

New England REZ community needs and priorities survey report

Introduction and background

August 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

The Energy Corporation of New South Wales acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past and present through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

Published by The Energy Corporation of New South Wales

energyco.nsw.gov.au

New England REZ regional needs survey report

First published: August 2026

ISBN: 978-1-76058-939-4

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Introduction

A secure energy future for everyone in NSW

The NSW Government has adopted the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap (the Roadmap) to bring together whole-of-government action to deliver NSW Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) in a way that is coordinated, timely, manages impacts and secures benefits for local communities.

Under the Roadmap, EnergyCo is planning REZs and upgrading the grid to keep the lights on and unlock clean, affordable energy for NSW energy consumers. This includes coordinating the investment and delivery of renewable energy projects in key locations across the state, ensuring long term community benefit.

We recognise the vital role people in regional communities play in hosting the power lines and renewables we need. We're working with them to minimise impacts and maximise the local benefits from this investment in regional NSW.

Investigating priority areas for the New England REZ

The NSW Government has been investigating how potential impacts will be managed in the New England REZ while providing long-term benefits to communities that are hosting new energy projects. This work includes a program of engagement with communities, local councils, government agencies and other key stakeholders to understand local issues.

In December 2025, EnergyCo published the New England Regional Major Infrastructure Studies which provides a point-in-time analysis of how proposed major projects from a range of sectors, including energy, mining and manufacturing, may interact over time across the region. Information from the studies is being used by NSW Government agencies to develop the REZ in a way that supports growth, opportunities and sustainable demand for renewable energy development.

Seeking local feedback to guide our planning

To support the release of the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, we invited the community to provide feedback on local priorities through an independent online survey facilitated by SEC Newgate. The survey was open between December 2025 and April 2026 and was completed by 217 participants.

We publicised the survey via local community groups, email newsletters and advertising in local newspapers. The survey asked respondents to consider their priorities both locally and regionally, and across the short and long term. Key topics addressed included workforce accommodation, training and skills, local supply chain, waste and circular economy and water and wastewater security.

To support the survey and validate the findings with the general population, SEC Newgate carried out an additional quantitative survey in April 2026 which included an online representative panel and computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI). 182 participants completed the quantitative survey including 75 online panel participants and 107 telephone interview participants.

Feedback received will help the NSW government better understand local pressures and consider ways to deliver benefits and support growth in the region.

Purpose of this report

This report was prepared by SEC Newgate, who carried out the survey on EnergyCo's behalf. It describes the feedback obtained from the survey participants and outlines key themes from the consultation.

Next steps

The survey findings will help inform EnergyCo's planning, coordination and engagement activities as the New England REZ is developed. Many of the opportunities and challenges identified by the community including housing, water, transport, workforce, health and other essential services, require collaboration between a range of delivery partners including councils, NSW Government agencies, service providers, industry and project developers.

EnergyCo will use these findings to support whole-of-government coordination and make sure community priorities are considered in future regional planning and decision making.

Prioritising initiatives for the region

EnergyCo will use the survey findings alongside information from the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, comprehensive engagement with councils and stakeholders, and technical assessments to support future planning and coordination activities. The survey findings provide valuable insights into community perspectives and contribute to a deeper understanding of regional opportunities, challenges and emerging issues associated with development of the New England REZ.

Community feedback is one of a range of inputs considered through ongoing planning and coordination activities. Future decisions regarding infrastructure, services, programs and investment opportunities will be informed by a range of factors, including delivery feasibility, agency responsibilities, funding availability and government decision-making processes.

Ongoing consultation with communities and stakeholders

We will continue to work closely with councils, renewable energy developers, other government agencies and key stakeholders as we continue to plan the REZ.

In June 2026, EnergyCo established the New England REZ Regional Steering Committee to bring together councils and regional representatives from NSW Government agencies to address REZ-wide priorities. The Committee will be a key reference group that meets quarterly to make sure the REZ is planned in a careful and coordinated way.

The Minister for Energy announced in May 2026 that New England and Upper Hunter communities will share in an initial \$60 million investment, as part of the Community and Employment Benefit Program, to deliver local infrastructure, services and employment opportunities as part of the New England REZ. EnergyCo will seek input from councils and the community on the design of the funding program, with consultation starting in July 2026.

We will keep communities informed on opportunities to get involved and share feedback. Local input is vital to help shape the delivery of the REZ and we invite communities to share their views at any time.

Acknowledgements

The survey and report have been developed with assistance from a range of key stakeholders providing input, expertise and local insights. EnergyCo thanks all the individuals and organisations who have participated in the online surveys and CATI.

For more information

If you have any questions about the contents of this document, please get in touch with our team on 1800 061 114 (toll free) or by emailing nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au.

For more information about the New England REZ visit our website at energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez.

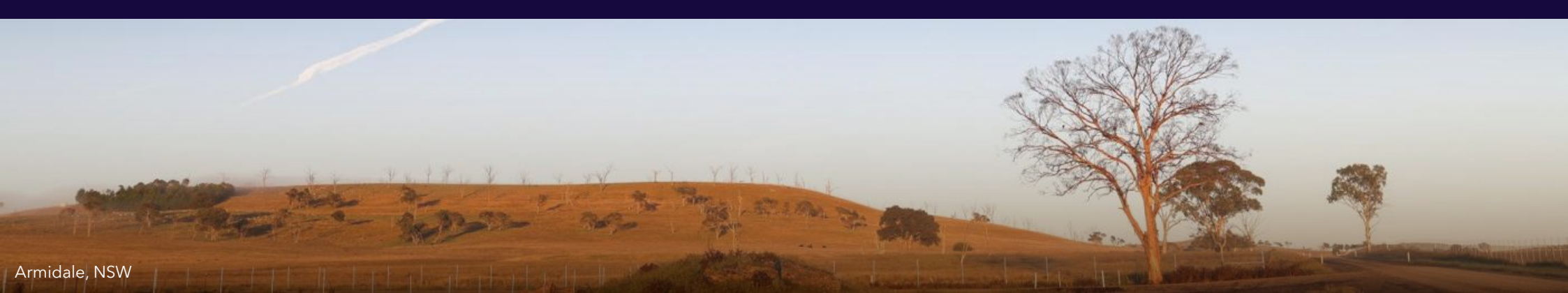


New England Renewable Energy Zone

Community needs and priorities

survey results report

August 2026



Armidale, NSW

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Acknowledgement of Country

SEC Newgate acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our firm operates around the country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

SEC Newgate is proud to support the Clontarf Foundation and future generations of Indigenous leaders.

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Survey questions index.

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Executive summary.

Executive summary.

Consultation with communities

EnergyCo is consulting with stakeholders and the wider community to inform the development of the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) and help support the region to grow and thrive over time. The development of new energy and transmission projects in the REZ will influence supply and demand across towns, local services, infrastructure, land use, and daily life for people across the region.

The purpose of this consultation is to hear from the community about what matters most to them and their local area, including:

- Local community priorities and concerns
- Opportunities for local benefits
- Opportunities for long-term investment

Feedback received will help EnergyCo better understand local pressures and consider opportunities to manage impacts and deliver long-term benefits to the region.

Research approach

The research was carried out through a two-stage approach following the release of EnergyCo's Regional Major Infrastructure Studies in December 2025. By commissioning both these surveys, EnergyCo sought to gather a thorough snapshot of views across the New England region.

From December 2025 to April 2026, EnergyCo held a community engagement survey to hear views from the community about key priorities in their local area

relating to the studies. The survey was supported and promoted at EnergyCo's pop-up community events in the region. In the body of this report, this survey is referred to as the 'community engagement survey'.

During April and May 2026, EnergyCo held a community research survey which included an online representative panel and Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews. In the body of this report, this survey is referred to as the 'community research survey'.

Survey scope

The surveys both aimed to gather local views including key community concerns, priorities and opportunities related to the development of the REZ and the region as a whole.

The surveys asked questions about priority areas both locally and regionally that will impact the region as the REZ develops over time, including:

- Employment and skills
- Workforce accommodation
- Local supply chain
- Water management
- Waste management
- Telecommunications

Who took part

Respondents from both community surveys were from across the New England REZ region. Respondents were a broad mix of local residents, workers, business owners, landholders and people

from different age groups and places across ten local government areas (LGAs):

- Tamworth Regional Council
- Armidale Regional Council
- Inverell Shire Council
- Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Glen Innes Severn Council
- Liverpool Plains Shire Council
- Uralla Shire Council
- Tenterfield Shire Council
- Walcha Council

Community engagement survey respondents had a greater proportion of older male respondents than the research survey and reported higher levels of prior knowledge of the REZ than respondents of the community research survey.

Overall findings

The overall findings of the community engagement survey and the community research survey largely aligned, with essential services and housing pressures identified as key focus areas across both sets of results.

Community engagement survey respondents expressed strong preference for addressing local issues as a first priority, including:

- Road quality and upgrades
- Upskilling the local workforce
- Mitigating construction-related impacts
- Partnering with local suppliers in procurement and waste management

217 Respondents completed the community engagement survey

182 Respondents completed the community research survey: **75** through an online research panel and **107** through Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews

~70 Community groups / organisations contacted to invite members to participate in the community engagement survey

3 Written submissions received

2 Regional shows attended to collect survey responses; Armidale and Upper Hunter Shows

Key insights.

Health, housing and essential local services are key priorities for the community.

Across both survey respondent groups, health and crisis services consistently rank as the highest priority areas.

Housing availability, particularly rental housing, is a key concern at both local and regional levels, including whether essential services and infrastructure can keep pace with workforce growth.

Roads and transport infrastructure are a key priority for improvement, particularly at a regional level.

Local road upgrades are the leading investment priority at the local level, while road quality is the biggest concern across the wider region.

Community engagement survey respondents are most concerned about construction traffic impacts and congestion, highlighting the importance of strategic transport planning as development progresses.

Water management is a region-wide priority.

Water is viewed as a shared regional challenge linked to supply and system management, and long-term drought resilience.

Concerns reflect growing demand for water resources across households, industry and future developments, highlighting that planning and investment in water infrastructure is critical to sustainable growth.

Communities want to see local, practical benefits prioritised, followed by long-term regional outcomes.

There is broad support for projects that deliver enduring local outcomes.

People want to see local outcomes prioritised, in addition to ongoing practical planning to manage impacts and deliver long-term benefits in the region after development is complete.

Findings dashboard.

Local priorities

PRIORITY LOCAL SERVICES		TOP LOCAL PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS	
Community engagement survey	Community research survey	Community engagement survey	Community research survey
Medical or crisis services, (e.g. doctors or local hospital capacity)	Medical or crisis services, (e.g. doctors or local hospital capacity)	Local road upgrades	Local health services or infrastructure
TOP PRIORITIES FOR HELPING LOCAL SUPPLIERS WITHIN THE REZ			
Community engagement survey		Community research survey	
Local suppliers receiving early information on potential opportunities to do business with renewable energy projects		Local suppliers receiving early information on potential opportunities to do business with renewable energy projects	

Findings dashboard.

Regional priorities

TOP REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Community engagement survey		Community research survey	
- Rental availability - Quality of major roads - Water availability - Regional demand on materials		- Rental availability - Quality of major roads - Water availability - Supporting local business opportunities	
TOP PRIORITIES FOR REGIONAL WORKFORCE ACCOMMODATION		TOP PRIORITIES FOR REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS	
Community engagement survey	Community research survey	Community engagement survey	Community research survey
Providing temporary worker accommodation in a way that minimises impacts to locals e.g. traffic, noise, safety	Temporary worker accommodation solutions that encourage workers to use local businesses and boost economic growth	Supporting people in regional areas to access specialised training through means such as transport services or mobile courses, upskilling locals for new job opportunities	New or increased trainee and apprentice programs (e.g. scholarships, subsidised training)
TOP PRIORITIES FOR MANAGING WATER IN THE REGION		TOP PRIORITIES FOR MANAGING REGIONAL WASTE	
Community engagement survey	Community research survey	Community engagement survey	Community research survey
Saving water. Promoting the efficient use of drinking water, e.g. education campaigns and manuals on how to reduce water consumption at home, installation of smart meters to help save water	Reducing water loss. Actions intended to reduce water loss, e.g. fixing and replacing water pipes, organising ongoing preventive maintenance	Focus on reducing, reusing, and recycling, such as partnering with local recyclers or social enterprises to recycle construction waste (e.g. concrete, metals, wood) and promoting the use of prefabricated materials	End-of-life planning and long-term waste management planning beyond construction (e.g. during operation and decommissioning of infrastructure)

Introduction.



Engagement aims and objectives

To assist EnergyCo to carefully plan the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), the NSW Government undertook five Regional Major Infrastructure Studies that provide point-in-time analysis of potential impacts and opportunities associated with major infrastructure projects across the region. These include:

- Workforce accommodation study
- Training and skills study
- Local supply chain study
- Waste management and circular economy study
- Water and wastewater security study

These studies were published on EnergyCo's New England REZ engagement portal at the beginning of the consultation period for the community to read.

EnergyCo developed and released a community engagement survey to gather feedback on the issues raised in these studies and to canvass community views on future needs locally and REZ-wide. The survey was hosted on the New England REZ engagement portal and was open from 9 December 2025 to 3 April 2026. Screenshots of the survey can be found in Appendix B. To capture a wide range of feedback, EnergyCo commissioned a (quantitative) community research survey which was conducted in April 2026. Both surveys aimed to gather local views including key community concerns, priorities and opportunities related to the development of the REZ and the region as a whole.

In addition to the community engagement survey, three community members provided formal written submissions to EnergyCo for consideration, a summary of which can be found on page 26.

EnergyCo will consider community feedback, including the results of both surveys, feedback on the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies, and submissions from other channels, to develop community benefit initiatives and strategies to manage impacts from REZ development.

Methodology

Community engagement survey

The survey was held to help EnergyCo better understand the community's views on local issues and priorities to be considered through the development and delivery of the REZ.

The survey asked respondents questions about themselves, their views about their specific locality, and then the broader REZ and project area.

The survey was intended to take 5 to 10 minutes to complete and was written in plain English to assist respondents to understand complex issues related to the REZ.

The survey employed a variety of response methods including open text responses, drag and drop priority questions, matrix boxes to rank the importance of particular topics, and multiple-choice questions.

All questions were voluntary, meaning respondents could answer as few or as many questions as they preferred. The community engagement survey was carried out through 9 December 2025 to 3 April 2026 and was completed by a total of 217 respondents.

Community research survey

The community research survey asked the same questions as the community engagement survey and was carried out by the Octopus Group. The study included an online representative group of 75 respondents from across 10 New England Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) with a further 107 respondents to effectively reach a representative sample of respondents from across the region.

The community research survey was carried out through April 2026 and reached a total of 182 respondents.

Methodology cont.

EnergyCo's New England REZ project team undertook engagement activities throughout the four-month survey period, including advertisements, e-newsletter notifications, community group and community reference group presentations, and engagement activities in the region to encourage community members to complete the survey:

9 December 2025 - The community engagement survey was opened to the public. EnergyCo reached out to 40+ community group representatives to notify them of the survey opening and the studies published online. A list of notified stakeholders is found in Appendix A.

10 December 2025 - EnergyCo distributed an e-newsletter to 1,496 registered stakeholders about the survey opening and release of the studies.

18 December 2025 - EnergyCo provided a project update presentation to Northern NSWALC Regional Forum and included a reminder to complete the survey.

22 December 2025 - EnergyCo distributed an e-newsletter to 1,528 registered stakeholders with a reminder to complete the survey.

11 February 2026 - EnergyCo provided a project update presentation to the Rotary Club of Tamworth First Light including a reminder to complete the survey.

12 February 2026 - EnergyCo distributed an e-newsletter to 1,572 registered stakeholders with a reminder to complete the survey.

25 February 2026 - EnergyCo held online meetings with the north and south community reference groups to provide a briefing on the studies. This included a discussion on the studies and a snapshot of the survey.

6-7 March 2026 - SEC Newgate staff attended the Armidale Show to encourage community members to complete the survey.

18 March 2026 - EnergyCo provided a project update presentation to the Lions Club of Armidale Dumaresq including a reminder to complete the survey.

19 March 2026 - EnergyCo provided a project update presentation to the Rotary Club of Armidale Central including a reminder to complete the survey.

21 March 2026 - SEC Newgate staff attended the Upper Hunter Show to encourage community members to complete the survey.

27 March 2026 - EnergyCo circulated a survey reminder email to the following community groups:

- Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association
- Farmers for Climate Action - Walcha
- Uralla Men's shed
- Guyra and community progress association
- Rotary Club of Tamworth First light
- Liverpool Plains business chamber
- Lions Club - Tamworth
- Lions Club - Armidale
- CWA - Muswellbrook
- Rotary Club - Glen Innes
- CWA - Scone
- Rotary Club - Armidale Central
- Rotary Club - Tamworth West
- NSW Farmers - Uralla
- Wallabadah Community Association
- Muswellbrook View Day Club
- Denman Aberdeen Muswellbrook Scone Healthy Environment Group
- Landcare Upper Hunter and Hunter Great Eastern Ranges
- McCully's Gap Rehabilitation Sustainability Group
- Tamworth Regional Residents and Ratepayers Association
- Tamworth Business Chamber
- Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce
- First Nations stakeholders

April 2026 - EnergyCo commissioned a community research survey with an online panel of 75 respondents as well as Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews with a further 107 respondents.

To promote the community engagement survey to members of the public, EnergyCo ran advertisements in local newspapers from December 2025 through January 2026. A schedule and copy of the advertisements can be viewed at Appendix C.

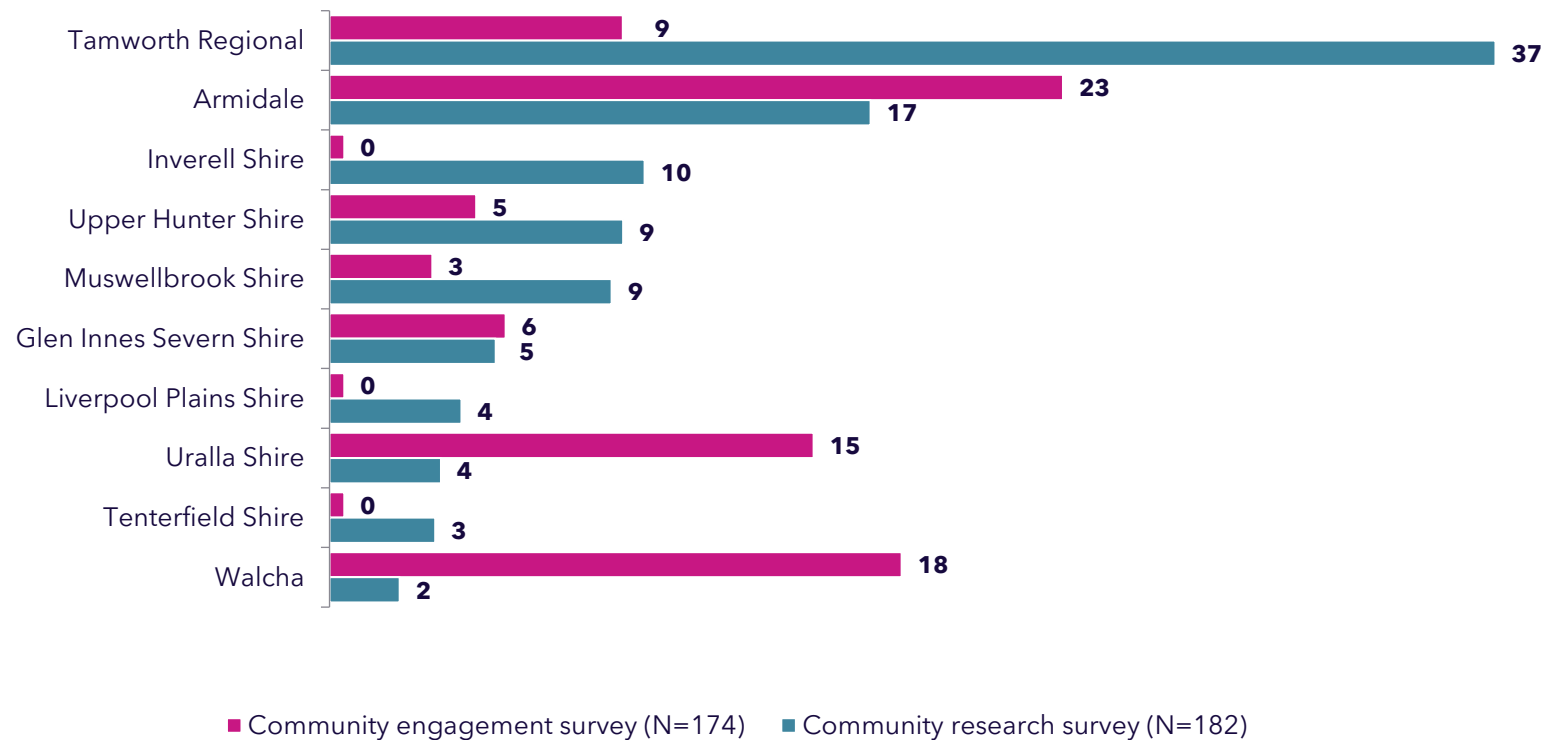
Respondents

Respondents in both the community engagement survey and community research survey were asked several demographic questions to help inform the breakdown of survey responses. Both surveys are shown side by side in the graphs below.

Local areas respondents were most interested in

Both community engagement survey and community research survey respondents were broadly spread across the ten New England LGAs.

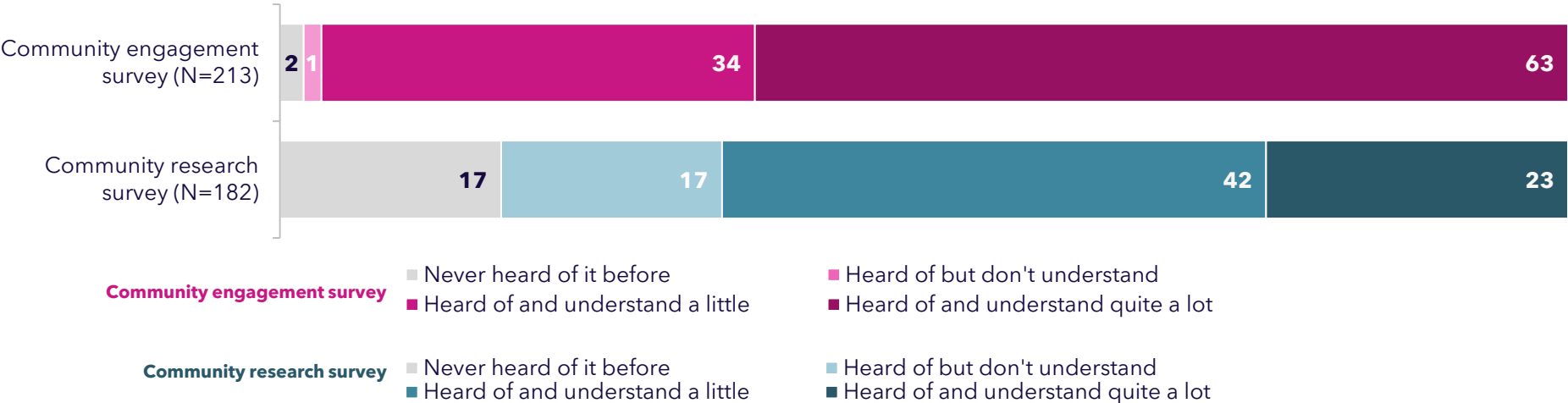
Below, can you please select the area you are most interested in?
(% all respondents)



Level of understanding of Renewable Energy Zones

Community research survey respondents reported lower levels of awareness and knowledge about Renewable Energy Zones than community engagement survey respondents, of whom nearly two-thirds reported hearing of and understanding quite a lot about Renewable Energy Zones.

Which of the following best describes your level of understanding of Renewable Energy Zones?
(% all respondents)

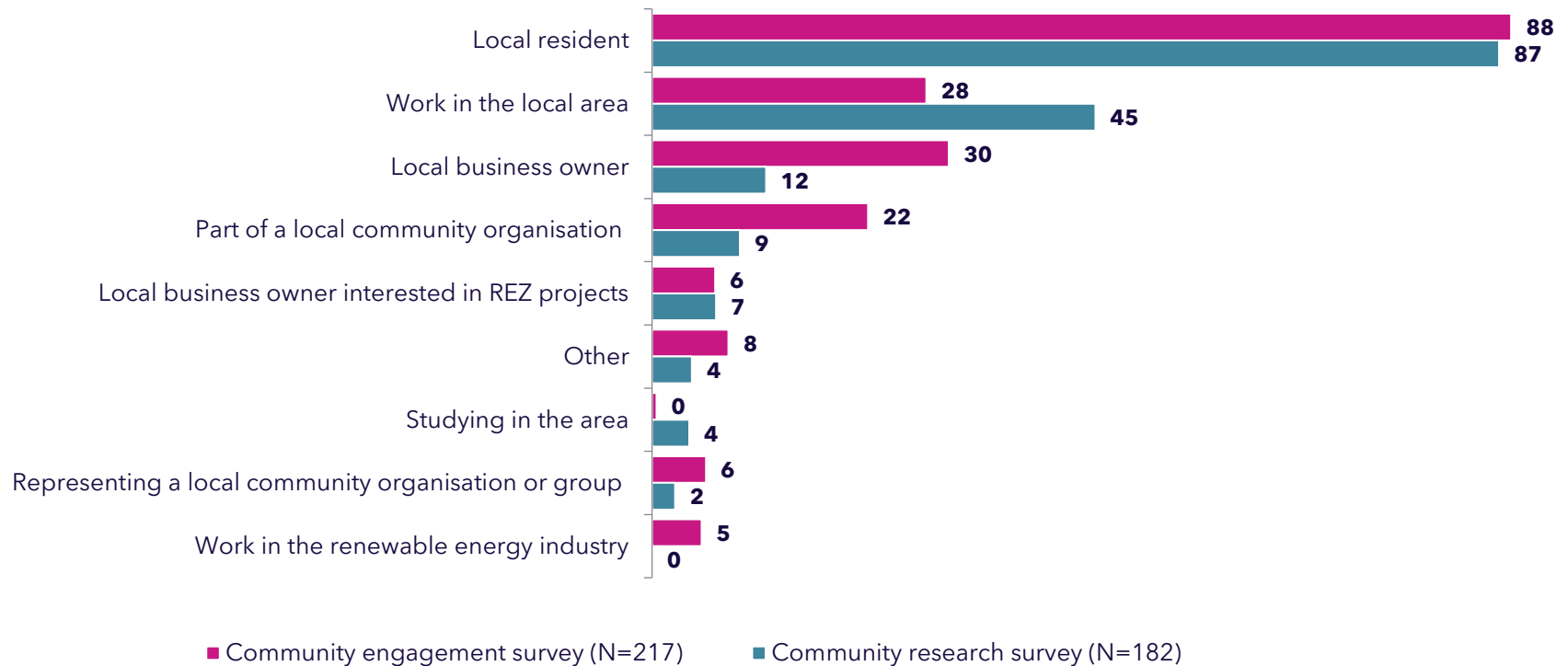


Relation to the local area

Nearly all respondents across both survey audiences best described themselves as 'local residents'. A larger share of community research survey respondents reported working in the local area than community engagement survey respondents. A larger share of community engagement survey respondents reported owning businesses and being members of local organisations than community research survey respondents.

Which of the following best describes you?

(% all respondents)



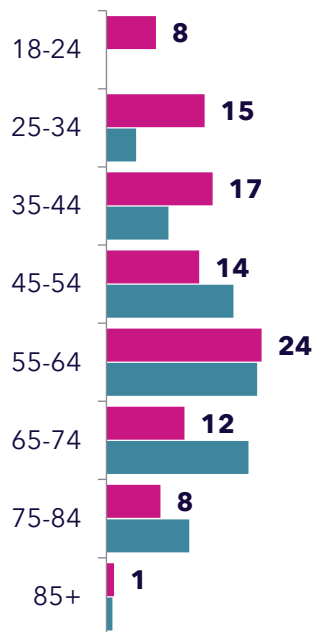
Respondents *cont.*

Age

Community research survey respondents tended to skew younger compared to community engagement survey respondents. No community engagement survey respondents reported being in the 18-24 age bracket.

What is your age?

(% all respondents)



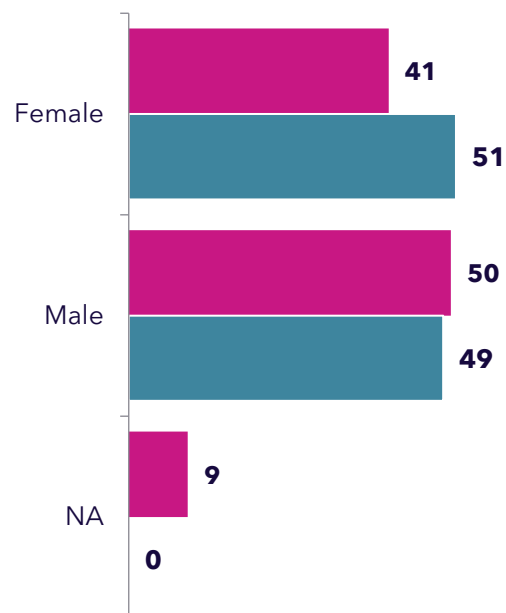
■ Community research survey (N=182)
■ Community engagement survey (N=203)

Gender

Both survey audiences were generally evenly split, with a slightly lower share of community engagement survey respondents reporting being female as compared to community research survey respondents.

Which of the following best describes your gender?

(% all respondents)



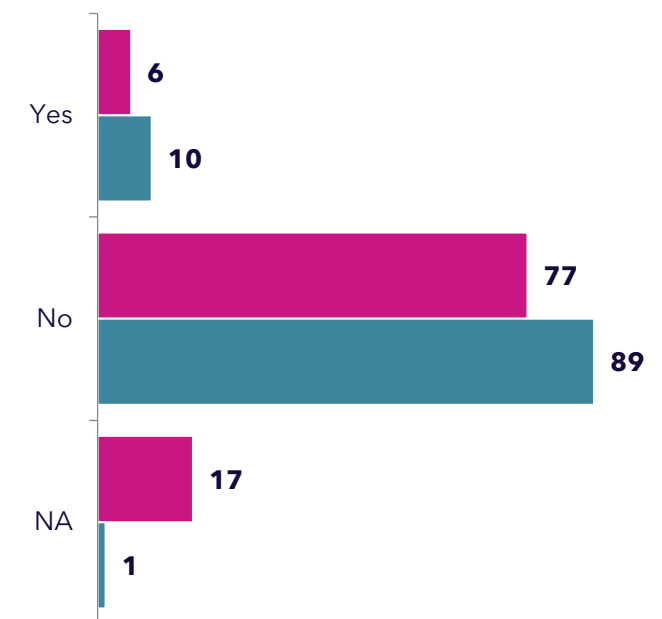
■ Community engagement survey (N=200)
■ Community research survey (N=182)

Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander

A larger share of community research survey respondents reported being of Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander descent than community engagement survey respondents.

Are you Aboriginal and / or Torres Strait Islander?

(% all respondents)



■ Community engagement survey (N=201)
■ Community research survey (N=182)

Participation by community groups or organisations

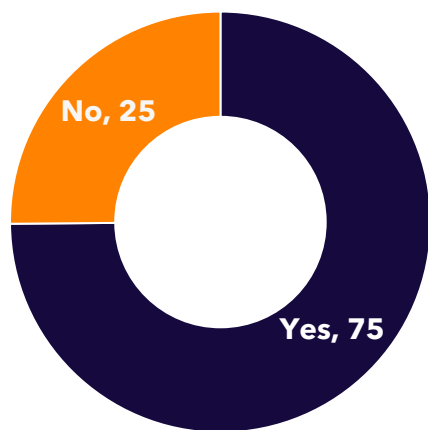
Respondents in the community engagement survey were asked whether they belonged to a group or organisation in the question “which of the following best describes you?” Below is the list of groups people said they belonged to.

- 2CBD FM 105.9 Community Radio
- Armidale Regional Ratepayers Association
- Armidale Rowing Club
- Australian Christians Party
- Batting for Boorolong
- Bioregional Futures
- Climate Action Armidale
- Community Power Agency
- Country Women's Association
- Dungowan Creek Alliance
- Men's Shed
- Myall Creek Memorial
- New England REZ South Community Reference Group
- New England Rugby Union
- Norths United FC
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- Police Citizens Youth Club
- Regional Development Australia - Northern Inland
- Responsible Energy Development for New England
- Renewable Energy Education Advocacy and Community Health
- Rotary Club of Armidale
- Rotary Club of Walcha
- Rotary International
- RSL NSW
- Southern New England Landcare
- Sustainable Living Armidale
- Tamworth City Brigade of the NSW Rural Fire Service
- TrainsNorth
- Transport for NSW
- Uralla Shire Business Chamber
- Uralla Shire Council
- Voices for New England
- Walcha Men's Shed
- ZNet Uralla
- Zonta Club of Armidale

Awareness of the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies and preferred channel of communication

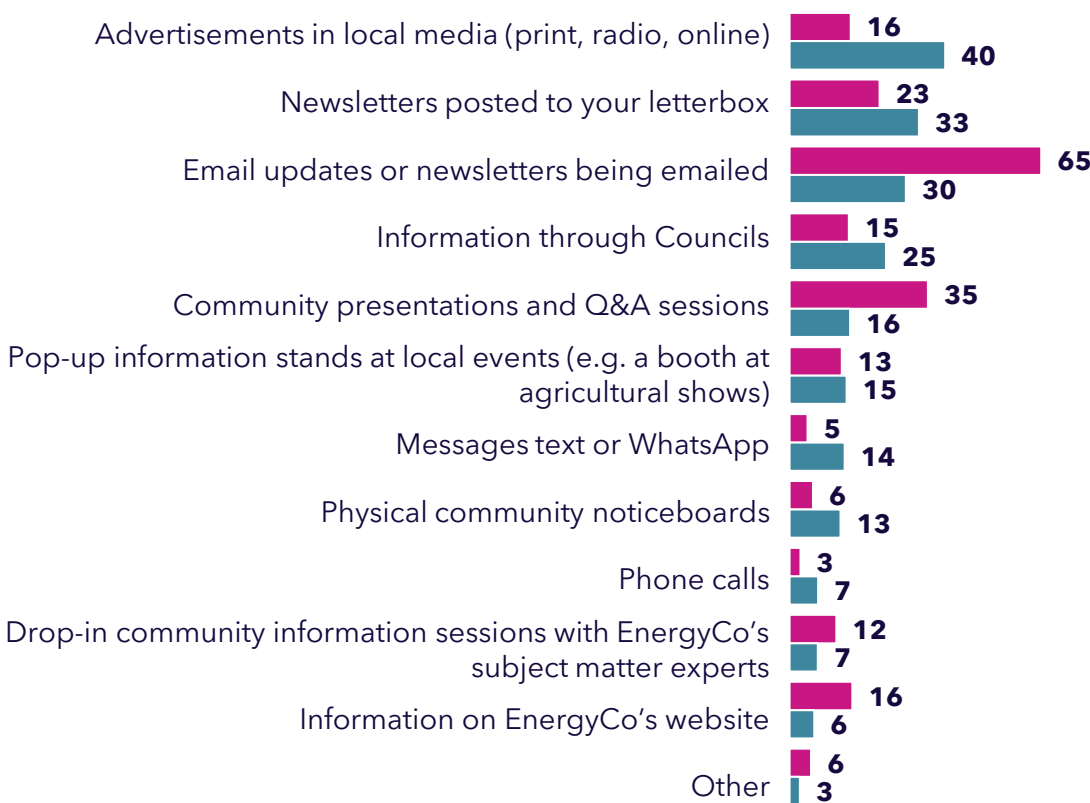
The preferred way to be informed differs by audience: community research survey respondents preferred broad-reach channels (ads in local media and letterbox newsletters) while community engagement survey respondents strongly favour direct updates, with email updates / newsletters the standout, and higher interest in community presentations and Q&A sessions.

Have read reports on website
(% all community engagement survey respondents)



Three in four community engagement survey respondents (75%) have read reports on the website on the future planning of this region (versus 25% have not), indicating a strong voluntary engagement with project information.

Best ways to be kept informed
(% all respondents)



- Community engagement survey (N=217)
- Community research survey (N=182)

Q: "Have you had a chance to read the reports published on the website on the future planning of this region?" Base: all community engagement survey respondents n=195
Q: "What are the best ways to keep you informed on the New England Renewable Energy Zone?" Base: Community research survey n=182, Community engagement survey n=217

What we heard.

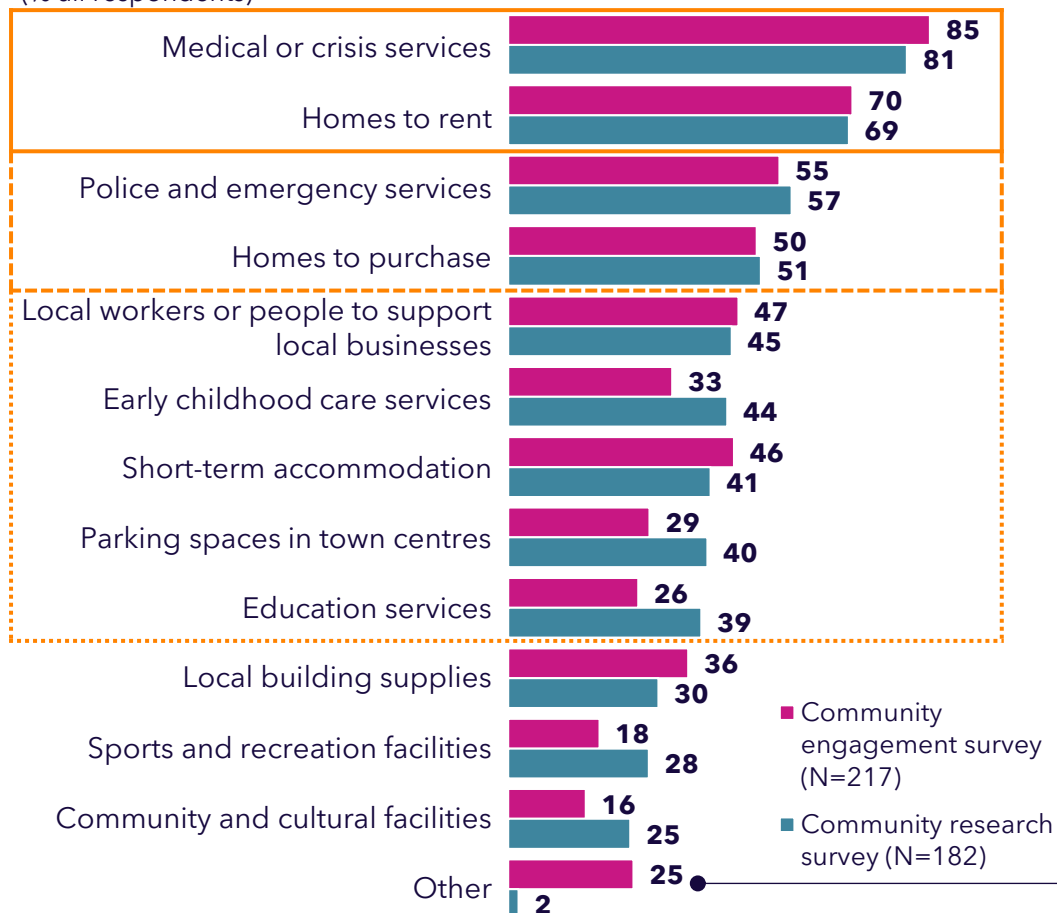


Local needs in five years.

Local services in local communities

The survey questionnaire began by asking respondents to think about the local area they live in. Respondents were informed that development of the New England REZ is expected to support around 6,000 construction jobs and 2,000 operational jobs throughout the region and that an influx of new workers, both temporary and permanent, may place extra demand on local services. Noting this information, respondents were asked to select the local services most critical to their communities. Respondents could choose more than one service.

(% all respondents)



Commentary

- Medical or crisis services, followed by home to rent, are people's top priorities suggesting they are the 'must-haves'
- Homes to purchase is a strong second-tier priority, sitting slightly behind police and emergency services. This suggests a broader housing stress beyond rental availability
- Several services bunch close together in the mid range (homes to purchase, supporting local business / workers, early childhood care, short-term accommodation, parking, education), suggesting people see multiple competing needs once the top essentials are covered

Open text responses to 'other' are below:

- Water supply and security
- Road, traffic, and transport infrastructure
- Public transport access
- Housing availability and affordability
- Pressure on local services and utilities
- Community wellbeing, social impact and cohesion
- Agriculture, environment, and tourism
- Scepticism, opposition, and distrust



Armidale Uniting Church, Armidale NSW

Local services in local communities *cont.*

Respondents in the community engagement survey were asked to list priority services critical to their local community using an open text response. Water-related services were the most cited services in the responses to this question. The below topics were derived from N=55 responses.

Water supply and water infrastructure

- Availability of water and groundwater for personal and business consumption
- Drought resilience initiatives

Waste management infrastructure

- Sewerage, waste disposal, decontamination services, and overall waste processing capacity

Roads, traffic, and transport infrastructure

- Road maintenance services and supporting infrastructure (bridges etc.) to account for road traffic impacts
- Capacity and safety of road infrastructure to accommodate increased demand
- Accessibility for buses, trucks, livestock transport, and emergency travel

Public transport

- Availability of local and regional bus, shuttles, taxis, and rail services
- Rail upgrades and increased services (Sydney, Brisbane, Tamworth, Armidale, QLD border)

Housing and accommodation

- Supply of both affordable short-term rental housing and long-term post-construction housing
- Supply of medium-density flats, single units, and other midmarket housing options

Health and social services

- Access to medical services, GPs, and mental health services (including in schools)
- Availability of domestic violence support services, community and social support services, youth and unemployment services, homeless shelters, and crisis accommodation
- Availability of aged care facilities



Armidale Uniting Church, Armidale NSW

Local services in local communities *cont.*

Telecommunications

- Reliable mobile phone reception

Council and regulatory services

- Council maintenance services, landowner and business assistance, Development Applications (DA) and approvals processing, and resourcing at council to accommodate increased demand on these service areas

Local economy and services

- Local availability of well-stocked retail businesses and supermarkets, banking facilities, and industrial facilities including processing facilities and saleyards
- Availability of local trades (builders, electricians, mechanics) and local employment support available to small-medium businesses
- Availability of construction materials including gravel and sand for small-medium businesses

Waste and resilience

- Waste and material recovery infrastructure
- Firefighting and emergency services capacity

Education

- Education and adult learning (including English language classes)

"Public transport, particularly trains, to Tamworth (increased trains) and, eventually, North to Wallangarra."

- Armidale respondent

"Water supply and infrastructure and roads. Maintaining farming and grazing businesses."

- Walcha respondent

"Road upgrades in general, but we need a permanent sealed coastal road. Need more operations capabilities at hospitals in town."

- Armidale respondent

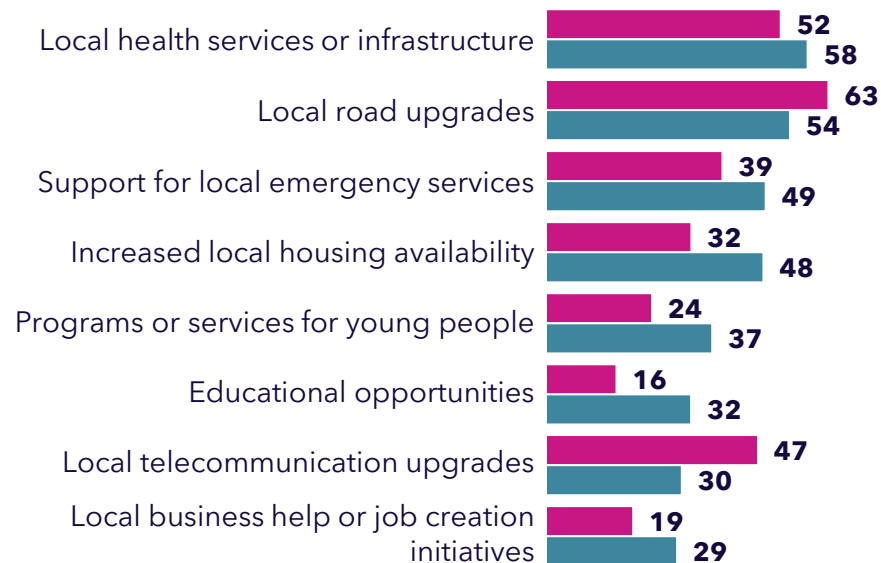
Priority benefits

Respondents were given the context that renewable energy projects will contribute to community benefits and asked to identify their priorities for potential community investment in their local area. Respondents could select up to six options.

Top 8 most important benefits

(% all respondents)

- Community Engagement Survey (N=217)
- Community Research Survey (N=182)



Next 9 most important benefits

(% all respondents)



Commentary

- Health services and road upgrades are most important to local communities, with road upgrades notably stronger for the community engagement survey group, and health services for community research survey respondents
- community engagement survey respondents prioritised infrastructure (e.g. road and telecommunication upgrades), and environmental initiatives compared to community research survey respondents
- Tourism-related benefits (e.g. local availability of accommodation, tourist program assistance or infrastructure) remain secondary



Tamworth Post Office Clock Tower, Tamworth NSW

Priority benefits *cont.*

Community engagement survey respondents were asked to list any other local services that were critical to their local community using open text responses. The list of priorities identified are outlined below from N=49 responses. Water-related services were the most cited services in the responses to this question.

Water security and waste management

- Building new dams and long-term drought resilience initiatives and upgrades to existing local water infrastructure
- Waste facilities, recycling, and circular economy opportunities (Food organics and garden organics (FOGO), renewable component recycling)

Public transport and rail infrastructure

- Reinstatement and expansion of passenger rail services including restoring / improving rail connectivity north and south of Armidale (Wallangarra, Toowoomba, Brisbane, Sydney)
- Freight rail upgrades to reduce road and fossil-fuel dependence
- Improved coach and inter-regional public transport
- Strong opposition to rail line removal for rail trails

Road infrastructure

- Road upgrades to accommodate heavy turbine and construction traffic
- Road service fees paid by proponents to councils
- Access roads and sealed roads as long-term assets
- Road safety and maintenance funding post-construction

Housing affordability and availability

- Initiatives to address rental pressure and affordability.
- Initiatives to improve long-term housing supply beyond construction

Health and medical services

- Increase the number of local GPs
- Improve operating room capacity in regional hospitals
- Accessibility to specialist treatment (linked to transport)



Tamworth Post Office Clock Tower, Tamworth NSW

Priority benefits *cont.*

Community infrastructure and facilities

- Large-scale, permanent community assets (e.g. swimming pool complex, community halls)
- Availability of sporting clubs, men's sheds, and service clubs
- Availability of quality public parkland, green space, recreational infrastructure, and bike paths

Local economy and employment

- The prioritisation of 'local proponents' over multinational developers
- Initiatives to address regional job losses from automation
- The development of targeted local youth services and employment pathways

Tourism and place-based development

- The creation of agritourism and wine tourism opportunities
- Initiatives to improve the currently underperforming local tourism

"Support for the restoration and enhancement of main north railway line for passenger and freight transport between the region and Sydney and Brisbane, reducing the dependency on fossil fuel powered transport."

- Armidale respondent

"Water security and waste facilities including ways to recycle that can become revenue streams ongoing. Solar panels, turbines / blades etc., FOGO, packaging from renewable projects."

- Uralla respondent

"Armidale desperately needs a community hall. Local service clubs would benefit from its use for meetings, events, programmes for the community. We are all not for profit groups and would welcome the opportunity to participate in various activities with our community members and each other."

- Armidale respondent



Telecommunications priorities

Community engagement survey respondents were asked for their views on telecommunications priorities in their local areas. Focusing first on what specific areas / locations they felt are most in need of telecommunications followed by what they needed most (speed, reliability, and affordability), including reasons for their choice. The topics below were derived from N=158 responses.

Respondents identified widespread mobile and internet black spots across rural and regional areas, particularly outside town centres, describing unreliable or non-existent coverage for everyday use and emergencies.

Specific localities identified as requiring improved coverage

- Walcha
- Uralla
- Armidale
- Bundarra
- Invergowrie
- Kentucky
- Balala
- Glen Innes
- Moonan
- Moona Plains
- Winterbourne
- Hanging Rock
- Nundle
- Guyra
- Deepwater / Dundee
- Barrington Tops
- Salisbury Plains
- Bendemeer
- Waverley Valley
- Upper Rouchel
- Merriwa

Transport corridors identified as requiring improved coverage

- The New England Highway
- Thunderbolts Way
- Oxley Highway
- Waterfall Way

"The Barrington Tops, Moonan and Upper Rouchel areas have limited telecommunications services. These are areas visited by tourists and local people for recreation and are also areas in which landowners work alone. They are also areas impacted by the proposed New England REZ transmission line. The same principles apply to pockets around Merriwa."

- Upper Hunter respondent



Armidale, NSW

Telecommunications priorities *cont.*

What do you need in the future? Speed? Reliability? Affordability?

Telecommunications performance was linked to safety, health and economic participation, particularly for older residents, people working alone, farming communities, and tourists. It was also linked to access to emergency services during floods, fires, and extreme weather.

Respondents nominated the following telecommunications priorities that were important to address:

- Reliability of telecommunications services during power outages, extreme weather events (snow, storms, floods, fire), and emergencies
- While many responses noted that all three factors were equally important to local communities, reliability was raised as an issue by the greatest number of submissions
- Backup systems and telecommunications resilience during power outages, noting that mobile towers and internet services frequently fail during storms, snow events and blackouts due to limited backup power
- Improved broadband access, including fibre-to-the-premises where available, upgrades from satellite or fixed wireless services, and better capacity during peak usage periods

"If they are going to improve it then I think it needs to be all three of the above; speed, reliability and affordability. If [my] local area is bearing the brunt of [the] energy transition, we should have access to the best and most affordable mobile reception, internet and electricity."

- Armidale respondent

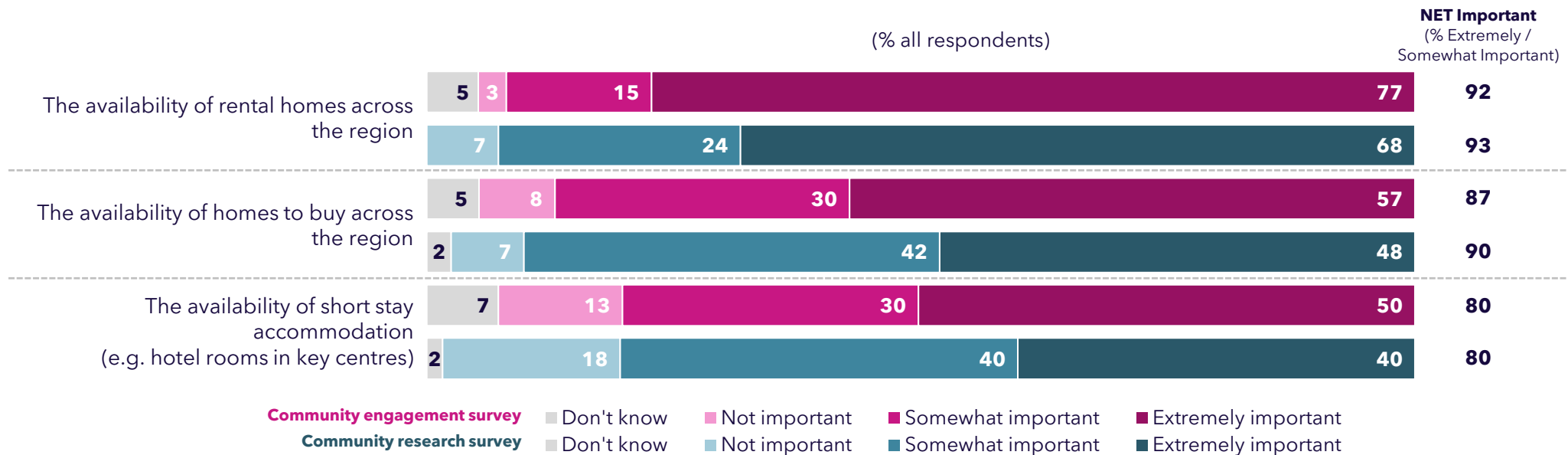
Regional needs in five years.



Housing and accommodation

"NET Important" means the combined % of those who said extremely or somewhat important for this question

Respondents were asked to think about the wider New England REZ region. Respondents considered the importance of EnergyCo's priority planning areas.

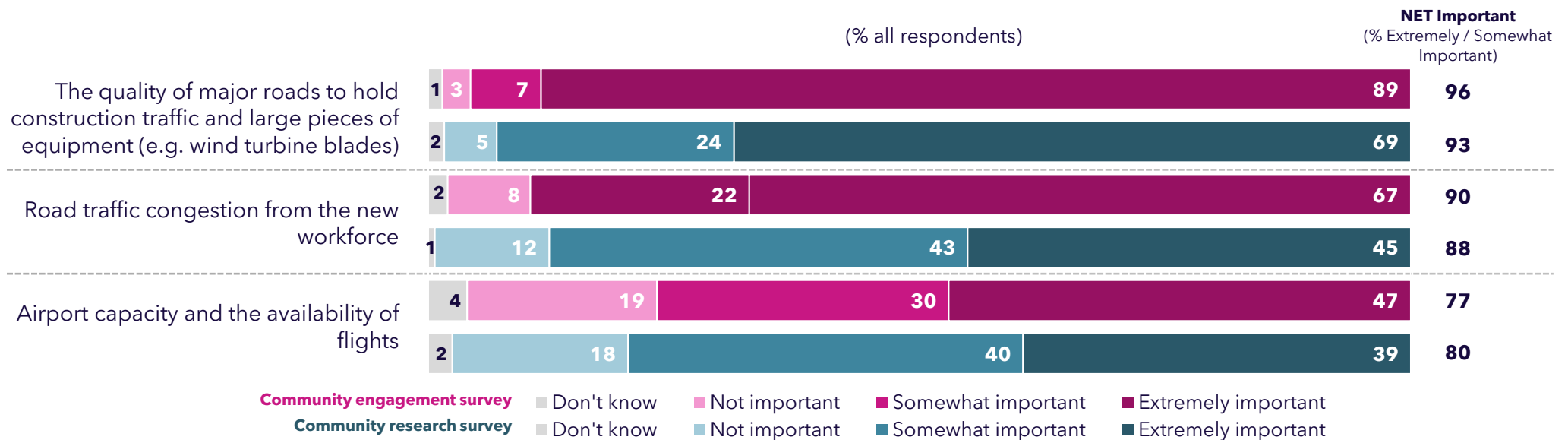


Commentary

- Housing availability is the key priority: rental homes rank highest (93% community research survey / 92% community engagement survey NET important), followed by homes to buy (90% / 87%). The availability of short-stay accommodation is secondary but still substantial, these results are the same across both surveys at 80%
- Housing was frequently raised in in-field conversations and submissions and was seen as a common problem across categories and across the region
- Overall, respondents considered the issue of rental homes to be the most important priority for housing and accommodation, ahead of homes to buy and short stay accommodation issues

Themes raised

- Zero or near-zero rental vacancy in some towns
- Concerns about increased housing demand displacing locals due to investors and new workers pushing up local prices
- Concerns about a lack of comprehensive workforce accommodation planning - ahead of construction commencing
- Concerns that the REZ will foster a boom-bust cycle of population and economic activity growth rather than lasting regional development

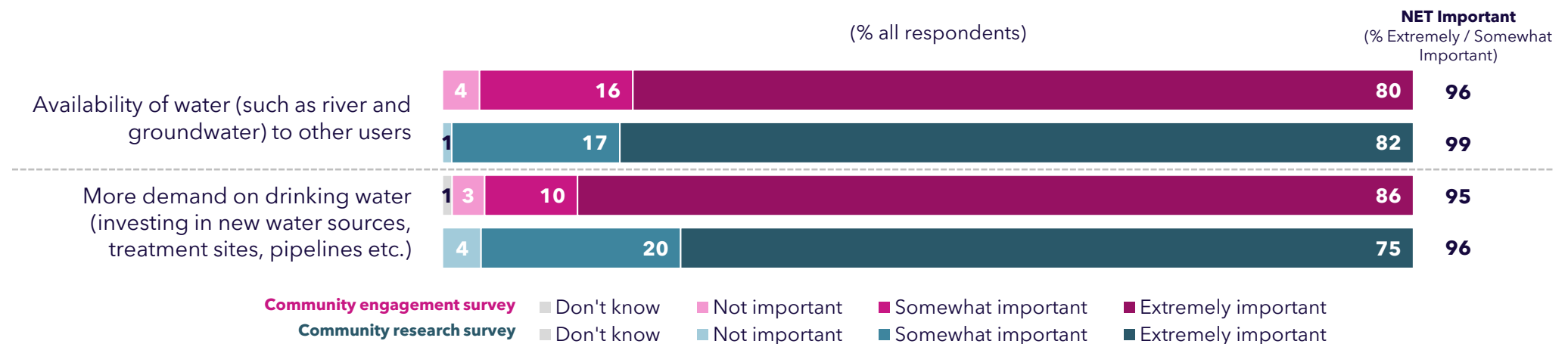


Commentary

- When thinking about roads and transport, the quality of major roads to support construction traffic and large pieces of equipment is seen as the most pressing issue
- Community engagement survey respondents prioritised quality of major roads and road traffic congestion, with 96% and 90% rating the issues as NET important respectively
- Airport capacity was seen as much less important, relative to these issues. Conversations on the topic revealed that respondents thought airport capacity would increase naturally in response to demand, was generally suitable for existing needs, and was not the responsibility of EnergyCo to resolve in any case

Themes raised

- Local and regional road networks not designed for sustained heavy vehicle movements
- Safety risks from increased congestion impacting emergency vehicle response times
- Calls for increased freight and passenger rail services by reopening and upgrading rail lines north and south of Armidale as a long-term regional asset



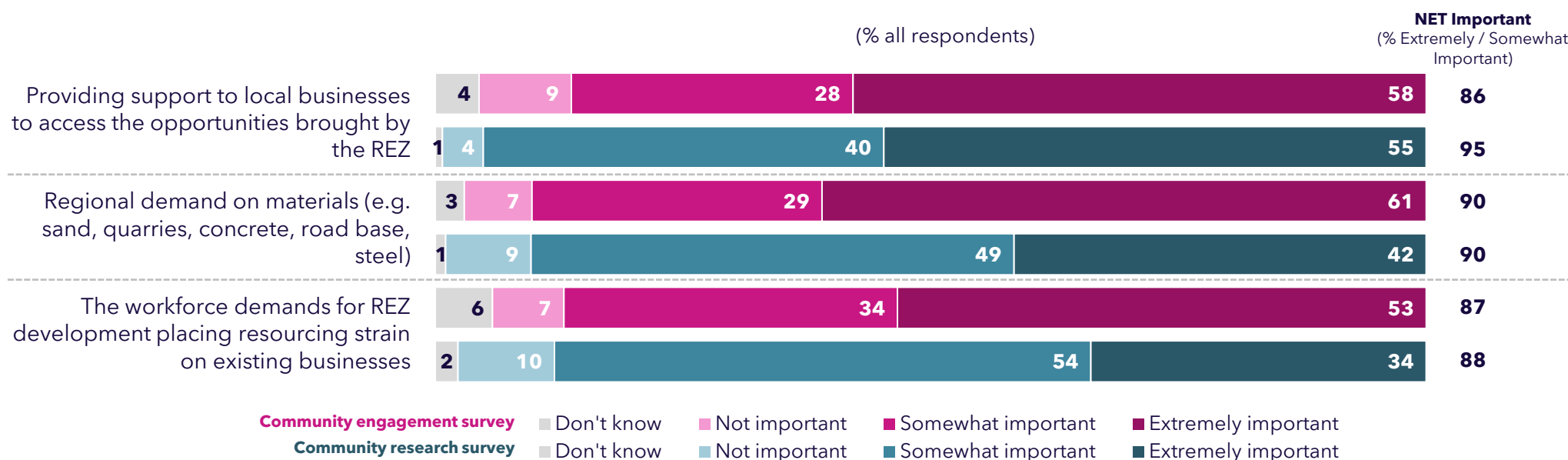
Commentary

- These two water-related issues were both considered to be extremely important, demonstrating the strong relevance that water issues have among respondents to both surveys
- Nearly all respondents rate water management very important or somewhat important, with availability of water to other users the top concern (99% NET important among community research survey respondents and 96% NET important among community engagement survey respondents) and pressure on drinking water supply and infrastructure close behind (96% and 95%)

Themes raised

- Insufficient availability of regulated surface water and groundwater
- A lack of capacity to produce additional potable water or wastewater (created by the REZ activity) at scale
- The risk of an upcoming drought worsening water supply constraints during construction phases

Local supply chain

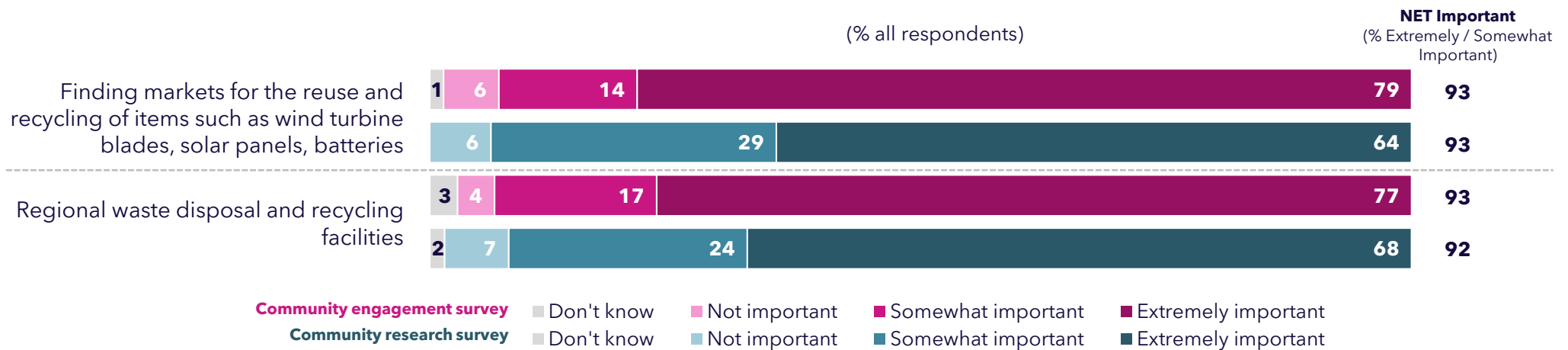


Commentary

- All three issues were viewed as highly important, with 86% to 95% of respondents rating them as NET important among both survey respondent groups
- Support for local businesses to access REZ opportunities was the top item for community research survey respondents, with over half (55%) identifying it as extremely important and 95% NET important. Community engagement survey respondents rated it lower at 86% NET important (with a -9% difference) which is the biggest gap in relation to delivering benefits for local suppliers
- The regional demand on materials has the strongest 'extremely important' result for community engagement survey respondents at 61%
- On workforce demands, community research survey respondents view it as less of a priority with 54% rating it as 'somewhat important', while community engagement survey responses lean towards extremely important (53%)

Themes raised

- Competition for local trades and skilled workers affecting existing local businesses
- Need for coordinated, early skills training and long-term employment pathways



Commentary

- When asked to consider waste management, both community engagement survey and community research survey respondents selected finding markets for the reuse and recycling of items and regional waste disposal and recycling facilities as equally important
- Conversations on the topic revealed respondents were generally supportive of these ideas as a concept but only if these facilities were available locally and the markets meaningfully existed for waste recycling

Themes raised

- Concerns about limited existing capacity to manage construction waste at the scales required for the REZ
- Uncertainty around end-of-life responsibilities for turbines, panels and batteries, with fears that costs for waste management will be borne by landholders and councils, rather than proponents
- Calls for mandated recycling of waste, local recycling facilities and the creation of circular-economy jobs



Other needs

Community engagement survey respondents were asked to list any other issues they felt were important for the whole region. The list of priorities identified is provided below. The below topics not already covered by the five prior topics were derived from N=136 responses.

Health, emergency, and social services

- Concerns about demand worsening the existing shortages of GPs, nurses, allied health professionals, hospital and emergency services capacity to support both construction activity and local needs
- Concerns about mental health impacts on farmers, families, and affected neighbours from negotiation processes, construction noise, and visual amenity impacts

Agricultural land and food production

- Concerns about the fragmentation and devaluation of prime agricultural land from project and transmission development
- Concern over broader impacts to farm biosecurity
- Concern over food security impacts as a result of reduced workable farmland

Environmental protection and biodiversity

- Large-scale vegetation clearing and erosion resulting in biodiversity and waterway impacts from project and transmission development
- Concern that offsets do not deliver genuine net environmental benefit

"Environmental damage during construction stage and impacts upon completion."

- Armidale respondent

"...I think locally, we have largely missed the boat to have specialist or trained people already skilled and waiting for the REZ. Instead, workers will come into our area when they are needed."

- Uralla respondent

"Healthcare facilities and staff to run and operate them and need to increase as well as expansion of schools to accommodate workers families as current overcrowding with increased pressure will lead to more problems in social cohesion"

- Armidale respondent

Barraba Silo Art Mural, Barraba NSW



Written submissions

EnergyCo received written submissions from three stakeholders during the consultation period relating to water and traffic-related impacts of developing the New England REZ. This page summarises these findings. Written submissions received will be considered by EnergyCo.

Water

- Water is a 'wicked problem' for the New England REZ; a finite, already constrained, and necessary resource for development of construction projects, agricultural industries, environmental sustainability, local consumption, and supporting the new workforce coming into the region
- The vulnerability of the region to water supply disruptions at existing levels of regional water demand, brought into significant relief by recent drought conditions, noting that peak demand from REZ activities will materially worsen this situation
- Questions regarding the assumptions and modelling within EnergyCo's *Water and Wastewater Security Study*, particularly around cumulative water demand, the viability of transporting additional water supplies by road (water tankering) at a large scale, and the capacity of regulated surface water extraction. Submissions were further concerned that alternative water supplies would not be available at the scale assumed in the study

Roads and transport

- Road and transport impacts were seen as directly related to water management issues, particularly water tankering
- Existing road networks are regarded as insufficient to handle frequent sustained travel by heavy vehicles during major infrastructure project construction, including posing a cumulative safety and traffic impact risk to commuters, agricultural vehicles, emergency services, and school transport
- Submissions note that traffic assessments have been overly high-level to date and contain assumptions that would not accurately reflect the material impact from REZ-related road network pressures

Waste

- Existing processing capacity is regarded as strained, with a resulting inability of the region to manage additional cumulative waste-related demands. Concerns were raised about potential opportunities for recycling end-markets and the likely projected cost of managing these recycling supply chains

Wind farm operations manager

Opportunities for the future.



Local workforce

Respondents were asked to rank a set of ideas for boosting local employment opportunities and skills development in the renewable energy sector region-wide, given the influx of workers and economic activity across the region from REZ projects. Respondents could rank the ideas from most important (1) to least important (6 or 7). There were five categories in this section; employment and skills, workforce accommodation, local suppliers, managing water and managing waste.

Community research survey respondents prioritise youth / apprenticeships and broader pathways first, while community engagement survey respondents shift toward immediate job-ready levers like training access and reskilling.



This is the percentage of people who ranked this category in their TOP 3 rankings



Local workforce *cont.*

Blue sky community thinking

Community engagement survey respondents were asked to list *any other ideas* on how to boost local employment and build skills in the renewable energy sector. The below topics were derived from N=95 responses. EnergyCo welcomes all ideas and submissions from the community. While not all suggestions can be actioned, they are valued as an important contribution to the discussion.

Workforce skills and local participation themes

Feedback highlighted interest in strengthening local workforce capability and improving access to employment pathways connected to renewable energy development.

Key themes included:

- Improving access to relevant regional training, vocational pathways and skills development.
- Supporting earlier awareness of future employment opportunities for students and young people.
- Reducing barriers to participation, particularly for people in smaller towns or with limited transport access.
- Improving visibility of recruitment processes and future workforce needs.
- Encouraging local participation where skills, project needs and procurement arrangements align.
- Considering broader enablers of workforce participation, including housing, transport and access to essential services.
- Supporting longer-term regional economic participation beyond construction, where feasible and in partnership with industry, education providers and relevant agencies.

"Lobby to Introduce [renewable energy] project maintenance as a TAFE course possibility at New England Institute of TAFE in Armidale as the epicentre of the NE REZ, thereby upskilling local youth for new projects rather than FIFO reliance."

- Armidale respondent

"Youth unemployment is very high in Walcha, but young people often are unable to travel due to poor bus transport, no licence, or no money for petrol. Training courses must be mobile and turn up consistently to educate young people. Walcha often is considered remote and rural so does not get a priority."

- Walcha respondent

"Fund and train people in local area who have long term e.g. over 15 years of connection to the area to get priority for jobs and assist them to get stable accommodation then target apprenticeships within family to increase family connection and retain youth in the area. Financial incentives for long term locals to stay or return to the area to work in the roles. During planning stages commence training of high school students in the local area so by the time project is in 2nd 3rd stages already have some of the entry level workforce available."

Build housing for the locals first, any local who signs on to work gets housed by company in company-built housing that can be bought by employee at end of project need."

- Armidale respondent

Renewable energy workers



Respondents indicated that their top priority is minimising impacts on locals and local service capacity, with a preference for workers using local businesses and integrating into communities. The next priority is leaving a longer-term housing legacy, and standalone camps are least preferred.





First tower installed at the Central West Orana REZ

Workforce accommodation *cont.*

Blue sky community thinking

Community engagement survey respondents were asked for their views on whether workforce accommodation should be centralised in out-of-town workers camps or spread out (distributed) across regional towns. The below topics were derived from N=104 responses. Submissions and community conversations were varied on the subject, with views also varying by town.

EnergyCo welcomes all ideas and submissions from the community. While not all suggestions can be actioned, they are valued as an important contribution to the discussion.

Overall preference

- Distributed workforce accommodation across the project area was the most common preference in responses to this question
- There is some support for centralised accommodation, if camps are built in locations that would not overwhelm local transport, water, and health infrastructure capacities
- Those who had no clear preference stated outcomes depend on local capacity, distance to sites, and mitigation measures

Themes for preferring distributed accommodation

- Spreads economic benefits (spending, services, jobs) across multiple towns rather than concentrating them in one location
- Avoids concentrating pressure on housing supply, utilities, emergency services, healthcare, and road infrastructure within any single community
- Minimises traffic congestion and road safety risks by placing workers closer to construction sites
- Encourages greater interaction with local communities, reducing 'camp silo' effects and supporting local businesses
- Seen as lower-risk than large mining-style camps in terms of social and amenity impacts

Themes for preferring centralised accommodation

- Easier coordination and service provision (utilities, maintenance, cleaning, catering, oversight)
- Potentially less impact on private housing markets, if accommodation is purpose-built and not drawing from local rentals
- Allows for controlled transport logistics, particularly when paired with compulsory bussing to worksites
- Preferred by some only if located well outside towns to limit noise, behavioural impacts, and local amenity impacts



First tower installed at the Central West Orana REZ

Workforce accommodation *cont.*

Several LGAs were directly mentioned in responses to this question. For each location there were differing views as to what method could work best.

- **Uralla** - Mixed views, centralised accommodation built on industrial land to the north of Uralla was supported by some, but others argue Uralla's housing shortages and limited local services cannot handle an influx of workers at all
- **Walcha** - Walcha was seen as having constrained local capacity. Respondents strongly preferred avoiding centralised accommodation. Some respondents noted that having project site-based accommodation (focused, dispersed) may help reduce pressure on any one area
- **Armidale** - Armidale was seen as having potential to absorb an influx of workers but not without impacts to locals. Respondents argued against centralising all workforce accommodation within Armidale, preferring distributed accommodation and their economic benefit across smaller towns
- **Muswellbrook / Upper Hunter** - If camps were constructed here, respondents expressed they should be built on regenerated mining land or nearby to specific projects built in the area

"Distribute the workforce across the project so that the entire region may benefit from the influx in people through increased business use and the accompanying improvements in services that go with bigger populations. This will also minimise the impact on any one single town or community."

- Armidale respondent

"Workforce should be in their local communities. Not providing jobs and incomes for further away regional centres. There should be a priority on local benefits."

- Walcha respondent

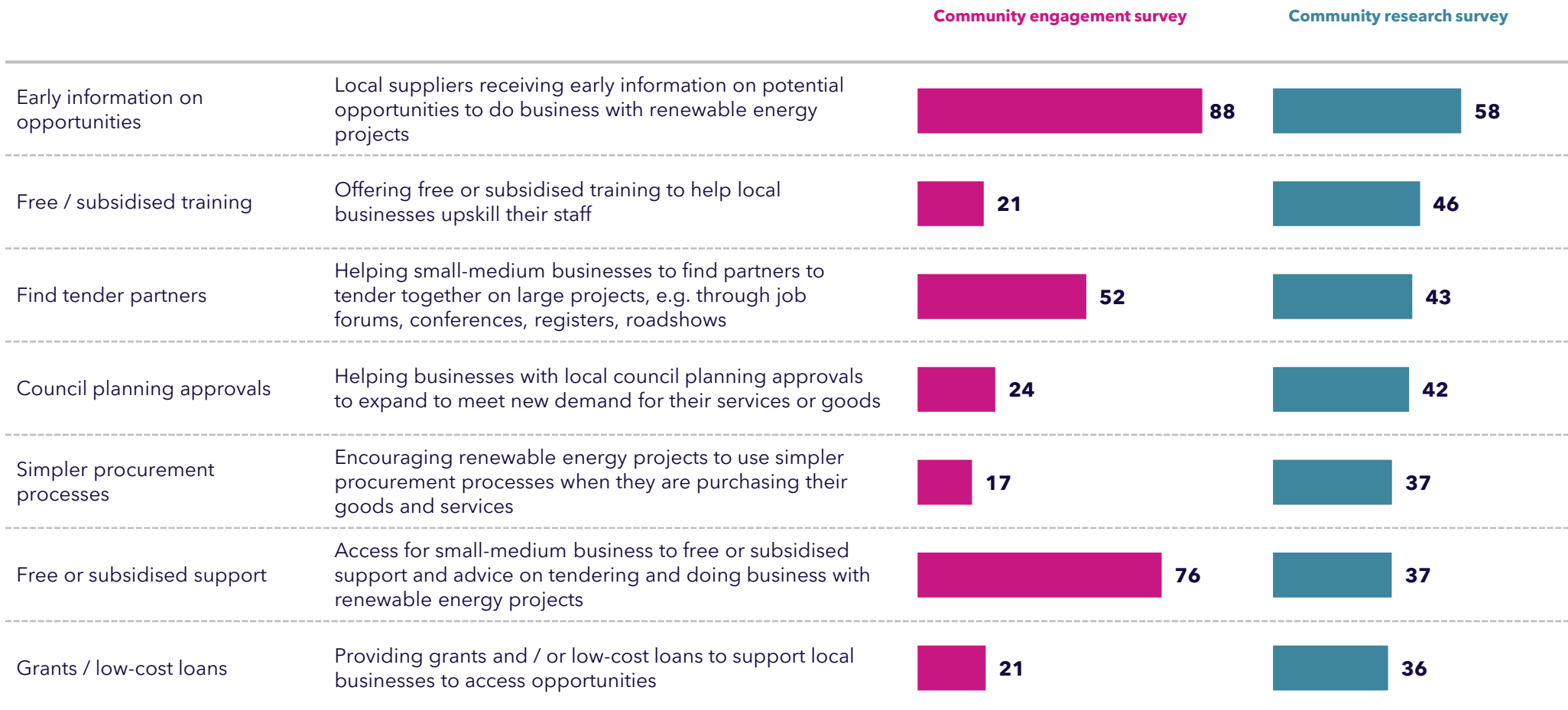
"Centralise the development around regions that have the capacity to absorb these temporary workers. The number of workers coming into the area are going to impact housing availability and affordability. Walcha and Uralla do not have the services and infrastructure to accommodate a workforce of this size. Workers should be housed close to project to reduce impact on roads and road users."

- Walcha respondent

Local supply chain



Responses indicated it would be beneficial for suppliers to have early, reliable visibility of upcoming work (what's coming and what's required) so they can plan, form partnerships, and meet procurement requirements. This could be supported by simplified tendering and free or subsidised support to remove the barriers for local businesses to participate.





Local supply chain *cont.*

Blue sky community thinking

Community engagement survey respondents were then asked to list any other ideas on how to help local business benefit from and take advantage of the economic activity coming into the region. The below topics were derived from N=73 responses.

EnergyCo welcomes all ideas and submissions from the community. While not all suggestions can be actioned, they are valued as an important contribution to the discussion.

Local supply chain themes

Feedback highlighted strong interest in ensuring local businesses can understand, prepare for and participate in supply chain opportunities associated with renewable energy development. Respondents noted that local participation would need to be balanced with existing business capacity, supply constraints and the need to avoid unintended impacts on local communities.

Key themes included:

- Providing clearer, earlier visibility of potential project timelines, procurement needs and upcoming opportunities.
- Supporting local businesses to understand tendering, compliance and procurement processes.
- Considering ways to reduce barriers for small and medium businesses, including administrative complexity and readiness requirements.
- Encouraging procurement approaches that recognise local skills, equipment, capability and capacity.
- Supporting participation by regional businesses, First Nations businesses and existing local suppliers where opportunities align.
- Considering local supply constraints, pricing pressures and freight/logistics impacts when planning procurement.
- Improving communication with businesses that may be affected by construction activity, demand pressures or supply disruptions.
- Coordinating with councils and relevant agencies where planning, approvals or local infrastructure constraints affect business participation.
- Supporting practical workforce transition and skills development where they are linked to local business needs.
- Looking for opportunities to support longer-term regional economic benefits beyond construction, including maintenance, operations and related services.

"Requiring developers and organisations to use local services to develop the REZ and as part of access rights or connections approvals."

- Armidale Respondent

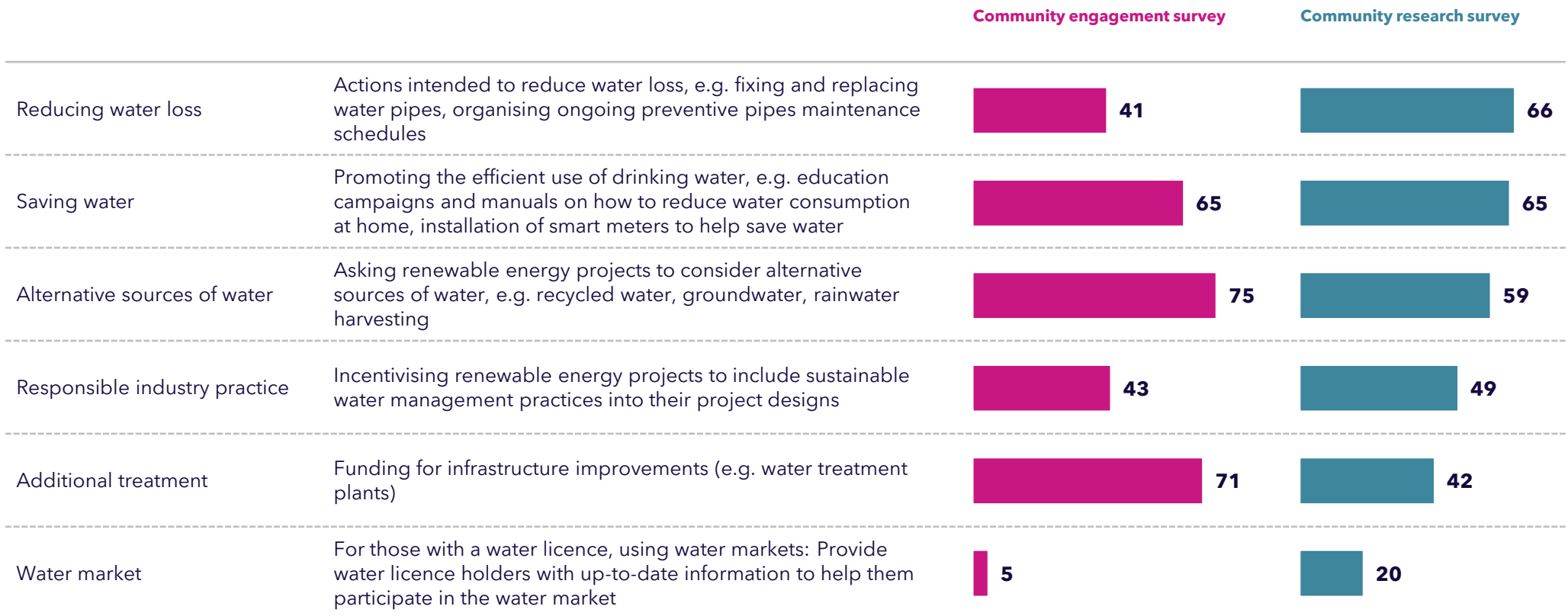
"Make sure the tendering process does not screw over all the small businesses in the local area. Employ a support worker to help with the tendering process in the local area"

- Walcha respondent

Managing water



Responses indicate that community research survey respondents prioritise 'getting the system working better' first including pipes and maintenance, followed by water saving measures. Community engagement survey respondents are less motivated by slower-moving options of leakage fixes and efficiency and instead prioritise alternative water sources and additional treatment capacity.





Managing water *cont.*

Blue sky community thinking

Community engagement survey respondents were asked to provide any other ideas to help reduce pressure on water supply and / or for water management during the delivery of the REZ. The below topics were derived from N=95 responses.

EnergyCo welcomes all ideas and submissions from the community. While not all suggestions can be actioned, they are valued as an important contribution to the discussion.

Managing water themes

Feedback highlighted water as a significant regional concern, with respondents focused on EnergyCo protecting existing town, household, agricultural and business water needs while planning for additional project-related demand.

Key themes included:

- Understanding and managing potential pressure on town water, groundwater and surface water resources.
- Considering how project water demand can be reduced or managed without adversely affecting existing water users.
- Exploring alternative or non-potable water sources where feasible, including recycled, greywater, harvested rainwater or other fit-for-purpose options.
- Considering project-specific water management approaches, including on-site systems and water-efficient construction practices.
- Following the point above, reducing reliance on drinking water by construction and operational activities using non potable water where practical.
- Planning for water infrastructure capacity, resilience and maintenance needs in partnership with relevant councils, utilities and agencies.
- Considering opportunities for longer-term community or regional water security benefits where these align with project needs, feasibility and responsible agency roles.

"Stress should not be placed on any towns water supply to build renewable energy projects as many of these water supplies are already unsustainable in the long term especially with the increasing incidence of droughts. Developers need to consider sourcing their own underground water supplies for water needed during the construction phase of projects. This can be a win-win for the developer and the owner of the land where the water is being sourced."

- Walcha respondent

"Minimum rain harvesting requirements applied to all new infrastructure and have these companies pay for and provide rainwater harvesting to existing homes e.g. 10,000l tanks delivered and installed to any home that does not have tank water to alleviate pressure and provide residents with a level of individual control."

- Armidale respondent

Managing waste



Responses from the community research survey indicate priorities are spread across different waste-management opportunities. In contrast, community engagement survey respondents strongly prioritise reducing, reusing, and recycling, followed by managing pricing as the next most important opportunity.

		Community engagement survey	Community research survey
End-of-life planning	End-of-life planning, long-term waste management planning beyond construction (e.g. during operation and decommissioning of infrastructure)	47	51
Local waste facilities	Expanding the capacity of local waste facilities, including to be able to manage more complex waste types (such as solar panels)	47	45
Managing pricing	Managing pricing of waste disposal to encourage waste diversion (i.e. recycling) while maintaining a fair and equitable price for local communities	59	44
Facilitate circular economy	Facilitate circular economy initiatives that extend the lifespan of renewable energy components, reduce disposal burdens, and unlock economic opportunities	22	44
Reducing, reusing, and recycling	Focus on reducing, reusing, and recycling, such as partnering with local recyclers or social enterprises to recycle construction waste (e.g. concrete, metals, wood) and promoting the use of prefabricated materials	71	43
Public transparency and benchmarking	Public transparency and benchmarking waste reporting for renewable energy projects through publishing waste data and industry benchmarking	32	36
Investing in innovative waste practices	Investing in innovative waste practices to support the development and testing of advanced recycling technologies for renewable energy waste streams	22	35



Oversize vehicle transporting a wind turbine

Managing waste *cont.*

Blue sky community thinking

Community engagement survey respondents were asked to provide any other ideas they had to help manage an increase in waste products from REZ construction activity. The below topics were derived from N=86 responses.

EnergyCo welcomes all ideas and submissions from the community. While not all suggestions can be actioned, they are valued as an important contribution to the discussion.

Managing waste themes

Feedback highlighted concern about the region's capacity to manage additional construction, operational and end-of-life waste associated with renewable energy projects. Respondents were particularly focused on reducing pressure on local waste management facilities and ensuring waste responsibilities are clearly planned and communicated.

Key themes included:

- Understanding local and regional waste capacity before project activity increases.
- Reducing waste generation through project design, material choices and construction practices.
- Considering opportunities to reuse, recycle or recover project materials where feasible and where viable end-markets exist.
- Avoiding additional pressure on local waste facilities that have limited capacity or are nearing end of life.
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities for waste transport, processing, disposal and recycling.
- Planning for end-of-life asset management, decommissioning and rehabilitation from the outset.
- Considering how waste costs, pricing and disposal responsibilities are reflected in project planning.
- Improving transparency around expected waste types, volumes, handling pathways and timing.

"The management of pricing of waste disposal should be factored into the costs paid by the proponent, not the landowner. In my area specifically, there are no local recycling companies."

- Armidale respondent

"Without creating a market for the recycled materials, what's the point? People understand recycling and keeping recyclables out of the landfill, but unless there is someone to buy the recycled material to reuse and repurpose, it just gets dumped back into landfill. There needs to be a mandate to USE recycled materials"

- Uralla respondent

"There should be no waste products left on the land at the end of the life of the project. There should be strong contractual obligations for the company responsible for decommissioning to dispose of ALL waste as per the original Lease Agreements."

- Walcha respondent



Ideas and feedback

Blue sky community thinking

At the end of the community engagement survey, respondents were asked to provide any other commentary or ideas for EnergyCo to consider to best support local communities. Responses were varied, with many respondents taking the opportunity to reflect on local issues, broader energy transition concerns, the REZ itself, and the community engagement process. The below topics were derived from N=94 responses.

EnergyCo welcomes all ideas and submissions from the community. While not all suggestions can be actioned, they are valued as an important contribution to the discussion.

General ideas and feedback themes

Feedback raised broader issues about how REZ planning, communication and decision-making are experienced by local communities. Respondents emphasised the importance of clear information, and transparent processes that result in confidence that local impacts, constraints and community priorities are being considered.

Key themes included:

- Continuing to strengthen community engagement through clear, accessible and regular communication.
- Using a mix of communication channels so information reaches people with different needs, locations and levels of digital access.
- Providing timely and consistent information to affected communities, landholders and stakeholders.
- Explaining the rationale for planning decisions, including how local constraints, cumulative impacts and community feedback are considered.
- Improving transparency around project timing, decision-making processes, responsibilities and limitations.
- Coordinating with relevant government agencies, councils and project partners where issues sit outside EnergyCo's direct remit.
- Considering local impacts and community benefits in a way that is clear, fair and aligned with community priorities.
- Building trust through ongoing engagement, evidence-based information and visible accountability.

"More engagement is better. There seems to be a trend of locals not being told about things. Best EnergyCo overdoes the information then not. Lots on newsletters etc. transparency is key."

- Uralla respondent

"Being transparent in regard to the tender process and, where possible, support local trades and businesses, particularly First Nation businesses"

- Tamworth respondent

Appendices.



Appendix A: Community groups and government agencies

EnergyCo released the community engagement survey to the public on 9 December 2025. EnergyCo then reached out to the following community groups to notify them of the survey and the release of the Regional Major Infrastructure Studies.

- Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association
- Guyra and Community Progress Association
- Wallabadah Community Association
- Muswellbrook View Day Club
- Liverpool Plains Business Chamber
- Tamworth Business Chamber
- Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce
- Scone Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Business Hunter
- Next Economy
- CWA – Scone
- Uralla Men's shed
- Walcha Men's Shed
- Lions Club - Tamworth
- Lions Club – Armidale
- Lions Club - Muswellbrook
- CWA - Muswellbrook
- Rotary Club - Glen Innes
- Rotary Club - Walcha
- Rotary Club - Armidale Central
- Rotary Club - Tamworth West
- Rotary Club of Tamworth First light
- Denman Aberdeen Muswellbrook Scone Healthy Environment Group
- McCully's Gap Rehabilitation Sustainability Group
- Electrify Armidale for a Renewable Energy Future / Sustainable Living Armidale
- RE-Alliance
- Community Power Agency
- The Energy Charter
- Sustainable Living Armidale
- ZNet Uralla
- Farmers for Climate Action - Walcha
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- Tamworth Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC)
- Wanaruah LALC
- Nungaroo LALC
- Armidale LALC
- 3 RAP groups
- Armajun Aboriginal Medical Service
- Aboriginal Affairs – Tamworth
- Birrelee Child Care Centre
- National Indigenous Australian Agency
- Department of Education (NSW)
- University of New England

Appendix B: Community engagement survey on New England REZ engagement portal



[Home](#) [About](#) [REZ coordination](#) [Documents](#) [Share your feedback](#) [Keep in touch](#)

Complete our survey to help shape the New England Renewable Energy Zone

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Welcome!



Thanks for visiting this page. We value the insights you are about to share with us.

To get us started...

Your privacy is important, you have the option to leave some of your personal details, like your name, email, region where you live and other things. A company called SEC Newgate is assisting with the survey, and their privacy policy is here: [Privacy Policy - SEC Newgate Australia](#).

What is this survey about?

This survey is about the development of the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) and the area in which the network infrastructure project will be built. These questions help EnergyCo to understand:

- what needs to be in place or planned when we are in the peak of construction
- where we should place our focus to make sure this REZ can have positive outcomes for the community.

EnergyCo will consider the community's feedback and the technical studies, which can be found on EnergyCo's website, to develop community benefit initiatives and strategies to manage impacts.

We will provide regular updates to the community on the progress of this work, including sharing the findings from this survey early next year.

Now, we are going to ask you questions about **yourself**, then your views **about your locality** and then the **broader region of the REZ and network infrastructure project**.

A NSW Government website



EnergyCo

[Home](#) [Renewable energy zones](#) [Our projects](#) [Community](#) [Industry](#) [Latest updates](#) [Contact us](#)

[Home](#) > [Renewable energy zones](#) > New England Renewable Energy Zone

New England Renewable Energy Zone

Renewable energy zones

What's a renewable energy zone?

Renewable energy zone locations

Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone

New England Renewable Energy Zone

Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone

South West Renewable Energy Zone

Illawarra Renewable Energy Zone

Have your say and shape local initiatives

We have launched a survey aimed at understanding local issues and priorities for the region. Please take the time to complete our 10-minute survey and help shape the delivery of the New England REZ.

We've also released a series of studies that explore how the New England REZ can balance project impacts and benefits for local communities. The studies cover key topics including workforce accommodation, training and skills, local supply chain, waste and circular economy, and water and wastewater security.

Complete the survey and view the studies via our new online portal - your input will help shape future plans and ensure the REZ delivers real, lasting benefits for the region.

View the studies and complete the survey

New England REZ network infrastructure project

The New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) will be serviced by new network infrastructure, including transmission lines and energy hubs, and enabling infrastructure which will transfer power generated by solar and wind farms to electricity consumers.

Find out more about the network infrastructure project



[Home](#) [About](#) [REZ coordination](#) [Documents](#) [Share your feedback](#) [Keep in touch](#)

Explore the New England REZ engagement portal

Learn how we're working to balance project impacts and benefits for local communities, and share your feedback to help shape our plans now and into the future.

How are we coordinating infrastructure delivery across NSW Renewable Energy Zones?

Learn more

Visuals on this site are for demonstration purposes only.

Appendix C: Community engagement survey advertisement

Publication	Advertisement Dates
The Land	Thursday 25 December 2025 and Thursday 1 January 2026
Armidale Express	Saturday 3 January and Saturday 10 January 2026
Northern Daily Leader	Saturday 27 December 2025 and Wednesday 21 January 2026
Apsley Advocate	Wednesday 14 January and Wednesday 21 January 2026
Guyra Gazette	Thursday 15 January and Thursday 22 January 2026

EnergyCo

Have your say on the New England Renewable Energy Zone



EnergyCo is inviting feedback to help shape the delivery of the New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). Feedback will be used to inform how the government responds to potential impacts and delivers benefits for communities that are hosting critical energy projects.

Complete the survey on our new online portal

Visit energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez (or scan the QR code below) to explore how we're working to balance project impacts and benefits for local communities, then share your feedback through a survey. The survey is open until Friday 30 January 2026 and will take around 10 minutes to complete.

You can also contact our team on the details below if you prefer to receive a paper copy.

Your input will help shape our plans – now and into the future – and ensures the REZ delivers real and lasting benefits for the region.

View the New England regional major infrastructure studies

To support the consultation period, EnergyCo has released a series of studies which address priority topics for REZ delivery including workforce accommodation, water and wastewater security, training and skills, local supply chain and waste and circular economy.

They consider the impacts of major projects in the New England region, including renewables and other industries, as well as opportunities that may arise from this significant investment in regional NSW. These studies are not intended to provide all the answers. They provide a common data point that will inform future strategies to address challenges and maximise opportunities.

The studies are the result of several months of consultation with councils, government agencies and industry to assess existing conditions and priority issues for the region.



For more information

To read the studies and complete our survey, visit the online portal at energyco.nsw.gov.au/nerez or scan the QR code. You can get in touch with our team at nerez@energyco.nsw.gov.au or by calling 1800 061 114 (toll free). We look forward to hearing from you.

