar to previous responses, the majority of respondents responded with negative views about the consultation process. Many respondents wrote 'everything' or 'see previous response' or 'all of it'. Again, similar themes regarding lack of transparency, accuracy and respecting the community were noted.

- 'All aspects. I am not aware of any consultation process conducted by energy companies. If there was a process, it clearly wasn't intended to be meaningful or comprehensive.'
- 'Honesty, transparency and respect.'
- 'Actually being consulted by energy companies, not finding out through 3rd parties on Facebook.'
- 'Quick to talk, slow to listen and don't implement anything anyway. They only consult because they have to.'
- 'A lot of times when they had information sessions you would find out after the event.'
- '[Genuine] listening, leave out the falsehoods and arrogance ... The Energy companies are poorly resourced, team members change all the time, they have little empathy or understanding of their project and the impact it has on the residences nearby...'
- 'Aboriginal Heritage Studies and consultation in the very preliminary stages with LALCs.'

Others also raised how some energy companies had caused division in the community.

Division in the community

- 'The developers only consulted with members of the community that support [their] cause. Division in the town was clear and sad for all residents.'
- '... It could have been improved by engaging and informing the actual communities directly impacted vs neighbouring; Having open all of community invitation meetings at the outset; Getting rid of the 'drop in sessions' This just creates a divide on who knows what. A meeting so we ALL hear the same info and hear responses to questions the same. These do not have to be confrontational. 'Drop in' sessions just lead to misinformation and disinformation; Rural areas still rely on the printed word. Pamphlets, posters dropped at key businesses and letterbox drops ensure ALL get the info ... Face to face and hard print media are fundamental to consulting with rural communities; Time frames for meetings needs to be mixed - one daytime one evening after work with added time for commuting. Those at meal times need catering that welcome families to attend ...'
- 'All communication has been constructed to divide and conquer the community. When finally the developers did reluctantly front the community they demanded a biased moderator of their choice and told baldfaced lies, which the community was not allowed to broadcast. Disgusting behaviour and there is zero trust of them or their agents and zero social licence.'
- 'All of it?? We had to push for information, they use the divide and [conquer] method with neighbours, information differences ...'

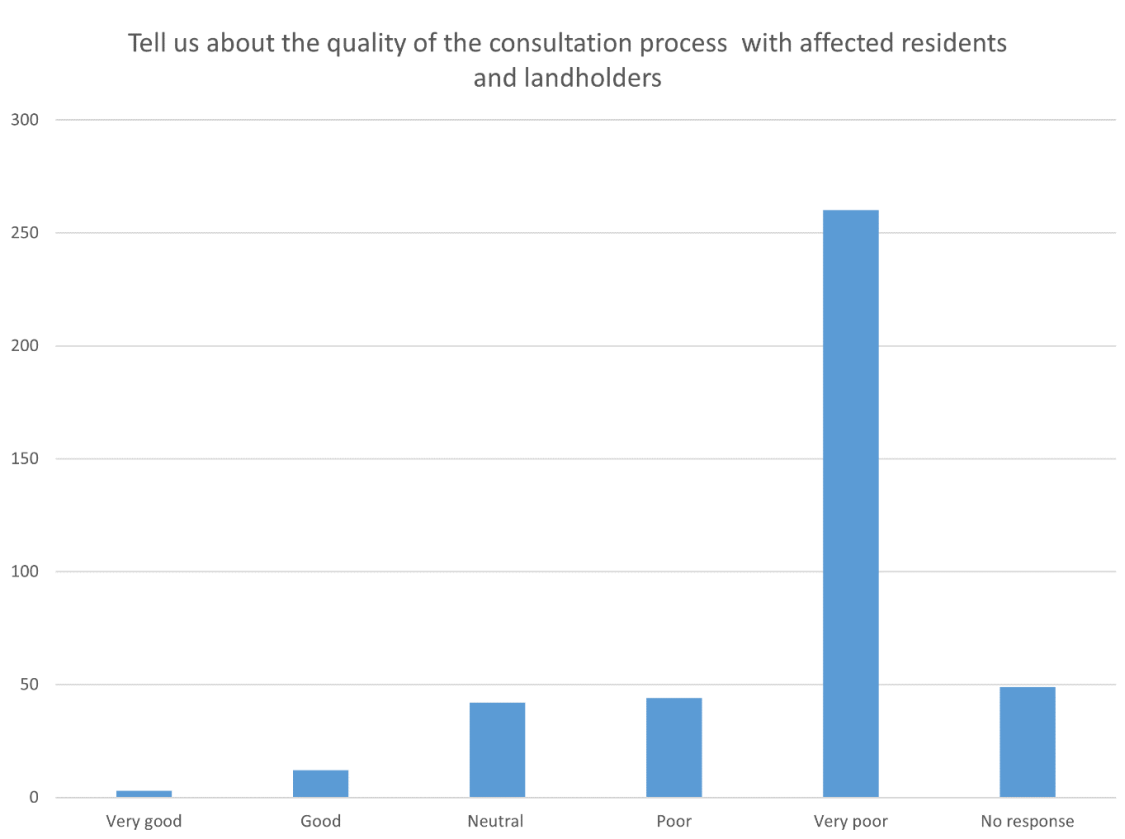
One respondent noted that their experience between energy providers differed. In their answer to question 38, they said that 'Squadron had great communication and seemed to actually care about the land owners', however, in their response to this question, they said that 'Light Source BP and Energy Co barely communicated with us about what was happening'.

Question 40. Tell us how you feel about the consultation process conducted by the NSW Government for approval of proposed energy projects.

There were 361 responses to this question. Participants were able to choose the following options: 'Very good', 'Good', 'Neither good nor poor', 'Poor', or 'Very poor' to describe how they felt the consultation process conducted by the NSW Government for approved energy projects.

A majority of participants indicated that their experiences were 'Very poor' (72 per cent). 12.2 per cent of participants indicated that they had a 'Poor' experience and 11.6 per cent indicated that their experience were 'Neither good nor poor'. The remaining participants indicated that they either had a 'Good' or 'Very good' experience (3.3 per cent and 0.8 per cent respectively).

The graph below provides a visual representation of the responses received for this question.



Question 41. Please comment on the aspects of the consultation process which worked well.

Question 41 was free text and a follow up question to Question 40. There were 203 responses to this question. From these, a sample of comments were reviewed and similar to previous responses, the majority of respondents responded with negative views about the consultation process. Many respondents wrote 'none', 'nil' or provided comments such as 'absolutely laughable', 'greenwashing' or 'what consultation process?'.

Negative views

- 'Caused lots of community angst individuals are also highly stressed , This is the third time Community has been in the firing line and each time we continue to lose more and more community members.'
- 'There is no consultation...the process is very flawed which then is time consuming to residents having to lodge objection after objection to various project applications.'
- 'The whole process is skewed in favour of the proponent. They can take their time with their EIS and we get a mere 28 days to reply? [It's] crazy.'
- 'I don't think there has been anything that has worked well. The process has been drawn out bureaucratic mine field.'
- 'None, it feels like they are going through the motion to tick a box, the decision has already been made.'

There were a few respondents that provided a direct response to the question. For example:

- 'The planning website is a great way to be informed about what is being proposed.'
- 'The website is easy to use to make submissions.'
- 'Usually stuck to the allotted time allowed for speakers to present their opinions.'

Question 42. Please comment on the aspects of the consultation process which could have been improved.

Question 42 was free-text and a follow up question to Question 40. There were 232 responses to this question. From these, a sample of comments were reviewed and again the majority of respondents provided negative views about the consultation process. Similar to the previous responses, many participants simply noted 'all of it' or 'everything', while some elaborated on their responses.

- 'Make it more obvious for the average person, what is going on. Make the submissions process more fair. Renewable energy companies have years to develop a HUGE EIS, with paid employees and consultants, and the public have only 28 days to respond, whilst trying to run their lives as well. Renewable energy companies then get extension after extension to reply to the submissions.'
- 'The EIS's submitted by developers have been lacking sufficient evidence to support approval and ensure the wider community that the benefits outweigh the detrimental impacts which will outlast the projects themselves. Ensuring developers remain accountable for the proposed projects and were made to be present during community engagement sessions.'
- 'We only ask that they do what they promise. They asked us to trust the system, and the application of the rules based decision making process. That went out the window a number of times, latest example being the Hills of Gold wind farm in Nundle. After giving a recommendation to remove 18 non-compliant turbines, the developer

complained that in doing so, the project would be less profitable. They were immediately re inserted. Justifiably, we now have no trust in the planning department and their process.'

- 'As all the points [in previous responses], not hidden "so called" information seen as verbose, meaningless and a way of ticking boxes without actual consultation'
- 'We were told what was going to happen, a one way process.'
- 'It's all rushed through. It's like the decision is already made & the consultation process is just put in to make it look like the community etc was consulted.'
- 'None of the very sound issues we raised were dealt with adequately. It was therefore a tokenistic process. A waste of tax payer money. Very frustrating. Many folks were not brave enough or educated enough or confident enough to participate in it. We had to voluntarily run help days at the local hall to help people submit objections. And none of them were taken seriously by the government. Shocking process that only served to more deeply wound our mental health.'
- '... in attending EnergyCo hosted events I have not felt that the community has been genuinely listened to and the burden on community members to provide extensive documentation to counter proposals is overwhelming.'

There were a small number of respondents who outlined their positive experience regarding the consultation process. One respondent noted that:

- 'The consultation process in our community was hijacked by 2 small groups of anti-renewable energy developments and the proposed host landholders have taken the brunt of all the vitriol, divisiveness, misinformation and disinformation distributed by these groups. The majority of people in the community support the REZs and development proposals but keep silent because of the aggressive and vitriolic behaviour of a small group of people who have become obsessed with trying to stop these projects happening.'