



Name: Clean Energy Council

Submission date: 6/06/2025

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?

The participant did not respond to this question.

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

The participant did not respond to this question.

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

The participant did not respond to this question.

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?

The participant did not respond to this question.

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

The participant did not respond to this question.

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

The participant did not respond to this question.

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

The Clean Energy Council ('the CEC') – the peak body for the renewable energy sector in Australia – recognises that high quality community engagement and partnerships with regional communities is at the heart of successful and sustainable long-term relationships, acceptance and support for clean energy projects across Australia.

The CEC has for more than 15 years promoted and evolved leading community engagement practices. In 2018 the CEC introduced a 'Best practice charter for renewable energy projects' that currently has 55 signatories – representing the majority (but not all) of – the development sector in Australia. The Charter includes 10 commitments that these signatories agree to uphold in their development activities. These are set out below:

1. We will engage respectfully with the local community, including Traditional Owners of the land, to seek their views and input before submitting a development application and finalising the design of the project.

2. We will provide timely information and be accessible and responsive in addressing the local community's feedback and concerns throughout the life of the project.
3. We will be sensitive to areas of high biodiversity, cultural and landscape value in the development and operation of projects.
4. We will minimise the impacts on highly productive agricultural land and explore opportunities to integrate agricultural production.
5. We will consult the community on the potential visual, noise, traffic and other impacts of the project, and on the mitigation options.
6. We will support the local economy by providing local employment and procurement opportunities.
7. We will offer communities the opportunity to share in the benefits of the project, and consult them on the options available, including relevant governance arrangements.
8. We commit to using the project to support educational and tourism opportunities where appropriate.
9. We will demonstrate responsible land stewardship over the life of the project and welcome opportunities to enhance the ecological, cultural and/or agricultural value of the land.
10. During the life of the project, we will recycle waste materials where feasible and commit to responsible decommissioning or refurbishment/repowering of the site at the end of the project's life.

In 2024, the Clean Energy Council introduced annual reporting against these principles, with signatories reporting how they are meeting and exceeding the 10 commitments contained in the charter. Reporting on the charter achieves three outcomes:

1. Inspires industry to evolve practices
2. Provides transparency to communities and stakeholders
3. Highlights the positive impacts that the industry is having in host communities and beyond.

You can find reports from the signatories at [Best Practice Charter - reports | Clean Energy Council](#).

Benefit sharing approaches

Benefit sharing is an important consideration for all renewable energy project proponents, and stems from the acknowledgement that projects are not simply hosted by the landholders who host the physical infrastructure, but by the surrounding community who experience construction and visual impacts in the development and continuing operation of the project.

Expert advice to the Clean Energy Council, and the lived experience of proponents over many years, has consistently shown that benefit sharing approaches must be developed through meaningful consultation with host communities, and should not be prescriptive, one-size-fits-all 'solutions'. This recognises that every community is different and has different priorities and interests depending on their circumstances.

Therefore, renewable energy proponents must be in a position to be adaptive and responsive to these local needs – and not bound by obligations set by organisations who are not engaged with these individual communities. This principle is reflected in the Clean Energy Council's Guide to Benefit Sharing Options for Renewable Energy Projects, which was authored by community engagement experts on behalf of the CEC in 2019.

Community engagement standards and guidance

While the clean energy sector has been making substantial efforts to continuously improve its social performance over the past 15 years or more, we recognise that there is more to do, and we are working closely with our members, as well as the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, state and federal governments, to explore ways to raise both the standards and consistency of responsible practices right across the sector.

While we must continuously strive for excellence in our engagement practices, we note that it will also be important for industry and governments to ensure that the standards applied are fit-for-purpose and do not create excessive burdens – or unmanageable risks – on project proponents or industry, noting that collectively we must also deliver a least-cost transition for energy consumers.

In this regard, there are also opportunities to explore efficiency improvements in the proliferation of guidance, standards and obligations from governments across Australia for community engagement and benefit sharing.

While these efforts are commendable, the industry now increasingly faces a patchwork landscape of obligations, which can be complex and inefficient to administer for proponents and investors operating at a national level. For example, a specific project might need to adhere to Capacity Investment Scheme Social Licence Merit Criteria while also adhering to jurisdictional prescriptive requirements on benefit sharing and engagement (i.e NSW Benefit Sharing Guideline, VIC Community Engagement Guideline, QLD upcoming reforms on benefit sharing and social impact assessments). In future, projects may also need to adhere to National Environmental Standard for Community Engagement under the proposed Commonwealth Nature Positive reforms, and the forthcoming Community Benefit Principles embedded within the Future Made in Australia legislation passed in 2024.

Furthermore, in NSW, in the event a community member is dissatisfied with the complaints' resolution process of a developer, it is unclear whether they should engage the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner or Energy & Water Ombudsman as they both provide the same service.

Even in circumstances where there isn't overlap, requirements on engagement and benefit sharing are different in every jurisdiction and in some jurisdictions, they differ from one local government area to another. The result is that developers and community engagement professionals struggle to work across multiple jurisdictions.

We believe that there is an opportunity for the Federal and state governments to make better use of the role of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's function to create some national consistency in terms of responsible performance 'standards' across the clean energy sector, and in so doing, streamlining the busy landscape of overlapping guidance and obligations on proponents. We believe that this would also create greater clarity for communities.

Local content requirements

The stringency of the standards/expectations placed on project proponents must balance the need for best practice conduct with not placing excessive burdens on projects, which will in turn translate into higher project costs and higher electricity prices to consumers.

One area of benefit sharing in which due care will need to be exercised relates to local content and workforce engagement obligations, which are typically applied by governments on project proponents. We note that minimum standards for both of these are being increasingly applied to competitive tenders designed to stimulate new investment. These include the Federal Government's Capacity Investment Scheme, the

NSW Government's Long-Term Energy Service Agreements, and the Victorian Renewable Energy Target.

While it is desirable to support positive outcomes in the engagement of local suppliers and workers, we believe that effective strategies to achieve these outcomes require a strategic, long-term and national approach, which builds capacity in strategic areas over the long-term. This stands in contrast to our industry's prevailing experience over recent years of jurisdictionally-based content/ participation targets introduced for specific competitive tender rounds etc, typically without a cohesive strategy for how local capacity/capability will be scaled up to meet demand in time to exploit the opportunity, and nor how that local capacity may be maintained over the long-term.

Noting that there is a trade-off between these aspirations and higher project costs (and therefore higher electricity prices), we would welcome the Productivity Commission's review and reflections on how the relative benefits of local content and participation/labour standards should be weighed up by governments who are setting standards.

Better communicating the rationale for the energy transition

The Community Engagement Review, led by Andrew Dyer, the previous Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner was published in 2024. The Review considered community attitudes to provide advice on the best way to maximise community engagement to plan, develop and operate renewable energy infrastructure. The CEC supports the intent of all recommendations in the Review. However, CEC and our members view Recommendation 6 as critically important. It stated,

"Recommendation 6. The Minister to initiate a process for the development and execution of a communications program that provides local communities with a clear narrative about the pragmatic reasons for the energy transition. The narrative should include articulating why there is an urgent need for new renewable energy and transmission infrastructure in their locality"

This narrative is essential to the efforts of government and industry to bring communities along on the journey of Australia's energy transition. We have found that where information vacuums exist, they can be readily filled with mis- and dis-information.

The most common concerns to renewable energy projects are well understood and include perceived loss of agricultural land, biodiversity impacts, land use compatibility, bushfire risks, cultural heritage, visual impact, contamination, glint and glare, noise and vibration and insurance to name a few. The CEC and our member companies have invested significant resources into providing factual information to communities through trusted mediums – and will continue to do so – but we recognise that governments have a critical role to play in explaining the rationale for the transition and for the clean energy infrastructure that we are working to build. The CEC recommends that the Federal Government fund Local Energy Hubs in renewable energy zones across Australia to provide a trusted source of information through trusted messengers.

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

The participant did not respond to this question.

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?

The participant did not respond to this question.

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?

The participant did not respond to this question.

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?

The participant did not respond to this question.

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

The participant did not respond to this question.

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?

The participant did not respond to this question.