

# Engagement Summary Report 2025

Net Zero Commission

Consultation activities April – August 2025



## Acknowledgement of Country

The Net Zero Commission acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waters upon which we live and work throughout NSW.

We pay respect to Elders, past, present and future, acknowledging the diversity of First Nations peoples across NSW, and we recognise their ongoing connection to land, waters, biodiversity and culture.

We recognise the practice of intergenerational care for Country and its relevance to our work. The Net Zero Commission values Aboriginal knowledge of caring for Country. We seek to listen, learn and build strong partnerships with First Nations peoples across NSW. Cultural approaches to caring for Country have existed for millennia and can teach us ways of adapting to our changing environment.

## Sun puddles hot on Country by Suzy Evans

My work evokes both contemporary and traditional symbols to foster an understanding of the sun's power. The sun I see as female figures in the centre of the work. Summer heat in Garah NSW, manifests like puddles, puddles of sun. Sun on Country, sun puddles.

## Published by the Net Zero Commission

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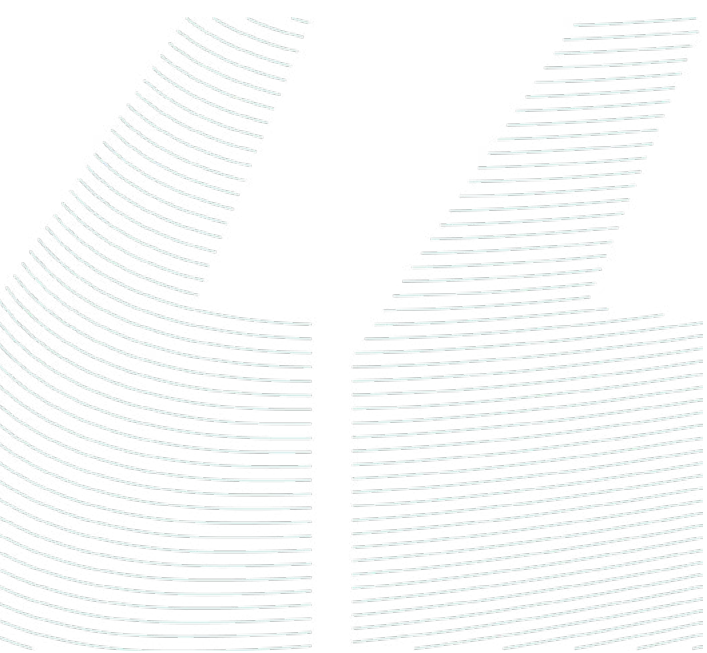
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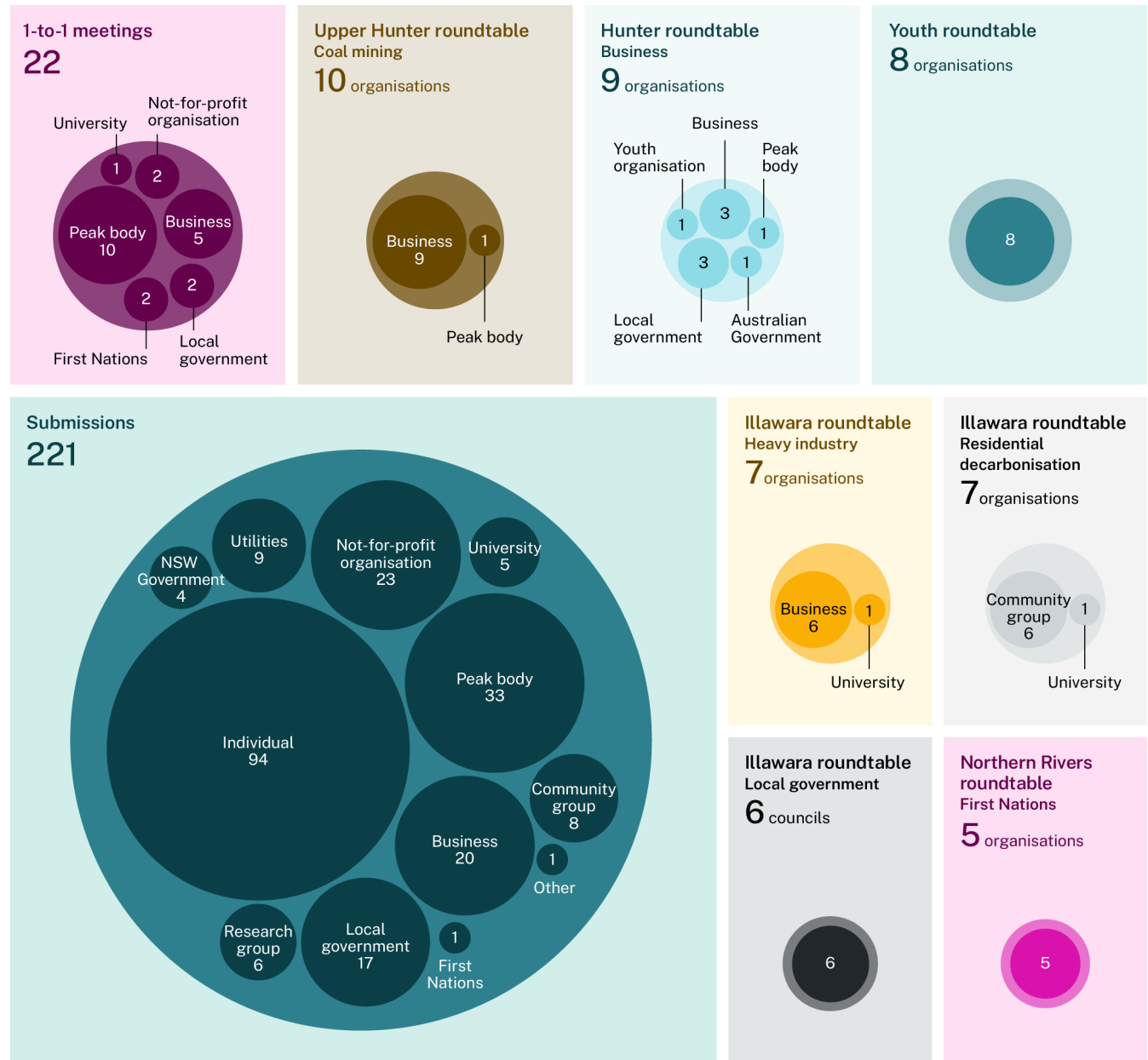




# What we did

- Held our first state-wide engagement activities between April to August 2025, to hear from stakeholders and inform the approach to our work and advice to government.
- Provided a consultation paper and asked for feedback on current challenges and suggested actions that the commission and government can take for adaptation and decarbonisation.
- Held roundtables, meetings and received over 200 submissions from across the state.

**Figure 1**  
Stakeholder engagement types





## What we heard

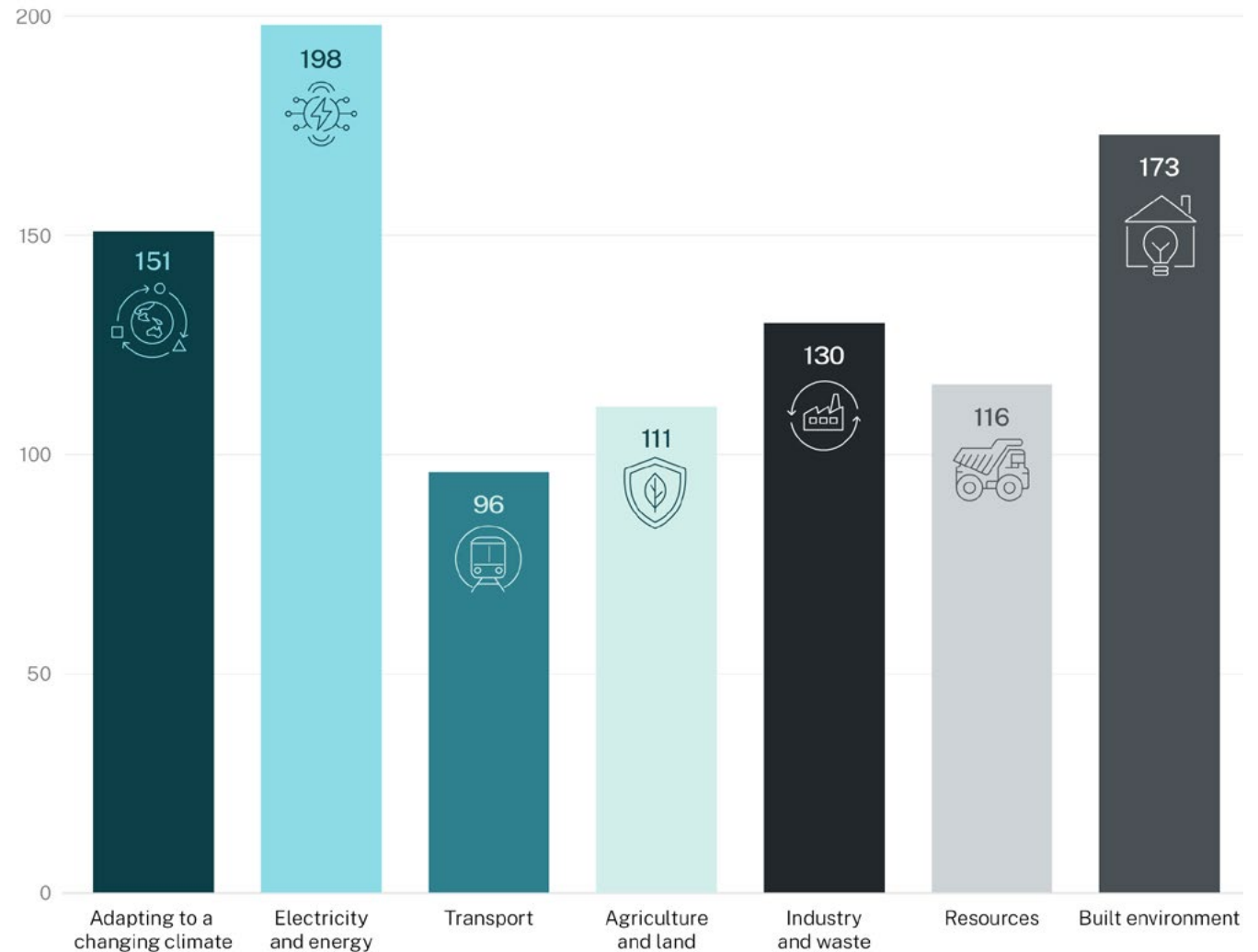
Feedback provided valuable insights across a broad spectrum of perspectives.

Stakeholder responses focused on:

- experience of climate change impacts,
- challenges with adaptation or decarbonisation,
- gaps or issues with current climate policy,
- suggested actions on NSW's approach to climate change.

Most of the suggested actions are for the NSW Government which are useful for informing our future advice, with some suggested actions on how the commission should fulfil its remit.

**Figure 2**  
Responses from submission process across consultation topics





## What we are doing

Opening our doors to engagement, this process marks the launch of ongoing engagement as a core feature of our work.

We greatly appreciate the time and effort taken to provide detailed, thoughtful and useful input.

Illawarra roundtable  
Photo: Adam McClean



### The feedback and insights help:



Shape advice within commission reports, including our upcoming 2025 annual progress report



Refine our monitoring approach to assess progress for the state



Inform decisions on priority areas for further investigation



Target future engagement to enable ongoing conversations and deliver useful outputs that reflect stakeholder experiences across NSW

# 1

## Overarching themes for addressing climate change in NSW

Feedback reflected 6 common themes, largely focused on how government could more effectively address climate change through decarbonisation and adaptation actions, in partnership with communities across the state.

# Elevating First Nations knowledge, leadership and stewardship as central to addressing climate change



## Key challenges

- Ineffective and non-inclusive cultural outcomes leading to broader environmental and social impacts
- Tokenistic engagement and/or consultation fatigue
- Missed opportunities to learn from extensive First Nations land management
- Lack of holistic approach to working alongside First Nations communities and leaders



## Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

- Genuine, sustained partnerships with First Nations peoples to shape climate policy and action, with decision-making authority and shared governance
- Shifting from transactional engagement to early, transformative approaches that respect cultural knowledge and custodianship, share ownership and consider inclusive co-design with fair remuneration and recognition of intellectual property
- Be led by communities and seek to listen and learn, considering existing engagement processes and capacity to build trust, reciprocity and equity

# Working closely with communities experiencing the most severe climate impacts



## Key challenges

- Climate impacts increasing in intensity and severity
- Essential services and infrastructure increasingly vulnerable to climate impacts
- Extreme events and climate hazards, including compound events, are impacting public health, safety and connectivity
- Vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected and not equipped to respond



## Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

- Listen to the people in the most impacted communities and co-design appropriate solutions
- Resource local leadership to drive local transition outcomes

Stakeholders suggested the commission could play a key role in strengthening government's understanding of community perspectives.

# Improve alignment and integrated decision-making across different sectors and levels of government



## Key challenges

- Fragmented governance with unclear roles and responsibilities, leading to siloed planning and action
- Policies and programs not delivering intended outcomes in different local areas
- Missed opportunities to capitalise on local skills and knowledge
- Complexity of planning and regulatory environment reducing investor interest and opportunities, particularly in renewable energy and industrial zones



## Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

- Coordinated, whole-of-government approach to support communities, accelerate delivery, and send clear investment signals, particularly for clean energy, including resourcing local stakeholders

# Driving equity, justice and community participation to build stronger understanding and support for climate change actions



## Key challenges

- Lack of accessibility to information and resources for people experiencing social or economic disadvantage
- Widespread misinformation and gaps in public understanding leading to fragmented support for climate action
- Long approval timescales due to lack of public support and planning system complexities
- Increasing energy prices seen by many as the result of climate action



## Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

- Inclusive engagement and co-design to ensure diverse communities can shape transition projects and climate action decisions, bringing appropriate long-term opportunity and benefit for local people
- Drive equitable outcomes across the state, thinking about how actions affect our most vulnerable people and how changes to address climate change can also address other barriers

Stakeholders also suggested the commission holds a critical role in building support for climate change actions through its convening power and education function.

# Maintaining a realistic, well-communicated narrative supported by a place-based approach and workforce support



## Key challenges

- Poor understanding of what net zero means, including benefits, costs and how climate action will shape people's lives in different ways
- Access to skilled workforces and innovation gaps risk timely delivery of new infrastructure, solutions and realisation of regional economic benefits
- Widespread misinformation driving confusion on the costs and trade-offs for climate action, particularly in regional areas



## Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

- Investment and approaches tailored to different areas, unlocking long-term economic opportunities and building regional resilience
- Improved public education and accessible information to build a stronger understanding of the need for change and the benefits for local communities

Stakeholders also suggested the commission could play a key role in fostering research, innovation and collaboration to support a stronger narrative for the transition, acting as an independent convener across areas of the economy and communities.

# Developing an effective monitoring framework to track progress and impacts in addressing climate change across the state



## Key challenges

### Adaptation

- Lack of clarity on goals and progress to drive increased funding and actions
- Differing data sources underpinning stakeholder understanding and approaches
- Building First Nations knowledge and community experience into frameworks
- Broadening analysis from a focus on projects implemented to recognition of the broader impacts of actions, and increased community resilience and capacity
- Considering the interconnection of community and ecosystem health in analysis of resilience

### Emissions

- Delays and time lags in emissions inventories
- Lack of enforceable targets in hard-to-abate sectors with inconsistent reporting
- Overreliance on unsubstantiated offsets
- Perceptions of methodological gaps, including ineffectual capturing of emerging sectors like data centres, and underestimation of potent gases like methane
- Failure to capture full scope of life-cycle emissions
- Concerns with land sector gains masking a lack of progress in other areas
- Negative perceptions reduce the credibility, transparency and effectiveness of efforts



## Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

Actions under this theme focused on the commission's approach to monitoring progress across the state to reduce emissions and improve resilience.

These included:

- Transparent emissions accounting prioritising reducing direct emissions, with broad criteria including social and cost-of-living impacts
- Clear, measurable adaptation objectives tracking a broad range of indicators, underpinned by data

# 2

## Adaptation

Stakeholders identified a range of challenges and suggested actions for government to improve NSW's approach to adapting to climate change and building resilience across the state.

Responses have been grouped into two core themes, focused on improving our understanding of the risks of climate impacts and our progress in building resilience, and increasing the preparedness of our infrastructure and communities.

# Understanding risk, assessing progress and building the ability to respond to challenges



## Challenges

- Escalating impacts and disproportionate climate risks for communities facing existing social and economic disadvantages
- Vulnerable and disadvantaged communities lack the authority, information and support needed to adapt
- Minimal First Nations integration in land management and adaptation activities
- Inconsistent evidence-base to assess adaptation progress and holistic integration of adaptation
- Lack of alignment in risk assessments at different jurisdictional levels and resultant community awareness of risk and extreme weather early warning
- Underutilisation of existing datasets and tools due to complexity, coverage limitations and insufficient integration with decision-making processes
- No legislative requirement and little support for local governments to plan for, implement actions or publicly report on adaptation



## Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

### Building adaptive capacity and risk understanding

Stronger evidence, inclusive planning and First Nations leadership to guide adaptation strategies:

- Continuously improve useability of climate data and tools, and standardise risk assessment for decision making
- Embed First Nations knowledge in risk and resilience planning, prioritising First Nations partnership in land management and adaptation activities
- Invest in community-based adaptation across sectors, communities and local government, empowering local stakeholders to build tailored responses that fit their regions
- Support local government and councils through legislation, funding and capacity-building to prepare, implement and publicly report on local adaptation plans

# Increasing infrastructure and community preparedness



## Challenges

- Essential services and infrastructure are increasingly vulnerable, with extreme events and climate hazards including compound events disrupting supplies and connectivity, reducing public health and safety
- Vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected by extreme heat, flooding and coastal inundation, but are not equipped to respond
- Extreme heat is particularly impacting the elderly, young children, outdoor workers, culturally and linguistically-diverse communities, people with disabilities and those with pre-existing health conditions
- Inadequate housing quality, poor urban design, limited access to cooling, and information barriers impacting early warnings are all driving lack of preparedness and response to extreme heat
- Rising insurance costs and an increasing number of uninsurable properties
- Heavy reliance on reactive disaster relief impacting government spending



## Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

### Preparing communities and infrastructure for impacts

Stronger planning and investment in housing, health, and emergency systems to build resilience in NSW:

- Improve planning codes, governance systems and insurance supports to reflect future risks and improve the ability to respond to impacts as they happen
- Co-design new strategies that address local concerns and enhance public education on how to prepare and respond to challenges, including targeted action for extreme heat and humidity, flooding and fires
- Strengthen equitable, collaborative community responses through funding that suits local needs, prioritises equity and delivers retro-fits alongside new solutions

# 3



## Approach to emissions reduction – by sector

Achieving our legislated targets in support of building a safer, more prosperous NSW for future generations was a core priority expressed throughout submissions.

Feedback on challenges and suggested actions for government and the commission have been grouped into sectors.



## Electricity & Energy



### Challenges

- Slow, complex, fragmented planning processes increase costs and regulatory burden and reduce investor confidence
- Market structures, regulation and incentive schemes are misaligned with a distributed energy system that integrates consumer energy
- Demand growth outpacing network investments
- Distrust, lack of community buy-in and engagement fatigue, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas
- Concerns over land use, biodiversity, pollution and benefit-sharing, with some misinformation weakening social license
- Retaining affordability and system reliability
- Disproportionate energy challenges for rural, regional and vulnerable people
- Inadequate First Nations participation, with lack of dedicated resources and sufficient recognition of rights and knowledge
- More frequent and intense extreme weather events are increasingly impacting network reliability
- Consumer energy resources not harnessed to accelerate the energy transition and reduce network augmentation costs



### Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

#### Accelerating a fair energy transition

Stronger, coordinated action to deliver clean energy while maintaining equity, reliability and community trust:

- Strengthen early, genuine community engagement to drive long-term benefit from projects
- Streamline approvals and grid and transmission upgrades to reduce costs and unlock investment
- Fund energy efficiency and scale up distributed energy by harnessing consumer energy resources and models of shared ownership, peer-to-peer energy trading, and virtual power plants
- Enable urban renewable energy zones



## Transport



### Challenges

- Disjointed policy, regulation and infrastructure approaches limit opportunities for increased electrification
- Limited consumer confidence in electric vehicles is slowing adoption, caused by perceived gaps in charging infrastructure and investment, supply chain constraints, high installation costs, grid constraints, retrofitting limitations, regulatory hurdles and limited incentives
- Reliance on diesel-powered vehicle fleets and road-based freight is limiting shifts in the sector such as lack of investment, technological development, workforce development and the identification of near-term opportunities
- Current urban planning prioritises car use, reducing focus on active and public transport infrastructure, funding and policy support



### Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

#### Driving a low-carbon transport future

Bold policy reform, EV infrastructure, investment in active and public transport to cut emissions:

- Expand EV charging, develop EV workforce capacity and battery recycling to strengthen consumer confidence
- In the longer-term, build capacity through electrifying urban freight, rail upgrades and scaling renewable fuels
- Drive change through policy mechanisms and regulations like emissions pricing and vehicle standards
- Invest in active transport, public transport and connectivity in urban and regional areas



## Agriculture & Land



### Challenges

- Farmers find incentives and finance mechanisms are not fit-for-purpose, with programs not reflecting the realities of on-farm practices
- Weak market and policy signals with inconsistent regulation across jurisdictions reduce appetite for change
- Limited practical guidance and uneven access to reliable technologies or information limits participation in new markets
- Restricted scaling of waste-to-energy technological solutions
- Concerns that higher feed and input costs would flow to consumers, destabilising food supply chains
- Trade-offs with competing land use demands between agricultural productivity, land conservation and accounting for offsets
- Divergent opinions on the value of offsets
- Concerns with accuracy of measurements and reporting in the land sector due to dynamic natural systems, shifting land management approaches, climate variability and increasing climate impacts



### Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

#### Strengthening agriculture & land-sector integrity

Tailored programs and clear policy signals to support farmers, cut emissions and protect biodiversity:

- Co-design incentives and interventions with First Nations communities, farmers and local stakeholders
- Enable spatial planning approvals to accelerate abatement technology uptake in feed additives and waste-to-energy manure management
- Investigate residue-use, low-carbon agricultural innovations and plantation management
- Invest in nature protection, while improving land-sector accounting and offset transparency
- Create regional integrated planning frameworks to balance the differing demands for land-use



## Industry & Waste



### Challenges

- Extensive scale and energy requirements of large industry operators
- Reliance on high-temperature processes that are more difficult to electrify than low temperature processes
- Implementing new approaches is capital intensive, with high upfront costs, long payback periods and long asset life-cycles
- Limited technology readiness and commercial availability, or lack of awareness and investor confidence in low-emissions substitutes
- Price and availability of renewable energy as key factors to maintain commercial competitiveness
- Lack of targeted incentives to drive first-mover innovation
- Landfill and organics continue to drive emissions through production and consumer behaviour
- Current waste and recycling systems are not enabling a circular economy



### Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

#### Decarbonising industry & scaling circular economy

Tailored strategies, innovation and policy reform to cut emissions and build clean industrial capacity:

- Support place-based net zero industrial development
- Expand trials and financial incentives to accelerate industrial heat electrification and overcome technology barriers
- Expand product stewardship and circular economy initiatives, including considering the role of energy-from-waste and leveraging government procurement
- Invest in low-carbon manufacturing and development of alternative fuels, including supply chains, alongside hydrogen



## Resources



### Challenges

- Different use cases and substitution challenges for thermal and metallurgical coal
- Strong variability of emissions between coal mines, and fluctuations in emissions due to a range of factors including the weather
- Mixed opinions about the technical and economic readiness of abatement technologies, including challenges with space, cost and safety that need to consider the specific situation of each mine
- Mixed opinions on whether current regulations limiting coal mine emissions are effective
- Some noted that approval of new, expanded or extended coal mines is incompatible with the state's climate goals
- Mixed views about the sufficiency of the Commonwealth Safeguard Mechanism for incentivising emissions reductions
- Some concerns about transparency, enforcement and accuracy of reporting, particularly for methane
- Concerns that mines rely heavily on offsets
- Concerns that regulation could result in duplication and reduce commercial efficiency



### Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

#### Reducing emissions from coal mining in NSW

Stronger regulation, transparency and use of planning levers to align the sector with the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023:

- Align planning levers with the gradual phase out of fossil fuels, supported by long-term community investment to transition to new industries
- Ensure planning assessments adequately consider project impacts, including on emissions targets and local climate impacts from downstream emissions
- Improve methane measurement, verification and timely uptake of on-site abatement
- Complement Safeguard Mechanism to drive on-site abatement and support NSW's targets

Align regulation and support abatement projects:

- Recognise offsets surrendered under the Safeguard Mechanism in NSW requirements
- Avoid regulatory and reporting duplication by aligning with Commonwealth regulation
- Ensure efficient consideration of abatement projects in planning assessments
- Provide targeted funding for early adopters

Stakeholders also suggested the commission provide advice to the Independent Planning Commission.

The Net Zero Commission is developing a report on emissions from coal mining and has conducted additional engagement specifically to inform this work. Input from the additional engagement is not included in this engagement summary.



## Built Environment



### Challenges

- Lack of regulation to drive home refurbishment for energy-efficiency and electrification
- Limited awareness of the benefits of electrification and understanding of opportunities for energy-efficiency/mitigation by homeowners
- High upfront costs reduce appetite for retrofitting existing buildings
- Lack of mandatory and consistent energy rating systems for residential properties reduce energy efficiency and upgrades
- Inconsistent disclosures and limited access to trusted consumer information reduce confidence and transparency in decision-making
- Vulnerable groups face inequitable access to electrification benefits
- Continued gas use undermining electrification and health outcomes
- Refrigerant use and disposal are not effectively targeted by policies and import regulations
- Low workforce capacity, with low numbers of tradespeople with electrification knowledge and supply chain networks
- Built environment Consumer Energy Resources face restrictions from participating in peer-to-peer energy trading



### Stakeholder suggested actions for Government

#### Decarbonising the built environment

Equity-focussed strategies to accelerate electrification, increase energy efficiency and reform refrigerants:

- Phase out gas use and provide clarity on when households and businesses must electrify
- Invest in workforce training to support electrification, as well as consumer education and product labelling
- Retrofit social and community housing for electrification and energy efficiency
- Enable greater demand-side participation in electricity markets
- Drive low carbon material uptake through government procurement and changes to standards
- Require disclosure of energy use (electricity and gas) in rental and sale agreements
- Phase out high-GWP refrigerants, with support to increase uptake and investment in alternatives and incentives to transition and manage end-of-life to avoid emissions

# Stakeholders who provided submissions

## Individuals

Dr S Akhtar

R Anderson

W Atkins

A Baker

G Batterbury

R Black

K Bossell

J Burgess

C Burman

D Case

D Curtis

C Dober

S Dunford

E Edwards

D Fleming

Dr T Guerin

R Gunning

D Hauser

L Hodges

C Holmes

N Howard

G Imhof

J Imrie

G Jessup

D Johnson

L Jones

J Karten

J Lambert

F Lee

V Lehmann-Monck

T Luck

S McGuinness

G Mercier

A Michaelis

J Ohana

E Pappas

A Potter

M Rich

T Schild

S Shaw

B Smiles

K Stark

M Stevenson

T Ward

A Welch

A Wheaton

D White

19 undisclosed submissions

## Joint

Solar Citizens campaign

## Organisation

350 Australia, Healthy Cities, local residents

AGL Energy

AIRAH

Alinta Energy

APA Group

ARC Centre of Excellence for the Weather of the 21st Century

ASK Property Consultants

Ausgrid

Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility

Australia Post

Australian Alliance For Energy Productivity

Australian Chicken Meat Federation

Australian Energy Council

Australian Forest Products Association NSW

Australian Hydrogen Council

Australian Industry Greenhouse Network

Australian Land Conservation Alliance

Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council

Australasian Railway Association

Bega Valley Shire Council

Better Futures Australia

Beyond Zero Emissions

Bioenergy Australia

BlueScope

Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action

Business Council for Sustainable Development Australia

Canberra Airport

Cement Industry Federation

Centennial

Central NSW Joint Organisation

City of Sydney

Climate Action Network Australia

Climate Action Newcastle

Climate Change Balmain-Rozelle

Climate Council

Climateworks

Committee for Sydney

Community Power Agency

Daikin

Endeavour Energy

Energy Efficiency Council

Environmental Defence Fund

Environmental Defenders Office

Friends of the Earth

Gas Appliances Manufacturing Association Australia

GoGet

Green Building Council of Australia

Healthy Futures

Housing Industry Association

Hunter Community Alliance

Hunter Jobs Alliance

Hunter Joint Organisation

Illawarra Knitting Nannas Against Greed

Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis

Insurance Council Australia

Jemena

Jesuit Social Services

Kiama Municipal Council

Ku-ring-gai Council

Kyogle Environment Group

Lake Macquarie Council

LMS Energy

Lock the Gate Alliance

Low Emissions Technology Australia

Mansfield Advisory and Bamboo Society

Master Electricians Australia

Materials and Embodied Carbon Leaders' Alliance

Minerals Council of Australia

Mining and Energy Union

National Environmental Law Association

National Parks Association NSW

Nature Conservation Council of NSW

New.E - Hunter New Energy Cluster

## Stakeholders who provided submissions

 Organisation continued	
Newtown Climate	Solar Citizens
Nexa Advisory	Southcoast Health and Sustainability Alliance
Next Cycle	Strata Community Association
Northern Beaches Council	Sweltering Cities
NSW Aboriginal Land Council	Sydney Coastal Councils Group
NSW Decarbonisation Innovation Hub	Sydney Environment Institute
NSW Farmers Association	Sydney Knitting Nannas
NSW Minerals Council	Sydney Water
NSW Productivity and Equality Commission	Tesla Motors Australia
Optimise Energy Solutions	The Climate Centre
Orica	The Justice and Equity Centre
Origin Energy	The Next Economy
Parents for climate	The Superpower Institute
PLF Accelerator	Transgrid
Powering Australia	University of Sydney
Rainforest Reserves Australia	UNSW Indigenous Land and Justice Research Group
Randwick City Council	Urban Transformation Research Centre WSU
Re-alliance	UTS Business School
Regional Cities NSW	Viva Energy
Resilient Sydney	Volvo Group Australia
Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation	Wando Conservation and Cultural Centre
Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils	Western Sydney Local Health District
Save Our Surroundings Riverina	Western Sydney Regional Organisation Councils
Shire Climate Action Network	WinZero Inc
Shorebird Group	Wollar Progress Association
	Zilch Forwarding Pty Ltd

## Net Zero Commission

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