
Supplementary questions

- 1) How is the Commission systematically measuring the real-world socioeconomic impacts of renewable energy projects on rural communities, beyond simply reporting on emissions or energy production metrics?

Response:

Section 15(1)(c)(i) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* requires the Commission to monitor and review the environmental, social and economic impacts of action being taken in NSW to address climate change. The Commission is currently developing its monitoring and assessment frameworks across its areas of remit.

Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* sets out guiding principles for climate action in NSW. This includes that this action be taken in such a way that “considers the impact on rural, regional, and remote communities” (Section 8(4)(d)) and that it takes account of “the need to support local communities, including Aboriginal communities, who may be affected by the action” (Section 8(8)(d)). This requires the Commission to assess both the environmental and social implications of climate action in NSW.

The Commission recently commenced its first of many public consultations seeking feedback to inform and help shape its future work and advice. It can be accessed at

<https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>.

The consultation is specifically seeking input on whether the current measures in place to ensure community engagement and benefit sharing from the build out of infrastructure for the energy transition are regarded as sufficient (Question 7) and views on what relevant specific metrics and indicators should be included in the Commission’s monitoring framework (Question 22).

- 2) Is the Commission's evaluation process for Renewable Energy Zones transparent to the public, and can affected communities contribute to these comprehensive reports?

Response

The Commission does not have a direct role in evaluating Renewable Energy Zones. Questions about the evaluation process for Renewable Energy Zones are best addressed to the Energy Corporation of NSW. Under Section 8(10) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* the Government of NSW is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to address climate change, and ensuring it pursues best practice.

The Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective. It must consider the guiding principles in Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* in its work. If evidence indicates that further action is needed to address local issues, the Commission can advise the NSW Government accordingly.

Any community can contribute to the Commission's work. The Commission recently commenced its first of many public consultations seeking feedback to inform and help shape its future work and advice. It can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. The opportunity to provide a submission is open to any member of the public and can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

- 3) Have there been examples of when community concerns have significantly changed or influenced decisions made by the Net Zero Commission regarding renewable energy developments? If so can you describe these examples.

Response:

The Net Zero Commission does not make decisions about renewable energy developments. Questions about renewable energy developments are best addressed to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water or Energy Corporation of NSW.

Under Section 8(10) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* the Government of NSW is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to address climate change, and ensuring it pursues best practice.

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective.

The Commission welcomes input from the public to inform its work and advice. It currently has its first public consultation open to seek this input. It can be accessed at

<https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>.

Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

- 4) Given your role in achieving net-zero emissions targets, how does the Commission balance these broader environmental objectives with genuine local concerns about land clearing, biodiversity loss, and agricultural disruption?

Response:

The NSW Government is responsible for achieving its emissions targets.

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective.

In its advice, the Commission is required to consider the guiding principles set out in Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* which include environmental, social and economic considerations such as those about land clearing, biodiversity loss and agricultural disruption.

Of relevance to this question is that the guiding principles require that action to address climate change should, inter alia:

- be taken as early as possible to minimise the cost and adverse impacts of climate change (Section 8(3))
- be taken in a way that is fiscally responsible, promotes sustainable economic growth, considers the economic risks of delaying action, and considers the impact on rural, regional and remote communities in NSW (Section 8(4))
- take into account “the knowledge of rural, regional and remote communities” (Section 8(8)(c)) and
- take into account “the need to support local communities, including Aboriginal communities, who may be affected by the action” (Section 8(8)(d)), including the “impact on local employment and industries” (Section 8(8)(d)(i)).

- 5) What accountability measures does the Commission have to ensure renewable energy projects do not negatively impact communities disproportionately, especially smaller rural communities?

Response:

The Commission does not make decisions about renewable energy developments. Questions about accountability measures to ensure renewable energy projects do not negatively impact communities disproportionately are best addressed to the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and the Energy Corporation of NSW.

Under Section 8(10) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* the Government of NSW is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to address climate change, and ensuring it pursues best practice.

Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* requires that action to address climate change should be taken in a way that considers the impact on rural, regional and remote communities in NSW (Section 8(4)(d)) and should involve appropriate consultation with affected persons, communities and stakeholders (Section 8(7)).

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective.

The Commission welcomes input from the public—including rural communities—to inform its work and advice. It currently has its first public consultation open to seek this input. It can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

- 6) Has the Commission established independent auditing or reviews of Renewable Energy Zone projects to verify that promised community benefits and environmental safeguards are genuinely being delivered?

Response:

Under Section 8(10) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* the Government of NSW is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to address climate change, and ensuring it pursues best practice. Questions about independent auditing or reviews of Renewable Energy Zone developments are best addressed to the Energy Corporation of NSW.

Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* requires that action to address climate change should be taken in a way that considers the impact on rural, regional and remote communities in NSW (Section 8(4)(d)) and should involve appropriate consultation with affected persons, communities and stakeholders (Section 8(7)).

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective. It is interested to hear if community benefits and environmental safeguards are not being delivered in the Renewable Energy Zones.

The Commission welcomes input from the public to inform its work and advice. It currently has its first public consultation open to seek this input. It can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

- 7) If significant adverse impacts are identified from existing renewable energy projects, such as community economic decline, environmental damage, or inadequate compensation, what corrective actions or recommendations can the Commission implement?

Response:

It is not the Commission's role to implement corrective actions or recommendations to adverse environmental, social or economic impacts of renewable energy projects. Under Section 8(10) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* the Government of NSW is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to address climate change, and ensuring it pursues best practice.

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective.

The Commission can advise Government on where additional measures could be implemented to address adverse social or environmental impacts caused by climate action, including from the development of renewable energy projects. Such advice would take into account the guiding principles for climate action set out in Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*.

These guiding principles include that action to address climate change should be taken in a way that is consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development (Section 8(6)), should consider the impact on rural, regional and remote communities in NSW (Section 8(4)(d)) and should involve appropriate consultation with affected persons, communities and stakeholders (Section 8(7)).

- 8) How closely does the Commission work with entities like the NSW Agriculture Commissioner or local councils to ensure renewable energy projects comprehensively address land-use conflicts and socioeconomic issues?

Response:

Section 21(3) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* requires the Commission to consult with the Agriculture Commissioner when preparing its annual progress report. The Commission has established open lines of communication with the Agriculture Commissioner to facilitate this, including regular meetings on a monthly basis. Through its current public consultation, the Commission is engaging with local councils and presented at the Joint Organisations Chairs Forum in Parliament House on 7 May 2025.

Under Section 8(10) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* the Government of NSW is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to address climate change, and ensuring it pursues best practice. This includes addressing land-use conflicts and socio-economic issues, in line with the guiding principles set out in Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*. Action to address climate change should be taken as early as possible to minimise the cost and adverse impacts of climate change (Section 8(3)) and should be taken in a way that is fiscally responsible, promotes sustainable economic growth, considers the economic risks of delaying action, and considers the impact on rural, regional and remote communities in NSW (Section 8(4)).

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective. If evidence indicates that further action is needed to address land-use conflicts and socio-economic issues, the Commission can advise the NSW Government accordingly.

The Commission welcomes input from the public to inform its work and advice. It currently has its first public consultation open to seek this input. It can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

- 9) What planning or risk assessment is the Commission undertaking to ensure renewable energy infrastructure installed today does not become an environmental or economic liability for rural communities in the future, particularly concerning issues like infrastructure decommissioning, waste management, or technological obsolescence?

Response:

The Commission's role does not include planning, risk assessment of specific renewable energy infrastructure or project delivery.

Under Section 8(10) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* the Government of NSW is responsible for developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to address climate change, and ensuring it pursues best practice. This includes planning, risk assessment and project delivery of renewable energy infrastructure, in line with the guiding principles set out in Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*. Action to address climate change should be taken as early as possible to minimise the cost and adverse impacts of climate change (Section 8(3)), and should be taken in a way that is fiscally responsible, promotes sustainable economic growth, considers the economic risks of delaying action, and considers the impact on rural, regional and remote communities in NSW (Section 8(4)).

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective. If evidence indicates that further action is needed to address renewable energy infrastructure becoming an environmental or economic liability for rural communities in the future, the Commission can advise the NSW Government accordingly.

The Commission welcomes input from the public to inform its work and advice. It currently has its first public consultation open to seek this input. It can be accessed at

<https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>.

Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

10) How does the Net Zero Commission plan to monitor and evaluate the regional community and environmental impacts of REZs?

Response:

The Commission is currently developing its monitoring and assessment frameworks across its areas of remit. Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* sets out the guiding principles the Commission must take into account. These include that action to address climate change should be taken in a way that is fiscally responsible, promotes sustainable economic growth, considers the economic risks of delaying action, and considers the impact on rural, regional and remote communities in NSW (Section 8(4)). The guiding principles also require that action to address climate change should take into account “the knowledge of rural, regional and remote communities” (Section 8(8)(c)) and “the need to support local communities, including Aboriginal communities, who may be affected by the action” (Section 8(8)(d)), including the “impact on local employment and industries” (Section 8(8)(d)(i)).

The Commission welcomes input from the public to inform its work and advice. It currently has its first public consultation open to seek this input. It can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

The consultation seeks input on whether the measures in place to ensure community engagement and benefit sharing from the build out of infrastructure for the energy transition are sufficient (Question 7) and what should be included in its monitoring framework, including specific metrics and indicators (Question 22).

11) Will the Commission play a role in assessing the adequacy or outcomes of community engagement in REZ-hosting areas?

Response:

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective.

The Commission could decide to assess the adequacy of or outcomes of community engagement in REZ-hosting areas or be asked to conduct such an assessment by the Minister for Climate Change, within its broader role to monitor and review action being taken in NSW to address climate change.

Section 8 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* sets out the guiding principles the Commission must take into account. These include that action to address climate change should be taken in a way that is fiscally responsible, promotes sustainable economic growth, considers the economic risks of delaying action, and considers the impact on rural, regional and remote communities in NSW (Section 8(4)). The guiding principles also require that action to address climate change should take into account "the knowledge of rural, regional and remote communities" (Section 8(8)(c)) and "the need to support local communities, including Aboriginal communities, who may be affected by the action" (Section 8(8)(d)).

The Commission welcomes input from the public to inform its work and advice. It currently has its first public consultation open to seek this input. It can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

The consultation seeks input on whether the measures in place to ensure community engagement and benefit sharing from the build out of infrastructure for the energy transition are sufficient (Question 7).

12) What mechanisms are in place to ensure the Commission independently monitors REZ rollout and its alignment with NSW's climate and social goals?

Response:

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency. Section 15 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* sets out its functions, which include monitoring and reviewing action currently being taken in NSW to address climate change, including the environmental, social and economic impacts of the action and action related to the strategies, policies and programs of the NSW Government (Section 15(c)). This would include monitoring progress of the REZ rollout under the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap and its alignment with achievement of NSW's climate targets.

- 13) How does the Commission intend to engage with local communities and stakeholders to reflect regional concerns in its reporting?

Response:

Section 17 of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023*, requires the Commission to “consult with, and consider submissions from, persons the Commission considers relevant or necessary for the exercise of the Commission’s functions, including government agencies and the general public.” The Commission takes this responsibility seriously and is committed to having meaningful dialogues with communities and stakeholders. Its public engagement is guided by four principles: integrity, inclusive, meaningful, and transparent.

The Commission welcomes input from the public to inform its work and advice. It currently has its first public consultation open to seek this input and is engaging with communities and stakeholders as part of this process. The consultation can be accessed at

<https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>.

Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

14) How will the Commission ensure transparency and accessibility of its advice and findings for rural and regional communities?

Response:

The Commission publishes copies of its advice and reports on its website. In its current consultation, it has committed to publishing submissions on its website. Reports that the Commission provides to Government must be tabled in Parliament within 28 days, and Government must provide a response within 6 months. The Government must provide a response to the Commission's Annual Progress Report within 4 months of receipt.

The Commission welcomes input from rural and regional communities as part of the current consultation the Commission is running which can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

15) It was mentioned that “strong and meaningful engagement” with communities is essential for social licence, and that benefit sharing must be robust. What criteria will the Commission use to assess whether engagement and benefit-sharing mechanisms have been “meaningful” in REZ-hosting areas?

Response:

One of the guiding principles in the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* is that “Action to address climate change should involve appropriate consultation with affected persons, communities and stakeholders” (Section 8(7)). The Commission is in its first year of operation and still developing its criteria to assess this aspect of fulfilling its responsibilities. We welcome submissions to inform the development of these criteria, including through our current consultation. The consultation can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.

16) The concern that REZ guidelines and frameworks are too reactionary, with some appearing after problems arise. In your view, how can NSW improve proactive policy coherence, so guidelines are embedded from the outset, rather than introduced reactively during REZ delivery?

Response:

The Net Zero Commission is an independent statutory agency which monitors and reviews action being taken in NSW to address climate change and provides advice and recommendations on progress towards NSW's emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective. It is keen to provide advice that helps Government fulfil its responsibility under Section 8(10) of the *Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023* to pursue best practice in developing and implementing strategies, policies and programs to address climate change.

The Commission is consulting widely to understand what is viewed as currently working well and what is not in respect of action to address climate change in NSW, including development of the REZs. It currently has its first public consultation open and welcomes input from the public. It can be accessed at <https://www.netzerocommission.nsw.gov.au/engagement-consultation/2025-consultation>. Submissions can be provided via a web form or by uploading a written response.