



CEIG REPORT REVEALS CRITICAL NEED FOR PLANNING REFORMS TO DRIVE CLEAN ENERGY INVESTMENT AND MEET EMISSIONS TARGETS

Clean Energy Investor Group (CEIG) and Herbert Smith Freehills (HSF) report notes inconsistent and unclear planning assessment processes lead to project delays and increased costs.

****EMBARGOED UNTIL 22 APRIL****

A groundbreaking report released today by the Clean Energy Investor Group (CEIG) identifies key pinch points in planning approval processes that are impacting the timely delivery of key renewable energy, storage and transmission projects.

To achieve net zero and renewable energy targets, a significant amount of investment in clean energy projects and transmission is urgently needed.

Leading international law firm, Herbert Smith Freehills (HSF) has reviewed the planning approval processes in Queensland and Victoria, and the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act), to inform CEIG's new report.

In Victoria planning permit applications for energy generation facilities took an average of 376 days in the 2023 financial year (334 days average so far in 2024), though as at 19 April 2024, one wind farm permit application lodged in 2018 had reached 2,045 days without a decision being made.

In Queensland, seven wind farms took an average of 190 days for planning approval in 2019-2021. In Queensland, solar, wind and storage projects are each assessed by different state and local authorities, meaning data on approvals timeframes is not readily available for comparison.

In comparison, CEIG's recent review of New South Wales planning processes found that over the last five years till 30 November 2023 average approval timeframes were 746 days for wind, solar and battery projects, and 492 days for hydro and transmission projects.

CEIG CEO Simon Corbell said, "though vital for effective implementation, planning processes currently face numerous challenges. This report underscores the urgent need to address delays and inefficiencies that hinder progress on critical clean energy investments, imperative for meeting emissions reduction targets."

Corbell noted numerous approvals bodies, inconsistent planning and environmental assessment processes, and a lack of guidance on community consultation are impacting clean energy investment.

“This report identifies quick wins Queensland, Victoria and the Commonwealth can take to reform planning processes and secure more renewable energy and transmission projects.”

In Queensland, CEIG members have particularly drawn attention to the recommendation for the government to review the requirements for police escort of mass transport, which will reduce costs and time delays for projects.

In Victoria, CEIG members have highlighted the need for risk-weighted impact assessment and have identified the potential for a quick win by allowing for Battery Energy Storage System projects to reach agreement with neighbours for increased noise limits, similar to the approach to wind farms.

Clean energy investors are also calling on the Commonwealth to improve assessment processes for renewable energy projects under the current EPBC Act which lacks predictability, transparency and timeliness.

Across all jurisdictions, the report identifies EPBC Act assessments as the single biggest challenge for delivering renewable energy projects in Australia, putting investment decisions and the likelihood of Australia meeting its clean energy targets and decarbonisation goals at significant risk.

The report recommends that all jurisdictions:

- Clarify and coordinate consultation processes to achieve transparency, consistency and coordination between proponents;
- Facilitate data sharing for regulators, proponents and operators;
- Streamline interaction with the Commonwealth including for strategic assessments and the treatment of Renewable Energy Zones; and
- Improve understanding of intangible cultural heritage with First Nations People.

More specific recommendations for the planning frameworks in Queensland, Victoria and EPBC Act are included in the report available at www.ceig.org.au.

This report follows a similar review by HSF of the New South Wales planning approvals process released by CEIG in December 2023.

Quotes attributable to Simon Corbell:

“Investment in clean energy projects is urgently needed to achieve net zero targets and the *Delivering Major Clean Energy Projects* report shows how planning processes can be enhanced to improve outcomes for communities, the environment and clean energy investment.”

Quotes attributable to Heidi Asten, HSF Environment, Planning & Communities partner.

“There is a clear need for planning and development reform to reduce project delays and help speed up the States’ energy transition. We’ve identified several opportunities, including quick wins and longer term recommendations, that would support this goal and the path to net zero.”

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About the report:

Delivering Major Clean Energy Projects in Queensland and Victoria: Review of Statutory Planning Approvals Processes identifies, from a legal perspective, key pinch points in the states' planning frameworks for major renewable energy projects and 'quick wins' that would enable government and industry to accelerate the delivery of renewable energy generation and transmission in these states, considered critical to achieving net zero emissions in accordance with their respective targets.

About the Clean Energy Investor Group: The Clean Energy Investor Group currently represents more than 20 Australian and global investors who have collectively funded over AUD \$10 billion worth of Australian renewable energy projects. CEIG's members have a combined portfolio of AUD \$38 billion and represent over 16GW of operational clean energy across 76 power stations. It is an investor body, representing the unique perspective of clean energy investors to regulators, policy makers and the broader energy sector.
<https://www.ceig.org.au>

About Herbert Smith Freehills: Herbert Smith Freehills is a world-leading international law firm. Located in 25 offices across Asia Pacific, UK, EMEA and North America, operating at the heart of the new global business landscape, providing premium, full-service legal advice for some of the world's biggest organisations. Heidi Asten is a partner in the Environment, Planning & Communities team helping government and private clients to navigate Commonwealth and State environmental and planning approvals for the successful delivery of their projects, and providing integrated advice on climate change and ESG considerations.