



## *ReD4NE is a Community Alliance for Responsible Energy Development for the New England*

Concerned Community Groups within the New England have, following several regional meetings, formed and incorporated an Association called **ReD4NE Inc.** ReD4NE is a regional community voice directed at advancing the interests of the New England Regional Community by advocating for equity associated with key aspects of the NSW energy transition. Members of ReD4NE have become increasingly concerned that the lack of engagement on the transition and lack of strategic planning is;

- producing an unplanned and uncontrolled surge of renewable energy projects.
- inducing long-term impacts on the landscape and the socio-economic fabric of the community of the New England.
- impacting negatively on the psychology of respective communities, who have become divided by an age-old renewable energy conundrum,
- creating a lack of benefit balance between host landowners and the rest the community in an irresponsible manner

ReD4NE say *“in a modern energy economy such as Australia we would have thought that our transition methodology was in better shape. We seem to be replicating errors of the past”*.

This uncontrolled surge has been facilitated by inadequate community engagement, communications and inappropriate ‘city-centric’ Government planning law and policy. The pursuit of the old ‘tick the box’ developer friendly planning governance presents with no strategic land use planning. Current NSW Planning Governance regimes do not put the community on an equal footing, either on engagement or on *the how, what, where and when in a strategic planning sense*. The broader Community needs to be aware that this surge has produced approximately 7000 MW generation either in the planning system or at an advance stage of feasibility. So for example this induces in a seventy-kilometre radius of Walcha, **466 wind turbines** (5.6MW/250M tip height) and appropriately **10 million solar panels**. The Government has now added ‘fuel to the fire’ by calling for expressions of interests for 8000 MW. ReD4NE maintain *“they, the Government, can’t manage existing expectations as they seemingly drown in outdated transmission and distribution network practices, further weigh-down by a ‘not fit for purpose’ planning regime “*

**The energy transition lacks the requisite social licence.** Much is written about the ‘Bush City’ divide. ReD4NE questions: Why mismanage this transition and exacerbate the divide? ReD4NE maintains that adverse impacts must be identified and minimized through better governance, better communication and increased community participation. ReD4NE maintain that *“If the Bush is going to do the heavy lifting in terms of hosting the pervasive infrastructure then it demands a more equitable seat at the table on planning and on approval processes. We are sure the private sector investment risk management aligns with this logical conclusion. We are sure that based on common sense interpretations of intergenerational equity, we need to plan the landscape prudently for future generations”*.

As the name suggests, ReD4NE is not *opposed to renewable energy and the energy transition*, nor is it *pro-coal* nor is it just *reactive nimbyism*. These labels would be a convenient over-simplification of a more complex problem that ‘city-centric’ governance fails to address. ReD4NE questions poor communications and poor planning, inappropriate development in the wrong location, and development which is irresponsible in terms of its potential negative impacts on the natural environment, on agricultural production and on the broader socio-economic well-being of the New England Community. It questions the one size fits all REZ (renewable energy zone) rollout message advocated by Macquarie St and trialled in the Central West. Where is the best practice international learning? The promise of



jobs and regional opportunity has been found to be a *'trojan horse'* in the past. Such platitudes need robust validation and testing before 'The Bush' buys this 'economic treasure chest' sales pitch. Too often in the past 'The Bush' ends up with *"the obligatory pair of socks on Father's Day"* translated to *"throw the Bushies some more roads bridges and dams"*.

Set out below are just some of the major transition issues ReD4NE would like to prosecute on behalf of the Communities. They embrace critical questions, surrounding the **how** to transition, the **what** to transition, the **where** to transition and the **when** to transition. Key issues for REZ landowners and communities and missing in Macquarie St *'consultancy orientated spin'* on Transmission, Electricity and Roadmap strategies. Yes, ReD4NE acknowledge the Roadmap might offer some in principle design opportunities, but at this point when you 'lift the bonnet' it presents as just another reverse auction process albeit with some *'bells and whistles'*. ReD4NE looks forward to stress testing on behalf of the community this proposed framework with Government.

- Failure to engage and explore with Community **key strategic land use planning**. Obvious questions addressed in other modern energy transitions. **What generation and transmission goes where and when?** How might this infrastructure address compatibility issues for example between large scale solar and agriculture? How might this infrastructure mitigate in favour rather than against regional tourism and respect for traditional owners and their heritage of the land?
- How might this infrastructure **synergise with, rather than damage the region's natural environment**, biodiversity conservation, on catchment hydrology and management, on water quality, and bushfire risk minimization and management?
- How do we promote for **more ethical engagement from developers** to respect full transparency for the Community in terms of project economics, overall life of the project bankability and genuine benefit sharing?
- How do we ensure engagement which introduces **more scientific certainty and liability for 'end of project life' considerations** such as decommissioning, remediation and securisation of a project through the payment of performance bonds?
- How to broker for the pursuit of independent research which clarifies potential adverse impacts of **oversized development** including development practices that minimise cumulative impacts from over development in the landscape?

ReD4NE calls on the NSW Government to put in place a **moratorium** on State Significant Renewal Energy Development pending meaningful engagement on issues associated with the ongoing erosion of social licence. For these reasons and more ReD4NE believes that a moratorium is an important starting point if Macquarie Street is genuine in wanting to *'rust on'* Regional NSW to its energy transition.

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