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Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone
c/- EnergyCo
155 Macquarie St
Dubbo NSW 2830

Submission to the EnergyCo EIS (SS1-48323210)

I am a resident & business owner in the community of Cassilis, NSW. I am making this submission as I have numerous concerns about the proposed EnergyCo project in our area. I also feel that community consultation for the project has been very poor & not met DPIE guidelines. My key concerns are outlined below.

Community consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EnergyCo has not provided early or effective communication with our community regarding the project. I have not had any correspondence regarding a single event in Cassilis. If EnergyCo has not engaged with our community, how have they properly assessed the impacts of this project? And how have they included our concerns, or incorporated local knowledge, into their planning?• There has been no mention of the proposed TWA at Neelys Lane to the Cassilis community, despite it being only 13km from town. TWA's can have a severe impact on community cohesion & our community deserves to know what is happening. Why hasn't any information been shared?• The planning for the TWA does not list any discussions with Upper Hunter Shire Council, despite all other local councils being mentioned. Why aren't Upper Hunter representatives being included in the planning conversations?• There are no mitigation measures included in the EIS on how a small community can cope with a temporary increase of 1400% in their population. This is significant & needs to be addressed.• The Cassilis community has not been effectively informed about the significant increases in traffic the village is going to experience. The EIS also doesn't include details on how the lack of footpaths & no pedestrian bridge will be addressed to ensure the safety of our students & residents is maintained.• The EIS confirms that surveys of local stakeholders has also been severely inadequate. Asking three Cassilis community members &
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	<p>seven farmers across the whole transmission area is not acceptable or accurate, it also does not comply with SEARS requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most community members seem unsure about the visual impact of the project. There have been no visual displays for Cassilis residents & many older members lack the skills to find the photo montages online. People have an attachment to the aesthetic beauty of the natural landscape, yet it seems this hasn't been considered
Social impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EnergyCo hasn't considered the demographic of our community. All information has to be accessed online, which isn't possible for many older residents. As a result, they don't get to have a say. This demonstrates social injustice on EnergyCo's behalf. • EnergyCo has not acknowledged the huge amount of professional & personal time that individuals have had to volunteer to evaluate this EIS. It is a large document & giving it due consideration, in a tight time frame, makes it near impossible for people to provide effective feedback. Where is the equity in this? • The majority of residents will be receiving no financial benefit from the project, yet will be faced with TWA's, transmission lines across the landscape & a negative impact on our local roads. Community Enhancement Funds need to be significantly higher in order to generate some sort of benefit for everyone else. They also need to be controlled by local community groups, not local councils, as they will be lost in administration costs or redirected. • The mental health of local community members has not been considered. The poor consultation & lack of transparent planning has left many worrying about how & to what extent their lives, businesses & homes will be impacted.
Safety & Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Traffic Management Plan directs large volumes of traffic through the Cassilis township, yet the EIS does not include any mitigation plans to ensure the safety of residents eg. Installing footpaths or a foot bridge. • The assumption that the Golden Highway is going to be minimally impacted is false. The cumulative impacts of multiple projects in the region aren't being considered & traffic counts done by EnergyCo are inaccurate. There is no doubt traffic levels on the highway will be significantly higher & the road degradation will increase at a rapid rate. There are no solid plans in the EIS that outline what the road maintenance & repair plans are going to be.
Agricultural Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIS grossly underestimates the economic & social contribution that farm businesses make to the local & national economy. The EIS also under-rates the importance of BSAL land, especially given the Cassilis Plateau is of strategic state primary production importance. These inaccuracies mean the impact of the transmission line is under-estimated & inadequately mitigated. • The cumulative impacts on the agricultural industry are not being addressed appropriately. The total amount of land being removed from food production is significant, especially when the cumulative amount is considered across all REZ's. • The research, conclusions & plans for the agricultural section of the EIS are out of touch & inaccurate. It seems farming business are not being considered in a professional light. Better advice from experienced agricultural consultants should have been obtained.

	<p>Basic information regarding weed control, chemical use, visitor protocols, biosecurity & production levels are inaccurate in the EIS. As a farmer for the last 10 years, I know first-hand that the details regarding compliance are not correct. Mitigation options included in the EIS also lack practicality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transmission lines & TWA sites will reduce the value of neighbouring farms. This has not been considered in the EIS and hence no mitigation measures have been mentioned. Why should neighbours have the negative financial & visual impact of this infrastructure, with no compensation put forward, financial or otherwise.
Environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIS states that 9,859 hectares of native vegetation will be cleared in the CWOREZ. This is significant. Destroying land of environmental value to produce renewable energy does not make sense. Both locals & other Australians alike, value the natural capital of this area. • The loss of biodiversity has been downplayed. The figures quoted for field work are incorrect, hence the impacts on biodiversity are understated.
Bushfires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This EnergyCo project will significantly increase the risk of bushfires in our area. Will our local RFS be left with 'legacy' resources to deal with the implications of this? • The dangerous nature of powerlines, on hot, windy summer days, is not explored in the EIS. They significantly increase the fire risk in the area, yet no mitigation measures are mentioned, • EnergyCo does not mention any compensation for landholders (direct or neighbouring) who may be burnt out as a result of a fire started by EnergyCo. If EnergyCo is increasing the risk, shouldn't they also be prepared to provide adequate compensation in this case?

Basically every aspect of the EIS demonstrates EnergyCo's lack of consultation with the community. This project is set to have detrimental impacts on our local people & the environment. It is a lose-lose situation for us & a vast waste of tax payers dollars.

Sincerely,



Bethany Abdilla