



Advocacy Statement: Renewable Industry Framework and Guidelines for Western Australian Local Governments: Submission to the State Government of Western Australia

For the Attention of: Premier, Minister for Energy, Minister for Planning, Minister for Lands, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Local Government

The Shire of Narrogin, call upon the State Government to develop a **comprehensive Renewable Industry Framework and Guidelines**. This initiative must prioritise equitable, consistent, and sustainable outcomes, ensuring that the rapid expansion of renewable energy infrastructure aligns with the needs of our communities while meeting the State's renewable energy targets for all projects over say 5 megawatts of commercial generation or storage.

To achieve this, we propose a framework built on **3 Cornerstones for Collaboration** and **5 Foundational Pillars**, addressing critical challenges and delivering **legacy solutions** for the communities that host these projects.

The 3 Cornerstones for Collaboration

The renewable energy transition in regional Western Australia must be built on trust and collaboration among three key groups:

1. *Community*: Local communities should have a voice in renewable energy developments impacting their areas. Their values, needs, and aspirations must guide project planning and implementation.
2. *Government*: State and local governments play a crucial role in creating frameworks and policies that ensure fairness, consistency, and long-term benefits for all involved. Policies must empower, not replace, local government capacities.
3. *Industry*: Renewable energy developers must engage transparently with local communities and governments, contributing to projects that respect community needs and environmental integrity.

The 5 Foundational Pillars

Pillar 1: Statewide Standards for Setbacks / Conditions and Zoning

Clear, consistent, and enforceable guidelines are essential to balance the needs of proponents, landholders, and communities. These standards should address setbacks for wind turbines, solar farms, and battery energy storage systems (BESS), factoring in

environmental, end of useful life, human health, safety, and visual considerations. A uniform approach will prevent conflicts, provide certainty to developers, and ensure responsible development that respects the fabric of our rural and agricultural landscapes and practices, and critically, maintains multi generation neighbour relations.

Outcome: A review of State Planning Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities (March 2020) in conjunction with local governments and industry utilising best practice from interstate and overseas is desperately required incorporating all of these 5 pillars.

Pillar 2: Comprehensive Community Engagement Framework

Effective and meaningful community engagement is paramount. We advocate for a **State-mandated engagement framework** that ensures:

- Transparent communication between proponents, local governments, near neighbours and residents.
- Inclusive participation of stakeholders, including Indigenous communities.
- Mechanisms for resolving disputes and addressing cultural and land-use sensitivities.

This pillar promotes trust and alignment, ensuring developments proceed with community support rather than conflict.

Pillar 3: Legacy Housing Solutions

Renewable energy projects should leave a **lasting housing legacy** for regional communities. Instead of short-term Transient/Temporary Worker Accommodations (TWAs), we advocate for permanent, sustainable housing that meets local needs. Collaborative efforts between proponents and local governments should include:

- Co-investment in infrastructure (e.g., water, sewer, power, local roads, where directly impacted and beneficial).
- Development of housing that addresses affordability and supports long-term community growth and *minimises* the need for investment in costly and short sighted TWAs.

This Pillar enriches communities while addressing workforce accommodation needs, leaving a **foundation for regional resilience** that outlasts the lifecycle of energy projects and assists meet State and Commonwealth housing targets and objectives.

Pillar 4: Community Benefit Funds (CBF)

A standardised **Community Benefit Fund (CBF)** framework that binds proponents receiving development approval from the State or Local Government(s) to a statutory contribution formula must ensure local communities (in the local government where the generation or storage occurs if across LG boundaries) directly benefit from renewable energy developments. Based on 1.5% Capital Investment Value (CIV) or a fixed rate (e.g., \$1,050 per megawatt for wind, \$850 per megawatt for solar, \$250 per megawatt for standalone BESS), these funds should be indexed to CPI for the life of the project (indicative 30 years) and managed by local governments who are uniquely best positioned to understand local needs, leverage funds,

exercise sound governance, and to maximise returns on investment for optimum community betterment.

Suggested (non-mandatory to tailor to local circumstances) thematic approach areas of investment include:

- **Sport & Recreation:** Enhancing sport & rec facilities, the lifeblood of rural towns.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Enhancing health and wellbeing generally.
- **Education and Training:** Scholarships and workforce development programs.
- **Environmental Initiatives:** Promoting renewable adoption and conservation.
- **Arts, Culture & Events:** Fostering vibrant regional communities.
- **Disaster Resilience and Emergency Services:** Strengthening emergency services.
- **Tourism Development:** Investing in attractions to drive economic growth.

Proponents should collaborate with community reference groups through having a 'seat at the table', administered and chaired by local governments to ensure allocations reflect local priorities, fostering shared investment and long-term benefits and who already have governance systems and procedures in place regarding restricted cash reserves and eliminating the need for large overheads and expensive 'trustee' arrangements.

Pillar 5: Payment in Lieu of Rates (PILoR)

A **consistent, State-wide PILoR framework** modelled on successful systems like Victoria's is essential for Windfarms in particular. By defining payment structures for projects exceeding a specific capacity, the framework would:

- Provide equitable revenue streams to support local governments in hosting renewable projects.
- Cover the costs of critical infrastructure and services.
- Ensure transparency and fairness for proponents and communities alike.

We also propose retaining the ability for local governments to utilise differentiated rates (Spot Rating under GRV) provisions in the Local Government Act 1995 for solar farms and storage-only facilities, tailored to their unique impacts.

A Balanced Future for Renewable Energy Development

The State Government has a unique opportunity to set a **gold standard** for renewable energy development in Australia. This framework must strike a balance between meeting renewable energy targets and preserving the integrity of our regional communities, agricultural livelihoods, and rural values.

Our rural landscapes and close-knit communities should not bear the disproportionate burden of the renewable transition. By enacting these pillars, the State Government can build a renewable future that respects local voices, strengthens infrastructure, and delivers **legacy solutions** for generations to come.

We urge the Premier, Minister for Energy, Minister for Planning, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Local Government to prioritise this framework and these pillars

and enshrine them in legislation and or Planning Policy and engage with local governments, communities, and industry proponents in its co-design and implementation.

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