

To: NSW Department of Planning and Environment

6/11/23

**RE: Submission on the Central-West Orana REZ Transmission – State Significant Infrastructure**

I do not consent to myself or my family living within a modern day 'power station' as aptly described by EnergyCo.

**A call to withdraw the adoption and re-exhibit the CWO REZ due to negligible community notification and engagement that occurred during Covid 2020 lockdowns**

There was a total lack of consultation by the NSW Parliament prior to ramming-through the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill 2020 (during the Covid pandemic – when people were more pre-occupied with survival), which established the CWO REZ in the first instance.

Lack of consultation totally invalidates the CWO REZ Transmission EIS currently on public exhibition, as we were never notified nor consulted from the very beginning on the 2020 Bill.

Go back to the drawing board! You must put this EIS on hold until you correct the major non-existent consultation error of 2020.

Most residents now forced to live within the CWO REZ “power station” remain completely unaware of the CWO REZ... until their homes and businesses begin to be surrounded by energy projects under construction.

Given the proposal’s significant impact on multiple factors e.g. property, lifestyles, livelihoods, agriculture, tourism, landscape, water supply and the irreversible impact on the environment, it should have, at the very least, involved a letter notification to the primary residential addresses of **all** landowners within the REZ. This crucial step was not taken, and the majority of residents were neither informed nor adequately engaged nor consulted regarding the exhibition or approval of the CWO REZ.

The majority of landowners do not receive newspaper deliveries to their relatively isolated rural properties, internet access is also limited and due to Covid lockdowns, aside from letter notification to landowners primary residential addresses, there was no other way to satisfactorily notify impacted landowners of the public exhibition and provide them with adequate opportunity to review and make submissions on the proposal.

In this regard, I DEMAND that the NSW Government withdraws the adoption / declaration of the CWO REZ and that it is re-notified and re-exhibited, in order to engender a social licence.

A precedent has been set for this to occur by the former NSW Minister for Planning Brad Hazzard, who deferred an area of land in Oxford Falls Valley and Belrose North, NSW, from the Warringah Local Environmental Plan 2011 on the grounds that those landowners did not receive a letter notification of the planning proposal. The same level of consideration should be extended to rural landowners within the CWO REZ that have even greater reasons to support deferral and re-exhibition, as outlined above.

**Significantly adverse cumulative social impacts on communities and landowners within REZ’s**

Landowners forced to reside within REZ “power stations” experience profoundly adverse cumulative social impacts.

A prime illustration of this is evident among residents near Burrendong Dam, NSW, in the CWO REZ. They are currently confronted with an overwhelming degree of projects surrounding them. They are contending with mounting engagement demands imposed by 100% profit driven multinational and foreign-owned corporations, in addition to those proposed by various levels of government and quasi government e.g. EnergyCo, including but not limited to:

- Ark Energy's Burrendong Wind Farm proposal – 250m high turbines proposed to be setback only 1km – 2km from some dwellings, located on the top of ridgelines turbines would tower (to the tip) up to ¾km into the air above dwellings located in valleys below.
- Vesta's Piambong Wind Farm proposal - Vesta's has so far ignored submissions from surrounding landowners regarding significant visual landscape features when determining their initial turbine layout, such as Cooee Mountain (turbines are proposed to tower approximately 200m above it).
- Uungula Wind project – currently under construction.
- Tilt Renewable Wind prospecting – targeting potential host landowners to the south.
- Pheonix Pumped Hydro Dam proposal – plans to utilise water from Burrendong Dam, a reservoir where water levels dropped significantly (down to a stream in parts) during the last drought.
- Landowners approached by multinational corporations for road widening and threatened with compulsory acquisition - adding to pressures on landowners.
- EnergyCo's:
  - Push for the rollout of transmission infrastructure (detailed further below).
  - Current public exhibition of EIS for 3GW power CWO REZ (7910 pages of documentation) to respond to within 28 days (now slightly extended). This exhibition period includes a public holiday long weekend and part of the NSW school holiday period.
  - A recent request for submissions on a proposal to double the Gigawatt power in the CWO REZ to 6 GW power with extremely limited information to comment on.
- NSW Energy Guidelines – ongoing updates including the current review of the NSW Wind Energy Guidelines soon to be publicly exhibited.
- Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioners Office
  - Multiple reviews/enquiries requesting input such as this one. Our children are missing out on quality time with their parents as they are forced to prepare submissions during the NSW school holidays.
  - Following up on complaints lodged with the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioners Office.
- Mid-Western Regional Council, policies exhibited for community benefit funding from renewables etc.

The overwhelming number of projects affecting communities and landowners within the CWO REZ often occurring simultaneously leads to prolonged periods of severe stress, anxiety, and financial hardship. People in this region, who find themselves in this situation against their will, are burdened with extensive paperwork, engagement efforts, document reviews, submissions, and countless meetings. They are forced to fight at their own expense for several years in detail, attempting to secure fundamental protections for their multi-generational properties, families and the local environment against both potential and confirmed adverse impacts.

Proponents such as EnergyCo benefit from this “engagement” overkill by suggesting that there has been minimal objection to their projects, which is far from the truth of the situation. Communities

and landowners are being buried in paperwork! Also there is an apparent media ban on Community facebook sites preventing information on proposals such as EnergyCo EIS public exhibition from notifying impacted communities and landowners – so the majority of rural people have ZERO knowledge of the project.

Communities and landowners in the CWO REZ want their lives back, to make a living, raise their children or retire peacefully and contribute positively to their communities, instead of being devastated by the entrenched inequity of this energy transition.

### **Psychopathic tendencies of 100% profit driven multinational corporations and EnergyCo**

The 2003 documentary "The Corporation," co-authored by University of British Columbia law professor Joel Bakan and filmmaker Harold Crooks, identifies that multinational corporations, driven by a relentless pursuit of maximum profits, exhibit psychopathic tendencies. The film parallels corporate behaviour with traits associated with a psychopath, examining this alignment through the World Health Organization's Personality Diagnosis Checklist from the "Manual of Mental Disorders." That is:

- Callous unconcern for the feelings of others
- Incapacity to maintain enduring relationships
- Reckless disregard for the safety of others
- Deceitfulness: repeated lying and conning others for profit
- Incapacity to experience guilt
- Failure to conform to social norms with respect to lawful behaviours

Here is a link to view this documentary:

[https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=ee403b7b15fcb9aeJmldtHM9MTY4NzgyNDAwMCZpZ3VpZD0yZjUwYjk4Ny1hZWY4LTYzZDYtMTg5MS1hOWJjYWY2ODYyYTUmaW5zaWQ9NTE0NQ&pptn=3&hsh=3&fclid=2f50b987-aef8-63d6-1891-a9bc6f6862a5&u=a1L3ZpZGVvcy9zZWYy2g\\_cT10aGUyY29ycG9yYXRpb24reW91dHVhZSZxcHZ0PXR0ZStjb3Jwb3JhdGlvbit5b3V0dWJlJkZPUk09VkRSRQ&ntb=1](https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=ee403b7b15fcb9aeJmldtHM9MTY4NzgyNDAwMCZpZ3VpZD0yZjUwYjk4Ny1hZWY4LTYzZDYtMTg5MS1hOWJjYWY2ODYyYTUmaW5zaWQ9NTE0NQ&pptn=3&hsh=3&fclid=2f50b987-aef8-63d6-1891-a9bc6f6862a5&u=a1L3ZpZGVvcy9zZWYy2g_cT10aGUyY29ycG9yYXRpb24reW91dHVhZSZxcHZ0PXR0ZStjb3Jwb3JhdGlvbit5b3V0dWJlJkZPUk09VkRSRQ&ntb=1)

This documentary provides clarity regarding the psychopathic traits that have been repeatedly experienced by rural communities and landowners during their forced interactions with 'renewable' energy corporations and EnergyCo operating within the CWO REZ. Examples of these experiences are detailed throughout this submission.

Currently, multinational corporations and EnergyCo can say anything they like to communities and landowners, they can lie, be recorded with clear evidence of these lies and are still allowed to get away with it. There are no repercussions. The Government at all levels are allowing multinational corporations to run rough shod over rural communities.

In this regard, the Government is effectively subjecting our mental health and wellbeing to multiple psychopathic corporations simultaneously, with no restraint in sight. It is little wonder that landowners within REZ's are now being forced to "Shut the gate"!

In our experience, there are no real Government protections for rural communities subjected to, in some instances, criminal behaviour by multinational corporations and EnergyCo when it comes to the ideological push for 'renewable' energy. This is placing communities and landowners under

unprecedented levels of stress and forcing them to have to resort to the court of law as their only option, at great personal expense.

We have found that the majority of commercial proponents are solely motivated by profits and rather than following the spirit in which Government guidelines have been written, they actively seek profit enhancing loopholes to achieve their financial objectives, to the detriment of rural communities and landowners.

Proponents need to be factual and truthful about their projects. Communities and landowners are sick and tired of the “spin” presented by proponents. Multiple developers have been caught in the act of obfuscation, misrepresentation, misleading statements, imparting the bare minimum of information and unable to answer landowner/resident questions. E.g:

- Ark Energy (Burrendong Wind) has recently attempted to state broadly that turbines had been deleted from their proposal due to studies and reports undertaken, however we have found the large majority of the turbines deleted were because a potential host refused to host turbines or allow an access corridor through their land, resulting in the deletion of approximately 30 turbines from the site plan.
- CCC meeting minutes for the Burrendong Wind Farm proposal have been edited to remove details and questions raised in the meeting that do not support the proponents proposed project.
- TILT (Liverpool Range Wind) has stated in their Response to Submissions (Sept. 2023) there is no evidence of koalas in the Coolah Tops National Park, adjacent to their turbines, yet NPWS found a thriving community of over 40 koalas there, earlier this year.

To counter the psychopathic tendencies of renewable energy corporations and to install some protections for residents within REZ's, the following are recommended:

- Establishment of an independent, government funded advocacy and support entity that solely represents the interest of communities and landowners within REZ's (Detailed in point 6 below).
- All interactions (including meetings) between renewable energy corporations, EnergyCo and rural communities / landowners should be required to be recorded and stored (unedited) on public record at the request of communities / landowners.
- All contracts relating to a project should be made publicly available.
- There should be an investigation and significant financial repercussions / penalties for renewable energy proponents and quasi statutory bodies such as EnergyCo for poor behaviour, lies and gaslighting perpetrated during community engagement.
- Where clear evidence of lies and gaslighting has been perpetrated on communities and landowners by 'renewable' proponents, this should be immediately corrected and publicised by Government. A record of these incidences should be made publicly available, filed against the name of the offending corporation on the Government's website.
- In the pursuit of genuine community engagement, renewable energy corporations and EnergyCo must adhere to strict ethical standards. Those with a track record of poor engagement, where they are unable to develop positive relationships with impacted communities causing entrenched community opposition (such as Ark Energy and EnergyCo), should be barred from the development of renewable energy infrastructure projects in Australia. Such a process would send a clear message to ensure that only corporations committed to positive relationships and responsible development can participate in Australia's renewable energy landscape.

### **Need for a mandatory requirement to notify surrounding landowners (via a letter to their primary postal address) at the outset of project proposals**

Efforts to notify non-associated landowners about renewable energy projects and EnergyCo's Transmission EIS must match the level of diligence demonstrated by proponents contacting potential host landowners. Many developers currently engage in minimal notification and engagement with surrounding landowners, and if it occurs it often occurs years after securing hosting agreements.

Using pamphlet letter box drops and sporadic local newspaper advertisements is insufficient for effective notification. Many landowners do not have letterboxes and some do not live on their rural properties full time, so pamphlet drops do not reach them. Newspapers are also predominantly not delivered to rural areas and regional homes have poor and often non-existent internet access. People frequently remain unaware of projects until construction begins. This is unacceptable.

Government should mandate that EnergyCo notify surrounding landowners (out to 10km from proposed transmission lines) at a proposal's outset via letters sent to surrounding landowners primary postal addresses (the same address where rate notices are sent), with the assistance of local Councils and postage costs borne by the proponents. Local Councils, with access to confidential primary postal addresses for rate notices, can assist in this process. Proponents such as Ark Energy already do this to contact potential host landowners and should do the same for surrounding landowners (e.g. in the CWO REZ, Ark Energy had Mid-Western Regional Council send letters to connect with potential host landowners, with Ark Energy covering postage costs).

Many problems and concerns have been generated from inadequate notification and engagement with surrounding landowners, both upfront and ongoing. Surrounding landowners are kept in the dark and do not get an opportunity to provide feedback into the preliminary siting and design of proposals, to reduce impacts and stress on them. This is unacceptable.

### **Absence of Government-funded advocacy and support for impacted landowners and communities**

Currently, there is a notable absence of government-funded advocacy and support entities dedicated to safeguarding the specific interests and rights of communities and landowners affected by renewable energy proposals including transmission line proposals within the CWO REZ.

Government guidelines and policies are proving inadequate, riddled with numerous loopholes. Government at all levels is effectively allowing 100% profit-driven and often foreign-owned multinational renewable energy corporations and quasi Govt authorities such as EnergyCo to lie, gaslight and run roughshod over rural communities and landowners with ZERO repercussions. This is a disgrace.

The sole recourse currently available for landowners is legal action, often at considerable personal expense.

We require significant government funding to establish an independent advocacy and support entity dedicated to safeguarding and representing the specific interest and rights of communities and landowners affected by multiple renewable energy proposals and transmission line proposals for the CWO REZ. This should include funding for independent reviews of project proposals and submissions, legal protections and independent testing, assessments and audits etc.

## **EnergyCo has ZERO Social Licence**

EnergyCo has ZERO Social licence. The stories I have heard from landowners in the Central West of their treatment at the hands of EnergyCo are horrifying and horrific.

As raised with the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, there should be an investigation and significant financial repercussions / penalties for renewable energy proponents and quasi statutory bodies such as EnergyCo for poor behaviour, lies and gaslighting perpetrated during community engagement.

A few examples of unsatisfactory engagement by EnergyCo's interactions with landowners in the CWO REZ:

- One landholder with a 330KV transmission line supposedly running along their boundary (not that they know because they can't get a map!) was told by an EnergyCo employee that if they're too hard to deal with the transmission lines would be placed over the fence, off their property, so they would still look at them but not get any money.
- A single landholder is being told they will have 300-400 trees removed from their property to make way for transmission lines. Some of these trees survived the Sir Ivan Bushfire in 2017 and the rest have been planted since. The line is currently proposed 100m from one of their houses and will impede their farming activities as their farming equipment will not be permitted to travel under the lines.
- A farmer has two 500KV and one 300KV transmission lines proposed to run directly through the middle of his approx. 600 acre property. The lines are drawn to go over all his infrastructure (cattle yards, shed etc) and take out numerous trees and a regeneration area. He has proposed two different routes, the first was flatly denied and the second is awaiting a response. The first EnergyCo contractor that set foot on the property said it was to mark out boundaries, when they left, there were pegs marking the easement line; they did not have permission for that.
- A small landholding is set to lose nearly 20% of their land to transmission lines. The proposed route takes out a dam, the only water source for one 90 acre paddock, and 60 shade trees rendering that paddock useless for stock.
- One farmer has a pacemaker and the doctor told him not to go within 600m of HV powerlines. Dual 330kv lines are proposed to dissect their farming property and skirt around the house and domestic area. They have engaged with EnergyCo but have got confusing signals and maps that change in minor detail. Despite 'negotiation' no substantive changes have been made to plans and the ability of the farmer to continue living on his property is unclear.
- There are many cases of landowners surrounding proposed transmission lines on neighbouring properties are not being consulted or engaged by EnergyCo, even though they will be adversely impacted.
- A farmer has dual 330kv lines proposed through domestic area, ~80m and ~300m from homes. EnergyCo has/will take over TILT easement but communication between these two entities is poor, and the landowner is in the middle. Alternate routes using crown land were dismissed.
- A farmer has dual 500kv lines proposed over the centre of his 700 acre property which will make it unsellable and unworkable as an agricultural property. The property also has wind and solar projects next door but powerlines are proposed to cross his adjoining non-host land. The landowner has made representation to any and all relevant parties without success. He is devastated and envisages he will be forced to sell and move if he can.

- Transgrid (prior to Energy Co) planned a corridor for HV Transmission across a farmer's property that went straight over their house. Transgrid made no attempt to contact the owners of the property, they only found out about it from an acquaintance who had seen the maps and brought it to their attention. Upon calling Transgrid they said they could put it anywhere as they had the backing of the State Government and didn't need "permission".  
The same farmer is now subject to transmission towers and lines via EnergyCo who appear to be copying part of the earlier Transgrid corridor. Once again they were not contacted by EnergyCo, only finding out about it through a community group opposed to the project. The farmer attended an information session and the maps shown were out of date. They received an acquisition letter in May 2023. No offer of negotiation on placement of the lines/towers has occurred.
- All of the landowners and farmers outlined above have tried to work with EnergyCo but to no avail. Their suggestions are apparently taken back to the planners but nothing seems to happen after that. Communication/consultation is seriously lacking!
- Information sessions by EnergyCo are attended by poorly prepared junior staff. Senior staff at meetings still do not know what is going on and cannot answer landowner questions.
- Staff dealing with landowners lie about neighbours having signed agreements with EnergyCo.
- Staff dealing with landowners are casual in their contact with landowners, attempting to get things done via a random phone call, often out of hours, for urgent work the next day, rather than written correspondence with appropriate lead times.
- EnergyCo sent out an email update on Monday 25/9/2023 (for those who have registered for email updates) advising that an EIS to “unlock” at least 3 gigawatts of new network capacity in the REZ will be placed on public exhibition shortly. EnergyCo also advises that outdoor “pop-up stalls” will occur across the region “this week” (with only 3 and 4 days’ notice) on Thursday 28 and Friday 29 September 2023, to be held during work hours AND also during school holidays. Surely, this cannot be considered effective community engagement.

### **Bushfire Prone Land**

The land is highly bushfire prone and transmission line arcing is a well know cause of major bushfires worlds wide. I do not consent to excess transmission lines supporting the RenewaBULLs scam, putting our lives in greater danger. It is highly apparent that public safety risks – risk to human life of rural dwellers comes second to this RenewaBULL energy transition. When the first person dies from a bushfire sparked by a transmission line EnergyCo has installed and has failed to maintain – EnergyCo will be in the class action firing line.

Councils like in the Northern Beaches require developers to underground new transmission lines on private land to the street. We are not second class citizens. All transmission lines must be underground for bushfire safety, to enable continuation of farming practices where electrical equipment is interfered with under transmission lines and also to ensure bushfire safety.

Any recommendation by EnergyCo regarding providing vegetation / tree planting to reduce visual impacts of transmission lines from dwellings, must be accompanied by an asset protection zone report in accordance with the requirements the RFS *NSW Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019*.

### **Environmental Impacts**

What is this impact on the Wedgetail Eagle population in the CWO area? Not only are they pushed off ridgelines where they hunt and play due to thousands of wind turbines – killing them when they go to eat other dead birds and bats under the turbines, they are also pushed out by thousands of

kms of transmission lines which is known to disturb their nesting habits. Cumulative impact is devastating. Wedge Tail Eagles are an Apex predator for the area, whole ecosystems in the CWO area will be destroyed by the REZ.

There is not enough water to share. We are heading into a El Nino. The CWO REZ area is drought prone. The major infrastructure works required in the REZ including new transmission infrastructure will cause a major drop in the water table – wreaking havoc on agriculture and making life even harder for rural communities. We do not consent to sharing water which is a precious resource in our region.

I do not consent to bulldozing vast swathes of our Australian Bushland to install these transmission lines. Death by a thousand cuts.

### **Community benefits – inequality of a transition to renewables**

- Community benefits are inconsequential considering the size and value of the projects. They appear as no more than a formalised attempt at bribery of local Councils and impacted hosting landowners. The funds will not be used to directly compensate adversely impacted landowners surrounding renewable energy projects and transmission lines, whose land values will be decimated. There is an absence of direct unincumbered compensation for surrounding impacted landowners.
- Rural landowners are being forced to pay for the transition to renewable energy. Land values are plummeting, wind energy land valuation studies referred to by Government and proponents are grossly outdated given the tripling in size and megawatt power of turbines since these studies were produced and the fact that they have been proven to be technically flawed. (A technical review identifying flaws in these studies can be provided on request).
- In Denmark property owners subjected to transmission lines and turbines are unable to get bank loans. There has already been a similar instance in Australia. Buyers cannot access bank loans to buy land subjected to such infrastructure either. How is this fair or equitable that rural landowners who are being forced to pay for this energy transition?
- It is not just landowners hosting infrastructure it is also surrounding landowners. Surrounding landowners are getting practically ZERO compensation for adverse impacts. Such as 250m high turbines proposed 50m from their property boundary, increasing bushfire impacts. Signing up for a standard neighbour agreements of a grossly inadequate compensation amount (daylight robbery) means landowners are also silenced from impacts such as nuisance noise and due to non-disclosure clauses imposed by proponents. A couple of thousand dollars on offer per year in no way will covers the loss of property value and enjoyment of their properties.
- Surrounding landowners must be fairly compensated. Compensation discussions should occur upfront at the outset of a project. In the case of 250m high turbines, this should include all surrounding landowners with dwellings out to 6km from turbines at a minimum. And compensation should not prohibit objections to a proposal.
- Community benefit funds will not be equitably directed to fairly compensate adversely impacted landowners surrounded by e.g. industrial scale wind turbine developments and transmission lines. Or landowners who are forced to host infrastructure.



## **Community surveys and focus groups**

Community surveys and focus groups need to have non-biased representative cross sections of the community affected - neighbours, hosts, non-associated local residents etc. This should be clarified in the results and should be reflected in the numbers surveyed. E.g. 1% of the population as hosts should only have 1% of the number of the consultations. Numbers consulted should reflect the population density of the area out to 20km. Many proponents think consultation is a minimal number (e.g. 30-50) people, but to encourage compliance by proponents, a % of the local population should be specified.

## **Removing the ban on Nuclear**

Nuclear is Co2 free!

Nuclear will have a far smaller land footprint compared to a never-ending sprawl of wind turbines, solar panels, batteries and pumped hydro dams, access roads and associated transmission lines and mining etc covering our bush, oceans and agricultural land, destroying our agriculture, tourism, local ecosystems and communities.

We are never going to need less electricity, demand will continue to increase and under the current highly subsidised renewable energy directive, renewable sprawl will continue to cover and destroy the Australian landscapes, ecosystems and communities.

The amount of landowners and communities affected by the renewable sprawl directive is extensive, and opposition and civil unrest is exponentially increasing with it. People's families, livelihoods, health and lifestyles are under direct threat across the board.

Nuclear located within existing decommissioned coal fire power stations, utilising existing transmission line infrastructure would significantly reduce the level of impacted communities opposing renewable sprawl that is growing across Australia.

Nuclear would significantly reduce the number of unique ecosystems and the amount of agricultural land destroyed by renewable sprawl. The cost of nuclear would also be more equitably covered by all Australians, instead unfairly burdening rural landowners land with the cost of this transition.

We must remove the ban on Nuclear immediately – it must be considered as part of the energy mix.

We must remove the Australian Government's commitment to increase the amount of energy produced from renewable energy sources to 82% across the National Electricity Market by 2030. This is driven by ideology and will devastate our economy, ecosystems and communities.

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Regards,

A.P

6 November 2023