



Every Queensland  
community deserves  
to be a liveable one

# AEIC Review of community engagement practices

Submission to Department of Climate Change,  
Energy, the Environment and Water

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## About the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. It is a not-for-profit association established solely to serve councils and their needs. The LGAQ has been advising, supporting, and representing local councils since 1896, enabling them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities. The LGAQ does this by connecting councils to people and places; supporting their drive to innovate and improve service delivery through smart services and sustainable solutions; and providing them with the means to achieve community, professional and political excellence.

# Community Engagement Review

## Executive Summary

The LGAQ welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Federal Government's Community Engagement Review Discussion Paper (the Discussion Paper) released as part of the review being led by the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner.

On behalf of our member councils, the LGAQ acknowledges the Federal Government's commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 43% below 2005 levels by the year 2030 and that each Australian state has set 2030 emissions reduction targets and most have a renewable energy target. For Queensland, those state targets are outlined in the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan (QEJP), released by our State Government in September 2022.

While Queensland councils have no confirmed position on either the emissions reduction or renewable energy targets set by State or Federal governments, Queensland local governments are committed to working in partnership with all spheres of government, industry and the community to develop and implement effective climate risk management strategies focusing on emissions reduction and adaptation.<sup>1</sup>

Queensland councils acknowledge that achieving the transition to renewable energy and electrification will require complex changes, and provides both challenges and opportunities throughout regional Australia.

Our members appreciate the approach to recognise community impact of this development. This includes the need for consultation with councils and community, balancing opportunities and impacts and securing long-term economic and social benefits.

In the case of solar and wind farms, councils and communities are looking for guarantees including that the new energy industries won't leave them with the new industrial waste of abandoned turbines and towers dotted like 200m scarecrows across the landscape, or endless fields of useless solar panels at the end of their productive life.

If communities are hosting major renewable energy generation, it's only right that they benefit from their fair share of the economic and social benefits that will come from these large-scale projects.

That means locking in social licence with upfront, detailed guarantees of improved liveability in these areas, not to their detriment, damage or destruction while benefitting proponents. Social licence demands real benefits – far beyond a few sets of footy jerseys like those that have sometimes been offered in the past.

The renewable energy transformation is based on billion-dollar investments, but with significant interruption to community, roads, established industry and councils. While the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lgaq.asn.au/downloads/file/531/2022-lgaq-policy-statement>

projects are generating power and profits for decades, so too should they be required to continue to generate agreed benefits for the communities that host them.

The LGAQ would like to acknowledge that earlier this year, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner Andrew Dyer presented at a local government webinar that was specific to these issues. That webinar was conducted prior to the announcement of this review in July 2023.

## Recommendations

The LGAQ has prepared detailed comments in relation to the Discussion Paper and has made 9 recommendations, summarised below:

- **Recommendation 1:** While welcoming the need to establish new regulatory frameworks that ensure host communities develop alongside large-scale renewable energy projects, the LGAQ recommends consideration of a nationally consistent approach to any new policy framework, noting Queensland's role as a policy leader.
- **Recommendation 2:** The LGAQ recommends early and genuine consultation, undertaken with councils in the development of all renewable energy projects, with the adoption of a 'no surprises' policy, ensuring key community consultation processes are only undertaken after initial engagement with the relevant local government.
- **Recommendation 3:** The LGAQ recommends that there is a mandatory notification process to local councils for all renewable energy projects occurring, either fully or partly, in the relevant Local Government Area (LGA).
- **Recommendation 4:** The LGAQ recommends the establishment of community contribution fees, based on capacity, for all renewable projects to support better community outcomes and decommission bonds held in trust, to protect prime agricultural land and support better decommissioning at an acceptable standard for community.
- **Recommendation 5:** The LGAQ recommends dedicated and specific federal support and engagement to develop a national workforce plan to reskill and train workers for renewable energy projects, with a focus on employing locally based workers within or close to the development of individual projects.
- **Recommendation 6:** The LGAQ recommends a consistent and regulated end-of-life or decommissioning and site remediation process.
- **Recommendation 7:** The LGAQ recommends Commonwealth support and more funding to deliver the Queensland Microgrid Pilot Fund to improve resilience in First Nations communities.
- **Recommendation 8:** To facilitate the diverse and specific energy needs of remote communities, the LGAQ recommends the establishment of a co-designed Remote and First Nations clean energy strategy in a partnership approach between the three levels of government.
- **Recommendation 9:** The LGAQ recommends the appointment of a dedicated and specific local government representative on the National Net Zero Authority, ideally from Queensland as the most impacted state from a lower carbon economic transition.



## Introduction

Queensland councils welcome the commitment by the Federal Government to review consultation practices for new renewable energy infrastructure, firming infrastructure such as pumped hydro and large-scale batteries and new transmission infrastructure.

As outlined in the Terms of Reference, the review focuses on the need to enhance community support and ensure that electricity transmission and renewable energy developments deliver for communities, landholders and traditional owners.

Effective community consultation and engagement is essential for any new large-scale projects, and this does not differ for renewable energy and transmission projects. To gain widespread support and earn the 'social licence' to operate within the host community, it is necessary to be engaged with the community and the leaders responsible for governing the region. In this regard, it is vital to involve the local council wherever possible in the design and execution of programs related to the project.

The LGAQ's feedback to this consultation process is drawn from our Policy Statement, Annual Conference resolutions passed by the majority of our members and from ongoing consultation with Queensland councils regarding the impact of renewable energy projects and the opportunities and challenges that come with decarbonising our economy. This feedback has been reflected in previous submissions to the State Government in relation to:

- Regional Energy Transformation Partnerships Framework; and
- Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Bill 2023; and
- The REZ Roadmap

The LGAQ also recently provided a submission to the review of the Wind Farm Code (State Code 23) and Guidelines, undertaken by the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning in Queensland. We would be happy to make all of these submissions available to the review team, however much of that feedback provided has been encapsulated in this submission.

Communities should develop alongside industry. The liveability of every Queensland community should be enhanced, not negatively impacted from renewable energy projects. Critical to that success is the need for proponents to engage early with community and councils. That engagement needs to be genuine and receptive to feedback and input.

Host and supply communities should have specific benefits that are identified and tangible. These legacy benefits should also be responsive to the needs of that local community. That can only be identified through genuine engagement. A commitment to local and regional benefit sharing is important to the long-term success of any industry or specific project.

Developers need to focus on buying locally and supporting locals. That means employing and retraining local workers, procuring from local businesses and supporting local community and not-for-profit groups. A successful project proponent should recognise and add value to the fabric of their local community. A fully transient workforce housed in work camps located outside of towns are not best practice, in fact the last thing most communities want to see.

Empowering local communities and building social licence will reduce costs and the time taken to develop a project. That process has to recognise the impact on essential service delivery, enabling infrastructure (roads, housing, water, etc) and on the local environment. Transparency of process will build trust and credibility with the community.

To assist the review team, the LGAQ has addressed the Terms of Reference and provided general feedback below.

## Submission

The number and scale of renewable energy generation projects required to reach renewable energy and emissions reductions targets will require better coordination of generation and transmission infrastructure to ensure efficient and effective investment.

The LGAQ acknowledges the Terms of Reference for the Review:

1. The Review will consider community attitudes towards renewable energy infrastructure and provide advice on the best way to maximise community engagement and benefit in planning, developing and operating renewable energy infrastructure
2. In conducting the review, the AEIC should have regard to the following:
  - a. Perceived or actual environmental impacts
  - b. Perceived or actual impacts on agricultural land, including:
    - i. Emergency management, including fire and biosecurity risks;
    - ii. Increases in landholder insurance premiums; and
    - iii. Tourism impacts and other aesthetic and cultural considerations.
  - c. Perceived or actual impacts on Indigenous heritage and land rights
  - d. Community engagement and benefit sharing including financial, local infrastructure, knowledge sharing, and any other types of benefit.
3. The AEIC can advise on how to maximise community engagement within the existing regulatory and legislative frameworks, including the National Electricity Law, the National Energy Objectives and the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission.
4. The AEIC may also provide recommendations to the existing regulatory frameworks that would better enable community engagement in all stages of planning and development.
5. The AEIC may assess current relevant government, and industry, policies and reforms, and suggest changes that improve community support for the necessary and rapid expansion of clean energy generation, while:
  - a. Preserving and expanding Australia's unique flora, fauna and fragile ecosystems;
  - b. Supporting agriculture and other land uses, including innovative colocation approaches;
  - c. Respecting First Nations people and ensuring they have opportunities to benefit from the transition;
  - d. Delivering community benefits in consultation with communities including any financial benefits, local employment opportunities and skills development;
  - e. Supporting regional development;
6. Any other related matters.

It is acknowledged that the Review will primarily focus on:



- Proponent capability for effective and successful engagement with landholders, community members and neighbours, local Councils, First Nations communities and environment groups – including identifying capability gaps that require immediate improvement;
- Landholder experience and expectations for how they have and should be engaged by proponents;
- Community and neighbour expectations for how they have and should be engaged by proponents; and
- The role of local Council in the development and deployment of the energy infrastructure, along with both their engagement expectations from proponents as well as Council's own engagement with the community on such projects.
- The leadership and vision that will bring Australians together to support and enable this massive energy transformation.

Many of these issues are currently being considered by the Queensland State Government under the rollout of the QEJP and we would encourage the review team to consider the need to establish a harmonious regulatory environment to avoid any confusion or overlap between state and federal regulations.

### Experience of Queensland councils

For generations, Queensland's economic success has been built on the back of a strong resources industry and the communities that enable it to thrive. Queensland miners and the sacrifices of their families continue to pave the roads we drive on, build the schools we learn in and service the hospitals we rely on.

As Queensland's economy transforms to a clean energy future, resource communities and their local councils need to ensure they have place-based plans that respond to the social and economic challenges this will bring.

Queensland communities should benefit and flourish alongside these mining, renewables and new minerals projects. Since the first time coal was dug out of the ground, local communities have been fighting to ensure that the benefits of mining and clean energy are secured locally.

Many Queensland councils have experience dealing with the development of large-scale industries through the concerted focus on exploring, extracting and producing coal and gas and other minerals over a century of mining in Queensland.

Other councils who will host renewable energy projects into the future but haven't had the exposure to large scale resource industry development previously, are not as familiar or experienced in any involvement with discussions on securing community benefit with project developers.

Queensland Councils have been working constructively with the State Government on co-designing regulatory frameworks that support the Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan and Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan. Critical to those discussions is the social impact of new resource and clean energy projects that are needed to continue to support the State's economy, and if managed well, can provide economic and social benefits to local communities in regional Queensland.

As Federal Government Ministers have proclaimed throughout 2023, more mining is needed in Australia to reach our net zero emissions targets. For Queensland, that means a gold rush of new developments in mining, renewable and critical minerals projects – providing more royalties and taxes into State and Federal Government coffers. It's only fair that local communities, especially in regional Queensland, who are contributing so much to our economy, get their fair share of the economic and social benefits that come from these large-scale developments.

As we have outlined to the State Government, there is an opportunity to provide a contemporary framework which applies principles similar to those developed by the State Government for Social Impact Assessment (SIA) guidelines as part of the *Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act 2017* (SSRC Act), for all resource, renewables and clean energy sector development in Queensland.

This could be through an extension of the SSRC Act or similar legislation specific to the renewables and clean energy sectors. This is state legislation and provides a strong regulatory platform of regulating and mitigating the impact of large-scale developments in local nearby communities.

As we have said to the State Government, key social sustainability principles need to be entrenched in the planning of all future investment in the resources, renewables and clean energy sectors, to ensure future sustainability for industry sectors and the communities that support them.

For that to occur, the LGAQ has recommended that the Queensland State Government fund and develop a toolkit for all local governments on how best to engage with project developers. The toolkit can be designed with feedback from local government and focus on building capacity across the State and a consistency of approach, recognising the unique value propositions within each Local Government Area.

From a Federal Government perspective, we recognise the benefits of ensuring regulatory consistency across state borders. Global investors could be deterred by different state regulatory interventions. In saying that, we have encouraged the State Government in Queensland to continue to be a policy leader on community benefit and engagement through the development of the QEJP, and for those frameworks to be discussed at a national level as well. While uniformity is important, we would not want to see standards or frameworks that lock-in community guarantees established in Queensland to be diminished or watered down through national harmonisation. For the Queensland context, we have recommended extending the role of the Gasfields Commission to oversee renewable energy projects and the impact of coexistence with landholders and communities as those projects roll-out across large swathes of rural and regional Queensland.

- **Recommendation 1:** While welcoming the need to establish new regulatory frameworks that ensure host communities develop alongside large-scale renewable energy projects, the LGAQ recommends consideration of a nationally consistent approach to any new policy framework, noting Queensland's role as a policy leader.

**Genuine and ongoing engagement**

Renewable energy projects including energy transmission and firming project's construction plans, transportation plans and overall project design should be developed in close consultation with councils. This is to ensure impacts are minimal and planning for the region's future can incorporate and adhere to other council plans for the growth of the region including land use, infrastructure, priority roads etc.

The AEIC's guide to best practice community engagement is strongly supported.<sup>2</sup> However, these are only best practice 'suggestions' – these initiatives are not codified or enforceable.

Key contacts at the developer and/or its construction contractors must be provided to landholders to allow landholders to more readily raise issues that arise during construction.

Developers must also meet regularly with council and landholders during construction to proactively discuss and resolve issues as well as keep landholders and the neighbouring community informed of the project's status. Proponents are making significant financial investments in these projects to deliver shareholder returns; they must also be required to make significant social and economic commitments to the communities that will host their projects.

- **Recommendation 2:** The LGAQ recommends early and genuine consultation, undertaken with councils in the development of all renewable energy projects, with the adoption of a 'no surprises' policy, ensuring key community consultation processes are only undertaken after initial engagement with the relevant local government.
- **Recommendation 3:** The LGAQ recommends that there is a mandatory notification process to local councils for all renewable energy projects occurring, either fully or partly, in the relevant Local Government Area (LGA).

### Commitment to benefit sharing

Opportunities for local procurement, manufacturing and other supply chain opportunities should not only be encouraged but mandated.

There are real concerns about the ongoing economic contribution these projects make to their host communities during the construction phase, but particularly beyond that phase.

One council has noted that a clean energy generation project worth more than \$2 billion – the largest every single project in that LGA is being proposed, and yet there is not one long term job being provided in that local host community.

Opportunities to provide long-term economic benefits to a host community need to be provided up-front. They can include community benefit funds to support local organisations and also other needs in that community – such as housing supply. Those opportunities should be negotiated and facilitated in discussions with the relevant local government.

Understanding the ability of host communities to support development, and the impact of any development on local and regional economies is critical. Project proponents should provide the quantifiable evidence of the impact on workforce, housing, supply chains, waste management, other land uses and social infrastructure. For example, if a project will require

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aeic.gov.au/observations-and-recommendations/community-engagement>

50 workers during construction, then the assessment should outline that specific detail – as well as where those workers will be drawn from, and where they will be housed.

It should identify opportunities to support local jobs and local businesses.

Workforce attraction and retention remains one of the key challenges for many local governments across Queensland. That is both an issue for councils as a key employer across Queensland, but also when it comes to attracting new industry and opportunities with a private sector proponent, across a range of different industries.

Job security is a key component of the economic sustainability of any community, particularly in rural, remote and regional parts of Queensland.

Delivering the energy transformation, in terms of the construction and operation of projects, will provide significant employment benefits.

Many workers within the existing workforce will require support and training to upskill or reskill for these jobs. In-region training hubs and localised upskilling opportunities will be vital in supporting opportunities for local economic benefits to many communities. Those jobs will also include opportunities throughout the supply chain or as part of new industries that are attracted as a catalytic industry development.

One of the challenges with clean energy projects, is that there are often very little if any direct jobs once a project has been constructed. Therefore, the focus on direct employment opportunities is through the construction phase.

State and Federal government needs to work with industry and local governments to train and re-skill a locally based workforce. Where possible, this should be used as an opportunity to retain long-term, secure jobs within rural and regional communities that host these projects.

- **Recommendation 4:** The LGAQ recommends the establishment of community contribution fees, based on capacity, for all renewable projects to support better community outcomes and decommission bonds held in trust, to protect prime agricultural land and support better decommissioning at an acceptable standard for community.
- **Recommendation 5:** The LGAQ recommends dedicated and specific federal support and engagement to develop a national workforce plan to reskill and train workers for renewable energy projects, with a focus on employing locally based workers within or close to the development of individual projects.

## Environmental impacts

At the end of the project's operating life, there will be expectations from stakeholders that the renewable projects will be decommissioned, with all turbines, arrays, batteries, and other infrastructure removed from the property. The property should be returned to its original condition – to the extent that it can be done.

Most planning permits that require decommissioning and site rehabilitation responsibilities rest with the project owner (i.e., the tenant). However, in the event of default by the project owner, the liability for decommissioning ultimately may rest with the landholder. Further, the landholder typically does not have title or ownership of the project's assets and, as a result,

may be unable to recover the costs of any decommissioning activities from selling the assets remaining on the property. Project operators/owners may also change many times during the life of the project, putting at risk any funding arrangements to cover the costs of decommissioning and potentially eroding the enforceability of any verbal agreements made over time.

From a landholder's perspective, it is imperative that any commercial agreement to host assets and the related infrastructure clearly sets out the responsibilities for decommissioning and restoring the site and also provides the mechanism for security of the funding to pay the decommissioning costs.

A landholder may also wish to seek ongoing evidence that the project owner has the capacity to fund the decommissioning activity and that such funds are securely set aside for that purpose.

Developers should be required to provide financial security that covers the cost of decommissioning infrastructure to ensure these costs are not borne by the local or state government. In this regard, decommissioning bonds for renewable energy projects should be held within a local government trust. Examples that could be considered include bank guarantees, a sinking fund, a trust fund order to, for example, protect prime agricultural land and support better decommissioning results.

There are no definitive guides to the cost of decommissioning a renewable energy project in Australia. However, some published plans have, for example, calculated costs for a wind turbine decommissioning at approximately \$400,000. This cost could increase for larger turbines and could range up to \$600,000 per turbine or more. If a turbine has a structural failure and is unstable, it could cost millions of dollars to safely remove the turbine from site.

To put these costs into perspective, the total fees earned for hosting a turbine for 25 years could be in the range of \$250,000 - \$750,000 (depending, typically, on the turbine capacity and when the wind farm commenced operations). It is therefore possible that the costs to decommission a turbine could be equal to or greater than the total income generated for the landholder over the 25-year lease period.

It should also be noted that these proposed costs are noted with today's currency value. If a wind turbine has a life of 20-25 years, recent inflationary pressures have demonstrated that this cost could be substantially more into the future, further illustrating the need to provision for this cost when the project is approved.

While some proponents are offering to deposit decommission funding into a trust fund, it typically does not take effect until the project's later years – in some instances, in year 15 or even year 20. There are obvious risks with the timing of such an approach and would require the project owner to source significant funding in the declining years of the asset. It would be much more acceptable, and at far less risk to the landholder, for the developer to commence funding the decommissioning trust fund from the beginning of the asset's operations.

Australia is about to enter a period where, for some of the initial renewable energy projects around the nation, decommissioning activities will need to commence within the next few years. There will likely be increased focus on concerns about this topic, particularly from councils, host landholders and community stakeholders. At a minimum, there needs to be



clarity surrounding who is responsible for decommissioning, who pays and how those funds are secured to protect the landholder from default and ensure the work gets done and is enforced.

Developers need to take responsibility for the potential solutions to decommissioning of renewable energy projects including costs, responsibilities, risks, and logistics as part of a project approval. This needs to be locked in as part of any approval process. Developers should be held accountable for the preparation and implementation of formal plans for decommissioning and restoration of the landholder's properties. One part of this process could include a decommissioning bond.

Decommissioning bonds could be payable during the development phase in consideration for the option (often exclusive) to use the land that is granted to the proponent by the landholder. Other fee arrangements/agreements could also be required for hosting electrical substations, batteries, transmission line easements, access to easements, road access, transportation of blades and towers across property boundaries, location of project offices and the like. Landholders hosting these ancillary assets may or may not be wind turbine or solar array hosts but are still integral to the project.

- **Recommendation 6:** The LGAQ recommends a consistent and regulated end-of-life or decommissioning and site remediation process.

### Empowering First Nations peoples

Without mandating an employment or apprenticeship condition for First Nations peoples within every project, at the very least – industry should be encouraged and supported to embrace First Nations workers and opportunities to develop pathways to employment for everyone in the host community.

There are also significant opportunities to support microgrids and renewable energy sources, with specific funding programs for First Nations communities.

Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council moved the resolution in 2022, to provide more incentives for local governments, as energy users, to be energy independent and net producers of energy.

Some state governments and local councils around Australia have delivered important outcomes to reduce costs, carbon emissions and mitigate climate change risks over recent years. For example, due to their investment in wind, solar and battery storage technology, South Australia became the first jurisdiction in the world to run their energy grid entirely on renewable energy on 26 October 2021, and for the month of October in 2021 their grid ran at almost 100 per cent renewable (wind and solar). Commencing early last year, a broad scale solar project worth \$180 million in New South Wales will see 25 councils have over 80 per cent of their energy consumption provided by solar, with 19 of them having 100 per cent renewable energy under the agreement with three providers (solar farms). Similarly, in December 2021, 48 Councils in Western Australia signed up with the WA Government to purchase renewable energy, with 43 aiming for 100 per cent renewables.



- **Recommendation 7:** The LGAQ recommends Commonwealth support and more funding to deliver the Queensland Microgrid Pilot Fund to improve resilience in First Nations communities.
- **Recommendation 8:** To facilitate the diverse and specific energy needs of remote communities, the LGAQ recommends the establishment of a co-designed Remote and First Nations clean energy strategy in a partnership approach between the three levels of government.

### Building local capacity

Local government acknowledges the value of long-term community planning to develop priorities and inform specific projects and programs. Any State Government-based long-term planning must recognise the diversity of local governments across Queensland and accept the right of individual councils to determine a fit for purpose arrangement that reflects their individual circumstances and capacity to respond.

Empowering local governments to implement solutions that are tailored to the needs and wishes of their local communities is always our favoured approach. Place-based solutions that are purposely designed to respond to a particular local issue has a much greater likelihood of achieving intended outcomes.

The LGAQ strongly supported the announcement of the National Net Zero Authority in May 2023.

Regional Australia is undergoing a social and economic transformation that will be beyond the capability of local councils to address. Existing coal heartlands like throughout Central Queensland are in a position to capitalise on the global shift to net zero emissions provided appropriate Federal and State government planning and investment is received. Equally, coal mining regions are particularly vulnerable in the decarbonisation process.

Numerous reports have articulated both the social and economic opportunities and risks for regional Australia associated with decarbonisation. Modelling by Accenture suggests that over 395,000 jobs could be created if Australia can capitalise on changes to the energy sector and become a 'renewable energy superpower'. Another report by Deloitte projects that the Queensland economy could grow by 7 per cent if it successfully manages the shift to net zero. Each of the reports clearly highlight that the risks associated with getting this transformation wrong are equally as significant as the potential for growth.

The effective management of this change is critical – principally for coal mining regions but also for all Local Government Areas supplying to, or reliant on, the economic output of coal mining, as well as heavily coal reliant industrial regions.

The development of regional plans to coordinate a sustainable transformation is critical, principally for Queensland's coal mining regions, but also for all LGAs supplying to or reliant on the economic output of coal mining, as well as heavily coal reliant industrial regions, like the Bowen Basin, and ensure all planning supports the ongoing and sustainable diversification of the resources sectors.

A local government voice is critically important in shaping the successful integration of Federal, State and Local governments on the economic and social transformation that will be

achieved on the pathway to net zero. Ideally that person should be from Queensland, the most impacted state from the transition to a lower carbon economy.

- **Recommendation 9:** The LGAQ recommends the appointment of a dedicated and specific local government representative on the National Net Zero Authority, ideally from Queensland as the most impacted state from a lower carbon economic transition.

## Conclusion

Overall, the LGAQ appreciates a national focus on ensuring community benefit and engagement in the development of renewable energy infrastructure.

It is crucial that suitable efforts are made to engage with local governing bodies to ensure that planning for these projects is undertaken in conjunction with the relevant council(s). The scale and pace of development will only be fast-tracked with the rollout of large-scale renewable energy generation, firming and transmission infrastructure development across large swathes of regional Queensland.

If communities are hosting major renewable energy projects, it's only right that they secure their fair share of the economic and social benefits that will come from these large-scale projects.

That means locking in social licence with upfront, detailed guarantees of improved liveability in these areas, not to their detriment, damage or destruction for the benefit of proponents. Social licence demands real benefits – far beyond a few sets of footy jerseys like those that have sometimes been offered in the past.

Working with local communities and councils will ensure better project planning, avoid delays, and ensure that land use and infrastructure is better managed, now and into the future. It will also achieve thriving communities and valued partnerships with industry.

Locking in a project's social licence up-front, will reduce project costs and delays.

## Contact Details

Please do not hesitate to contact Nathan Ruhle, Manager – Intergovernmental Relations via email [nathan\\_ruhle@lgaq.asn.au](mailto:nathan_ruhle@lgaq.asn.au) or phone 1300 542 700 should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission.

# Appendix

## LGAQ Policy Statement

The LGAQ Policy Statement<sup>3</sup> is a definitive statement of the collective voice of local government in Queensland. The relevant policy positions of local government in the context of the following policy areas are as follows:

### 3.6 Climate Risk Management

#### 3.6.1. Role of local government:

3.6.1.1 Local government is committed to providing a leadership role to assist local communities, including industry, to understand and address climate risk including acute and chronic physical risks and transition risks associated with moving to a low carbon economy

3.6.2.1 Local government seeks appropriate policy and legislative frameworks from the Federal and State governments to allow necessary decision making and responses to climate risk to occur without prejudice or undue risk exposure to councils.

3.6.2.2 Local government seeks timely access to high quality, nationally consistent but locally appropriate data, methodologies, standards, and codes from the federal and state governments to ensure responses to climate risk are safe, timely, proportionate, and equitable.

### 6.1 Planning Policy Development

6.1.1.1 Local government should be recognised as the sphere of government immediately responsible for land use planning and development assessment.

6.1.1.2 Local government supports an effective planning system guided by appropriate legislation and balanced social, environmental, cultural, and economic interests.

6.1.1.3 Local government supports the definition of a 'state Interest' being limited to whole of state government endorsed land use planning policy that has undergone rigorous community review.

6.1.1.5 Local government opposes the devolution of land use planning matters to councils, where these matters are of interest to the state and should be considered and decided by the state government.

6.1.1.6 Local government opposes state government land use planning policy or intervention that inhibits local decision making.

### 8.7 Energy

8.7.1 Local government supports the development of an integrated renewable energy strategy for Queensland by the State Government, in genuine consultation with Queensland councils.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lgaq.asn.au/downloads/file/183/2019-lgaq-policy-statement>

8.7.2 Local governments should seek partnerships with electricity authorities to promote the use of environmentally friendly equipment and practices in line with ecologically sustainable objectives including alternative energy sources and off-grid or micro-grid technologies.

8.7.3.3 Local government supports effective and consistent standards and regulations where necessary for cleaner and more efficient energy use management.

8.7.3.4 Local government supports whole of government support for regional implementation of energy use management initiatives including capacity building programs, incentives schemes, regional strategies for land use planning and transport.

## 8.8 Economic and Regional Development

8.8.4 Local Government facilitates partnerships between government, industry, universities, and the community, with particular focus on technology commercialisation and emerging industry sectors. Local government recommends all government agencies have a whole of government approach and engage local councils on local projects in the initial stages of interest to deliver the best possible outcomes for research translation and commercialisation to benefit the local economy.

8.8.5 Local government is a legitimate partner with State and Federal governments in facilitating sustainable economic and regional development. Local government does this through its role as purchaser, property owner/developer, regional leader, infrastructure provider, economic policy and community advocate, regulator, and business development facilitator.

## LGAQ Advocacy Action Plan/ Annual Conference Resolutions

The LGAQ is committed to member driven advocacy and working with members to build stronger local government and more resilient local communities.

The Local Government Association of Queensland's Advocacy Action Plan (AAP)<sup>4</sup> is a roadmap designed to highlight the top policy positions and funding priorities councils believe are critical to ensuring Queensland flourishes and our communities thrive.

Relevant Advocacy Action items to this submission are:

**AAP73** - Establish a Regional Transformation Authority with statutory powers inclusive of local governments to respond to changing supply and demand for fossil fuels, and develop regional plans and coordinate a sustainable transformation and diversification of the resources sectors

**AAP 75** - Establish a contemporary framework for resource, renewables and clean energy sectors

**AAP 78** - Introduce legislation and policy which requires proponents of renewable projects to make a 'local benefit' contribution to regional communities.

These are further expanded in the following Annual Conference resolutions that were endorsed by Queensland councils:

### The Need for a Regional Transformation Authority

The LGAQ calls on the State and Federal governments to establish a Regional Transformation Authority with statutory powers inclusive of local governments, to:

- Respond to changing supply and demand for fossil-fuel.
- Develop regional plans and coordinate a sustainable transformation, principally for Queensland's coal mining regions, but also for all Local Government Areas supplying to or reliant on the economic output of coal mining, as well as heavily coal reliant industrial regions, like the Bowen Basin, and ensure all planning supports the ongoing and sustainable diversification of the resources sectors.

The effective management of this change is critical – principally for coal mining regions but also for all Local Government Areas supplying to, or reliant on, the economic output of coal mining, as well as heavily coal reliant industrial regions.

### Establishment of a Contemporary Framework for Resource, Renewables and Clean Energy Sector

The LGAQ calls on the State Government to:

1. Undertake a wholesale review of the regulatory frameworks associated with resource, renewable and clean energy projects with consideration of a centralised agency approach to ensure consistent outcomes relative to size and impact of all projects.
2. Develop and implement contemporary Social Impact Assessment (SIA) type values to underpin the Queensland Resource Industry Development Plan and that those SIA values are

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lgaq.asn.au/downloads/file/383/advocacy-action-plan-2021>



applicable for all resource, renewable and clean energy projects with a legislated ability for the State Government to enforce compliance.

3. Work with local government to develop a Contemporary Integrated Social Impact Assessment Framework for closure of resource, renewable and clean energy projects with outcomes focused on sustainable communities;

4. Lead policy agendas in relation to the resource, renewable and clean energy sectors and that those policy settings inform regional planning and future sector investment.

### **Renewable Energy Project Contributions and Engagement with Local Communities**

The LGAQ calls on the State Government to introduce legislation and policy which requires proponents of renewable projects to make a 'local benefit' contribution to regional communities by implementing the following measures:

- Have a mandatory notification process to local government for all renewable energy projects occurring within their region.
- Have meaningful engagement with local government, community, and local leaders.
- Have a community contribution fee, based on capacity, for all renewable projects to support better community outcomes.
- Provide access to Renewable Project Decommission Bonds, or local government hold these in trust, in order to protect prime agricultural land and support better decommissioning at an acceptable standard for community.