

September 2023



To Department of Energy and Public Works,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the draft [2023 Queensland Renewable Energy Zone Roadmap](#). [Beyond Zero Emissions](#) (BZE) is an independent think tank creating solutions for a prosperous zero-emissions Australia.

We welcome the Queensland Government's draft QREZ Roadmap and back its emphasis on the need for the Queensland Government to deliver fast, cross government, place-based renewable energy planning to ensure that deployment of renewable energy is on track to achieve targeted emission reductions.

For timely implementation of the QREZ Roadmap it is critical that leading practice local community engagement be at the forefront of place based planning. We welcome the progress made by the Queensland Government in the draft 2023 Queensland Renewable Energy Zone Roadmap and the broad reflection of this need including to:

- apply best practice community consultation and sharing of community benefits
- prioritise authentic engagement with First Nations people and other landowners including farmers,
- be cognisant of social acceptance and the need to roll out renewable energy infrastructure in ways that are nature positive, and
- focus on safe and secure jobs.

A shared understanding of the prevailing land use values, opportunities and constraints is key to ensuring that the Roadmap delivers critical infrastructure in a way that best serves the impacted communities. There is currently uncertainty and information gaps as to the key land values across the areas proposed in the Roadmap and this has the potential to result in avoidable conflict between alternate land uses and local stakeholders.

Beyond Zero Emissions is currently undertaking detailed mapping of biodiversity land use values and renewable energy infrastructure needs in Central Queensland and would welcome the opportunity to share this information with the Department of Energy and Public works once finalised. The intent with this data is to provide a regional perspective on how to best balance renewable energy, biodiversity and other land use values and communicate these conflicting values.

Transparency is at the heart of authentic engagement and we encourage the Government to provide public access to available data sets relating to statewide strategic assessment of land use, environment, cultural heritage and existing industries, together with renewable land use suitability assessments and transmission route planning. This will help to provide impacted local communities with greater certainty that Queensland's renewable energy infrastructure is being developed in the most appropriate locations.

BZE has engaged industry, government and community in Central Queensland in recent years around the concept of a [Renewable Energy Industrial Precinct for Gladstone](#), towards coordinating and clustering energy needs of local industry and planning for the scale of new renewable energy required to power industry and support local manufacturing jobs powered by 100% renewable energy. The Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan addresses the scale of this ambition. BZE recognises that it is critical now that the roll out of renewable energy and associated infrastructure is done well in ways that are nature positive, sensitive to community values and community benefits, promote safe and secure jobs. BZE welcomes the Roadmap framework's efforts towards rolling out renewables well.

We have provided detailed comments and recommendations in the following two pages for your consideration. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of this information further and look forward to further stakeholder engagement opportunities as the Roadmap progresses.

Yours Sincerely,

Heidi Edmonds

Queensland Engagement Lead Beyond Zero Emissions.

heidi.edmonds@bze.org.au

Questions

1. *What should the strategic and detailed REZ Readiness Assessments focus on to maximise local opportunities and manage impacts from REZ development?*

Ensure land use mapping for social acceptance and biodiversity protection is resourced effectively

BZE welcomes the allocation of \$6 million to undertake strategic assessments of the proposed QREZ regions, with focus on potential implications for infrastructure, transport, housing and accommodation, workforce, supply chains, waste management, other land uses, and social infrastructure, as well as local industry and First Nations peoples' considerations.

It is critical that these assessments are transparent and communicated effectively with the community. BZE recommends rapid, well-resourced and transparent mapping of important biodiversity and existing land uses and supporting First Nations groups to map cultural heritage to inform the location of generation and transmission upgrades.

BZE is undertaking a land use mapping project focused on the Central Queensland Renewable Energy Zones and would be pleased to discuss the findings of this work when the project is completed. BZE also commends the Queensland Government for now providing their Biodiversity Assessment and Mapping Methodology (BAMM and AquaBAMM) datasets as web map services on the [Queensland Spatial Portal](#) in addition to having the datasets available on [Queensland Spatial Catalogue](#). Inclusion on the Queensland Spatial Portal will improve access to these datasets for community groups and industry wanting to understand land use impacts on biodiversity associated with renewable energy and other energy infrastructure.

It is also important that skills and training are accessible to locals, and are localised where possible. Jobs involved in renewable energy infrastructure installation and generation, manufacturing and elsewhere in the community must be safe and secure.

2. *How should Regional Energy Reference Groups be established and what role should they play in setting local investment priorities and shaping REZ outcomes?*

BZE supports the idea of Regional Energy Reference Groups to manage the development. A range of relevant models to be cognisant of include Energy Transition Authorities as outlined by The Next Economy and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. Regional bodies need to be able to inform and engage with both state based processes such as the

Queensland Energy and Jobs plan and federal processes such as the Net Zero Authority. Other models to be cognisant of include Natural Resource Management (NRM) groups, which operate more locally than the proposed QREZ aligned three Regional Energy Reference Groups. It is also important that the reference groups are granular enough so that critical differences in community preferences can be captured and understood. As well as government and industry, advisory and reference groups should include and be open to First Nations people, workers, community and civil society representatives. They should be open, transparent and inclusive. Local expertise on local issues such as biodiversity and land use planning should be invited.

3. Should there be a coordinated scheme in place to invest in local priorities to leave a positive legacy for REZ communities and how should this operate?

BZE notes the importance of community benefits flowing from energy and infrastructure to help regional communities thrive. BZE welcomes items noted in the QREZ Roadmap including:

- work noted in the QREZ Roadmap regarding Powerlink and subsidiary QCN on how best to connect Queensland's regions to high-speed internet using the fibre optic cables that run along transmission infrastructure
- state and federal support for a remote and First Nations Clean Energy Strategy being co-designed by First Nations communities and the Queensland and Australian governments
- a microgrid pilot fund that has been established to improve resilience of electricity supply in regional and remote communities.

Communities deserve to benefit from energy and infrastructure projects in their regions. It is important that input is obtained from a range of stakeholders on how this could best be achieved and coordinated.

4. What else do we need to consider for REZ development in Queensland?

Landholder compensation

BZE welcomes Powerlink's recent update to landholder payments for transmission; this includes a neighbour payment to recognise the impact of large infrastructure on neighbouring landholders. The Government should investigate a similar model of neighbour payments for people who will be impacted by renewable energy assets in a REZ.

National Regional Investment Framework

We note that this work aligns closely to the Federal government work on the Regional Investment Framework currently being developed by Ministers Catherine King and Kirsty McBain. The coordination of local, regional, state and federal governments is integral to the successful planning and investment in the regional infrastructure required to bring the roadmap to fruition.