

Draft Renewables Regulatory Framework

Supporting strong and sustainable energy communities

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Introduction

Queensland is emerging as a leader in renewable energy, attracting substantial investment across the State. These investments help the State's existing industries by maintaining global competitiveness with access to, cleaner, cheaper, secure energy. They are also paving the way for new opportunities, critical minerals, and advanced manufacturing powered by renewables. The Queensland Government is committed to developing world leading practice in the delivery of energy infrastructure.

This clean energy investment represents a significant opportunity to rethink the way energy infrastructure is developed to ensure communities reap real benefits in their local area. Communities are seeking fair treatment, meaningful engagement, accessible advice, real choices, and tangible benefits. The Queensland Government acknowledges these needs and is consulting on a **Draft Renewables Regulatory Framework** to address them and ensure communities are full partners in the energy transformation.

The intent of the Draft Framework outlined in this document is to provide coordinated action across government to ensure consistent and coordinated engagement, communication, regulation, assessment, approvals and oversight. Doing so will provide for more responsible development of energy infrastructure and support strong and sustainable energy communities across regional Queensland. It includes existing and proposed initiatives for consultation across five key areas:

- Enhanced environmental outcomes
- Effective community participation
- Easy access to information
- Enduring landholder protections
- Efficient industry facilitation.

Have your say

The Queensland Government is seeking your views on the proposed initiatives and implementation of this framework.

To have your say, refer to the consultation questions and submission instructions in section 6 of this paper.

1 Enhanced environmental outcomes

Queensland's identity is deeply rooted in its unique biodiversity and pristine natural environment. The following initiatives aim to ensure enhanced environmental outcomes are delivered alongside the energy transformation, with a focus on nature positive, through improving environmental assessments and compliance, focusing on outcomes and strategic planning, and fostering a circular economy.

1.1 Improving environmental assessments and compliance

Responsible renewable energy development requires appropriate assessment of environmental impacts. In Queensland, assessments for renewable energy projects follow a structured process to evaluate potential environmental, social, and economic impacts.

Wind farm developments in Queensland are assessed by the State Assessment and Referral Agency (SARA) under the *Planning Act 2016*. They can be either code or impact assessable, however all wind farms to date have been eligible for code assessable against the requirements of State code 23: Wind farm development of the State Development Assessment Provisions (SDAP).

All wind farm development applications in Queensland have also triggered native vegetation clearing and are assessed against State code 16: Native vegetation clearing. In addition to State planning requirements, a wind farm proposal may also require assessment under the Federal *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) if the proposed action will have or is likely to have a significant impact on one or more matters of national environmental significance.

Solar farms are assessed by local council planning schemes (not the State Government) under the *Planning Act 2016*. These local planning schemes set assessment categories and benchmarks for solar farms which can result in variations of requirements between local government areas. For example, a solar farm may be code assessable in one local government area and impact assessable in another, leading to issues around transparency and differing public participation requirements in the assessment process.

The Queensland Government recognises that there are growing concerns from stakeholders about the adequacy and timeframes of these assessment processes. Emerging concerns include the need for better consideration of cumulative impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity, and habitats. There are also worries about insufficient attention to cultural and social impacts, particularly on Indigenous lands. Additionally, issues around transparency and public participation in the assessment process, along with conflicts over land use and decommissioning, suggest that current assessments may not fully address community expectations and the complex challenges associated with the expansion of renewable energy.

To improve environmental assessments and compliance, the Queensland Government is:

- updating the wind code to strengthen protections for communities and the environment
- conducting a more comprehensive review of the planning framework for renewables
- exploring an expanded role for the State environment agency.

Updating the wind code to strengthen protections for communities and the environment

The *State Code 23: Wind Farm Development* and associated planning guidance provides the assessment framework for windfarms in Queensland. Following consultation in 2023, the Queensland Government has updated the code to improve environmental assessment and outcomes, address issues with haulage routes and consider workforce accommodation impacts on surrounding communities and townships.

The Queensland Government is also reviewing the Relevant Purpose Determinations under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* to streamline requirements for wind farm applications that involve operational work for the clearing of native vegetation, in consultation with industry.

Conducting phase two of the planning framework review for renewables

The Queensland Government recognises that more comprehensive reform may be required to manage the scale and pace of renewable energy development in the future in a way that enhances environmental outcomes, supports community and also provides certainty to industry.

Building on phase one with the updated wind code, the Queensland Government will explore the role of the planning framework in renewables development, further potential reforms for renewable energy, including solar and battery developments.

The review will investigate a range of options to improve protections for community and the environment and address key emerging issues for industry. It will include the role of strategic land use planning through Statutory Regional Plans to ensure long term planning is underpinned by detailed consideration and prioritisation of competing land uses (see section 4.4 below) and it will also consider how to further embed the Code of Conduct under development for renewable energy proponents (see section 2.1 for further information).

Exploring an expanded role for the State environment agency

As part of the second phase of the review of the planning framework, the Queensland Government will explore an expanded role for the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation in assessing renewable energy projects. This will build on current work that the Department is leading on bioregional planning.

The aim is to ensure that environmental impacts are rigorously assessed and managed for renewable activities. This could allow for more comprehensive assessment of the impacts to the environment both during construction and operation and allow for conditioning around rehabilitation and management of ongoing environmental impacts (e.g., noise). This enhanced role could also facilitate a more transparent and accountable decision-making process for renewable energy projects.

1.2 Focusing on outcomes and strategic planning

Queensland's unique biodiversity is world renowned and contains high numbers of rare and endemic species and unique habitats. The Queensland Government is committed to delivering on the [Queensland Biodiversity Conservation Strategy](#), the [Queensland Protected Area Strategy](#), and the [Vegetation Management Framework](#) through the rollout of new renewable energy.

The Queensland Government is also supporting habitat restoration through the [Land Restoration Fund](#) and will continue to look for opportunities to partner with industry, including opportunities to co-locate energy projects with carbon and nature repair market projects. These initiatives aim to ensure net climate and nature positive outcomes.

To continue to focus on outcomes and strategic planning, the Queensland Government is:

- undertaking proactive planning and investigating strategic advanced offsets in renewable energy zones (REZs)
- continuing bioregional planning to achieve better overall environmental outcomes and faster decisions for business
- exploring other pathways for enhancing environmental outcomes.

Undertaking proactive planning and investigating strategic advanced offsets in REZs

The Queensland Government recognises that renewable energy development is occurring at a rapid pace, and there needs to be a greater focus on proactive consideration of environmental and community priorities where renewables are being built.

The Queensland Government is undertaking REZ Readiness Assessments to support the early planning and potential declaration of future REZ developments. These assessments focus on the potential pipeline of renewable energy development in an area to identify local and regional

opportunities and mitigations for cumulative impacts of future REZ development. The assessments are informed by community input, considering a range of social, economic, community and environment matters, including biodiversity, cultural heritage, waste management and land-use planning. Findings from REZ Readiness Assessments will be used to inform work across government.

The Coordinator-General could play an important role in helping facilitate REZ development and coordinate outcomes including investigating opportunities for securing strategic advanced offsets to meet State and Commonwealth requirements, leveraging outcomes of the REZ Readiness Assessments. As part of this, the Queensland Government is working proactively with the Commonwealth Government to align a more coordinated approach with the Commonwealth's *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Continuing bioregional planning to achieve better overall environmental outcomes and faster decisions for business

In the longer-term, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments are working together on ways to better manage the environment in specific areas of Queensland through better planning to protect biodiversity (including threatened species), world and national heritage areas, and areas of cultural significance. This process is called bioregional planning.

This will focus on the impacts of particular development in a region, rather than just from individual projects. The Queensland Government has commenced work on pilot bioregional plans including one in northern Queensland with a focus on renewables.

For further information on this initiative visit the [Bioregional Planning web page](#).

Exploring other pathways for enhancing environmental outcomes

The Queensland Government is supporting the Queensland Conservation Council to investigate opportunities to deliver significant environmental benefits from renewable developments. The outcomes from this work will be considered, in line with changes to the Commonwealth Government's emerging Nature Positive laws, to identify opportunities to deliver enhanced environmental outcomes.

Additionally, the Queensland Government has committed to reviewing all Regional Plans that are older than five years and will explore [Strategic Environmental Areas \(SEAs\)](#) as part of Statutory Regional Plans in regions where they do not yet exist. SEAs identify areas where the impact of a prescribed activity will not result in a widespread or irreversible impact on an environmental attribute of a strategic environmental area. The SEAs are prescribed within the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014 or within a Regional Plan.

1.3 Fostering a circular economy

The Queensland Government is continually seeking to reduce the environmental impacts of industry by reducing waste and promoting the reuse or recycling of components. Through strategic partnerships, the government is identifying opportunities to build new resource recovery industries and activate these opportunities for the renewable energy industry. To continue fostering a circular economy, the Queensland Government is:

- supporting solar panel recycling
- supporting resource recovery industry innovation.

Supporting solar panel recycling

Large-scale solar farms and household rooftop solar panels typically have a warranted output life of 25 years, however, the inverter typically has a warranted life of 10-15 years. As these installations reach end-of-life, it creates opportunities to explore and implement avenues for reuse and recycling of these solar panels as they are replaced or decommissioned, keeping the value of the material in these panels circulating in the economy for longer.

The Queensland Government is working with the Smart Energy Council (SEC) to identify opportunities for a solar panel reuse and recycling market in Queensland for both household and industrial scale installations. The partnership with SEC will pilot solar panel recycling across the state, and guide better practice in the renewable energy sector by improving industry engagement with communities, leveraging existing investments to stimulate Queensland's recycling market. The product stewardship pilot is designed to test the feasibility of collection, re-use and recycling for solar panels from homes, businesses and solar farms, ensuring a significant reduction in landfill.

Following the SEC pilot recycling program, in 2025 the Queensland Government will review this program and consider opportunities to expand this activity including for wind turbine recycling. This will include exploring potential viable locations, volume and timing of demand for wind turbine recycling.

The review will explore how to reduce barriers to recycling in the long-term and support industry to respond to the demand. The review will examine future recycling opportunities including exploring the potential for material flow analysis to support recycling opportunities and co-location of local advanced manufacturing based on resource aggregation in regional centres.

Supporting resource recovery industry innovation

To further support circular economy outcomes across various industries, including the renewable energy sector, the Queensland Government has introduced the following programs to stimulate industry-led innovation:

- **Recycling and Jobs Funds – Industry Development**: This program supports large-scale recycling projects that can demonstrate significant improvement in recycling processes and help to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills.
- **Circular Economy Investment Program**: This initiative aims to encourage Queensland's transition to a system that minimises waste and keeps materials in use for as long as possible.

2 Effective community participation

Communities need to be partners in the energy transformation. The following initiatives aim to ensure community engagement and local benefits are a key focus of the energy transformation through enhancing engagement and leading practice, ensuring local benefits for host communities, and boosting local jobs and economic development.

2.1 Enhancing engagement and leading practice, including with First Nations peoples

Communities consistently provide feedback that they want early, ongoing, and meaningful engagement from developers and genuine opportunities to inform and input to development in their area. Throughout Queensland Government consultation in 2023 and 2024, communities highlighted the importance of real and deep engagement that demonstrates that developers are listening to and learning from communities. Too often communities report that developers have engaged late, with too little substance and in a way they feel is “ticking the box”. This leaves communities feeling unheard, undervalued and without any way to meaningfully express their concerns, preferences, and needs.

To enhance engagement, including with First Nations peoples, and drive leading practice, the Queensland Government is:

- creating a mandatory Code of Conduct for renewable energy developers
- establishing independent Community Leader Councils through Coexistence Queensland
- improving First Nations engagement and local capacity to benefit from renewables.

Creating a mandatory Code of Conduct for renewable energy developers

In April 2024, the Queensland Government committed to developing a mandatory Code of Conduct to ensure renewable energy developers are meeting standards on a range of issues and engaging genuinely with communities, including First Nations groups, when developing, building and operating new generation and storage projects.

Enabled through the passage of the *Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024*, the Code of Conduct is being delivered to ensure that genuine efforts are displayed when engaging with stakeholders and communities, mitigating impacts on communities and delivering benefits to communities throughout the lifecycle of generation projects intending to connect to Queensland’s electricity system. In doing so, the Code of Conduct aims to put communities firmly at the forefront of the energy transformation.

It is anticipated that the regulator (Department of Energy and Climate) will consider compliance with the Code of Conduct through the generation authority assessment under the provisions in section 180 and section 180A of the *Electricity Act 1994*. A [generation authority](#) allows a generating plant, greater than 30 MW, to connect to a transmission grid or supply network in Queensland. The code will ensure better outcomes through the development, building and operation of generating plant.

The Queensland Government is working closely with industry and key stakeholders to develop the code and will further consult on its contents during 2024. As part of this, the Queensland Government will also examine the compliance framework for the code to ensure it is fit for purpose with effective means to monitor and enforce compliance.

Establishing independent Community Leader Councils through Coexistence Queensland

The Queensland Government has established Coexistence Queensland to proactively bring stakeholders together on emerging coexistence issues. As an independent body, Coexistence Queensland is uniquely positioned to play a leading role in the promotion of positive coexistence outcomes.

Formerly the GasFields Commission Queensland, Coexistence Queensland will be extending Community Leader Councils developed for the gas sector to consider broader coexistence matters in northern, central and southern Queensland. These will be independent forums used to engage across communities and sectors on promoting cooperation between the agricultural, resources and renewable energy sectors.

Investigating need for specific cultural heritage management and engagement guidance

The Queensland Government recognises the importance of understanding the needs and aspirations of First Nations communities with respect to the development of Queensland’s major energy infrastructure in regions, particularly in areas of future REZ development.

The Government is advancing an initiative to work with regional partners and First Nations communities close to major energy infrastructure in REZs, with the goal of helping communities articulate how they want to actively participate in and benefit from renewable energy development.

The Queensland Government is also working with the Commonwealth Government as part of the development of the Remote and First Nations Clean Energy Strategy, including potential guidance material for First Nations stakeholders and proponents.

To build on this, the Queensland Government is investigating the benefits of developing further specific cultural heritage management and engagement guidance for renewables with First Nations peoples to ensure better and more culturally appropriate handling of cultural heritage matters. This would build on any requirements established within the renewable energy developer mandatory Code of Conduct.

2.2 Ensuring local benefits for host communities

Communities hosting renewable energy development need and expect to see direct benefits of the investment in their area. Following the experience of resources and coal seam gas exploration and extraction, feedback from communities consistently highlights their expectations of receiving legacy benefits from development.

To support local benefits and legacy outcomes for host communities, the Queensland Government is:

- exploring setting clear minimum standards for community benefits
- developing new models for delivering a positive community legacy
- expanding regional internet access with the Powerlink SuperGrid Telecommunications Program
- continuing to roll out the Local Energy Partnerships program.

Exploring setting clear minimum standards for community benefits

States and territories have begun to set clear and transparent standards for community benefit contributions from renewable energy developers. While some developers have published community benefit frameworks, contributions from industry can be variable and often not transparent.

The Queensland Government is exploring setting an expected minimum contribution for community benefits and require public reporting of contributions and outcomes. This will be considered as part of the development of the statutory Code of Conduct for renewable energy developers.

Developing new models for delivering a positive community legacy

To further support community outcomes, the Queensland Government is also investigating new models for community benefits including:

- **Models for community ownership of large-scale renewables:**
Innovative ownership models like community owned renewable energy can help build trust in the energy transformation and foster a greater sense of participation and direct benefits. This includes models like small levels of investment from community groups or collectives which result in profit sharing arrangements from a large-scale renewable energy development. To support this, the Queensland Government is developing a framework for community-owned renewable energy.
- **Piloting a pooled Community Legacy Fund for the Callide REZ:**
As part of the outcomes from the REZ Readiness Assessments in the Central Queensland region, the Queensland Government is investing \$5 million in seed funding for a pooled Callide REZ Community Legacy Fund to ensure long-lasting, legacy benefits. This will consider opportunities for developers to also make contributions to the fund. A new REZ Local Reference Group will be established will help determine priorities for investment.

Expanding regional internet access with the Powerlink SuperGrid Telecommunications Program

Communities living near large-scale renewable energy developments and transmission lines need to receive tangible benefits from this development. The [SuperGrid Telecommunications Program](#) is a joint initiative between Powerlink and their subsidiary Queensland Capacity Network (QCN) to improve access to high-speed internet and mobile phone coverage to regional areas hosting transmission infrastructure.

The program will use Powerlink's transmission towers, and the fiber optic cable they carry, to boost telecommunications services for communities in REZs and across the Queensland SuperGrid. Local engagement by QCN will provide an opportunity for communities to directly input their feedback on mobile phone 'black spot' areas that should be prioritised as well as areas with poor internet connectivity. Visit the [Powerlink website](#) for more information.

Continuing to roll out the Local Energy Partnerships program

Release in October 2023, the Local Energy Partnership framework committed to a range of partnerships with key peak bodies, communities and industry. The Queensland Government will continue to roll out this program including:

- **Queensland Farmers Federation** to develop a [landholder toolkit](#) and the [Energy Information Service for Landholders](#) to help farmers and landholders answer energy-related challenges and provide them with guidance to hosting renewable projects.
- **Business Renewables Centre Australia** to support councils and local businesses to access greater benefits from the energy market through Power Purchase Agreements by holding information sessions with councils and local businesses who are ready to enter into contracts.
- **Queensland Conservation Council** to develop a framework to identify how to improve environmental outcomes for pumped hydro storage, large-scale solar and wind farms projects.
- **Partnering with local councils** to boost their ability to engage on energy matters and meet challenges of the energy transformation through tailored support – see Section 3.2.

Other partnerships with renewable energy industry peak bodies are outlined further in Section 5.3.

2.3 Boosting local jobs and economic development

The Queensland Government is committed to growing our regions and is prioritising job creation, economic development, and investment in regional people and communities to protect and enhance our Queensland lifestyle. To boost local jobs and economic development, the Queensland Government is:

- continuing to support better local workforce outcomes
- building regional training facilities
- launching a new energy jobs portal
- delivering the \$200 million Regional Economic Futures Fund and transformation strategies.

Continuing to support better local workforce outcomes

Queensland's regions will be at the forefront of opportunities from the creation of the State's SuperGrid, with 95 per cent of infrastructure investment and 70 per cent of employment projected to be in regional areas. Queensland's path to 2050 will create opportunities for Queensland businesses to support the emerging and critical industries driving the State's economic growth.

The [Good people. Good jobs: Queensland Workforce Strategy 2022-2032](#) aims to harness the potential of our people, drive economic growth and strengthen our communities. The Strategy is supporting benefits to individuals, employers, regions and communities. Through the [first Action Plan \(2022–25\)](#), there are several actions directly and indirectly supporting Queensland's energy transformation.

Queensland's [Clean Energy Workforce Roadmap](#) provides direction to further develop Queensland's highly skilled workforce to support the continued growth of the State's clean energy industry. The [Future Energy Jobs Guide](#) helps workers explore career opportunities in the clean energy sector and identify education and training pathways.

The \$150 million Job Security Guarantee has been legislated to ensure workers across Queensland publicly owned coal-fired power stations and associated mines can transition to new roles in emerging renewable energy industries. [Tradies for the Transition](#) supports attracting a workforce for these new jobs, while protecting existing ones. The Renewable Energy Jobs Advocate will also provide advice to government on how to increase opportunities for employment in the energy industry.

Building regional training facilities

The Queensland Government is also directly supporting the building of new regional training facilities. Powerlink Queensland is developing Transmission and Training Hubs in Townsville and Gladstone to support the development of some of the critical skills required for the energy transformation, including high voltage technical training.

Stanwell Corporation has commenced the transformation of Stanwell Power Station in Rockhampton to a Clean Energy Hub through the Future Energy Innovation and Training Hub. The hub will test out innovative new energy technology including wind, solar, hydrogen and battery storage. It will also provide a real-life, hands-on training environment for Queensland energy employees to develop the skills needed to work on renewable energy technologies.

The Queensland Government has also recently announced support for the Callide Future Hub, a new dedicated learning facility near the Callide power station featuring a visitor centre for new technologies. The facility is located within the proposed Callide REZ and will support the transition of workers and communities to address the challenges and opportunities that decarbonising the energy sector presents.

Delivering the new energy jobs portal

The Energy Jobs portal is a new online resource that aims to increase the visibility of Queensland's energy workforce transformation and provide a comprehensive 'one-stop-shop' for energy jobs in Queensland. The portal features hundreds of energy jobs across roles in clean energy and traditional electricity generation, highlights the energy industry skills currently in high demand, and profiles leading energy employers.

The new Energy Jobs portal can be accessed at: qld.gov.au/energyjobs

Delivering the \$200 million Regional Economic Futures Fund (REFF) and transformation strategies

The REFF is a \$200 million program to support communities in seizing industry development opportunities presented by the development of renewable energy

The regions identified for funding have communities with coal-fired power stations and associated mines that are a significant source of economic activity and jobs. They present unique opportunities to further support industries like critical minerals, renewable energy, hydrogen and biofuels. Regions include:

- North-West Queensland (including the corridor to Townsville)
- Greater Whitsunday
- Central Queensland
- Darling Downs South West and the South Burnett.

Each region is guided by a regional transformation strategy, identifying key economic strengths and industry priorities. Stakeholder Advisory Committees (SACs), consisting of representatives from each region's government agencies, industries and communities, informed and developed these strategies following extensive public consultation.

More information is available on the [REFF web page](#).

3 Easy access to information

Access to information is crucial for informed engagement and improved understanding of the energy transformation. The following initiatives aim to ensure access to information is a key focus of the energy transformation through improving transparency of the renewable energy pipeline, empowering communities and local government, and supporting independent trusted information on the transformation.

3.1 Improving transparency of renewable energy pipeline

Communities and local governments frequently express frustration about the lack of transparency and awareness over developments planned in their area. While developments go through different approvals pathways and information can be found on these projects from a range of sources, there is no single point of truth for communities to see what is planned and how applications are progressing.

To increase the transparency of the renewable energy pipeline, the Queensland Government is:

- investigating a notification scheme for renewable energy projects
- exploring the need for a comprehensive online portal with project mapping.

Investigating a notification scheme for renewable energy projects

To enhance the visibility and oversight of renewable energy projects, the Queensland Government is investigating the need for a notification scheme for renewable energy projects.

The notification scheme could include a requirement for projects to engage with the Queensland Government earlier in the development process (i.e. prior to seeking development approvals) and provide some minimum standard of information about the project. This could then be used to underpin notifications to relevant stakeholders, like Local Government of projects in the pipeline and their status.

Exploring the need for a comprehensive online portal with project mapping

The Queensland Government will investigate establishing a comprehensive online portal with information about the pipeline of renewable energy development and other energy infrastructure including a mapping service.

This could leverage information from the proposed notification scheme and information from applications made for development assessments. Combined with information about projects that are completed or under development, this resource would give communities and Local Government better overall awareness of renewable energy developments in their region.

Through consultation on this discussion paper, the Queensland Government is seeking views from stakeholders on the merits of an online portal and the type of information this should include.

3.2 Empowering communities and local government

The Queensland Government wants to support communities and local governments to be partners in the energy transformation. However, navigating the energy transformation can be challenging with complex and resource intensive processes. To empower communities and local government, the Queensland Government is:

- tailoring support for Local Government
- seeking to understand what guidance communities may need to engage with renewable energy developers.

Delivering tailored support for Local Government

The Queensland Government is working with the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) to support local councils and Regional Organisations of Councils to increase capacity and capability as part of the energy transformation.

LGAQ will deliver a series of projects aimed at enhancing councils' capacity to coordinate and engage with their communities on energy matters as well as equip councils with the required resources to manage the increase in renewable energy development applications. A social licence in energy toolkit for local councils will support councils with the necessary tools and knowledge to engage meaningfully with renewable energy developers, support their communities, and maximise local benefits from renewables development.

Seeking to understand what guidance communities may need to engage with renewable energy developers

The process that renewable energy projects follow, and the associated opportunities for communities to provide input can sometimes be difficult to understand or engage with for a range of stakeholders.

To support greater transparency on this process, through consultation on this paper, the Queensland Government is seeking to understand what information, support and guidance communities may need to engage with renewable energy development to improve the effectiveness and outcomes of community engagement. This will inform the development of guidance materials for key stakeholders on renewable energy development.

3.3 Supporting independent trusted information

Trusted information and sources of evidence are required to underpin community empowerment in the energy transformation. Recognising that government and industry are not always perceived as unbiased, the Queensland Government will look at partner with trusted experts, researchers and educators to provide trusted and transparent information about the energy transformation.

To promote independent, trusted information on the energy transformation, the Queensland Government is:

- supporting independent analysis of emerging issues in the energy transformation
- exploring ways to increase energy literacy and education.

Supporting independent analysis of emerging issues in the energy transformation

Credible, independent sources of information are crucial for building community trust in the energy transformation. When information is sourced from unbiased, reputable institutions, it carries greater credibility and is more likely to be accepted by a diverse audience. Independent analysis also helps to ensure that the data and insights provided are free from political or commercial influence, fostering transparency and accountability. This trust is essential in ensuring communities are well-informed and their participation in the energy transformation is supported.

The Queensland Government is committing \$1.5 million to establish a partnership with an academic institution to support independent analysis of emerging issues in the energy transformation to build trust and understanding as well as combat the spread of misinformation about renewables.

Exploring ways to increase energy literacy and education

The Queensland Government wants to ensure communities have the information they need to make informed decisions and are supported to engage with the transformation on their own terms.

Working with the renewable energy sector, the Queensland Government will explore whether energy focused conversations or more community forums would help support the roll out of trusted and location-specific energy information, energy literacy and confidence.

The Queensland Government has allocated \$1.8 million as part of the recent REZ Readiness Assessments in Central Queensland for an education program about renewable energy, with a focus on Central Queensland, including local forums, identification of local champions, educational materials and myth busting.

4 Enduring landholder protections

Promoting enduring landholder protections and coexistence as well as effective land use planning is crucial for the energy transformation to ensure sustainable development is achieved and community trust is maintained in the long term. The following initiatives aim to ensure enduring landholder protections are a key focus of the energy transformation through better support and fair compensation for landholders, clear escalation pathways, comprehensive end-of-life planning and protections, strategic land use planning and sustainable practices for coexistence.

4.1 Improving support and fair compensation for landholders

Renewable energy development for the energy transformation is occurring across the State, and sometimes in locations that have not traditionally played a role of the production of energy. Landholders are critical to this transformation and it is vital that they are supported to make informed decisions and choices for their business, their family and their future.

To improve support and fair compensation for landholders, the Queensland Government is:

- supporting landholders with a toolkit, information telephone service and website
- delivering a nation leading SuperGrid Landholder Payment Framework
- investigating a requirement for proponents to provide financial support to landholders to access independent advice
- exploring the need to develop model contracts for landholder agreements.

Supporting landholders with a toolkit, information telephone service and website

The Queensland Government is working with the Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF) to bring support to farmers and landholders. QFF has developed the [Queensland Renewable Energy Landholder Toolkit](#) which includes information about a range of topics landholders should consider when exploring opportunities for renewable projects on their land. The [Energy Information Service for Landholders](#) (EISL) provides a new phone information service to assist Queensland farmers and landholders with their on-farm energy related enquiries.

The [Queensland Ag Energy Hub website](#) is available to assist farmers and landholders with information about energy, including case studies from farms that have successfully implemented savings initiatives.

Delivering a nation leading SuperGrid Landholder Payment Framework

Powerlink has developed the new SuperGrid Landholder Payment Framework which significantly boosts payments to landholders hosting new transmission infrastructure. Under the framework, Queensland landholders hosting new transmission infrastructure will receive higher payments. The increase in payments is based on property-specific values and impacts, as opposed to using a flat rate and has greater flexibility on how payments are made.

Powerlink is the first transmission company in Australia to offer payments to landholders with properties adjacent to new transmission. Find out more information on the [Powerlink website](#).

Investigating a statutory land access code for transmission providers

There is growing landholder and stakeholder concern surrounding land access for significant transmission network development across Australia. Recent reviews at the national level (including the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner) have underscored the importance of improving land access management to maintain social licence.

Currently, Powerlink Queensland, the State's publicly owned transmission network service provider operates under a self-imposed Land Access Protocol which is not supported by legislation or regulation. While this is a best practice protocol, engagement with landholders, communities and representative bodies indicates that establishing a statutory land access code for transmission providers, to ensure consistent and transparent practices across industry, would serve to preserve or increase trust from communities.

It is intended that a transmission and access code would apply to Powerlink and any other entity developing transmission projects across Queensland. A similar approach has recently been adopted for renewable energy developers with the Queensland Government's commitment to create a statutory Code of Conduct. Over the next decade, significant new transmission projects will be delivered and putting in place a clear code for transmission could strengthen community confidence in the energy transformation.

Investigating a requirement for financial support to landholders to access advice

As part of the development of the Code of Conduct for renewable energy developers, the Queensland Government will investigate opportunities to enhance protections for landholders. This will include investigating whether a requirement for providing funds to landholders to access independent legal and financial advice is necessary to ensure landholders can access the information they need when entering into agreements with renewable energy proponents, including neighbouring landholders. Some developers already offer financial support to landholders so that they can access advice as well as financial support to landholders for legal expenses incurred throughout project delivery.

Exploring the need to develop model contracts for landholder agreements

Developing standard model contracts or clauses for common interactions between renewable energy developers and landholders could provide additional support for landholders and increase transparency in renewable developments.

Examples might include arrangements for installing masts and wind monitoring equipment, options to lease or purchase land for renewable development, and allowable farming activities within a wind farm area. These standard provisions would be developed in consultation with the industry, peak organisations and the Queensland Law Society. The Queensland Government will engage with stakeholders to understand the value of model contracts and usefulness in supporting negotiations between landholders and project developers.

4.2 Creating clear escalation pathways

The Queensland Government recognises that clear complaint pathways and dispute resolution options help to improve relationships between communities, landholders, and renewable energy developers, thus building trust and securing social licence for Queensland's renewable energy transformation. To provide clear escalation pathways, the Queensland Government is:

- working with the Commonwealth Government to support greater coordination
- investigating the expansion of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) to include complaints pathways for large-scale renewable energy.

Working with the Commonwealth Government to support greater coordination

The Queensland Government is committed to working with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions in the National Electricity Market to ensure sustainable development in the energy transformation. At a national level, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) receives and refers complaints from concerned community residents about wind farms, large-scale solar farms, energy storage facilities and new major transmission projects. In addition, the AEIC promotes best practices for industry and government to adopt regarding the planning and operation of these projects.

The AEIC published a review into community engagement practices in early 2024 including a recommendation for a developer rating scheme to provide transparency over developer performance and capability.

The Queensland Government is working proactively with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions on addressing the outcomes from the review including the design of this potential rating scheme and how this will complement the state level statutory Code of Conduct for renewable energy developers.

Investigating the expansion of the ombudsman to include complaints pathways for large-scale renewable energy

Some stakeholders have called for a user-friendly disputes or complaints resolution process in Queensland to support compliance and provide fair outcomes for landholders, neighbours, and communities.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland (EWOQ) provides independent dispute resolution for complaints related to electricity, gas, and water services for residential and small business customers across Queensland. As Queensland transitions to a clean energy future, EWOQ is well positioned to expand its remit to include complaints related to large-scale renewable energy projects and the conduct of renewable energy developers.

This would complement the new role Coexistence Queensland plays in promoting improved community outcomes through engagement, education and collaboration across sectors. The Queensland Government is seeking views on the benefits and challenges of expanding the role of EWOQ and how to establish clear and balanced escalation pathways.

4.3 Enforcing comprehensive end-of-life planning and protections

Under the current *Planning Act 2016* the legal obligation for decommissioning of renewable energy plant resides with the premises (land) rather than the renewable energy proponent and decommissioning requirements need to be established through landholder agreements. Landowners and peak bodies have raised concerns that if a proponent/operator does not fulfill decommissioning obligations these will fall to the landowner, with potentially significant financial implications. To enforce comprehensive end-of-life planning and protections, the Queensland Government is:

- exploring new requirements for life cycle planning for renewable energy developers
- investigating models to provide financial assurance for end-of-life activities for renewable energy projects.

Exploring new requirements for life cycle planning for renewable energy developers

The Queensland Government's Code of Conduct for renewable energy developers will ensure appropriate standards of impact mitigation must be met or exceeded throughout the entire life cycle of the renewable energy project, from development through to the building and eventual operation of the generating plant. As part of the code, the Queensland Government is exploring new requirements for life cycle planning for renewable developers well in advance of decommissioning decisions.

Investigating models to provide financial assurance for end-of-life activities for renewable energy projects

Many jurisdictions use surety bonds or financial securities to reduce the risk exposure to landowners of decommissioning. In the Queensland resources sector, the Financial Provisioning Scheme is used to improve the State's management of its financial risk in the event a resource company fails to comply with their environmental management and rehabilitation obligations.

Renewables have a different lifecycle model, and many sites will be recommissioned or repowered, extending their lives. Opportunities to establish a recommissioning, decommissioning and financial assurance model for renewable energy sites will be investigated to ensure responsible recommissioning and decommissioning and land restoration so that post-project land uses can support the most efficient or highest value use of the land.

This includes looking at the merits of setting aside funds or bonds to cover the costs of restoring land to its original state once the project has reached the end of its lifecycle to ensure landholders are not negatively impacted when a project is decommissioning.

4.4 Undertaking strategic land use planning

As the State's population and industries continue to grow, there is increased pressure on land and infrastructure. Competition for land is intensifying in regions where there is increasing demand for renewable energy, infrastructure, industrial and manufacturing opportunities, critical mineral deposits, agricultural production, and need for environmental conservation. To promote strategic land use planning, the Queensland Government is:

- supporting sustainable development and coexistence through Regional Plans
- conducting early cumulative impact analysis in REZ planning.

Supporting sustainable development through Regional Plans

Development across Queensland regions is guided by a strategic regional planning process which includes the creation of [Statutory Regional Plans](#). These are long-term strategic plans that support local growth and development while also protecting a region's natural resources.

At a regional and State level, these plans shape overall growth patterns, including renewable energy, and guide State assessment of wind projects. At a local level, they are implemented through local government planning schemes which manage the development of solar and battery projects. [Regional Infrastructure Plans](#) further deliver on the priorities set in the Regional Plans, taking a place-based approach to ensure regionally significant infrastructure needs are considered and prioritised.

As the state's population and industries continue to grow, there is increased pressure on land and infrastructure. Competition for land is intensifying in regions where there is increasing demand for renewable energy, infrastructure, industrial and manufacturing opportunities, critical mineral deposits, agricultural production, and need for environmental conservation.

To ensure Regional Plans are dynamic and responsive to wider trends and geopolitical change, the Queensland Government has committed to reviewing all plans that are older than five years. This includes nine statutory regional plans (Cape York, Central Queensland, Central West, Darling Downs, Far North Queensland, Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday, Maranoa-Balonne, North-West, and South-West) and one non-statutory regional plan (the Gulf).

This review is underpinned by detailed mapping of competing land uses, including renewable energy, environmental values, agriculture and resource interests. This will inform prioritisation of these interests at a regional landscape scale.

Other planning exercises to better align State interests with national priorities are also underway like Bioregional planning (see section 1.2 for more information).

In recognition of the rapid pace of the energy transformation, the Queensland Government is also implementing frameworks to enhance the coordination of energy infrastructure, like the publishing of the [SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint](#) (the Blueprint) and the [Renewable Energy Zones \(REZ\) Roadmap](#). These frameworks are helping to inform future Regional Plan updates about the likely trajectory of renewable energy development and requirements to meet renewable energy targets. These frameworks provide new levers to coordinate the roll-out of renewables to support broader strategic objectives. The Blueprint and REZ Roadmap are updated every two years and will inform, and be shaped by, future Regional Plan updates.

Conducting early cumulative impact analysis in REZ planning

In acknowledgement that development for the energy transformation has increased in scale and pace in recent years, the Queensland Government is undertaking early analysis on land use and cumulative impacts as part of 'REZ Readiness Assessments' at both the regional level and detailed level for proposed REZ locations.

REZ Readiness Assessments are identifying strategies for maximising the opportunities associated with REZs, as well as ways to manage potential cumulative impacts. These assessments will identify environmental, economic and social issues and opportunities and will be taken into consideration during the statutory regional plan process as well as the subsequent assessment of renewable energy projects.

REZ Readiness Assessments will investigate a range of matters including infrastructure, transport, housing and accommodation, workforce, supply chains, waste management, environment, other land uses and social infrastructure, as well as local industry and First Nations considerations, and other issues.

4.5 Supporting sustainable practices for coexistence

The Queensland Government recognises the need to support agricultural businesses through the rollout of renewable energy development and to support landholders to optimise land productivity and outcomes. To support sustainable practices for coexistence, the Queensland Government is:

- exploring agrivoltaics for Queensland landscapes
- investigating tax implications for renewables on farms.

Exploring agrivoltaics for Queensland landscapes

Agrivoltaics is the dual use of land for agriculture and solar energy production. Queensland's vast expanses of agricultural land makes it an ideal setting for exploring the coexistence of solar farms for grid-scale energy generation and agriculture. A prime example is the proposed Callide Solar Farm which plans to run up to 1,000 sheep on the project site to ensure the ongoing agricultural sustainability of the area.

The Queensland Government will partner with peak bodies to investigate the opportunities for agrivoltaics on Queensland's farming land used for tropical and sub-tropical grazing and broad acre and horticultural cropping with the aim of improved coexistence outcomes.

This will identify scenarios suitable for agrivoltaics with a particular focus on Queensland's proposed REZ regions and seek to understand the opportunities for farmers to adopt solar energy production and provide an easy to understand 'Guide to Agrivoltaics' for farmers.

Investigating tax implications for renewables on farms

Farmers across Australia have access to a broad range of assistance schemes which include tax concessions and exemptions. These initiatives exist to reflect the specific challenges and unpredictability associated with the agricultural sector.

Entering into agreements to host energy infrastructure such as transmission towers or renewable energy projects is an opportunity for farmers to diversify their income. However, revenue gained through such agreements may change a farmer's financial situation and tax obligations.

The Queensland Government is investigating these tax implications in collaboration with other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth Government to ensure landholders are not disincentivised from hosting renewable energy projects or transmission and compensation agreements are adequate.

5 Efficient industry facilitation

Attracting and facilitating investment in clean energy is fundamental to the energy transformation and also the broader economic transformation with traditional industries seeking access to cleaner affordable energy to remain globally competitive. The following initiatives aim to ensure industry facilitation is a key focus of the energy transformation through streamlined processes, enhanced coordination and greater certainty for industry, and partnerships for the future.

5.1 Streamlining processes and facilitation

The planning and policy frameworks supporting the renewable energy sector need to be fit-for-purpose to achieve the scale of large-scale renewable energy development. As part of this, it is important that assessment processes for projects are streamlined, transparent and provide confidence to industry. For streamlining processes and facilitation, the Queensland Government is exploring approaches for greater industry facilitation through the Office of the Coordinator-General.

Investigating the need for greater industry facilitation

In response to emerging concerns about assessing renewable energy projects and in recognition of the importance of investment to decarbonise Queensland's energy supply, the Queensland Government will investigate how to enhance industry facilitation by leveraging the unique function of the Coordinator-General.

The Office of the Coordinator-General is well-placed to support renewable energy projects in Queensland by providing advice on the most efficient assessment pathway. Streamlining the development assessment process and reducing the assessment decision timeframes will provide greater certainty to industry and the community.

As renewable energy projects get larger and more complex, more projects could also progress through the Coordinator-General's assessment pathways, prioritising projects within proposed REZ locations. Smaller, less complex projects could continue to access advice from the Office of the Coordinator-General but would utilise existing pathways for assessment.

The Office of the Coordinator-General's wide remit and established relationship with the Commonwealth Government can provide developers with a more comprehensive service, considering a broader range of matters including cumulative impacts to ensure better outcomes for both projects and communities.

The Queensland Government will consider further opportunities for strengthening the Coordinator-General's role as part of the broader planning framework review for establishing a streamlined, robust, trusted and transparent assessment and approvals framework for large-scale renewable energy projects. This aims to bridge regulatory gaps in renewable energy, including cumulative environmental and social impact assessment and conditioning for community benefit, cumulative impacts and rehabilitation.

Through consultation on this discussion paper, the Queensland Government is seeking views from stakeholders on the merits of leveraging the Coordinator-General to help facilitate a sustainable energy transformation in the State.

5.2 Driving investment confidence through greater certainty

An important feature of an attractive investment environment is greater certainty to drive investment confidence. The Queensland Government is working closely with Powerlink Queensland as the REZ Delivery Body to deliver scale efficient transmission in REZs to lower costs and provide industry confidence about electricity system connections. Industry also needs greater certainty that projects can be developed in a timely manner, including a range of critical enablers like transport logistics, workforce, and waste among other aspects. To provide greater certainty to drive investment confidence for industry, the Queensland Government is:

- proactively considering enabling infrastructure for REZs
- updating the Infrastructure Blueprint and REZ Roadmap.

Proactively considering enabling infrastructure in REZs

The Queensland Government is undertaking REZ Readiness Assessments at a strategic level across REZ regions in Queensland. Central Queensland has been the initial focus, with strategic REZ Readiness Assessments for north and far north Queensland and southern Queensland kicking off in late 2024 and early 2025.

REZ Readiness Assessments are front-loading planning and identification of critical infrastructure needs for REZ locations. This not only supports community, but also addresses potential bottlenecks and challenges that could impact project delivery for industry.

As part of these assessments, the Office of the Coordinator General is playing a lead role in supporting the roll out of REZs, including supporting the timely delivery of enabling infrastructure for REZ development. This will include exploring appropriate mechanisms under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* to help facilitate REZ development.

Updating the Infrastructure Blueprint and REZ Roadmap

Under the *Energy (Renewable Transformation and Jobs) Act 2024*, the Queensland Government will be reviewing and updating the SuperGrid Infrastructure Blueprint (the Blueprint) every two years.

The Blueprint provides a transparent plan to the market for how the energy transformation will be supported in the State. As the Queensland market includes both public and private ownership, it is vital that the Queensland Government provides clear information on its plans for these assets for the future and how to support a smooth energy transformation.

The Blueprint is informed by expert technical input from the new Queensland Energy System Advisory Board. This board includes a range of leading technical experts in the energy sector representing different stakeholder views.

The next Blueprint is due to be updated. As part of this Blueprint update, the Queensland Government will also update the REZ Roadmap which outlines future potential REZ locations and status of REZ developments underway.

5.3 Building industry partnerships for the future

The Queensland Government is committed to building strong relationships with industry on various initiatives that will support the energy transformation in Queensland. To build industry partnerships for the future, the Queensland Government is continuing to deliver on industry partnerships with peak bodies.

Continuing to deliver on industry partnerships with peak bodies

Under the Local Energy Partnerships framework, the Queensland Government has partnered with peak renewable energy industry bodies to deliver a range of outcomes, including:

- Smart Energy Council (SEC) to deliver a large-scale solar panel recycling pilot in five locations in metro and regional Queensland. This will provide drop-off sites so panels can be distributed to resource recovery, reuse and recycling facilities. The SEC will also establish a Commercial and Industrial Solar Consultative Committee that brings together manufacturers, project developers and owners, recyclers, researchers and government representatives.
- Clean Energy Council (CEC) to develop and promote clean energy stories showing real life jobs in regional communities, and deliver industry training on social licence to support the delivery of energy infrastructure projects in REZs. The CEC has also delivered regional careers fairs in 2024 to showcase local job opportunities in our clean energy economy.
- Queensland Renewable Energy Council (QREC) to inform development of the Code of Conduct for Queensland, helping to guide better industry practice, understand local needs and support communities to benefit from the energy transformation. QREC will also develop industry resources to help with assessments and approvals for renewable energy projects or improve developers understanding of biosecurity practises and support industry with engagement in REZs.

The Queensland Government will continue to identify and leverage opportunities to work with industry to resolve emerging challenges and improve the investment environment in Queensland.

6 Consultation questions

To help refine and deliver the initiatives outlined in this discussion paper we are seeking your feedback on the following key questions (these can be answered in relation to any of the initiatives covered in this paper):

1. Do these initiatives effectively contribute to the desired objectives including enhanced environmental outcomes, effective community participation, easy access to information, enduring landholder protections, and efficient industry facilitation?
2. What potential challenges do you foresee in the implementation of these initiatives, and what strategies or solutions could help address them?
3. Are there any important issues or gaps that these initiatives have not yet addressed?
4. Do you have any specific feedback or suggestions regarding any particular initiative?

To have your say, email your written submission addressing these questions to renewablesframework@epw.qld.gov.au

Next steps

The Queensland Government will review stakeholder submissions and themes from engagement activities to inform next steps for initiatives in the Draft Renewables Regulatory Framework.

For further information about upcoming engagement activities, please visit our website www.energyandclimate.qld.gov.au/energy



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