

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner
Community Engagement Review
30 September 2023



Dear Mr. Andrew Dyer

The Carbon Zero Initiative (CZI) is a new organisation dedicated to achieving a carbon-neutral Australia by 2040. Our commitment to decarbonization involves supporting the development of up to 5GW of clean energy in Tasmania and upgrading transmission infrastructure. New renewable energy infrastructure will play a pivotal role in expediting the transition to clean energy, while simultaneously lowering prices within the National Electricity Market (NEM).

In our pursuit of a sustainable, clean energy future, CZI views effective and genuine community engagement as the cornerstone of success. We believe that genuine community involvement is essential not only to address legitimate concerns but also to highlight the multitude of benefits that can arise from new clean energy projects. To this end, we would like to contribute the following key points to the Community Engagement Review:

Community Engagement as a Priority:

Community engagement is not a checkbox; it is a process that requires the active participation of trusted stakeholders, ideally leaders from the affected communities. These individuals can play a crucial role in advocating for solutions to concerns and articulate the significant benefits that stem from clean energy projects. Their involvement can foster trust, transparency, and a sense of shared responsibility.

Resourcing for Planning Authorities:

Planning authorities serve as the nexus where renewable energy development, community engagement, and statutory obligations converge. It is evident that many planning authorities across the country are under-resourced. This is felt acutely in Tasmania, where local councils are the planning authority, yet have only one or one shared planner on staff. To facilitate effective community engagement and ensure that renewable energy developers uphold their responsibilities, it is imperative to bolster the resources available to planning authorities. A well-resourced planning process is essential to actively listen to and act on community concerns and to enforce measures that protect natural values and local amenity.

Embracing Regional-Level Plans:

Including communities in the design phase of these plans can provide an exceptional avenue for engagement. For instance, the creation of Renewable Energy Zones in Tasmania, led by Renewable Energy Climate and Future Industries Tasmania, exemplifies the benefits of regional-level planning. Such proactive engagement not only empowers local communities but also ensures that renewable energy projects are in sync with regional priorities and values.

CZI is committed to collaborating with communities, stakeholders, and authorities to expedite the transition to clean energy while addressing legitimate concerns. We firmly believe that by prioritising community engagement, allocating adequate resources to planning authorities, and embracing regional-level plans, we can collectively pave the way for a fast, fair, and sustainable clean energy future for Australia.

We look forward to seeing the outcomes of the review and hope that our insights prove valuable in shaping a brighter, more sustainable energy landscape for Australia.

Sincerely

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