



Department of Industry Science and Resources
Industry House
10 Binara Street
CANBERRA, ACT, 2601

To whom it may concern,

Re. Submission to Future Made in Australia Community Benefit Principles

I welcome the opportunity to participate in the consultation on the Community Benefit Principles as part of the Future Made in Australia agenda.

I support the intention behind these Community Benefit Principles. In particular, I welcome their recognition that Commonwealth investment in Australian industry and manufacturing should deliver better outcomes for the regional industries and economies core to Australia's prosperity.

I am pleased the Community Benefit Principles proposal requires consistent and transparent application of the 'Principles' when delivering Future Made in Australia funding. I often hear from industry, and in particular renewable energy proponents, that they are happy to deliver community benefits but want consistency in requirements for community engagement and benefit. As such, I agree with Future Made in Australia's intent in setting minimum requirements for community engagement and benefit.

My electorate of Indi spans 29,000 square kilometres of Victoria's North East. Indi's economy and industries are diverse. Timber processing, manufacturing and agriculture are major employers across Indi's communities.

Since I was elected in 2019, I have advocated for regional communities to receive long-term and meaningful economic benefit from the transition to renewable energy, commensurate to their vital role in hosting this transition.

Across parts of Indi and regional Australia, you can see the lasting regional benefit brought about from times of regional prosperity. The legacy of the gold rush can be seen in grand public buildings, historic town centres, telecommunications, roads and railways. This regional benefit improved the livelihood and productivity of regional Australia, making it an attractive place to live and run a business.

Community benefit in 2026 and going forward needs to deliver similar legacy projects that act as economic multipliers, continuing to enhance the livelihood and prosperity of regional Australia.



Community Benefit Principle 1: safe and secure jobs

The creation of regional jobs is important, and I agree with the intention of this principle.

Minimum Requirement 1.1 seeks to set a target for permanent jobs relative to the relevant ANZSIC code of the proponent. I agree with this intention, however benchmarking this to industry standards is concerning, particularly regarding the renewable energy sector.

In the context of the transition to renewable energy, community benefit is often referred to in terms of the number of jobs created. While there may be long-term jobs created for manufacturing wind and solar farm componentry, jobs created for the installation of grid-scale renewable energy projects are overwhelmingly short-term construction jobs. There are limited ongoing, permanent jobs for regional communities hosting renewable energy infrastructure. This is standard practice for this industry and if this industry was benchmarked against this practice, as proposed in Minimum Requirement 1.1, regional communities will not receive long term community benefit or better outcomes as is intended from these Principles.

I recommend that where Minimum Requirement 1.1 does not satisfactorily deliver lasting economic benefit for a region, other forms of community benefit be required, including investment into community priority projects.

Community Benefit Principle 3: engaging and achieving positive outcomes for local communities

I am pleased Principle 3 includes engaging with and delivering positive outcomes for local communities. The explicit inclusion of First Nations communities and communities directly affected by the transition to net zero is welcome.

However, the proposed Minimum Requirement 3.1 under Principle 3 only expects evidence of engagement with communities. This does not set a clear minimum standard and falls short of requiring best practice engagement with communities.

Community engagement is increasingly being understood as a vital step to achieving better outcomes for projects, proponents, and local communities. Meaningful community engagement early in project planning has the potential to reduce uncertainty, prevent misinformation, make sure projects are located in the right places, include local knowledge of the land in their planning, and improve social licence¹.

However, there is a patchwork of community engagement and benefit guidelines and policies across industries and federal and state governments. This disjointed information is difficult for regional communities and developers alike to navigate, causing unnecessary confusion and frustration and exacerbating the power imbalance between proponents and communities. Resources and guidelines

¹ Andrew Bray, RE-Alliance (2024), *Community engagement has no cookie-cutter approach: It's time to start listening*, https://www.re-alliance.org.au/community_engagement_reneweconomy



on best practice community engagement and benefit, such as The Energy Charter's 'Better Practice Landholder and Community Engagement Guide',² are helpful guides to fill this information gap.

I recommend Minimum Requirement 3.1 be updated to require evidence of best practice engagement with local communities, including First Nations communities.

Further, clear minimum expectations and guidelines on how to undertake best practice community engagement should be published to support proponents and communities to achieve the intention of Principle 3.

The Public guidance document lays out helpful context for these principles for the use of proponents, communities and Government in applying consistency across these principles. Under Principle 3, section 2.3 states:

"Local economic and employment opportunities created by projects can help offset the concentrated regional impacts of the net zero transition."

As outlined above, I urge the focus in Principle 3 to be updated to focus on local economic opportunities created and not on jobs created.

Conclusion

It is wholly reasonable for projects receiving Future Made in Australia support from the Federal Government to be expected to undertake meaningful community engagement and deliver long-term benefits to the regional community they operate in.

I call on the Government to ensure that Future Made in Australia's Community Benefit Principles are crafted clearly in a way that delivers long-term economic benefit to regional communities. We have an opportunity to ensure regional Australia meaningfully benefits from Future Made in Australia, and achieves lasting, legacy benefits that future generations will be proud of.

Sincerely,

Helen Haines MP

30 January 2026

² The Energy Charter (2021), *Better Practice Landholder and Community Engagement Guide*, [Better-Practice-Landholder-and-Community-Engagement-Guide-Final-September-2021.pdf](#)