



Australian Government

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner

AEIC Report to ECMC Meeting 10

AEIC report to ECMC - Meeting 10

8 May 2026

Presented by Commissioner Tony Mahar



What we have been doing – 2025 lookback

Enquiries and complaints

205 cases

Second highest number on record

35% higher than 2024

2024

2025

Engagement



More than 440 formal meetings with stakeholders

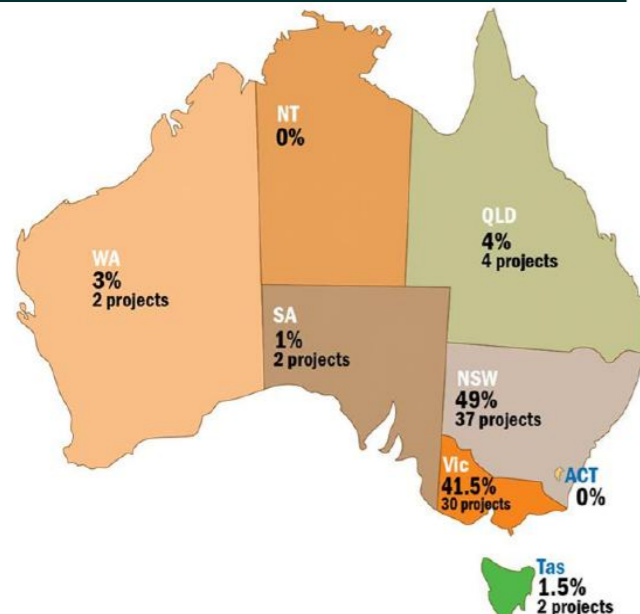


Travelled to all states and territories



Met people where they live

Enquiry and complaint locations



Case Issues

Top 5 Issues raised in cases

- 1 Community engagement – over 75% of cases
- 2 Planning processes – 66% of cases, double the year before
- 3 Amenity
- 4 Natural environment
- 5 Economic loss

Information and guidance

- 11 conference presentations and panels
- 5 new AEIC publications
- 11 formal submissions to government and policy consultations
- 3 parliamentary hearings

Media interviews and Podcasts to share information on our work and broader opinions about renewable energy matters

As well as a high number of cases (205), these were spread across the highest number of different projects (78 projects).

NSW and Vic remain busiest for case numbers; WA has increased in 2025.



The last year has been instrumental in consolidating the role of the AEIC - with government decision makers, with industry stakeholders and with community members. We have met with and helped many people and groups. Those that have an influence on, and are impacted by, the investment into renewable energy. We have invested in and established strong trusting relationships. These are helping the AEIC to make a real difference in a smoother and fairer energy shift. Over the next 12 months we will work hard to deliver more and better. To help deliver beneficial outcomes for all as part of the energy shift.

What we are hearing

From community

- Want to understand the need (rec 6) and why in their location
- “I support renewables, but this is not the right location” – the right location is critical and proposals in poor locations cause damage to the whole transition
- Impacts are real – concerns about short term impacts, long term viability, relationships within communities
- Want to be better supported to participate in approval processes – time, skills and resources
- Want real benefits – short and long term

From industry

- Communicating well is hard when misinformation spreads quickly
- Timing of engagement is a challenge – too early can mean not enough information, too late can mean lost trust

From government

- Local governments feel ill-equipped and not properly included in the process, yet bear a lot of impact
- Regulators can only work within remit, but community expect more
- Approvals are a balance of many competing factors.










What we are doing - AEIC Strategic and Operational Priorities 2026

Published priorities

Whilst AEIC has always set priorities through an annual plan to the Minister, in 2026 we have published our priorities so that we are transparent to all stakeholders on where we are focusing our efforts

Priority Outcomes 2026

For 2026 our priorities are:

-  We will deliver more and raise the awareness, collaboration and tangible output from the AEIC to ensure we are accessible and responsive to all members of the public.
-  We will maintain an effective and efficient complaints system and analyse it to identify trends and systemic issues.
-  We will lead efforts to promote best practices, information availability, and provide a central, trusted source for dissemination of information.
-  We will build on our First Nations engagement and ensure information needs and opportunities are promoted and addressed.
-  We will help combat misinformation by providing fact sheets and communicating accurate and reliable content on issues like decommissioning, public liability insurance and contamination.
-  We will actively contribute to the policy/regulatory reform agenda via submissions and AEIC expectations and position statements.
-  We will continue to promote and drive accountability for the recommendations from the Community Engagement Review including through the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council.

[Source - AEIC strategic and operational priorities 2026](#)

Consultations and Submissions

We continue to make submissions to various consultations and welcome the chance to share insights and recommendations. While we search out opportunities, we also welcome any invitation to meet to discuss or comment on relevant initiatives.

Updates on some key focus areas

Third Party Insurance

AEIC has been leading work with various stakeholders to combat the common concerns around public liability insurance. Through open discussions we have been able to forge broad agreement to a future model that would provide certainty for neighbouring landholders that they would not bear costs of any incidents of damage too or from renewable infrastructure projects.

Decommissioning

Following release of position statement last year, and support from Clean Energy Council and others, further work to bring in financial surety and improved governance framework for decommissioning.

Facts Sheets and Position Statements

As part of our role in combatting misinformation, and informed by our case work and stakeholder engagements, AEIC is working on a range of topics

- Fact sheets on
 - shadow flicker
 - noise regulation
 - contamination
 - setbacks
 - property valuation
 - fire safety
 - planning processes and making effective submissions
- Position statements on
 - use of non-disclosure agreements
 - First Nations engagement expectations
 - minimum website expectations for proponents
 - consistency and contemporariness of standards
 - public liability insurance (finalised position)



AEIC view on Community Engagement Review Progress

“How is the Community Engagement Review recommendations going?”

As you can imagine, it is a question I am asked often.

What I say in response to the question is there's been a lot of activity, a lot of effort and a lot of good will. I've seen and heard some good examples of change and improvement across the sector. But it would be a brave person to say community commentary and concerns around renewable energy infrastructure have reduced.

Given what we know about the difficulty in getting projects completed – now is not the time to slow down or refer back to business as usual. We need to keep working on the issues until communities are having a more positive experience, until industry is operating at a higher standard and where we can say communities are clearly better off from the transition. We need all governments to increase effort to really make sure the energy transition does not stall and reliability, security and sustainability are delivered. Until we have that, it's not possible for me to say hand on heart that the energy shift is happening in a way that either smooth or fair enough.

I do want to acknowledge the work by Commonwealth, States and Territories that has been undertaken to date and that is outlined in the report.

As AEIC I endorse the recommendation to publish an update – the original report was about the community, and it is important the community be able to see the update.

But we should be under no illusions, there is a lot of work yet to be done to ensure community confidence and trust is secured and some of the activities already identified are completed, see some specific comments to the right.

The need for more nationally consistent approaches is becoming more important as the intensity of the renewables roll out increases and the ability to get information and compare standards and experiences across states is so easy. There is a need to spread some of the good work more consistently across the country – taking some of the best initiatives from one jurisdiction and tailoring it for implementation in others..

The establishment phase may be considered complete, but the delivery of better outcomes for communities is not. I commit myself and my team to continuing to listening and ensuring the views of communities as we hear them, are heard to help them with their specific complaints and concerns about projects. I will continue to advocate for better practices, more collaboration and updating of standards as to ensure the regulatory framework keeps up with technology and community expectations.

Developer Rating Scheme (rec 1)

It is great to now have the scheme built and open for industry to opt in to. But at this moment, there is still no visible register for the communities that the scheme is established to help.

We are yet to see the level of take up in the numbers that we need for the scheme to work well. As a voluntary scheme this is a huge risk. There is a need for governments to get behind and push early adoption by big projects and those being run by government entities, such as major transmission builds.

And there is already acknowledgment of the need for refinement and the opportunity to add to it – for example decommissioning.

I will continue to work with the Department, with Equifax and with industry to see this scheme deliver the outcomes envisaged.

Communications (Rec 6)

One of the most common questions raised with me is “why?” . Why do we need renewables, why do they need to be in this location, why do they need to be at the scale that they are and who is ultimately paying for it all, both financially and socially?

The fact that this continues to be raised, as recently as last week in a well-informed community in northern NSW, reiterates to me that there is much more to do.

Whilst there are some government initiatives in research, and in some states in delivery, what I am consistently told is that people want to hear about it from trusted sources and in many cases local sources. Delivered in a way that fits that communities needs.

I will continue to advocate for better and more tailored communications channels, as well as increasing the information available via my office.

Decommissioning (part of rec 2)

Whilst not an explicit recommendation, decommissioning was included in the implementation recommendations for recommendation 2. It remains an issue of concern and is increasing as decommissioning moved from a future state to an actual state.

AEIC released a position paper on this in October 2025. Commitment is need to realise a financial surety scheme, and to strengthen the requirements in approvals.

The research project about to commence via ECMC is a good start but needs to be done with speed and move quickly to implementation. This can deliver a much-needed level of confidence and recognition by the community that Governments collectively are acknowledging community concerns. I would like to take the lead on this issue (as I have done with public liability insurance) with the support of the Commonwealth and States.