

Attn: Portfolio Committee No. 4 Regional NSW
Upper House Committees - Legislative Council
Parliament of New South Wales, 6 Macquarie St, Sydney
NSW 2000, Australia

Dear Committee Members,

INQUIRY INTO THE IMPACT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONES ON RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES AND INDUSTRIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Ref: JK/SL/AS/GV DocSet ID 2833817

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tamworth Regional Council (Council) commends this Inquiry and appreciates the opportunity to provide this submission. Council is generally supportive of renewable energy initiatives, with Blueprint 100: Our Community Plan 2023–2033 recognising the need to “increase the take up and use of affordable and clean energy across the region.” However, Council also recognises that renewable energy projects can have significant social, economic, and environmental impacts on local communities. These challenges are central to our response to the Terms of the Inquiry.

While Council supports the renewable energy transition, it stresses that it must be delivered responsibly, with communities as genuine partners. The current rollout of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) is advancing outside established planning frameworks, creating heavy pressures on housing, infrastructure, and industries, while offering limited benefits to host regions. Without reform, regional communities risk carrying the costs of the transition without its rewards.

Key Concerns

- **Planning bypassed:** Projects progressing outside strategic frameworks, undermining zoning objectives, fragmenting communities, and reducing council flexibility.
- **Prime agricultural land lost:** Large-scale projects are being located on highly productive farmland and ecologically significant areas, threatening food security, undermining biodiversity, and negatively impacting the wider NSW economy.
- **Housing and workforce pressure:** Construction workforces arriving without dedicated accommodation drive up rents and absorb much of the available tourist and short-stay housing. This displacement of residents and visitors threatens the stability of local communities and undermines the region’s visitor economy and ability to host major tourism and cultural events.

- **Over-approval and developer churn:** The project pipeline already far exceeds the 8 GW REZ capacity, resulting in blanket approvals while higher-quality projects remain stalled. This environment encourages speculative developers to seek approvals for on-selling, with little commitment to long-term delivery or community accountability.
- **Infrastructure strain:** Current OSOM transport proposals depend on unsafe; stop-gap measures that compromise road safety, restrict emergency access, and place unsustainable pressure on local networks.
- **Water security risks:** Renewable projects are being advanced in a region already facing critical shortages, without adequate protections for communities, agriculture, and industry.

Opportunities if Managed Well

- **Anchor new industries:** Position Tamworth to lead in green hydrogen, advanced manufacturing, recycling, and data centres.
- **Develop circular economy pathways:** Link agriculture with bioenergy and recycling to create new regional value chains.
- **Build local skills and training pipelines:** Partner with TAFE and universities to establish apprenticeships, training hubs, and professional pathways.
- **Deliver legacy infrastructure:** Purpose-built assets and the repurposing REZ-related assets and utilities into long-term community infrastructure.
- **Co-design of a southern OSOM bypass:** Secure a purpose-built, co-designed transport corridor that delivers lasting regional connectivity and safety benefits.
- **Alignment with the Federal Future Made in Australia agenda:** Attract investment, secure jobs, and strengthen regional resilience through localised value creation.

Council's Position

Council calls for stronger local powers to reshape projects, fairer and indexed benefit-sharing managed through community-led structures, enforceable consultation standards, mandatory post-approval engagement, and upfront housing and infrastructure plans. With these safeguards, renewables can be delivered with us, not to us, leaving a positive and enduring legacy for Tamworth and regional NSW.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

(1) Tamworth is a key regional hub with growing industrial and residential zones. How is REZ land use impacting your long-term strategic planning or zoning flexibility?

Council has a sustained history regional planning strategies that address the wide range of land use possibilities in urban, town and rural lands. Commencing in 2019 and extending for a year Council undertook the comprehensive Blueprint 100 process which also included the Tamworth Regional Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020 (LSPS). This work involved all relevant stakeholders including Government Agencies. The LSPS 2020, in company with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure *New England North West Regional Plan 2041*, provides the basis for planning provision in the local government area.

The issue is that renewable energy projects have jumped ahead of the plans identified above and Local Environmental Plans upon which they are based. The rigorous processes have been overridden successive developments and initiatives which largely ignore the objectives of zones and the local government narratives included in the Regional Plan. The outcome has seen the division of some communities that will take years (decades) to repair. Already, contrary to the objectives of rural zones, large scale renewable energy projects are taking up prime agricultural land, while also being ignorant of the incredible biodiversity qualities present across the LGA.

It is difficult for Council, and impossible for the community to understand, the strong stance taken by the State Government on the protection of prime agricultural land, by maintaining large rural Lot Size provisions while at the same time forcing a net-zero agenda on rural communities which largely see only the impacts and not the benefits of renewable energy developments.

(2) Are you worried that a long-term over-commitment to renewables in your LGA could block out investment from other industries in the future?

Tamworth plays a pivotal role in Australia's meat processing industry, hosting major facilities (such as Baiada, Thomas Foods International and Teys) that anchor domestic and export protein markets. The region supports thousands of jobs across supply chains, from livestock producers and processors to transport, logistics, local trades, and retailers. Agriculture and food processing contribute significantly to Tamworth's regional economy, and the Tamworth Agricultural Institute continues to innovate in cropping, livestock and sustainability practices, reinforcing our competitive edge.

Rising competition for accommodation due to the influx of renewable energy construction workers poses a serious threat to Tamworth's visitor economy. Visitors attending flagship events, such as the Tamworth Country Music Festival, regional equestrian shows and state and national sporting events may struggle to find suitable accommodation, threatening both the viability and reputation of these major events. This pressure could also compromise Tamworth's ability to host culturally significant events such as the Koori Knockout, which selected Tamworth as the 2025 host city due to its abundant tourism infrastructure. Should accommodation be absorbed by long-stay construction workers, organisers may be forced to look elsewhere in future years. The same applies to emerging major events like the World Angus Expo, which is currently considering Tamworth as a recurring fixture on its international calendar, following its success in Tamworth in 2025.

Risks if Renewable Development is Poorly Managed

- Loss of prime agricultural land: REZ projects are increasingly proposed on some of Tamworth's most productive grazing and cropping land. If renewable infrastructure occupies these high-value soils, investors in meat processing and feedlots may shift operations to areas with more secure agricultural zoning or lower land conflict risk.
- Housing and workforce pressure: Evidence from the Central-West Orana REZ shows construction workforce inflows driving rapid local rent increases, housing shortages, overstretched services and displacement of local residents. Similar dynamics could occur around Tamworth, threatening stability in workforce accommodation critical for meat processing operations and supply chain reliability.
- Potential industry migration: Together, both factors could motivate major agribusiness and food processors to invest elsewhere, undermining Tamworth's strategic positioning in protein markets.
- Long-term occupation of motel and holiday accommodation: Construction workforces may occupy motels and holiday accommodation on extended stays, raising major concerns over Tamworth's viability as a hub for tourism, industry, and events. This risks displacing tourists and event visitors, and compromising the region's visitor economy.

Opportunities if Managed Smartly

Council recognises that the renewable transition presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity for regional NSW, if implemented purposefully:

- Creation of new industries: Renewable energy can anchor emerging sectors like green hydrogen, green steel, regional recycling hubs, and distributed micro-grid systems. Tamworth is well placed to attract start-ups and research-led innovation in these areas.
- Circular economy pathways: Opportunities exist to align bio-processing (e.g., poultry waste, meat plant by-products) with bioenergy and recycling infrastructure, potentially co-located in regional hubs to integrate waste streams and power generation locally.
- Regional Manufacturing Capacity: There are major opportunities for onshore manufacturing of critical renewable components to reduce reliance on transport from ports and avoid long-distance logistics (E.g., Solar panel manufacturing, copper wire and cable production).
- Boosted economic diversification: Renewable infrastructure may support local training, technology adoption, and in-region manufacturing. This could supplement existing agribusiness strengths and attract new employers interested in a low-carbon, regional scale.
- Data Centres alongside Transmission Infrastructure: Renewables and data centres form a symbiotic pair: hyperscale and edge data centres require vast amounts of electricity, often anchored near low-carbon generation. This makes Tamworth and REZs ideal locations for new data infrastructure, particularly if fibre or dark fibre cables are co-laid alongside transmission lines. Data centre investment brings commercial diversification, skilled jobs, and local technological capacity. Major developers are pivoting towards data centre proposals in REZ regions when transmission access for renewables is constrained.

- Federal alignment: These developments align closely with the Federal Government's Future Made in Australia agenda, providing a pathway to long-term prosperity through local value retention, innovation and green economy investments centred in Tamworth and regional Australia.
- Education, Skills and Local Workforce Development: For Tamworth, establishing renewable-focused training hubs, joint programs with TAFE/universities, and local apprenticeship schemes could attract and retain skills, jobs, and new start-ups in the region.

(3) Do you believe councils like yours should have more power to veto or reshape REZ developments that conflict with local land use goals?

Yes. Council believes stronger local influence is essential, to avoid an "at any cost" approach in approving projects indiscriminately.

Council is supportive of renewable energy development, but only within a framework that respects local land-use priorities and strategic planning. The current approach appears to use token local input in a largely developer-driven pipeline, raising concerns as to why so many projects are approved without adequate alignment to community values or planning rationale.

However, with dependable and trustworthy state-led planning (where projects are rigorously assessed on merit, aligned with strategic land-use priorities, and only the most suitable developments are approved) the pressure for councils to seek veto or redesign powers would be greatly diminished. In such a system, local government could focus on constructive partnership and long-term regional planning, rather than acting as the last line of defence against poorly located or speculative projects.

The Over-Approval Problem

The New England REZ has an intended network capacity of 8 GW once complete, but project applications currently far exceed this 8 GW threshold. In 2021, registrations of interest totalled roughly 34 GW, indicating substantial oversubscription, yet NSW is still approving multiple overlapping State Significant Projects. The result is an unchecked project pipeline that risks overrunning the intended REZ capacity and overriding local planning logic.

Planning on Merits, not Momentum

Council questions why nearly every renewable project is approved by default:

- Projects that conflict with local strategic plans, disrupt prime agricultural land, or fail to align with community values should be declined, not fast-tracked.
- Effective site selection and planning assessment must allow for refusals or modifications if projects don't meet the "community on merit" thresholds.

Project Churn: Developers Seeking Approval to Flip Projects

Council is particularly concerned about a class of developer behaviour that undermines genuine community integration and accountability:

- Some proponents build minimal relationships with local communities, focusing solely on gaining statutory approval with the intention of selling the project to another entity rather than managing it themselves.

- These developers often engage inadequately with the community, as they lack a long-term stake in project delivery, local operations, or benefit-sharing.
- This churn can leave communities facing infrastructure they never imagined, with reduced recourse if the new owner lacks commitment to engagement or mitigation.

Why Council Veto/Redesign Power Matters

1. *Protect community-aligned land use*

Without meaningful local input into project approvals, the REZ pipeline may displace agriculture, housing development, light industry, and long-term land use objectives.

2. *Prevent saturation risk*

Accepting projects far in excess of the 8 GW boundary risks saturating the landscape with inappropriate infrastructure that wasn't anticipated in strategic planning.

3. *Ensure balanced decision-making*

Local councils should be able to define no-go zones, set visual and ecological buffers, and ensure alignment with LSPS, local strategies, and LEP land-use intent, rather than being relegated to on-the-fly negotiation once proposals reach SSD status.

4. *Legal or contractual integrity clauses*

Approval conditions could include clause-based continuity obligations requiring new owners to adopt existing engagement and community benefit plans if ownership changes, or risk losing operational approval.

(4) Your submission expresses disappointment in You weren't too impressed with the Benefit Sharing Guideline. What changes would you like to see to improve compensation for the community?

Council has been explicit that the current NSW Benefit-Sharing Guideline is inadequate in both scope and fairness. Key recommendations for improvement are:

Lift and index the benefit-sharing rates

- Current baseline rates (\$850/MW pa solar; \$1,050/MW pa wind; \$150/MWh for BESS) deliver minimal value relative to landowner footprints and regional impact. They should be:
 - Boosted substantially, with clear mechanisms for periodic CPI-indexing.
 - Reviewed regularly and re-calibrated alongside changes to local government funding schemes or land-rating rules.

Use a multi-tier approach including neighbourhood, local, and regional benefits

- Neighbour-level support (e.g., direct payments, screenings, micro-solar, events sponsorship) should be mandatory, not optional.
- Councils should be empowered to administer local community funds (VPA-controlled) that allocate benefits in line with community strategic priorities.

- Regional pooled contributions coordinated via EnergyCo or NSW Government through REZ-wide funds should support macro-projects (telecommunications, roads, housing) that lie beyond single-LGA scope.

Enable in-kind and co-investment option

- Benefit-sharing should include employment and investment opportunities, such as:
 - Local procurement requirements,
 - Apprenticeship/training programs,
 - Community co-ownership schemes,
 - First nation collaboration closing the gap initiatives,
 - Community contributions (e.g., microgrid design, community hall upgrades).
- These non-cash benefits better reflect real value to communities, whereas fixed cash rates may fall short.

Community-led governance structures

- Require establishment of community steering committees for community benefit funds (independent third party such as philanthropic organisation, community foundation or cooperative) responsible for transparent administration and monitoring of benefit funds.
- Ensure trust, accountability and alignment with the community's stated strategic needs, particularly important where multiple projects intersect in a region.

Cumulative impact contributions

- Introduce mechanisms to aggregate developer contributions across multiple renewable developments in the same area, eliminating piecemeal or fragmented benefits and enabling scaled investment in infrastructure and services that serve whole communities.

(5) Would you support mandatory post-determination community engagement to help heal divisions?

Council strongly supports mandatory post-approval engagement as a standard policy, with these rationales:

- Social cohesion challenges are already evident in REZ hosting communities, including neighbourhood division, trust erosion, and lingering resentment toward developers or government decisions.
- Structured, facilitated community healing forums, periodic feedback loops, and continual dialogue between councils, developers and affected residents would help rebuild trust and ensure benefit delivery stays aligned with community expectations.
- This model reflects international best practice in community benefit-sharing, where engagement and social licence are seen as ongoing, not transactional or one-off pre-development exercises

Renewable Energy Developer Rating Scheme (National Accountability Framework)

The Renewable Energy Developer Rating Scheme currently under development by the Australian Government (via the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water) represents a landmark tool: it will assess developer performance, track record, and community engagement using objective criteria.

- Council sees mandatory adoption of this scheme at the state/federal level as a powerful post-determination accountability measure. It would subject proponents to periodic public evaluation and promote excellence in social license delivery.

Communities Partnering Framework Model: Western Downs Regional Council, QLD

- The Western Downs Regional Council has pioneered what local government can achieve, requiring large businesses (turnover >A\$250 m or 200+ staff) to complete a self-evaluation form aligned with seven key criteria: trusted partnerships, local talent, environmental care, First Nations collaboration, and more. Scores determine “Gold Great Neighbour” or “Silver Good Neighbour” status.
- This competitive and transparent model has encouraged developers to be proactive, accountable neighbours, strengthening reputation and social license in regional communities.

Council believes that applying a state- or federally-mandated version of this framework would reinforce developer accountability, elevate community outcomes, and reduce social friction in host regions.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

(1) How is this renewable energy rollout intersecting with some of those key things that are happening in water security within your council, and what would you need from the State Government to make that process work more efficiently and effectively?

Council will not support any renewable energy projects that pose a detrimental risk to our water security. This position is underpinned by the fact that the State Government itself has acknowledged, through the Namoi Regional Water Strategy, that the region’s water security is already inadequate.

In the Murray–Darling Basin, the allocation and management of all water resources (both surface and groundwater) fall under the jurisdiction of State Governments. Water Sharing Plans set the framework for how water is distributed among different categories of licensed users and establish the priority of supply during times of scarcity. These frameworks are critical to ensuring fair access and long-term sustainability.

For Council, the key requirement from the State Government is assurance that the approval and operation of renewable energy projects will not compromise existing water entitlements or diminish security for any water users, particularly local communities, agriculture, and industry, as well as the Council’s own operational needs. This means applying rigorous water impact assessments to project approvals, enforcing protective conditions, and ensuring that renewable energy development aligns with regional water management strategies.

Council’s expectation is that State-led planning and decision-making will continue to prioritise the protection of water resources as an essential foundation for the region’s liveability, economic resilience, and environmental health; while enabling renewable energy projects to proceed in a way that complements, rather than competes with, our most critical resource.

(2) Can you come back to the Committee on whether you'd want any changes made to the statutory requirements to make them more explicit and prescriptive about how consultation should be done so some of these developers can't sidestep or do it in a tokenistic way, which is what we've been hearing quite clearly has been going on?

Prescribe Minimum Consultation Standards in Legislation

Currently, consultation processes, including public submissions under the EP&A Act 1979 and community consultative committees, lack enforceable detail on methodology, timing and documentation Council recommends:

- Legislated minimum standards, such as mandatory early notification, tailored stakeholder mapping, consultation plans and community impact assessments, aligned with local LSPS, LEP and DCPs.
- Defined benchmarks, for example, minimum meeting frequencies, predefined resident proximity thresholds, and requirements to engage nearby neighbours and local business operators.

Mandate Impact-Specific Engagement Requirements

Rather than leaving details to guideline interpretation:

- Require specific consultation pathways where projects affect sensitive zones such as prime agricultural land, heritage assets, or township edges.
- Include tiered and early engagement: precinct-level master planning first, followed by project-level consultation.

Introduce Independent Oversight or Certification

- Establish a certification mechanism, e.g., through a statutory body or accredited third-party, to validate that consultation met legislative standards.
- Poor consultation would be publicly recorded, impacting reputational standing and future developer ratings.

Embed Transparent Reporting and Accountability

- Require developers to publicly publish consultation summaries, feedback registers, and responses.
- Develop sanction mechanisms if standards are unmet, such as penalties, conditions, or ratings downgrades within accountability schemes.

Align with Emerging Accountability Schemes

- A statutory framework could be matched to tools like The Renewable Energy Developer Rating Scheme, currently under development, which would rate developers on their consultation performance, community responsiveness, and impact management.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

(1) Call for State Government Leadership and Collaboration.

Council and other local governments are being forced to pick up the slack left by poor state-level planning, fragmented strategies, and a lack of leadership in addressing the cumulative impacts of the Renewable Energy Zone.

In the absence of a coordinated, proactive state approach, we've been left to develop our own renewable energy strategy, housing and accommodation plans, legacy infrastructure frameworks, skills attraction tools, and benefit-sharing policies, simply to safeguard our community from becoming collateral damage in the energy transition.

State planning for the energy transition stagnated for far too long, and now, under pressure to meet ambitious energy targets, we are charging ahead without appropriately examining the impacts. The strategic work that should have been done 10 or more years ago is only now getting started, just as projects are entering the pipeline at a rate of knots.

Rather than being empowered by state leadership, councils like ours are carrying the load, diverting staff, managing infrastructure risks, mitigating housing pressures, and protecting local industries and events, all while state agencies continue to take a piecemeal, reactive approach.

We do this work not because we should have to, but because if we don't, no one else will.

Meanwhile, Council has been in active communication with local governments across NSW and other states, particularly in Queensland and Victoria. A consistent insight from these discussions is that other state governments are taking a more active role in mitigating cumulative impacts and are working more closely with local councils to deliver coordinated responses, a level of collaboration that remains lacking in NSW. Other east coast states are showing what coordinated leadership looks like:

In Queensland:

- *Coexistence Queensland* acts as a state-supported facilitator between councils, communities, and developers. It brings stakeholders together early through regional forums, supports landholder rights, and partners with councils on land-use planning and coexistence mapping.
- The *Queensland Renewable Energy Council (QREC)*, backed by the state government, provides funding for engagement toolkits, community forums, and policy co-design, ensuring that local governments aren't navigating these transitions alone.

In Victoria:

- *VicGrid* and *DEECA* coordinate transmission and REZ development through place-based initiatives like *Gippsland New Energy*, which integrates community engagement, skills transition, and state-supported PPAs to underpin new projects.
- The *Latrobe Valley Authority*, under Regional Development Victoria, drives a comprehensive, people-led transition strategy with clear focus areas: economic diversification, liveability, environmental leadership, and jobs.
- The *Key & Essential Worker Housing Supply Action Plan*, a partnership between the Victorian Planning Authority and six regional councils on the Great South Coast, proactively addresses the housing needs of the growing clean energy workforce, funded and supported through state programs.

These are models NSW could and should be learning from.

We are not asking for a silver bullet. We are asking for a seat at the table, clear state-led frameworks, funding support, and genuine coordination. If Queensland and Victoria can do it, so can NSW.

(2) Scale of Projects in Council

While many proposed renewable energy projects within the Tamworth LGA are not located inside the official New England REZ boundary, they are emerging as a direct consequence of the gazettal of the zone on 17 December 2021. Most of these projects will connect to existing TransGrid infrastructure, rather than the new New England Transmission Infrastructure being developed by EnergyCo.

Tamworth's proximity to the REZ means that, despite being outside its defined boundary, the region is already experiencing significant developer interest. In this case, the adage "*Build it and they will come*" does not apply; nothing new has yet been built, and the proponents are already arriving.

Although the City of Tamworth is not formally within the REZ, it plays a pivotal role in its success: the REZ will draw workers, materials, and resources from Tamworth, and all oversize-over-mass (OSOM) and heavy vehicles will transit via the city. These vehicles are using local roads originally built for light agricultural use, which are at high risk of premature wear and deterioration. Given this functional centrality, COUNCIL strongly asserts that it should receive the same level of state support as councils located within the REZ boundary.

To appreciate the full scale and geographic distribution of projects emerging just outside the REZ boundary within COUNCIL, please refer to **Appendix 1**, which maps all renewable projects currently on the horizon.

(3) Planning With Us, Not For Us

Our experience underscores a simple truth, meaningful engagement must occur before impacts are felt. Planning after the fact sidelines communities. We stand by the principle: if it happens to us without us, it is not for us. Proper planning requires enforceable avenues for community input and transparent decision-making, not retrospective consultation.

Council's Priorities for Proactive, Inclusive, and Equitable Planning

- **Mandatory Workforce Housing Strategies**
Legally binding accommodation plans must be in place prior to project consent. These plans must address onsite camps, offsite housing provisions, and place strict limits on motel usage.
- **Targeted Developer Contributions**
Developer contributions and planning agreements must fund affordable housing and protect tourism accommodations. Contributions must be secured upfront, not applied retrospectively.
- **Staged Infrastructure Funding**
OSOM movements and workforce mobilisation should not occur until required infrastructure upgrades and safety improvements are completed.
- **Regional Cumulative Impact Assessments**
Environmental impact assessments and planning approvals must account for regional cumulative impacts on housing, transport, services, and social systems, not just individual project impacts.

- Equitable Council Resourcing

Dedicated funding must be provided to Council to address the increasing demands on staff and resources and ensure we can maintain service delivery across all sectors.

(4) Council Reinforces Opposition to Inadequate OSOM Transport Proposals

Council maintains strong opposition to the current OSOM (Over Size Over Mass) transport routes proposed through the LGA. Of particular concern are options involving the reversing of turbine blades across roundabouts, narrow bridges, and local roads including Nundle Road, Cockburn River Bridge, Whitehouse Lane, and Marsden Park Road. These movements are considered highly impractical, unsafe, and wholly unacceptable in their current form.

Proposals requiring OSOM vehicles to reverse significant distances on active public roads, including over narrow bridges and through key intersections, reflect a disregard for public safety, local amenity, and the structural capacity of our road networks. These approaches are also at odds with the shared strategic objective of EnergyCo, Transport for NSW, and local councils to develop a purpose-built southern OSOM bypass for Tamworth, one that delivers genuine, long-term regional transport benefits.

EnergyCo and Transport for NSW commenced OSOM corridor investigations in Tamworth in April 2025 to facilitate component deliveries to the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). However, the necessary road upgrades are not expected to begin until late 2025 or 2026, despite the likelihood that major OSOM movements will commence before the end of 2026. In the interim, local roads, originally constructed for light agricultural traffic, are already at risk of premature degradation from repeated exposure to heavy transport movements.


While the road corridor following Whitehouse Lane, Marsden Park Road, O'Brien's Lane, and Nundle Road remains Council's preferred route, the proposed 'detour' in its current form fails to adequately accommodate OSOM swept paths and does not provide a satisfactory solution for re-joining the New England Highway via Armidale Road.

Although the state government has repeatedly promised long-term legacy outcomes, few of these have materialised. Most proposed measures appear to be short-term, reactive interventions that do not reflect the scale of disruption faced by local communities, nor deliver the durable infrastructure enhancements that were originally promised. While EnergyCo has committed to "doing it once and doing it right," there is currently little evidence that this commitment is being upheld in practice.

Rather than developing a genuine southern bypass that would deliver enduring regional value by redirecting REZ-related traffic away from local roads, the current solution relies exclusively on existing routes. This includes a series of reverse manoeuvres, undertaken under escort, to move turbine components from the New England Highway south of Tamworth to the New England Highway north of Tamworth and Nemingha.

This "reverse detour" approach does not deliver lasting benefit to the region. On the contrary, it places one of Tamworth's most critical transport arteries at risk. In emergency scenarios, particularly in the city's rural outskirts, it could result in delayed response times, force emergency services onto longer and less efficient routes, and create unacceptable levels of risk and disruption.

This inadequate, stopgap solution has largely resulted from EnergyCo's need to accelerate project timelines to keep pace with the rapid progression of energy generation developments, particularly wind farms, which are advancing far more quickly than the delivery of associated transmission infrastructure.



Council questions why substandard solutions are being imposed on local communities to accommodate the priorities of private investors. A more balanced and respectful approach would be to pause the construction of these generation assets under deferred commencement provisions, allowing time for a proper long-term road infrastructure solution to be developed and delivered. Only then can host communities feel that they are being valued by the state government to the same extent that the government values the projects being delivered in their regions.

CONCLUSION

Council supports the transition to clean energy in NSW, but not at the expense of our community's wellbeing, inclusion, or future. We remain committed to enabling responsible and sustainable development that aligns with regional planning priorities and supports the long-term prosperity of our communities.

We urge the Committee to champion planning processes that are rigorous, enforceable, and genuinely inclusive; ensuring projects are delivered with us, for us, and by us.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide supplementary comments. Should the Committee require further clarification on any of the above items, please contact Jordan Kirk, Renewable Energy Project Coordinator, Tamworth Regional Council.

Regards,

Gina Vereker
Director, Liveable Communities

Contact: Jordan Kirk

20 August 2025

APPENDICES - Appendix 1.

