

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

Hearing: 17 July 2025

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Ms Susan Newey & Mr Mark Fogarty – ReD4NE (Submission 46)

- (1) Your submission calls the REZ rollout a “speed skating, politically motivated exercise.” What’s the one moment that confirmed that for you?**

The agenda in 2019-20 seemed to be an ideological race to net zero activity pursued by Minister Matt Kean and his MO office. The Roadmap was a hasty policy presenting little strategy except an electricity strategy which has since turned into a nonsense objective on energy price reductions. This strategy also referenced the REZ, its formulation based on a desk top study by ANU. This study was never ever tested and generational targets were just assigned. There was no time offer for consultation with communities and the NSW Nationals just rolled over. It seemed that speed skating was an appropriate analogy: *speed at high risk to a fall.*

- (2) Do you think communities like yours are being labelled as “NIMBYs” to shut down valid concerns?**

Yes, a weaponised response by the left.

What we are actually doing (at huge cost to our health, families and pockets) is setting an example to other REZ communities in NSW, and indeed Australia, in demanding the appropriate checks and balances from the government, EnCo and renewable energy proponents before the rollout of huge projects which will change the landscape and communities forever.

- (3) ReD4NE suggests councils are pressured into weak VPAs. Can you expand on how that works?**

It's part of the planning guidelines and the planning act: firstly, the councils have big financial holes to fill so some will cut a deal to give a quick fix. Walcha comes to mind as an example. Others such as the Murray River Council will be much more strategic and cut a good deal such as a legacy opportunity: a much needed medical centre.

4. What would a “fit-for-purpose” regulatory regime look like—one that rural NSW can trust?

A new Planning Act at two levels that focuses on more upfront actions:

Firstly, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (a “SEA focus”): - a bigger picture above projects for instance, regional land use planning, roads etc

Secondly, a stronger focus on early stage project assessment rather than wait two years for an environmental impact statement.

Thirdly, a more defined role for hosting communities to influence planning approvals.

(in actual fact, communities at this juncture have NO influence over planning approvals, despite the rhetoric to the contrary)

5. Is there any part of the REZ policy or delivery model that you do think could work—if properly implemented?

Good question! From an institutional, structural perspective there is on paper some good elements like the Consumer Trustee and the Infrastructure Planner but when it comes to practice, they devalue the outcome by with compromised appointments. Consumer Trustee (AEMO Services or Energy Co) was just a draw down from the planning bureaucracy.

6. What does “responsible” renewable energy development look like to ReD4NE?

Our interpretation of ‘responsible’ development is set out in the eight protocols on our website (copy attached)