

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

Hearing: 18 February 2026
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Mr Richard Coughlan, Secretary, Mr Andrew Browning, Committee member
Bundure District Landholders Group (BUNDL)

1) What specific access rights allocation criteria were unavailable to you at the time of assessment?

There was no clear allocation criteria made available to landholders at this time. Transparency in the process was lacking and it was not made clear why AEMO and Energy Co. made the decisions they did for their assessments of Projects submitted.

2) Were written reasons provided for access rights decisions? If not, should this be mandatory?

NO, there were not written reasons provided. Yes, the public deserves some explanation. In the SWREZ one Development gained access with a flawed EIS and requiring considerable modification to the project.

Developers were encouraged to put in an application for access, with the knowledge that given the limited amount of capacity, were they ever going to get access??(12 projects who spent the initial cost to get into the grid when geographically they were so far from the substation – was there any feedback and why did they make an initial bid?)

3) Should infrastructure located outside a gazetted REZ boundary be eligible to receive access rights? Please explain.

NO, there was more than enough infrastructure with Projects located inside the REZ, but this has not happened. One of the successful Project granted has 32 wind towers outside the REZ. This creates more transmission lines, disturbance to native vegetation and environmental destruction, social and mental health consequences and extra cost to accommodate this. Again, where is the transparency. This project has advised that Energy Co would allow 10% of project to be outside the REZ. We would appreciate clarity on this.

4) At what point do project amendments become sufficiently substantial to require a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

In particular we refer to the modifications submitted by Origin for the Yanco Delta Wind Farm which deviates significantly from the original submission –

- 800 person workers camp not included – water requirements which will be significant not included
- road upgrades and maintenance for worker vehicles not accounted for
- No route for transmission lines to the substation or tracks equating to 71kms, which gives significant increase in environmental impact as follows (YDWF EPBC No 2025 10179 Main Project Site updated):

- Natural grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains (CEEC) Original approved (EPBC) 129.44 ha, new impact 418.10 ha (increase of 288.66 ha (**223%**))
- PCT 26 Weeping Myall Woodlands original approved impact (EPBC) 5.17 ha, new impact 158.6 ha (increase of 153.43 ha (**2967%**))
- Superb Parrot Habitat 31.25 ha original BDAR, new impact 318.84 ha (increase of 287.09 ha (**919%**))
- Project impact on native vegetation original approved impact (EPBC) 129.70 TEC, new impact (1268.50 ha (**978%**))

As we understand changes to approved SSD projects are handled under Section 4.55 of the EP&A Act”

“A modification can be approved if the consent authority is satisfied that the modified project is SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME DEVELOPMENT as originally approved.”

It goes on to say that: “If the change is too large to meet that test a new development application and EIS may be required”

In our view as stated above the YDWF Modifications are significant and don’t think the development has the same footprint as the original EIS.

5) What legislative changes would prevent significant environmental impact increases post-approval?

When a Project goes outside scope of their original EIS with environmental impacts this needs to be addressed by NSW Dept.

6) Should non-disclosure agreements in neighbour agreements be regulated or prohibited? Why?

Unsure of the meaning of this question
Understand that remuneration should not be disclosed, but other elements of the agreement should be made accessible to other neighbours. Content to be open for disclosure.
NDA relating to non-remuneration should be prohibited.

7) Should the State fund independent legal advice for directly affected neighbours?

No, the Developers to fund independent legal advice for affected neighbours

8) What statutory protections are required to shield landholders from liability for damage to renewable infrastructure?

Legislate for limited indemnity when acting reasonably.

9) Should minimum aerial firefighting exclusion standards be legislated for wind turbine developments?

NO. Individual assessment by pilot on case by case situation. Too early to have legislated restrictions.

10) What would a fair and consistent neighbour compensation framework look like?

Case by case situation. A fair and reasonable scaled approach depending on impact to residents and neighbouring land use. There should be a minimum figure for all Projects to adhere to for compensation.

11) Should benefit sharing arrangements be standardised by regulation rather than negotiated privately?

The benefit sharing arrangement should be negotiated privately without Govt regulation.

12) What single legislative reform would most improve fairness and accountability in the REZ rollout?

We think any single legislative reform that would restore the confidence of those within the REZ that the projects were going to be held accountable and transparent.

13) What should be the minimum enforceable community benefit for large renewable energy projects?

This question is vague in detail – we think the community benefit should reflect the cost of having the development in the region. I.e:

- Security
- Insurance and liability
- Road maintenance
- Social and environmental disruption
- Mental health and noise and visual disruption
- Negative impacts on biodiversity and potential decreased land values
- Fire control
- Telecommunication connectivity

14) Should a temporary pause on new access rights be considered until cumulative impacts are resolved?

Yes. There has been no joint cumulative impacts report published. There should be a pause on development until this is forthcoming. Energy Co were meant to have their report on this on the table by now.

15) Should the project modification process be tightened to prevent substantial post-approval changes without a new EIS?

Yes. Refer to answers in questions 1 and 2 and 4.

16) Should non-disclosure agreements in neighbour agreements be regulated or prohibited statewide?

This is answered in 6).