



Australian Government

Department of Climate Change, Energy,
the Environment and Water

Initial Australian Government Response to the Community Engagement Review



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Initial Australian Government response to the independent review of community engagement in renewable energy infrastructure

The Australian Government welcomes the final report provided by Mr Andrew Dyer, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, about community engagement in renewable energy infrastructure development.

The Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, commissioned the Review to examine community attitudes towards renewable energy infrastructure, and to advise on how best to maximise community engagement and benefit.

The Review sought input from a range of stakeholders through roundtable meetings with key stakeholder groups, an online survey, and written submissions. Participants included landholders and community members living close to renewable energy projects and new transmission infrastructure, First Nations people, farmers, local governments, energy and transmission developers, and state and territory governments.

The Review identified opportunities to improve community engagement and benefit, which are intrinsic to deliver community support and participation as Australia transitions to net zero emissions by 2050.

In particular, the Review identified the following needs:

- encourage best practice and select reputable developers for new projects
- reduce unnecessary and onerous community engagement by improving the selection of project sites
- make engagement more efficient by revising planning and approval processes
- improve complaint handling processes
- keep communities informed about the transition, including its goals, benefits and requirements
- equitably share the benefits of the transition.

Mr Dyer made 9 recommendations to address community needs. The Australian Government accepts in principle the Commissioner's recommendations. While implementing some of the recommendations will be shared across governments, the Australian Government will also begin work to implement these recommendations. Minister Bowen will work with state and territory Energy and Climate Ministers on the best way to take forward the Commissioner's recommendations.

During the course of the Review, significant progress has continued to be made toward energy transformation, reflecting ongoing improvements to the community engagement practices of industry and governments.

Based on AEMO predictions, about 5,000 km of new and upgraded transmission is needed in the next decade. Over 1,000 km of the additional transmission we need has already been completed or is under construction. This adds to the existing 40,000 km of transmission already in operation across the National Energy Market.

The Review recognised the work that is already being implemented by all levels of government to address community expectations. This includes the Australian Energy Market Commission's recent implementation of Australian Government market rules to improve early community engagement requirements for transmission infrastructure businesses.

The Australian Government has also been working with state and territory governments, industry, peak bodies and communities to progress:

- national guidelines on community engagement and benefit sharing in the development of transmission infrastructure
- a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy to ensure First Nations people have a say in renewable energy policies and programs
- a Nationally Significant Transmission Projects Framework to help accelerate project delivery
- Renewable Energy Transformation Agreements to align Australian Government and state and territory government approval processes.