

EnergyCo

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Community feedback report

**Coordinating impacts and benefits in the Central-West
Orana Renewable Energy Zone**

June 2023

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of Australia, and the oldest continuing culture in human history.

We pay respect to Elders past and present and commit to respecting the lands we walk on, and the communities we walk with.

We celebrate the deep and enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country and acknowledge their continuing custodianship of the land, seas and sky.

We acknowledge the ongoing stewardship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the important contribution they make to our communities and economies.

We reflect on the continuing impact of government policies and practices, and recognise our responsibility to work together with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities, towards improved economic, social and cultural outcomes.

Artwork:

Regeneration by Josie Rose



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1 Executive summary

The Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) is the NSW statutory authority appointed to lead the delivery of the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) under the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. EnergyCo's role includes coordinating benefits for local communities and stakeholders in the REZs who are hosting renewable energy generation and transmission projects.

EnergyCo has been engaging with key stakeholders since mid-2022 to inform how impacts will be managed in the REZ while also providing long-term benefits for local communities. This is an ongoing program of work involving extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders with an interest in the REZ, including councils, NSW Government agencies, renewable energy generators, industry organisations and others. Further context can be found in EnergyCo's research summary report published in March 2023 at energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo/project-documents.

To support this ongoing work, EnergyCo sought feedback from the wider community between January and March 2023 to understand local views and sentiment about a number of key issues. Feedback was invited via a community survey which covered housing and accommodation, employment and training, community benefit-sharing initiatives and other priority topics. EnergyCo received 290 survey responses in total and the key findings from the survey are outlined in this report. Thank you to everyone who took time to complete the survey and provide feedback.

EnergyCo is now considering input from communities and stakeholders to inform various strategies and initiatives for the REZ. We expect to update the community in mid-2023 on detailed plans for implementation. We will continue to provide updates on this work and will keep the community informed about further opportunities to provide feedback.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

EnergyCo is in the development phase for the state's first renewable energy zone (REZ) in the Central-West Orana region. The REZ will deliver substantial private sector investment from renewable energy generation projects, initially unlocking at least three gigawatts of new transmission network capacity within the next decade.

The NSW Government is committed to ensuring long-term benefits for communities that will be hosting renewable energy infrastructure in the REZs. In addition to providing reliable, clean energy for NSW electricity consumers, the Central-West Orana REZ will deliver:

- community benefit-sharing funding initiatives, including dedicated funding for community and employment purposes to be provided through generator access fees
- new local jobs and business opportunities during construction and operation
- additional payments to landowners for hosting transmission infrastructure under the NSW Government's Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme
- enabling infrastructure and services such as local road upgrades and telecommunication improvements.

As Infrastructure Planner for the REZ, EnergyCo is taking a leading role in coordinating community benefit funding opportunities and developing strategies and initiatives to manage impacts to REZ communities.

2.2 EnergyCo's investigations to date

EnergyCo began an extensive program of research in mid-2022 to understand key issues for local councils and communities in the Central-West Orana REZ. This includes detailed investigations into several priority areas, including road upgrades, housing and accommodation, training and skills, waste and circular economy, telecommunication and social infrastructure. The purpose of this work was to collect baseline data on existing conditions in the REZ, and to identify potential challenges and opportunities for the construction and operation of the REZ.

EnergyCo's investigations have been informed by engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, such as local councils, NSW Government agencies, industry organisations, developers of renewable energy projects and local communities. Between June 2022 and March 2023, EnergyCo carried out:

- 57 meetings with local councils that are directly impacted by the REZ transmission project and major generation projects (Dubbo Regional Council, Mid-Western Regional Council, Warrumbungle Shire Council and Upper Hunter Shire Council)
- 13 meetings with local elected representatives
- 85 meetings with developers of generation projects with planned connections to the REZ transmission network (Candidate Foundation Generators)
- 20 meetings with NSW Government agencies with an interest in the REZ, including the Department of Planning and Environment and the Department of Regional NSW
- three interactive sessions with three consortia tendering for the Network Operator contract to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the REZ transmission network.

Key issues and priorities resulting from EnergyCo's engagement with local councils included:

- cumulative impacts to local communities and councils, particularly during the construction delivery phase
- impact to local housing and accommodation availability
- impact to tourism due to demand for short-term accommodation
- upgrades and maintenance to local roads
- impact to other council assets and services, such as waste facilities
- resourcing to support councils during the development and delivery of the REZ
- local development and planning considerations
- increased demand for social infrastructure and services
- opportunities to provide legacy benefits to communities, such as new social housing.

Table 1 outlines the stakeholder engagement and research carried out by EnergyCo prior to inviting wider community feedback in January 2023.

Table 1: Engagement and research carried out to date

Activity	Purpose	Timing
Initial consultation with key stakeholders including councils, government agencies and elected representatives	Understand issues and priorities in affected Local Government Areas (LGAs)	Mid-2022 to early 2023
Consultants engaged by EnergyCo to carry out studies into priority areas identified through key stakeholder consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • road upgrades • housing and accommodation • industry, training and skills • waste and circular economy • telecommunication • social infrastructure. 	Establish baseline data and test potential opportunities	Late 2022 to early 2023
Further consultation with key stakeholders	Collect data to inform the studies and test potential opportunities	Late 2022 to early 2023
Presentations to the Central-West Orana REZ Community Reference Group	Discuss the potential initiatives under investigation and seek initial feedback via the project's quarterly meetings	December 2022 and January 2023
Consultation with REZ communities	Seek feedback via an online survey on the types of initiatives people would like to see in their communities	January to March 2023

2.3 Research summary report

To support the community consultation period, EnergyCo released a research summary report in March 2023 which outlined the investigations carried out to date and the initial findings and opportunities. The report is available to view on EnergyCo's website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo/project-documents.

2.4 Purpose of this report

This report provides an overview of the community consultation carried out by EnergyCo between January and March 2023 to inform the ongoing investigations into how community impacts and benefits will be coordinated in the REZ. It describes the data obtained from the online survey responses, key findings and next steps.

3 Community engagement approach

3.1 Objectives

EnergyCo's objectives for the community consultation period were to:

- update the community on EnergyCo's ongoing investigations into how impacts and benefits will be coordinated in the REZ
 - seek community feedback on a range of key topics via an online survey
 - provide opportunities for people to hear from the EnergyCo team, ask questions and provide feedback via a series of community information sessions.
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3.2 How we engaged

Community feedback was invited between Monday 23 January and Friday 31 March 2023. Table 1 outlines the key activities carried out to inform communities and stakeholders about the consultation period and seek feedback.

Table 2: Communication and engagement activities

Activity	Description
Media release	A media release was distributed on Monday 23 January to journalists from local and regional media outlets to announce the consultation period, publicise the community information sessions and encourage people to complete the online survey.
Website	Information was published on the project web page on Monday 23 January, including a link to the online survey.
Advertisements	Print advertisements were published between Monday 23 January and Wednesday 1 February in the Dubbo Daily Liberal, Dunedoo District Diary, Wellington Leader, Coonabarabran Times, Mudgee Guardian, Gulgong Advertiser and Coolah District Diary.
Project update newsletter	A project update was distributed to about 5,500 letterboxes in the project area via Australia Post in the week beginning Monday 23 January. Copies were also made available at various locations throughout the REZ, including local post offices.
Email distribution	An email newsletter was sent to about 480 subscribed community members and stakeholders on Monday 23 January. Reminder emails were sent on Thursday 9 February, Friday 17 February, Thursday 2 March and Tuesday 28 March 2023.
Information sessions	Three information sessions were held in Wellington, Coolah and Gulgong in February 2023 to provide the community with an update on our recent investigations. The sessions included a presentation from EnergyCo followed by a question-and-answer discussion. The sessions were attended by about 92 people in total.

Activity	Description
Survey	An online survey was published on EnergyCo's website throughout the consultation period. Hard copies of the survey were made available to community members on request.
Stakeholder meetings	Targeted briefings were held with specific stakeholders including the NSW Farmers association, councils, the Central-West Orana REZ Community Reference Group and Renewable Energy Alliance (RE-Alliance).

3.3 Community information sessions

EnergyCo held three community information sessions in February 2023 which were attended by 92 people in total. Attendees were primarily comprised of local community members and landowners within the project area for the REZ transmission network and major generation projects. The sessions consisted of a presentation by EnergyCo followed by a question-and-answer discussion.

Table 3: Information session attendance

Location	Date	Attendees
Wellington Soldiers Memorial Club 75 Arthur Street, Wellington	Tuesday 14 February, 3pm to 4.30pm	18
Coolah Youth and Community Centre 10-12 Binnia Street, Coolah	Wednesday 15 February, 4pm to 5.30pm	53
Gulgong Memorial Hall 112 Herbert Street, Gulgong	Thursday 16 February, 5pm to 6.30pm	21
Total:		92

4 Community survey

4.1 Overview

The survey received 290 valid responses between 23 January and 31 March 2023. The survey was facilitated by the Department of Planning and Environment’s Social Research department on behalf of EnergyCo. Survey responses were collected via the Qualtrics online survey platform. Any invalid or duplicate responses were removed from the final survey count and were not included in the data analysis.

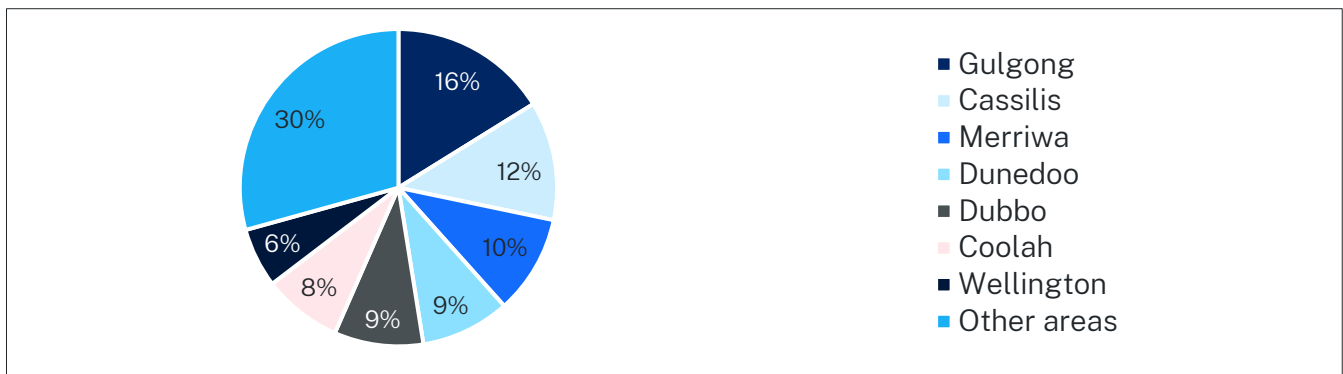
This section outlines the key findings from the survey responses. To view the survey data in table format, please read Appendix A: Survey data.

4.2 Participants

4.2.1 Where they live

About two thirds of the survey participants reported living in either Gulgong, Cassilis, Merriwa, Dunedoo, Dubbo, Coolah or Wellington, which are key communities in the REZ. About 30 percent of participants reporting in other areas, which included localities in the REZ such as Ulan, Turill, Merotherie, Uarbry and others.

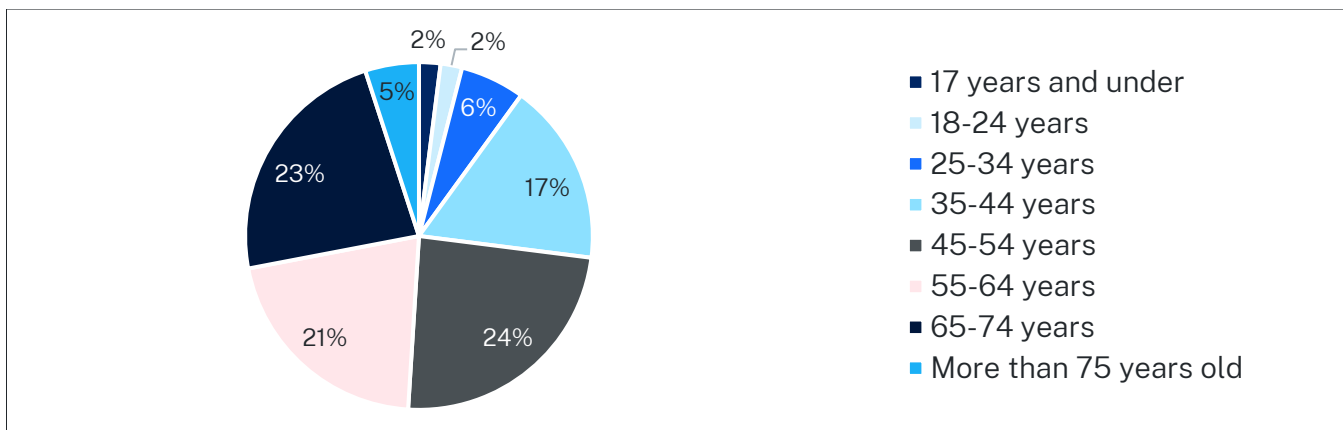
Figure 1: Response to question “Which suburb/town do you live in?”



4.2.2 Age groups

Most participants reported being between 35 and 74 years old. Nearly a quarter of participants were between the ages of 45 and 54.

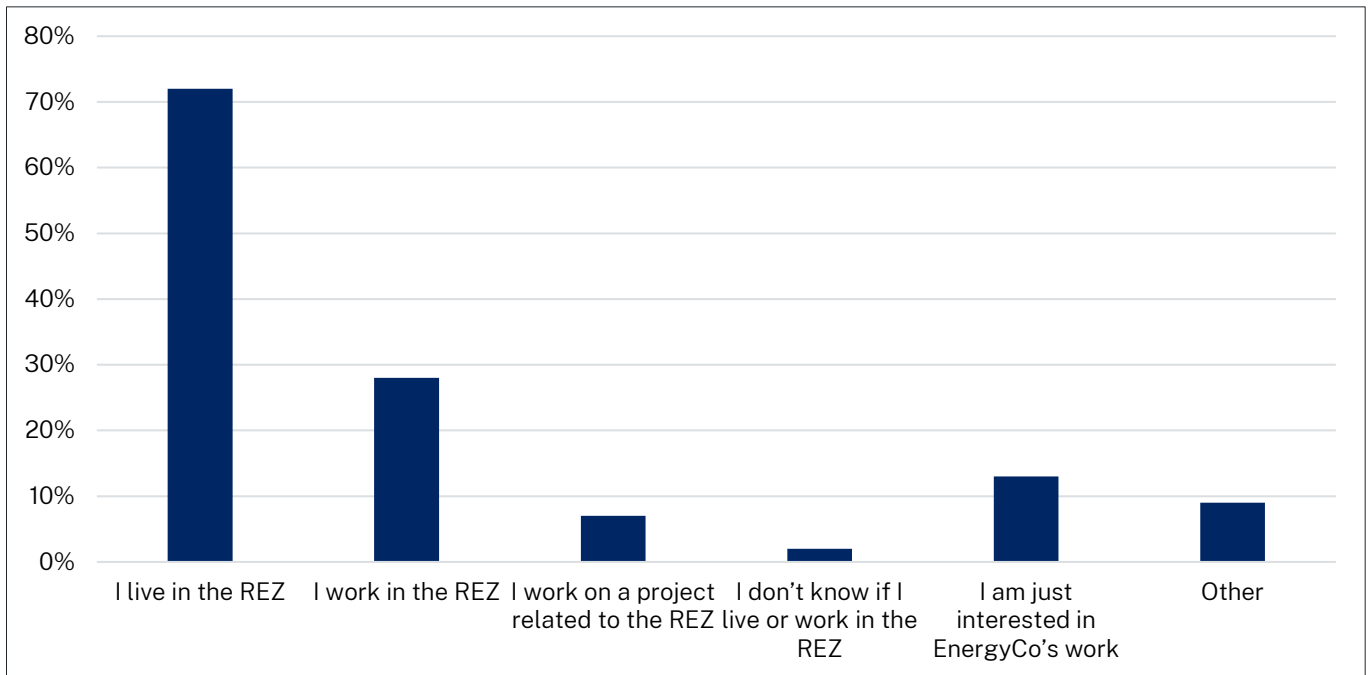
Figure 2: Response to question "What is your age?"



4.2.3 Relationship to the REZ

Nearly three quarters of participants said they live in the REZ, while almost a third said they work in the REZ. Seven percent of participants said they work on a project related to the REZ and 13 percent said they are just interested in EnergyCo’s work. Of the nine percent of participants who selected “other”, about half of these said they live near the REZ.

Figure 3: Response to question "Which of the following best describes you?"

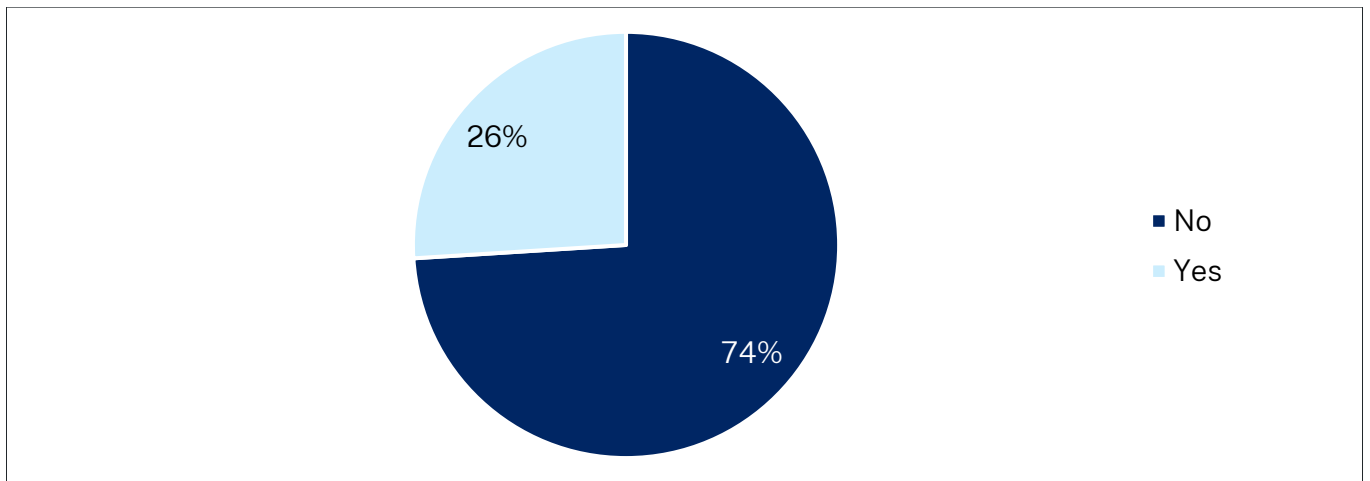


4.2.4 Information session attendance

About a quarter of participants said they had attended one of EnergyCo’s information sessions prior to completing the survey. Of those who attended the sessions:

- 40 percent said they attended the session at Gulgong
- 39 percent said they attended the session at Coolah
- 23 percent said they attended the session at Wellington.

Figure 4: Response to question "Have you attended any of EnergyCo's information sessions in February 2023 prior to completing this survey?"



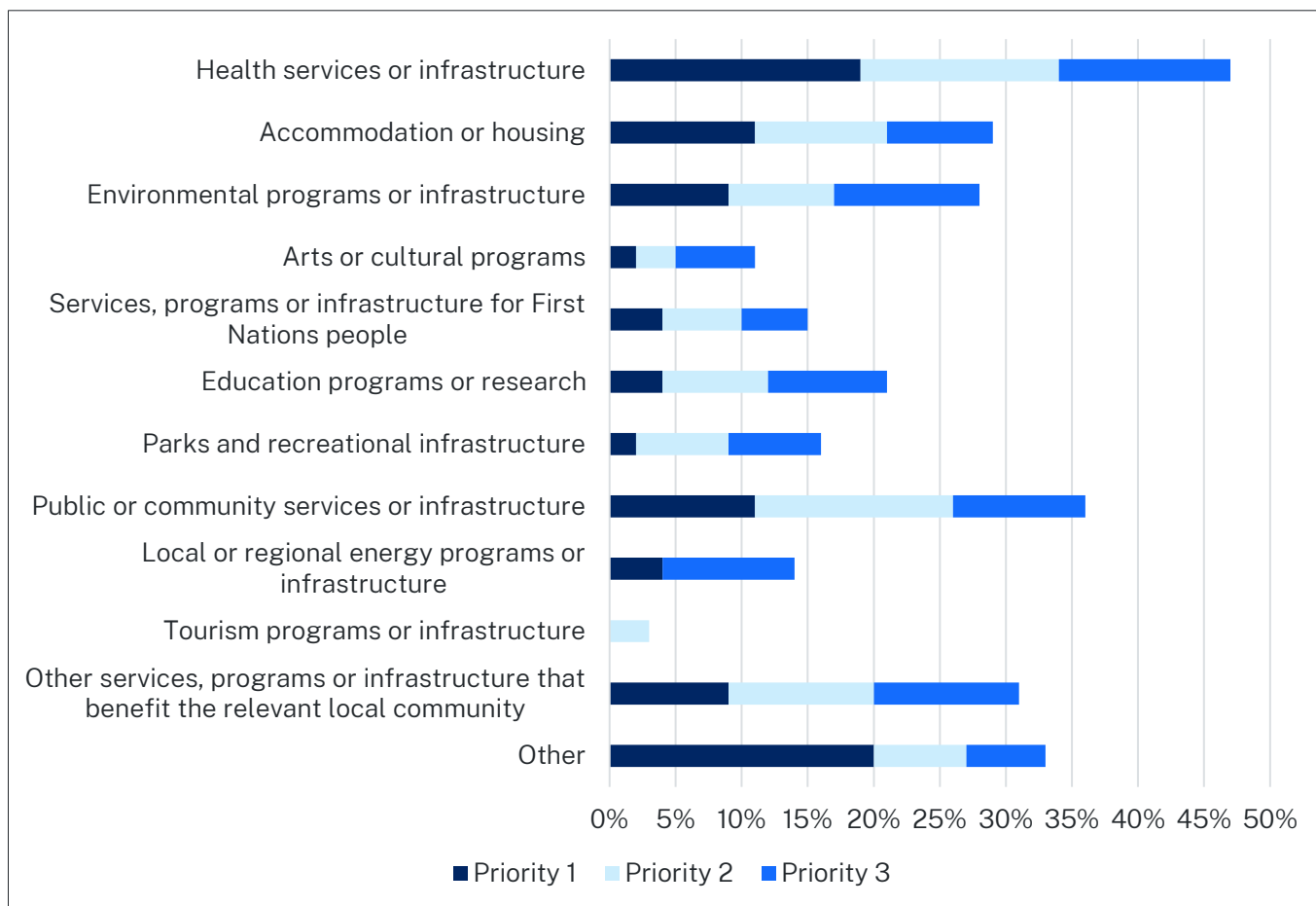
4.3 Funding for community benefits

4.3.1 Priority areas

Renewable energy generators (i.e. solar and wind farms) are required to pay access fees to connect to the REZ transmission network. Part of this fee will be available for a community benefit purpose. Survey participants were asked which benefits they would like to see these access fees used for.

Health services or infrastructure was the highest priority for community benefit funding, with nearly half of participants including it in their top three priorities.

Figure 5: Top three priorities of survey participants when asked “What benefits would you like to see these access fees used for?”



Other suggestions identified by participants included:

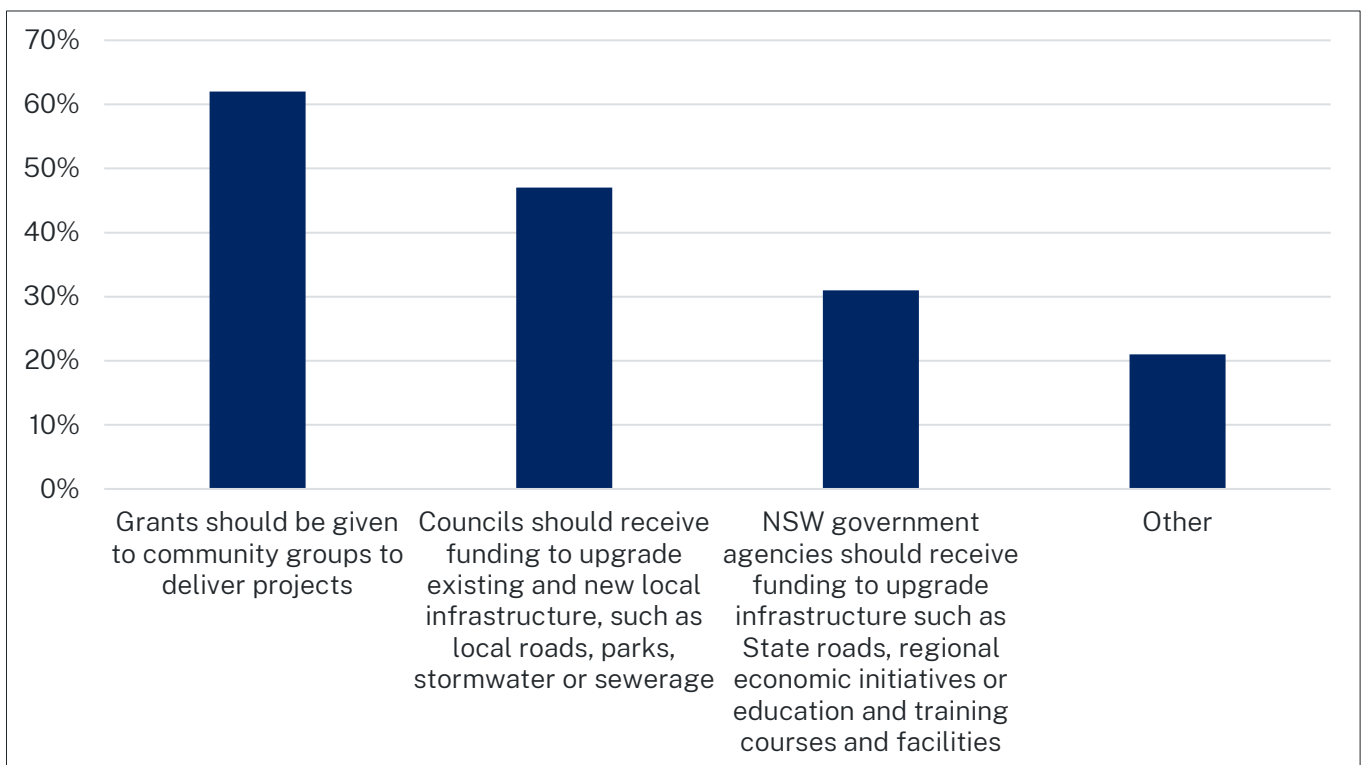
- resourcing initiatives:
 - a support planner to help rural landowners liaise with renewable energy providers
 - funding for resources with local knowledge and networks
- education:
 - driver education for local youth
 - youth programs and activities
 - sustainability initiatives in school curriculums
 - childcare
- progressive / regenerative farming:

- programs to help young/progressive farmers afford to acquire farming land in the area
- funding for regenerative farming initiatives
- agricultural development and technology projects
- aged care:
 - redevelopment of the former Three Rivers regional retirement community site
 - conversion of temporary workforce accommodation into aged care independent living units
- improvements to local community facilities such as Uarbry community hall
- transport and active transport:
 - shared pathway infrastructure
 - railway connection to Mudgee onwards
- social justice:
 - refugee and domestic violence programs for women
 - programs to prevent juvenile delinquency
- miscellaneous:
 - weed and pest control
 - renewable energy information centre / tourism centre.

4.3.2 Funding mechanisms

When asked how funding for community purposes should be made available, nearly two thirds of participants said that grants should be given to community groups to deliver projects. Just under half said councils should be given funding for local projects and about a third said funding should be given to NSW Government agencies to upgrade infrastructure.

Figure 6: Response to question "How do you think funding for community purposes should be made available? (Select all that apply)"



About 20 percent of participants provided alternative suggestions, including:

- providing funding directly to landowners and businesses as compensation
- via an independently-chaired community consultative committee
- a combination of grants, councils and NSW Government agencies / a coordinated approach
- energy bill reduction
- funding for project management resources.

4.3.3 Key comments

- *"Legacy projects should be identified by communities in a coordinated process. The community should collectively decide the order of priority of projects. This will lead to more strategic expenditure than a typical grants process. It ultimately means the final decision on expenditure is made by the community, not EnergyCo in response to individual community groups."*
 - *"Any funding should be through a CCC [Community Consultative Committee] with an Independent Chair."*
 - *"Money should not get caught up in bureaucracy. It should be targeted to what communities want, and used to create an enabling future for liveability in communities."*
 - *"With good governance processes, community grants have proven to be the most successful avenue of funding for successfully delivering any community project."*
 - *"Certified and established Aboriginal owned businesses should be targeted for business opportunities as part of above local infrastructure and environmental projects."*
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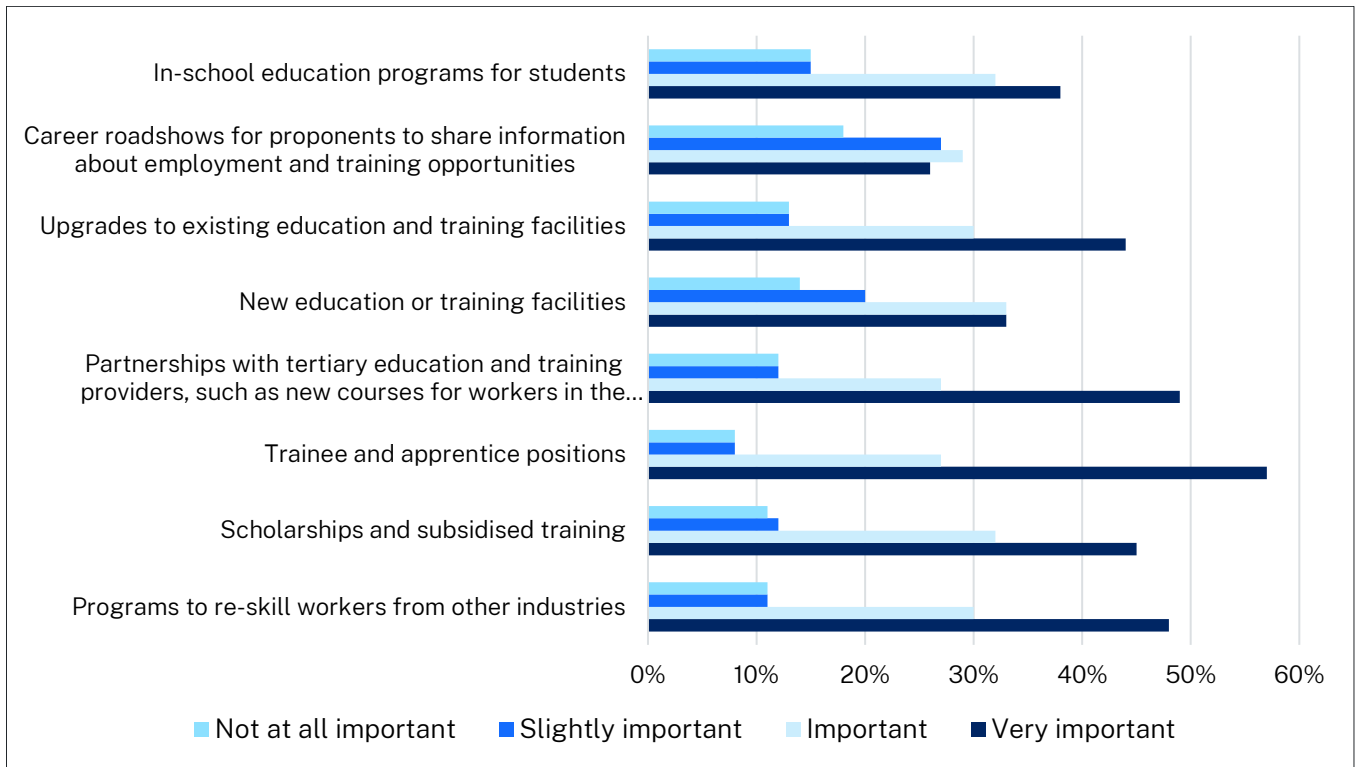
4.4 Training and employment

4.4.1 Potential initiatives

EnergyCo is investigating opportunities to boost local employment and increase workforce skills in the renewable energy sector. Survey participants were asked to rank the importance of various potential initiatives for their communities.

The proposed initiatives were generally viewed as important by participants. Trainee and apprentice positions were viewed as the most important initiative, with nearly 60 percent of participants ranking it as very important.

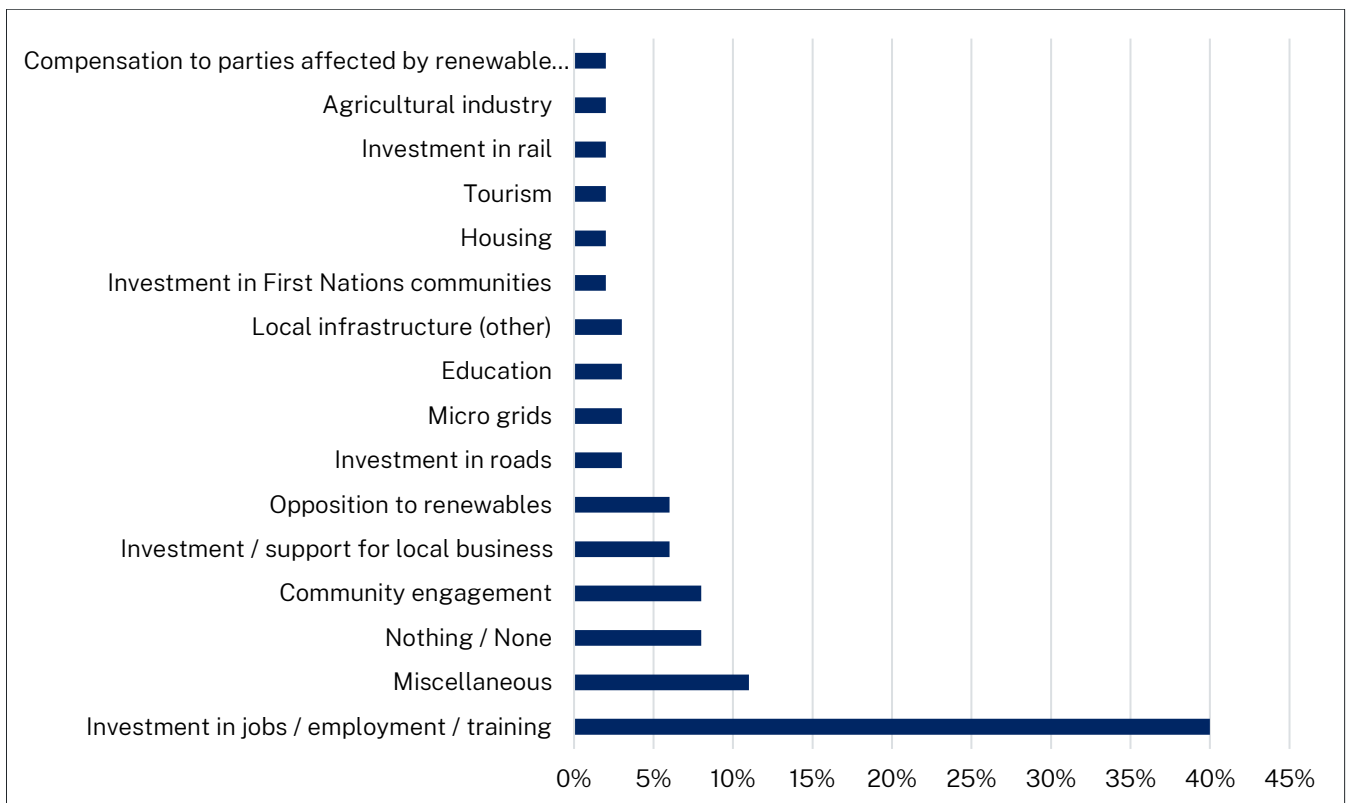
Figure 7: Response to question "Please indicate how important you think the following initiatives would be for your local community?"



4.4.2 Other suggestions

Participants were asked to describe any other initiatives that would be important for their community, with a range of suggestions provided.

Figure 8: Response to question "Please describe any other initiatives that you think will be important for your local community that are not listed above (optional)."



4.4.3 Key comments

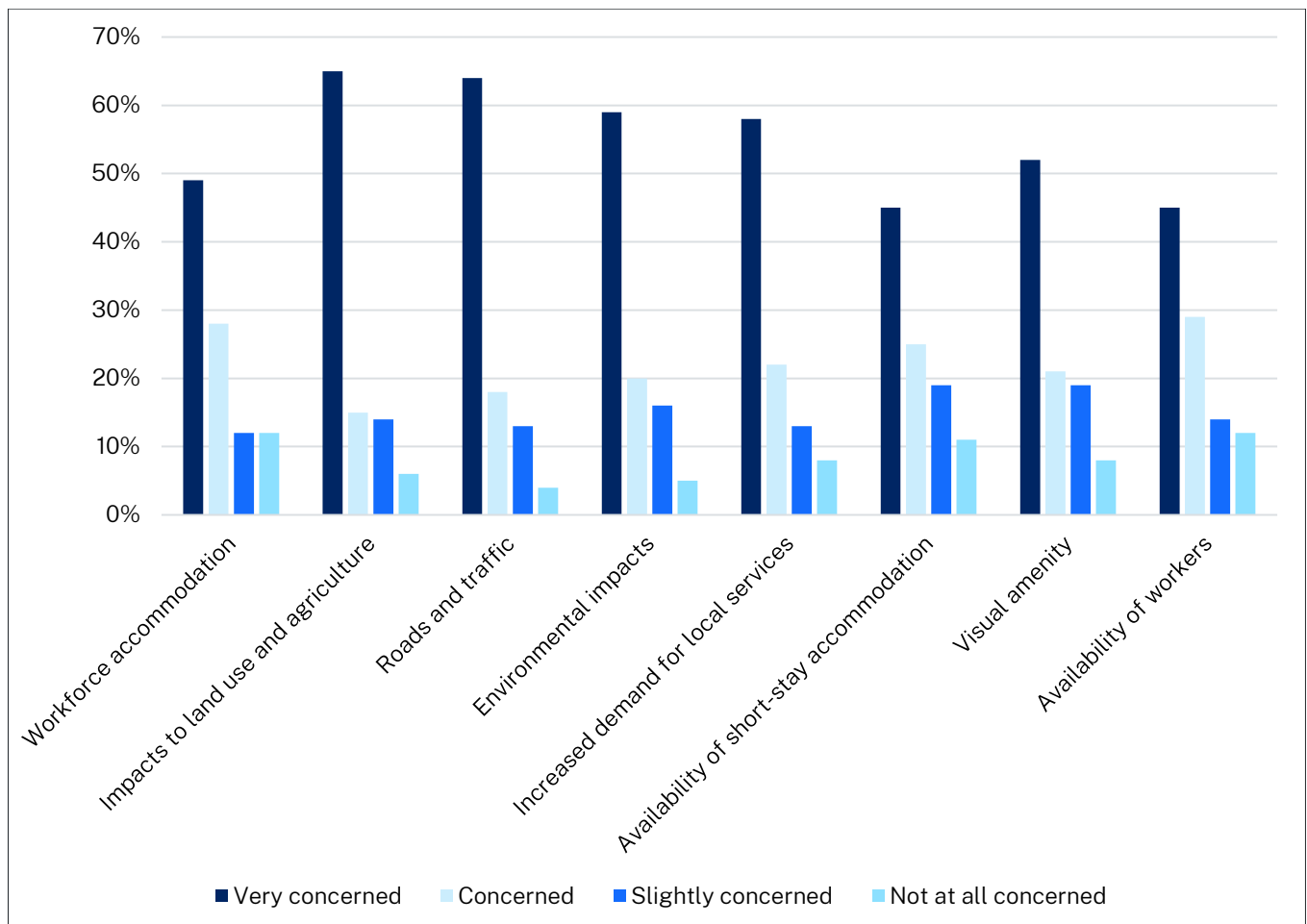
- “Training should not only be aimed at renewables. This project will impact the community in all areas of trade...while the project is being built and long after.”
- “Workers for renewables [should be] required to live in the community (not fly in / fly out).”
- “Skills training [should be provided] for locals who will not work on the REZ but provide services that will be in shortage because of the REZ (e.g. electricians).”
- “Retraining [should be] prioritised for those employed in the mining (coal) sector so that they can transition across into the renewable energy industry. Training must be made available on weekends so that currently employed persons can continue to work while they are upskilling.”
- “Train locally...those in small communities should not be made to commute to larger cities (Orange/Bathurst/Dubbo) as so often occurs for apprenticeships through TAFE. Make retraining available online to reduce travel required.”

4.5 Cumulative impacts to communities

4.5.1 Key areas of concern

Survey participants were asked to rank the impacts they are most concerned about in their communities. They were generally concerned about all the impacts identified, with the strongest areas of concern being impact to land use and agriculture (65 percent very concerned) and roads and traffic (64 percent very concerned).

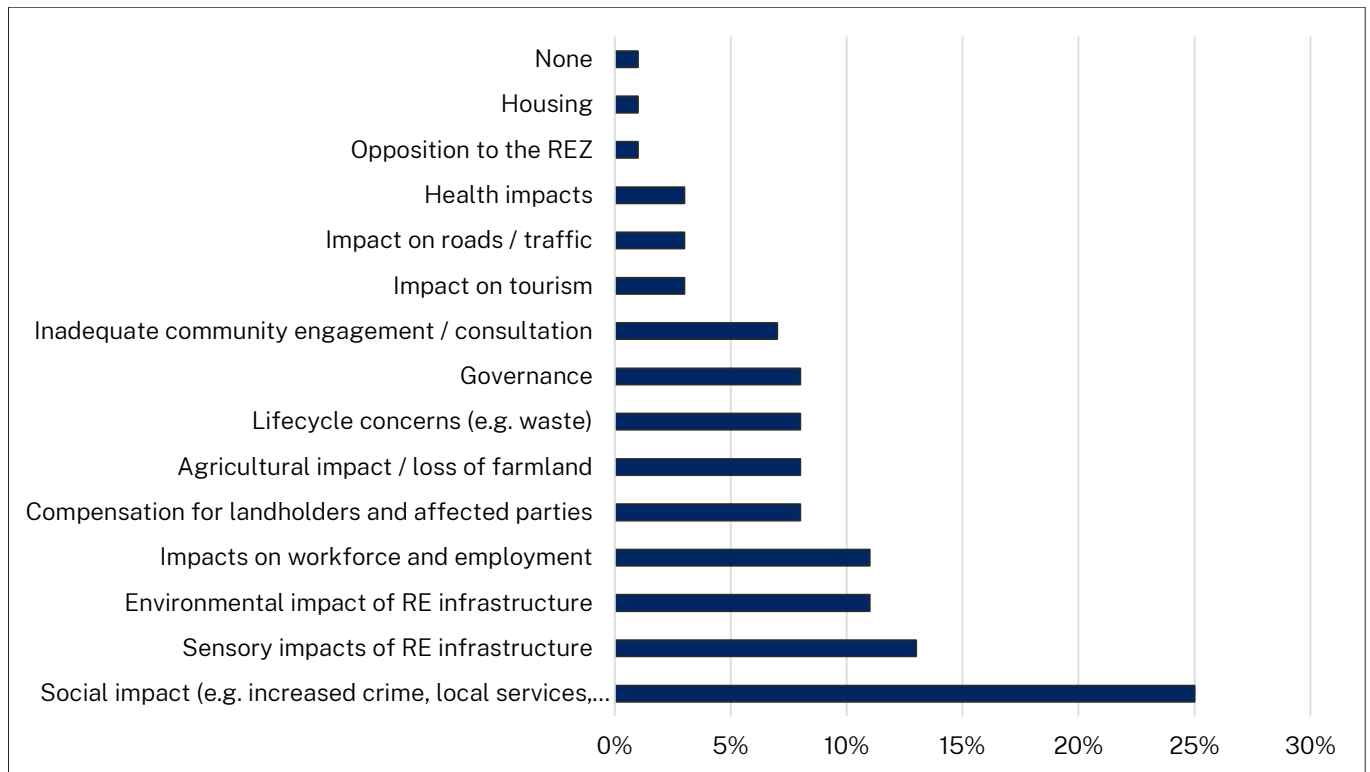
Figure 9: Response to question "Which impacts are you most concerned about?"



4.5.2 Other impacts

Participants were asked to describe any other areas of concern for their communities, with various impacts identified.

Figure 10: Response to question "Please describe any other impacts that you are concerned about that are not listed (optional)."



4.5.3 Key comments

- *“Once tourists can’t find accommodation they tend never to return to the area.”*
- *“It would be sad to see existing businesses have staff head-hunted.”*
- *“Inability for towns of Dunedoo and Coolah to grow and benefit from the renewable energy projects because of LPA minimum 600Ha to the town boundaries. Need LEP changed to have development zones around the towns so the towns can expand.”*
- *“Farmers are not able to secure sufficient public liability insurance to cover potential losses at a solar farm.”*
- *“The vegetation selected should form part of the application process with focus on extending and rebuilding local habitat that considers Aboriginal perspectives and fire reduction/water collection and habitat for local fauna.”*
- *“Accommodation being used by workforce coming into town. This would make housing unaffordable to the locals who would then leave town. When the project is built, the incoming workforce leaves but the original locals have moved away and started life elsewhere.”*

4.6 Workforce accommodation

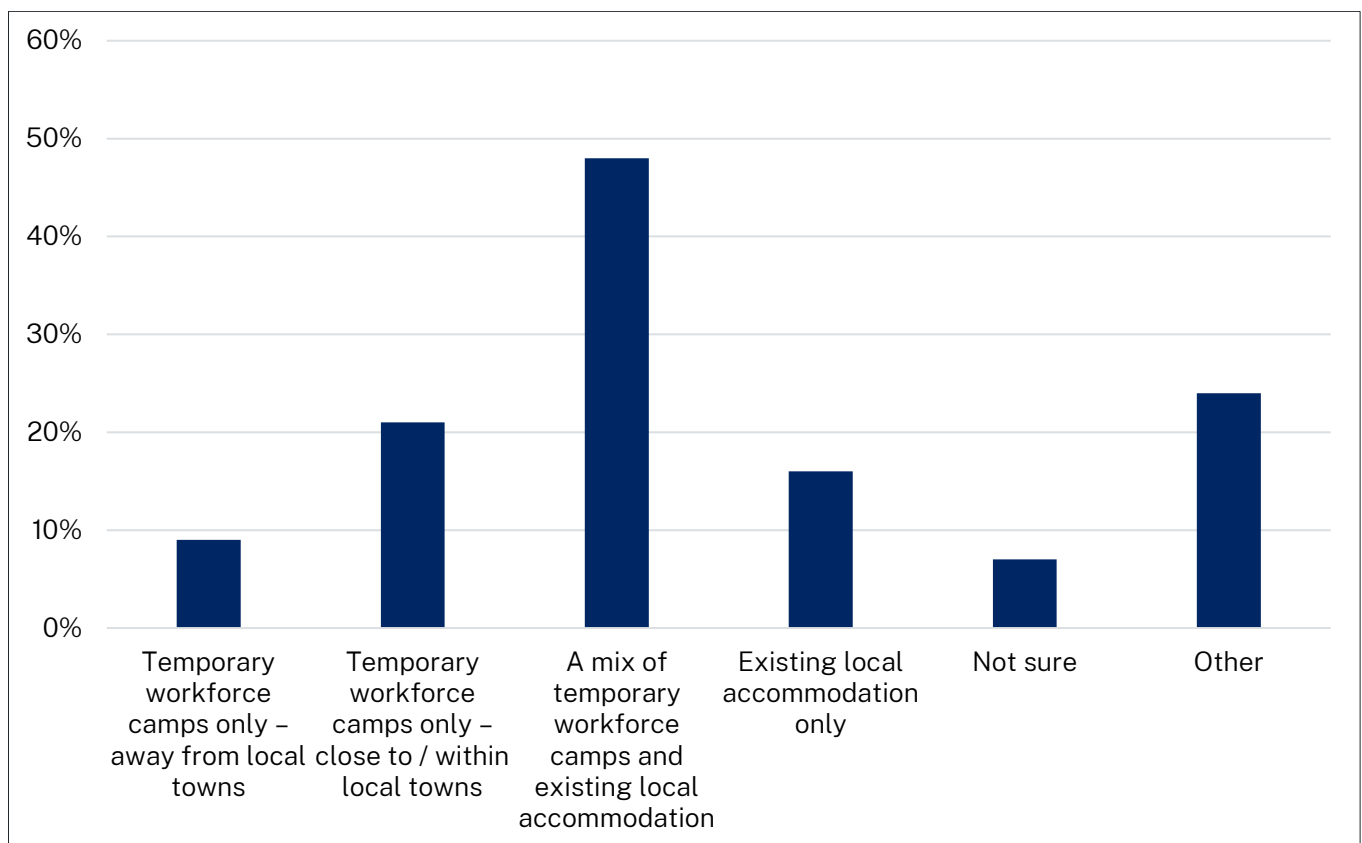
4.6.1 How workers should be accommodated

Construction of the REZ will require temporary workers from outside the Central-West Orana region. Survey participants were asked how they think workers should be accommodated during the construction delivery phase, with nearly half of participants indicating that a mix of temporary camps and existing local accommodation should be used.

About 20 percent of participants provided alternative suggestions, including:

- new / low-cost permanent housing
- camps which can be repurposed after construction
- accommodation close to town centres
- repurposing existing accommodation
- landowners hosting worker accommodation
- supplementing local accommodation with temporary overflow camps.

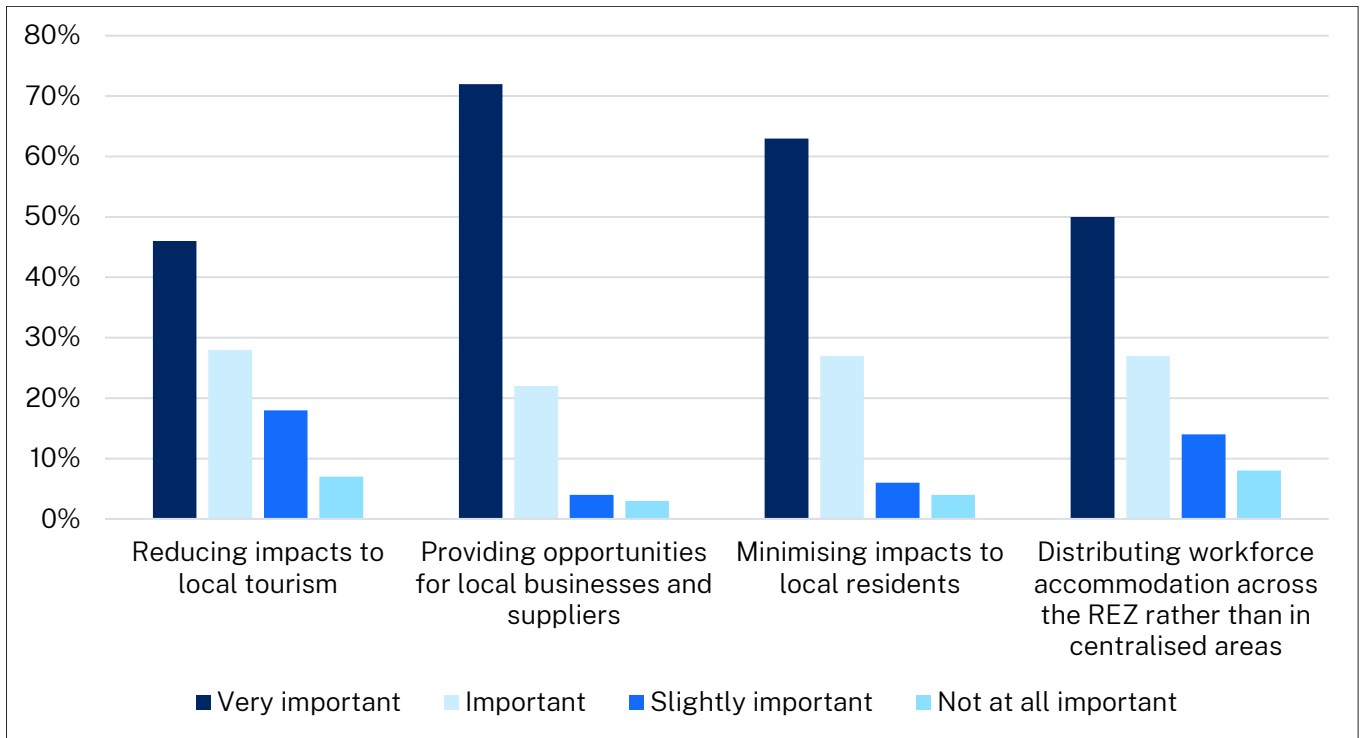
Figure 11: Response to question "How do you think workers should be accommodated during construction?"



4.6.2 Considerations for proponents

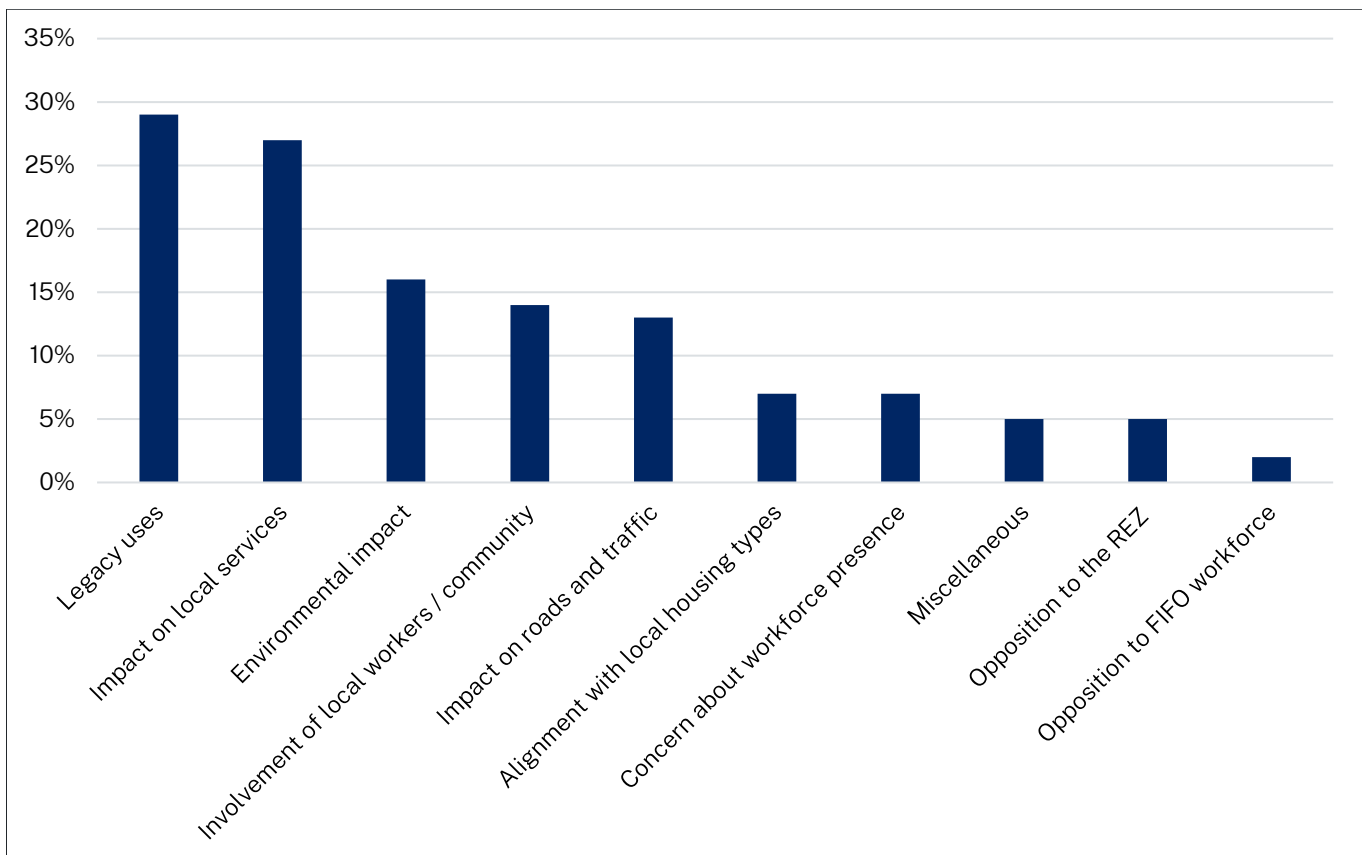
Survey participants were asked to rank the importance of certain factors for proponents when planning workforce accommodation. All considerations were seen as generally important, with local business and supplier opportunities seen as the most important factor for proponents to consider.

Figure 12: Response to question "How important are the following factors for proponents to consider when planning workforce accommodation?"



When asked if there are any other factors for proponents to consider, legacy uses and impact to local services were both identified in nearly a third of responses.

Figure 13: Response to question "Please describe any other factors for proponents to consider when planning workforce accommodation that are not listed above (optional)."



4.6.3 Key comments

Supporting services:

- *“The camps [should] include accommodation for all personnel but importantly, facilities to support. Established by the councils to receive lease income. Camps can become future housing.”*
- *“Medical and other basic amenities such as post offices will need support to accommodate extra people. There should also be incentives of budget given to employees to spend money locally instead of going elsewhere.”*

Transporting workforces from major town centres:

- *“Bus the workers from Newcastle. This area cannot handle the extra population.”*
- *“Workers should contribute to the local community, not FIFO.”*

Consultation:

- *“Consult with each town and village as they are not homogenous, and each may have a different long-term view.”*
- *“Community should be invited to workshop its own ideas to meet the actionable requirements of the REZ.”*

Participation in local communities:

- *“New, affordable accommodation within local towns that encourages workers to spend money in the town.”*
- *“Any temporary accommodation to be located within towns so the workers participate in the local community.”*

Site and accommodation considerations:

- *“Only use temporary workforce camps when all local accommodation is fully booked.”*
- *“Build accommodation that can be converted to independent aged or disability care.”*
- *“Any new accommodation builds need to fit the visual aesthetic and characters of the town, otherwise this will affect tourism and the iconic beauty of the town.”*
- *“If using overseas workers, bring families, not just the male workers to have a community on site during construction.”*

Site options:

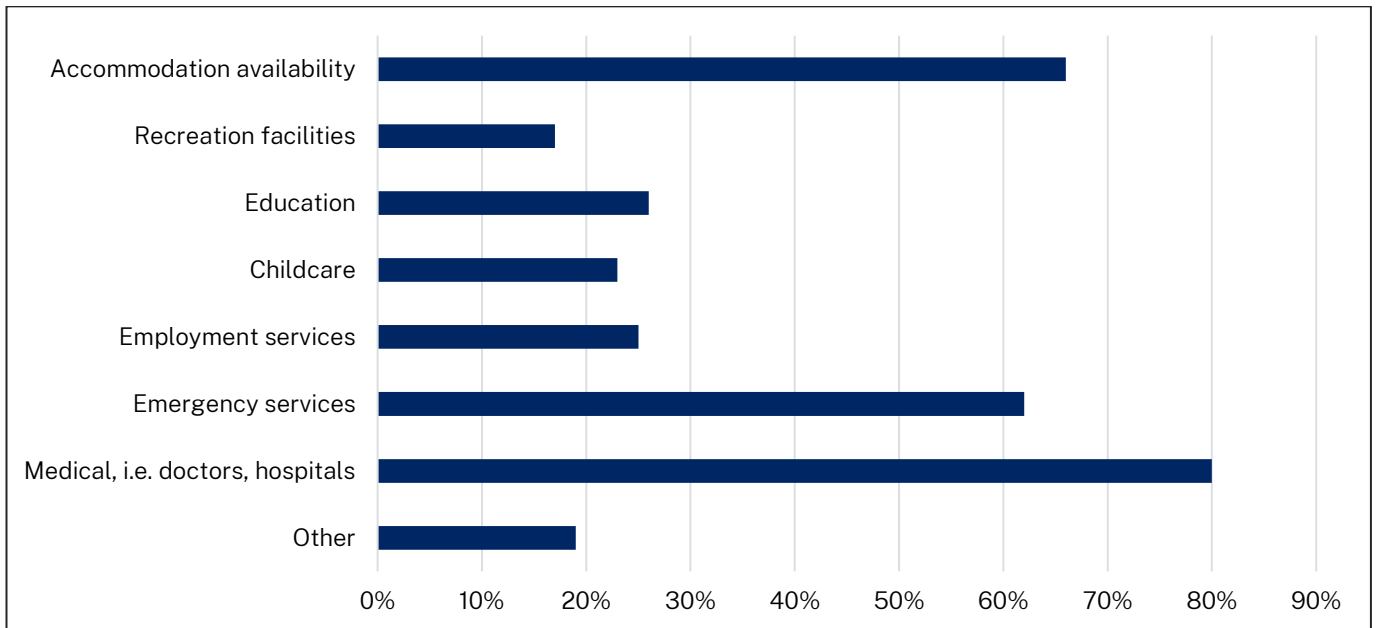
- *“Some local landholders with suitable services may be open to temporarily hosting transportable accommodation.”*
- *“Coolah Hostel should be returned to the Coolah community, not sold to provide accommodation unless it becomes a legacy item at the end of construction.”*
- *“The former site of the Dunedoo Hospital could be utilised and handed back to the community after completion of the projects.”*

4.7 Impact to local services

In certain areas, there will be increased demand for local services during construction of the REZ. When asked which local services they are most concerned about in their community, 80 percent of participants identified medical services as a concern. Accommodation availability and emergency services were the next two biggest areas of concern, with both topics identified by more than 60 percent of participants.

About 20 percent selected “other”, with alternative answers including local businesses, telecommunication, roads, rising costs of essential goods (i.e. groceries), public transport and waste.

Figure 14: Response to question “Which local services are you most concerned about in your community? (Select all that apply).”



4.7.1 Key comments

- *“Permanent availability of more than one doctor and facilities for them to practice in local towns.”*
- *“Food resources at our local grocery stores, which therefore leads to price increases locals can’t afford.”*
- *“Concerned local businesses will shut up shop due to not being able to keep workforce and we will be left with fewer services, e.g. mechanics, heavy vehicle operators, electricians, steel fabricators.”*
- *“Policing – only one policeman in Dunedoo and Coolah.”*
- *“Local parking in main streets. Additional parking to be made available.”*

4.8 Telecommunication black spots

EnergyCo is investigating opportunities to improve telecommunication black spots as we build the REZ transmission network. Survey participants were asked where telecommunication improvements are most needed. The delivery of improved service in known blackspots, as well as improving mobile coverage more generally in the REZ, were seen as the priority areas, along with major roads in the area:

- 23 percent of participants said existing blackspots in general need to be addressed
- 16 percent said improvements were needed throughout the REZ
- 10 percent suggested the Golden Highway
- nine percent said major roads and highways generally required blackspot improvements.

Participants specifically mentioned a number of townships that would benefit from blackspot improvements, including Dunedoo, Cassilis, Coolah, Wellington, Gulgong, Goolma, Dubbo, Leadville, Merotherie, Barneys Reef, Yarrabin, Neilrex, Kerrs Creek and Curra Creek.

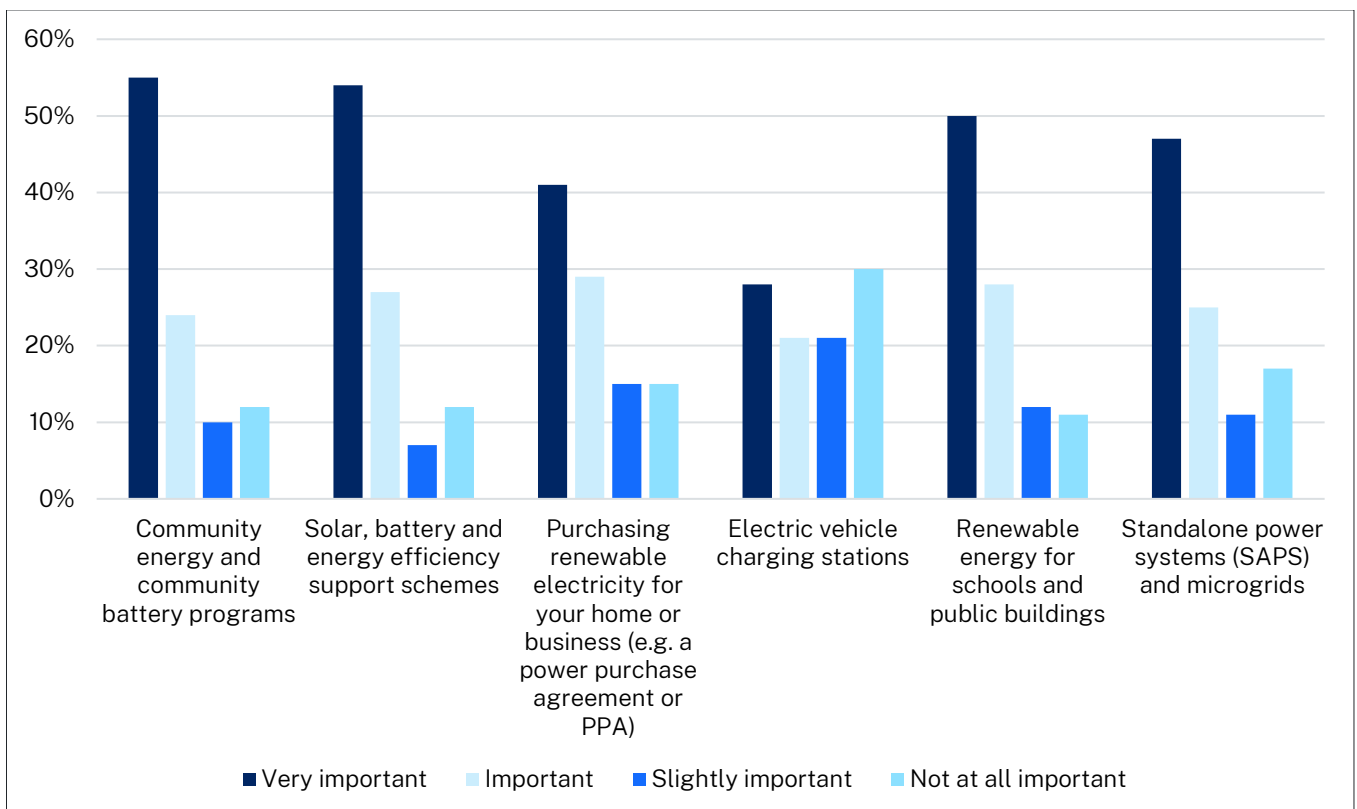
4.9 Community energy initiatives

4.9.1 Access to affordable energy for REZ communities

EnergyCo is investigating opportunities to provide access to affordable energy for communities in the REZ who are hosting renewable energy infrastructure. Participants were asked how important a number of initiatives would be for their communities.

Participants generally viewed the initiatives as important or very important. More than half of participants viewed community energy and community battery programs as very important, in addition to solar, battery and energy efficiency support schemes.

Figure 15: Response to question "How important would the following initiatives be for your community?"



4.9.2 Other suggestions

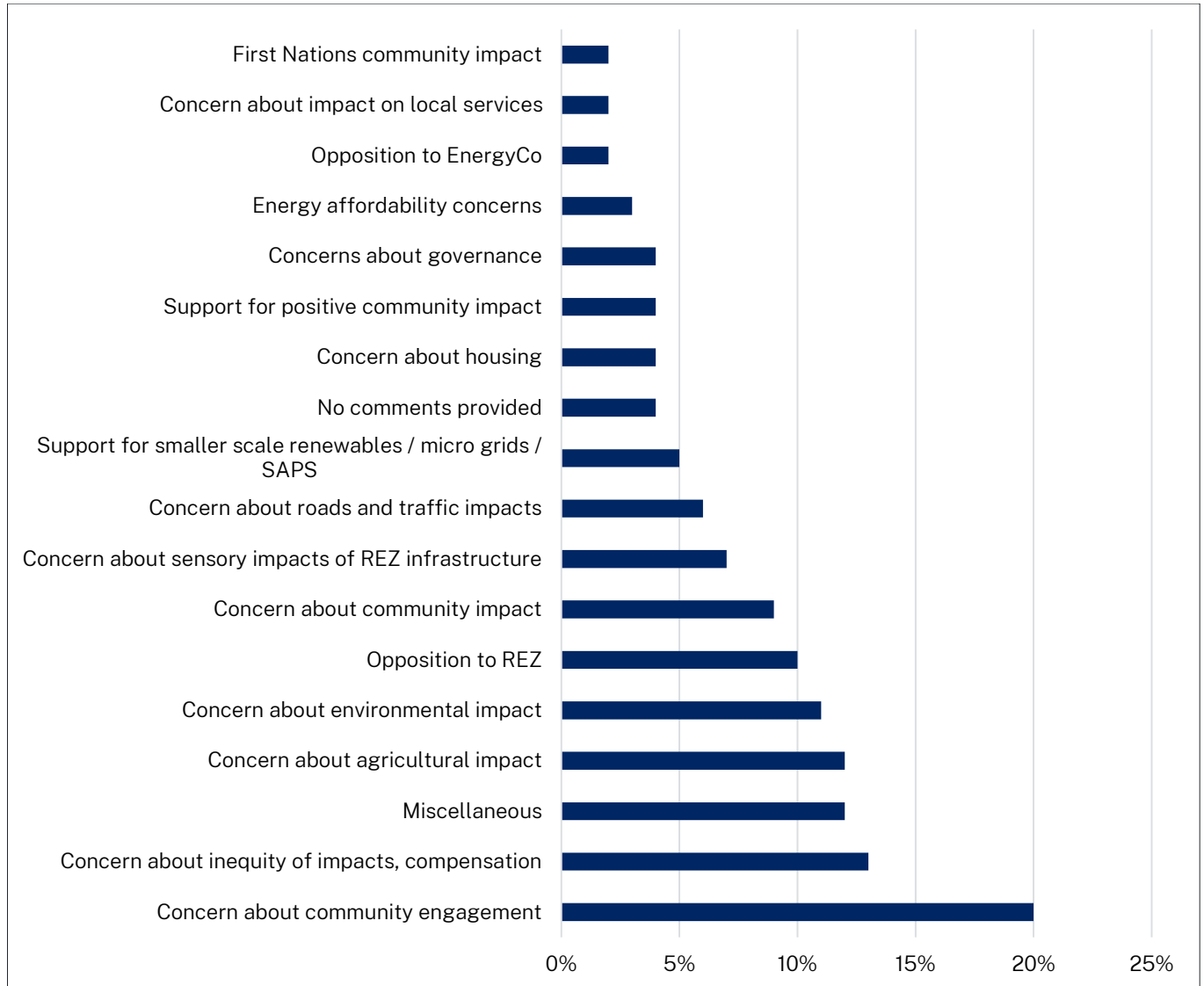
When asked to describe any other energy initiatives that may be important, suggestions included:

- general support for energy affordability initiatives (21 percent of participants)
- micro grids / standalone power systems (14 percent of participants)
- electrical vehicle infrastructure (three percent of participants).

4.10 Other feedback

When asked if they had any other comments to provide, survey participants provided suggestions and feedback on a number of topics.

Figure 16: Response to question "Do you have any other comments to provide?"



4.10.1 Key comments

Community benefits:

- *“Any benefits need to go to the specific villages where the energy projects are located, not to the major centres which are not impacted.”*
- *“Any monies should be paid directly to those residents most impacted by the developments.”*
- *“Affordable/subsidised energy for the communities housing the infrastructure should be mandated.”*
- *“Please ensure town communities/localities directly impacted by REZ are full beneficiaries of community benefit funding, rather than being funnelled by councils towards un-impacted regions and populations.”*
- *“I would like to see transparency with what and how our local councils are benefitting.”*

- *“The community hosting the construction and maintenance of the energy initiatives needs to see tangible long-term benefits for the community.”*

Road upgrades:

- *“Golden Highway upgrade for passing lanes between Merriwa and Cassilis is our highest priority as this section is narrow, hilly and accidents occur regularly.”*
- *“The Golden Highway has very few overtaking lanes and will be a nightmare to drive on while construction is underway. It requires a rapid upgrade to reduce the risk of serious accidents caused by vehicles attempting to overtake vehicles carrying wide loads.”*

Community consultation:

- *“EnergyCo needs to actively engage local communities rather than just Councils.”*
- *“More community consultation. There is a real opportunity to help rural communities here.”*
- *“Ongoing and genuine community consultation is essential for community support of the REZ.”*

Compensation for landowners:

- *“People whose views will be substantially changed should also be compensated, not just people who have solar or wind turbines on their land.”*
- *“Landowners in the REZ that join or overlook project infrastructure are not being well enough considered by government or project developers.”*
- *“There is an urgent need to adequately compensate landholders who either host transmission lines or are in proximity to the transmission lines.”*

5 Next steps

EnergyCo is currently considering feedback received via the community survey in conjunction with feedback from key stakeholders to inform various opportunities and initiatives for the Central-West Orana REZ. We are in the process of developing detailed plans for implementation and will seek further input from key stakeholders and communities on a targeted basis.

We plan to provide an update on this work later this year and will keep the community informed about future opportunities to provide feedback.

To stay up to date, we encourage community members to subscribe for email updates by contacting our team on 1800 032 101 or by emailing cwo@energyco.nsw.gov.au.

Appendix A: Survey data

Q. Which suburb/town do you live in?

Answer	Percentage of participants
Gulgong	16%
Cassilis	12%
Merriwa	10%
Dunedoo	9%
Dubbo	9%
Coolah	8%
Wellington	6%
Other areas	30%

Q. What is your age?

Answer	Percentage of participants
17 years and under	2%
18-24 years	2%
25-34 years	6%
35-44 years	17%
45-54 years	24%
55-64 years	21%
65-74 years	23%
More than 75 years old	5%

Q. Which of the following best describes you? (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage of participants
I live in the REZ	72%
I work in the REZ	28%
I work on a project related to the REZ	7%
I don't know if I live or work in the REZ	2%
I am just interested in EnergyCo's work	13%
Other	9%

Q. Have you attended any of EnergyCo's community engagement sessions in February 2023 prior to completing this survey?

Answer	Percentage of participants
No	74%
Yes	26%

Q. Which session did you attend? (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage of participants
Wellington, Tuesday 14 February	23%
Coolah, Wednesday 15 February	39%
Gulgong, Thursday 16 February	40%
Online webinar, Tuesday 21 February*	14%

*EnergyCo’s scheduled webinar on Tuesday 21 February was cancelled, but this answer remained included in the survey options.

Q. Renewable energy generators (i.e. solar and wind farms) are required to pay access fees to connect to the REZ transmission network. Part of this fee will be available for a community benefit purpose. What benefits would you like to see these access fees used for? Please rank the options below by numbering them in order from most important (1) to least important (12).

Answer	Percentage of participants											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Public or community services or infrastructure	11%	15%	10%	11%	11%	11%	8%	7%	7%	3%	5%	2%
Health services or infrastructure	19%	15%	13%	14%	7%	4%	8%	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Accommodation or housing	11%	10%	8%	9%	10%	13%	9%	7%	7%	6%	7%	4%
Local or regional energy programs or infrastructure	4%	8%	10%	9%	13%	10%	7%	9%	7%	9%	6%	6%
Environmental programs or infrastructure	9%	8%	11%	7%	9%	9%	9%	11%	8%	9%	6%	5%
Parks and recreational infrastructure	2%	7%	7%	5%	10%	9%	13%	11%	13%	12%	5%	4%
Education programs or research	4%	8%	9%	10%	9%	11%	10%	12%	10%	5%	7%	5%
Arts or cultural programs	2%	3%	6%	3%	4%	8%	12%	11%	11%	16%	13%	10%
Tourism programs or infrastructure	4%	3%	5%	6%	7%	7%	12%	9%	12%	14%	12%	8%

Services, programs or infrastructure for First Nations people	4%	6%	5%	7%	6%	7%	5%	7%	9%	11%	16%	17%
Other services, programs or infrastructure that benefit the relevant local community	9%	11%	11%	13%	10%	7%	4%	8%	8%	5%	9%	5%
Other	20%	7%	6%	4%	4%	2%	4%	4%	4%	5%	9%	31%

Q. How do you think funding for community purposes should be made available? (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage of participants
Grants should be given to community groups to deliver projects	62%
Councils should receive funding to upgrade existing and new local infrastructure, such as local roads, parks, stormwater or sewerage	47%
NSW government agencies should receive funding to upgrade infrastructure such as State roads, regional economic initiatives or education and training courses and facilities	31%
Other	21%

Q. EnergyCo is investigating opportunities to boost local employment and increase workforce skills in the renewable energy sector. Please indicate how important you think the following initiatives would be for your local community?

Answer	Percentage of participants			
	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Programs to re-skill workers from other industries	48%	30%	11%	11%
Scholarships and subsidised training	45%	32%	12%	11%
Trainee and apprentice positions	57%	27%	8%	8%
Partnerships with tertiary education and training providers, such as new courses for workers in the renewable energy sector	49%	27%	12%	12%
New education or training facilities	33%	33%	20%	14%
Upgrades to existing education and training facilities	44%	30%	13%	13%
Career roadshows for proponents to share information about employment and training opportunities	26%	29%	27%	18%
In-school education programs for students	38%	32%	15%	15%

Q. Please describe any other initiatives that you think will be important for your local community that are not listed above (optional)

Answer	Percentage of participants
Investment in jobs / employment / training	40%
Miscellaneous	11%
None provided	8%
Community engagement	8%
Investment / support for local business	6%
Opposition to renewables	6%
Investment in roads	3%
Micro grids	3%
Education	3%
Local infrastructure (other)	3%
Investment in First Nations communities	2%
Housing	2%
Tourism	2%
Investment in rail	2%
Agricultural industry	2%
Compensation to parties affected by renewable energy infrastructure	2%

Q. We understand cumulative impacts are a key concern for communities during the construction and operation of the REZ. Which impacts are you most concerned about?

Answer	Percentage of participants			
	Very concerned	Concerned	Slightly concerned	Not at all concerned
Workforce accommodation	49%	28%	12%	12%
Impacts to land use and agriculture	65%	15%	14%	6%
Roads and traffic	64%	18%	13%	4%
Environmental impacts	59%	20%	16%	5%
Increased demand for local services (i.e. medical, education)	58%	22%	13%	8%
Availability of short-stay accommodation (impacts to tourism)	45%	25%	19%	11%
Visual amenity	52%	21%	19%	8%
Availability of workers (impacts on employment)	45%	29%	14%	12%

Q. Please describe any other impacts that you are concerned about that are not listed above (optional)

Answer	Percentage of participants
Social impact (i.e. increased crime, local services, inequitable benefits)	25%
Visual impacts of renewable energy infrastructure	13%
Environmental impact of renewable energy infrastructure	11%
Impacts on workforce and employment	11%
Inadequate compensation for landholders & affected parties	8%
Agricultural impact / loss of farmland	8%
Life cycle concerns (i.e. waste)	8%
Governance	8%
Inadequate community engagement / consultation	7%
Impact on tourism	3%
Impact on roads / traffic	3%
Health impacts	3%
Opposition to the REZ	1%
Housing	1%
Nothing	1%

Q. Construction of the REZ will require temporary workers from outside the Central-West Orana region. How do you think workers should be accommodated during construction? (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage of participants
Temporary workforce camps only – away from local towns	9%
Temporary workforce camps only – close to / within local towns	21%
A mix of temporary workforce camps and existing local accommodation	48%
Existing local accommodation only	16%
Not sure	7%
Other	24%

Q. How important are the following factors for proponents to consider when planning workforce accommodation?

Answer	Percentage of participants			
	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Reducing impacts to local tourism	46%	28%	18%	7%
Providing opportunities for local businesses and suppliers	72%	22%	4%	3%
Minimising impacts to local residents	63%	27%	6%	4%

Distributing workforce accommodation across the REZ rather than in centralised areas	50%	27%	14%	8%
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Q. Please describe any other factors for proponents to consider when planning workforce accommodation that are not listed above (optional)

Answer	Percentage of participants
Legacy uses	29%
Impact on local services	27%
Environmental impact	16%
Involvement of local workers / community	14%
Impact on roads & traffic	13%
Alignment with local housing types (i.e. visual)	7%
Concern about workforce presence in the region	7%
Miscellaneous	5%
Opposition to the REZ	5%
Opposition to FIFO workforce	2%

Q. In certain areas, there will be increased demand for local services during the construction of the REZ. Which local services are you most concerned about in your community? (select all that apply)

Answer	Percentage of participants
Medical, i.e. doctors, hospitals	80%
Emergency services	62%
Employment services	25%
Childcare	23%
Education	26%
Recreation facilities	17%
Accommodation availability	66%
Other	19%

Q. EnergyCo is investigating opportunities to improve telecommunication black spots as we build the REZ transmission network. Where do you think telecommunication improvements are most needed and why? (Open text)

Answer	Percentage of participants
Existing black spots	23%
All over the REZ	16%
Improve existing mobile coverage	10%
Golden Highway	10%
Major roads / highways	9%

Rural areas	7%
Miscellaneous	4%
Dunedoo	4%
Cassilis	4%
Don't know / unsure	3%
Coolah	3%
Wellington	3%
Gulgong	2%
Goolma	2%
Opposition to REZ	2%
Population growth leads to decline in telecommunications service	1%
Health sector	1%
Mitchell Highway	1%
Dubbo	1%
Leadville	1%
Merotherie	1%
Important for business, education	1%
Barney's Reef	1%
Yarrabin	1%
Neilrex	1%
Kerrs Creek	1%
Curra Creek	1%
Broadband	1%
Labels Creek Road	1%

Q. EnergyCo is investigating opportunities to provide access to affordable energy for communities in the REZ who are hosting renewable energy infrastructure. How important would the following initiatives be for your community?

Answer	Percentage of participants			
	Very important	Important	Slightly important	Not at all important
Community energy and community battery programs	55%	24%	10%	12%
Solar, battery and energy efficiency support schemes	54%	27%	7%	12%
Purchasing renewable electricity for your home or business (i.e. a power purchase agreement or PPA)	41%	29%	15%	15%
Electric vehicle charging stations	28%	21%	21%	30%

Renewable energy for schools and public buildings	50%	28%	12%	11%
Standalone power systems (SAPS) and microgrids	47%	25%	11%	17%

Q. Please describe any other energy initiatives you believe to be important for your community that are not listed above (optional)

Topic raised	Percentage of participants
Opposition to REZ	21%
Energy affordability	21%
Compensation for affected parties	21%
Micro grids / Standalone power systems	14%
Proper life cycle / waste management of renewable energy infrastructure	3%
Miscellaneous	3%
Concern about environmental impact	3%
Electric vehicle infrastructure	3%
Don't know / unsure	2%
Underground transmission lines	2%
First Nations community investment	2%
Training for local employment	2%
Improved emergency services	2%
Improved energy reliability	2%
Telecommunications services	2%
Water resources / security	2%
Opposition to closing coal power stations	2%
Investment in energy efficiency	2%

Q. Do you have any other comments to provide?

Topic raised	Percentage of participants
Concern about community engagement	20%
Concern about inequity of impacts, compensation	13%
Miscellaneous	12%
Concern about agricultural impact	12%
Concern about environmental impact	11%
Opposition to REZ	10%
Concern about community impact	9%
Concern about sensory impacts of REZ infrastructure	7%
Concern about roads & traffic impacts	6%

Support for smaller scale renewables / micro grids / SAPS	5%
No / none	4%
Concern about housing	4%
Positive community impact	4%
Concerns about governance	4%
Energy affordability concerns	3%
Opposition to EnergyCo	2%
Concern about impact on local services	2%
First Nations community impact	2%

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