



Name: Queensland Renewable Energy Council (QREC)

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1. Reduce the cost of meeting carbon targets

1. What could be done to improve the cost-effectiveness and alignment of policies to reduce emissions across the industrial, electricity and transport sectors?

Coordinate a national policy framework that aligns emissions-reduction incentives across sectors through:

- Technology-neutral market mechanisms (e.g. safeguard mechanism reform, expanded renewable procurement).
- Transparent transition timeframes for legacy energy assets (especially coal).
- Consistent environmental and planning pathways to reduce delivery costs.
- Establish industrial decarbonisation hubs. These would extend the concept of renewable energy zones (REZ) beyond the coordination of renewable energy generation and transmission to become cross-sectoral hubs for energy, industry, and innovation. Strategically located in regions where heavy industry, mining, and advanced manufacturing intersect with high-quality renewable resources and existing infrastructure. The hubs could directly support large industrial loads with firming renewable electricity, and other low-emission energy sources.

Near-term priorities

Align transition signals between generation and heavy industry:

- Co-location of renewable generation with high-load industrial users which would reduce network losses and allow industrial emissions reductions at a lower cost. This coordination should be mirrored in national planning and funding programs (e.g. Net Zero Economy Agency, Rewiring the Nation).

Accelerate accreditation of state environmental approvals for renewables under Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) bilateral agreements:

- Sequential and inconsistent assessment processes drive up development costs. Queensland's renewable energy development assessment frameworks should be nationally recognised and accredited to streamline bilateral project delivery. Use Government-Owned Corporations (GOCs) as strategic off-takers:
- In Queensland, GOCs can aggregate demand and anchor long-term PPAs to help lower-cost abatement in energy-intensive sectors. A coordinated Commonwealth-State procurement strategy would create scale and price certainty.

Positive example of aligned policy

Industrial decarbonisation hubs allow electricity and industrial emissions policy to converge - where a single investment decision supports both a renewable generation target and industrial emissions reductions. This avoids redundant infrastructure and improves grid efficiency.

Negative example of misalignment

Without clear coal closure timelines, electricity investors are hesitant to commit to large-

scale renewables. This limits the flow-on benefits to industrial users seeking firmed renewable supply and results in higher system costs as coal plants retire unpredictably.

2. Are there gaps in the emissions-reduction policies in the industrial, electricity and transport sectors which should be addressed?

Key Gaps and Priorities

1. Planning and approvals misaligned with emissions targets:

Emissions targets cannot be met if renewable energy projects are delayed 4–5 years due to fragmented or unclear approvals processes. This is a major policy–delivery gap. Faster, risk-based approvals are critical to keeping emissions abatement on a cost-effective trajectory.

2. Lack of integrated energy–transport–land use planning:

Freight corridors for renewable infrastructure (e.g. wind turbine components) are often overlooked in national transport and logistics strategies. QREC supports a coordinated national approach to identify and upgrade transport infrastructure to facilitate the clean energy transition.

3. Lack of price signals or standards for embodied emissions in construction:

Major emissions sources in infrastructure and housing (e.g. cement, steel, aluminium) lack consistent demand-side abatement signals. National procurement incentives could prioritise low-emissions materials and manufacturing, tied to clean energy supply zones like industrial decarbonisation hubs.

Risks of ignoring these gaps

If planning reform does not keep pace with infrastructure needs, project congestion and community resistance will grow. Without coordination, some regions may bear disproportionate environmental and social impacts, undermining social licence and delaying national progress.

3. Are there any duplicative emissions-reduction policies in the industrial, electricity and transport sectors which could be streamlined?

Priority Areas for Streamlining

1. EPBC Act and State environmental approvals:

Proponents must often duplicate environmental assessments under both Commonwealth and State processes. In Queensland, projects assessed under the Planning Act 2016 Act or State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 (SDPWO Act) should be accepted under the bilateral agreement to eliminate this duplication.

2. Transmission planning and investment approvals:

The lack of alignment between National Electricity Rules, state planning legislation, and funding bodies causes delays and duplicated effort. Federal, state and AEMO processes could be integrated into a single approvals and funding window for REZ and/or industrial decarbonisation hubs infrastructure.

3. Multiple grant-based programs targeting the same sectors:

Businesses in the industrial and transport sectors often face overlapping but inconsistent funding criteria for emissions-reduction initiatives. The Commonwealth should consolidate small grant schemes into a single Clean Industry Investment Platform, aligned with the Safeguard Mechanism.

Negative example of duplication

Some renewable energy developers must complete separate community engagement processes for local government planning, state development approval, and federal

environmental review – all with different expectations and timeframes. This increases costs without improving outcomes.

2. Speed up approvals for new energy infrastructure

1. Are planning and approvals processes for large energy infrastructure taking too long? If so, what causes the most delay?

Yes, current planning and approval processes for large-scale renewable energy infrastructure are too slow and fragmented, imposing unnecessary costs and deterring investment. For example, it can take four to five years to complete environmental approvals under the EPBC Act alone. Specific causes include:

- Sequential and overlapping approval pathways between Commonwealth and state regulators (e.g. EPBC and State Development assessments).
- Lack of clear statutory timeframes and absence of consistent assessment criteria across jurisdictions.
- Local government capacity gaps, particularly for newer technologies such as Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).
- Nested approvals that require separate consents for vegetation, cultural heritage, and infrastructure – often outside the main development application process.

2. How can planning and approvals processes be sped up without unduly compromising regulatory standards?

Reform is urgently needed to maintain robust environmental standards while improving efficiency. Key recommendations include:

- Establish a nationally coordinated Green Energy Assessment Unit to streamline approvals. This “front door” approach would mirror the Western Australian model and centralise referral, support, and information-sharing for renewable project assessments. Such a unit could guide proponents through consistent pathways for both primary and secondary consents.
- Legislate clear statutory timeframes for both state and federal approvals, accompanied by risk-based assessment categories (e.g., code assessable vs. impact assessable) to triage project complexity.
- Mutual recognition and greater use of bilateral agreements under the EPBC Act, enabling parallel, rather than sequential, assessments. For instance, Queensland’s Coordinator-General assessment process and EIS/IAR models already qualify for Commonwealth accreditation and could be adopted as the default for renewable energy projects.
- Adopt model conditions and codified standards across project life cycles at the federal level. These would reflect actual impact phases (e.g., high-impact construction phase vs. low-impact operational phase), improve regulatory certainty, and reduce duplication.
- Use of a decommissioning and financial security framework (for example modelled on Queensland’s Financial Provisioning Scheme but made fit-for-purpose for renewable energy projects) to give confidence that community and environmental outcomes will be safeguarded post-operations.

3. Should clean energy projects be treated differently to other projects for the purpose of environmental and other approvals? If so, how?

Yes, clean energy projects should be treated differently due to their contribution to public benefit and the time-critical nature of the federal net-zero transition. This could be achieved through a fast-tracked approval track for designated clean energy precincts,

such as REZs or industrial decarbonisation hubs, where strategic and cumulative environmental assessments have already been conducted at a regional level.

4. What can be done to build local community support for new energy infrastructure projects?

Support for renewable energy projects hinges on leading-practice, early and meaningful engagement with landholders, First Nations people, and the local community; transparency; having a strong local presence; and ensuring communities are meaningfully involved in shaping long-term benefits from renewable energy projects. Locally and regionally tailored benefit-sharing mechanisms can support legacy outcomes for local communities, but these should be guided by strong governance principles and co-designed frameworks rather than mandated structures. QREC recommends:

- Embedding early-stage project notification and community engagement as a requirement for project proponents – ideally commencing during prospecting or feasibility stages - so that community feedback can inform project design before major milestones. This aligns with mandatory requirements for large-scale wind and solar projects in Queensland assessed under the Planning Act. Community engagement should include, but not be limited to host landholders, neighbouring landholders, First Nations people, local government, and the local community.
- Continued government support for the delivery of regional renewable energy community forums, co-hosted with local government, to ensure coordinated, consistent, and fact-based community consultation.
- Training for landholders and developers, including micro-accreditation for renewable developers on negotiation, coexistence, and regional awareness.
- Creation of an independent, science-based advisory body, like a renewables equivalent of CSIRO's GISERA, to provide trusted information on environmental and health concerns associated with renewable energy technologies/projects.
- Incentivising and streamlining the creation of pooled regional community benefit schemes, administered by a suitable government body (with adequate resources and capacity) with local government and local community input and voluntarily funded by developers. These funds would support legacy infrastructure, social services, and local priorities (e.g., upgrades, grants, school sponsorships).
- Providing high-level guidance on community benefit sharing that is principles-based, flexible, and encourages locally appropriate outcomes—rather than a one-size-fits-all approach or rigid mandates.

5. Please outline any evidence showing the productivity benefits of faster approvals for energy projects.

Faster approvals would:

- Accelerate the delivery of clean, reliable power, reducing wholesale energy prices and improving investor confidence in Australia's infrastructure pipeline.
- Avoid multi-million-dollar carrying costs and capital delays. For example, a 12-month delay in financial close on a \$400 million project can add more than \$20 million in holding and opportunity costs.
- Strengthen domestic supply chains and regional workforce development, by offering certainty of project timelines and construction phases.
- Reduce duplication across jurisdictions, freeing up resources within government agencies and allowing industry to focus on project delivery rather than navigating administrative complexity.

3. Encourage adaptation by addressing barriers to private investment

1. What are the barriers and enablers impacting decisions by owner-occupiers, landlords and developers about how housing is built and updated over time so that it is resilient to the effects of climate change?

Not applicable to QREC

2. What information do people need to make decisions about where to live, how to build and how to upgrade their homes to appropriately factor in climate change?

Not applicable to QREC

3. What are the most cost-effective retrofitting options for improving the resilience of Australia's existing housing stock? What are their costs and benefits?

Not applicable to QREC

4. What role might minimum standards play in ensuring the resilience of Australia's housing stock?

Not applicable to QREC

5. The impacts of climate change are being factored into the regulation of where and how houses are built in different ways around Australia. What does leading practice look like? Where is there room for improvement? Are there lessons we can learn from other countries?

Not applicable to QREC