NSW GOVERNMENT Environment, Climate Change & Water

Community attitudes to wind farms and renewable energy in NSW

Renewable Energy Precincts

The NSW Government has established six Renewable Energy Precincts in areas with the best known wind resources including: New England Tablelands, Upper Hunter, Central Tablelands, NSW/ACT Border Region, South Coast and Cooma-Monaro. Full-time Renewable Energy Coordinators based locally have been employed in each Precinct to build community knowledge, understanding and uptake of renewable energy.

Community attitudes to wind farms survey

In 2010, the NSW Government commissioned an independent polling company to survey over 2000 residents and 300 businesses in regional areas in NSW on attitudes to wind farms and renewable energy.

The purpose of the survey was to understand community attitudes within the Renewable Energy Precincts, to inform the work of the regional coordinators and community debates.

The consultants surveyed 2022 residents aged 18 years or older across the six Renewable Energy Precincts and a 'control area' in regional NSW. It also covered 300 businesses across the six precincts. The research was undertaken via telephone interviews over May and June 2010.

It is the most comprehensive survey of community attitudes to wind farms and renewable energy in NSW.

This brochure summarises the key findings of the report (*Community Attitudes to Wind Farms in NSW*). To download the full report go to the Renewable Energy Precincts information resources at: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/climatechange/reprecinctresources.htm.

How do people feel about wind and renewable energy?

Solar and wind energy have higher community acceptance than other types of renewable energy and coal, gas or nuclear power.

Table 1 Acceptable power sources (n= sample size)

	REGIONAL NSW	
Energy source	Renewable Energy Precincts (n=1729) %	Regional Control Area (n=293) %
Solar	95	96
Wind	81	81
Water or hydroelectric	75	79
Gas	69	74
Conventional coal	33	27
Nuclear	24	30

Community support for wind farms

Community support for wind farms in NSW and the local area is high

The research found very strong support for wind farms among the NSW community. There was no significant difference in the level of support from residents in and out of town.

Over half of farmers (57%) reported that they would consider hosting turbines on their property. Local businesses expressed higher levels of support for wind farms in the local region (84%).

Men and women were equally supportive towards wind farms, but there was higher support among university-educated residents and younger residents (18-29 years old) than older residents (aged 65 years and over).

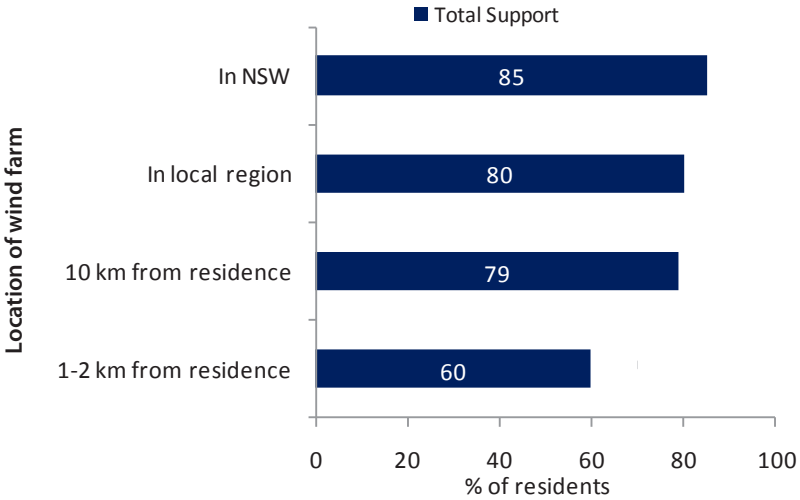


Figure 1 **Overall support for wind farms in the Renewable Energy Precincts**

Key factors affecting community attitudes

Residents were asked, unprompted, what **benefits** wind farms would bring to the region.

Benefits

The most common responses were that windfarms reduce pollution and generate clean power, reduce electricity costs to the consumer, and increase employment opportunities within the community.

Table 2 **Perceived benefits of wind farms (unprompted), residents who support or oppose wind farms 1–2 km from residence**

Benefit	Supporters (n=1053) %	Opposers (n=589) %
Reduces pollution (clean power/greenhouse gas)	56	36
Cost effective/cheaper energy/bills	28	18
Benefits local economy and community	41	29
Increases employment opportunities	34	24
Don't know	4	19

Residents were asked, unprompted, what **concerns** they had about wind farms.

Concerns

The most common responses were about the potential for noise, and the potential visual impact on the landscape. Less frequent concerns were voiced about the effectiveness of the power generation and the impact on the local environment.

Table 3 **Perceived concerns about wind farms (unprompted), residents who support or oppose wind farms 1–2 km from residence**

Concern	Supporters (n=1053) %	Opposers (n=589) %
Noise concerns	17	40
Impact on landscape (including aesthetic/agricultural impact)	11	31
Concern over power generation/effectiveness	5	14
Impact on environment (vegetation/wildlife/farm animals	6	11
No concerns	44	13

How do attitudes across the Precincts compare?

P1 New England Tablelands

SUPPORT FOR WIND FARMS:

In NSW: 82% 10km: 76% 1–2km: 54%

WIND PROJECTS:
Approved: 1
81 MW (Glen Innes)
Under Assessment: 2
730 MW (Ben Lomond and Sapphire)
POPULATION: Approx 172,000 adults
SURVEY: 70% in town, 30% out-of-town

P2 Upper Hunter

SUPPORT FOR WIND FARMS:

In NSW: 79% 10km: 74% 1–2km: 47%

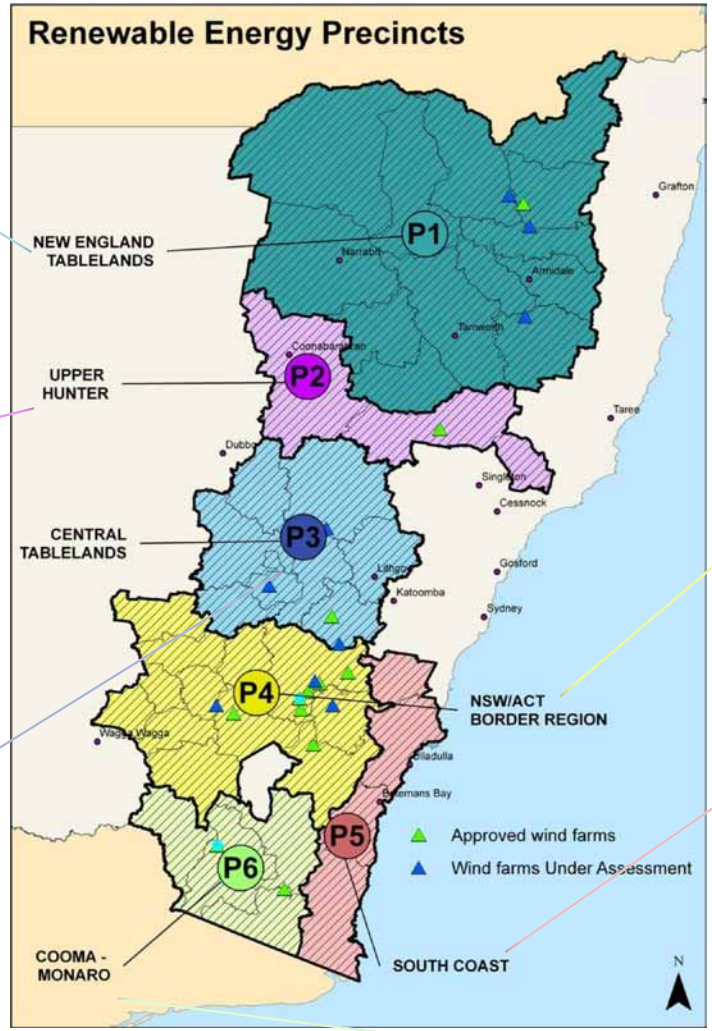
WIND PROJECTS:
Approved: 1
102 MW (Kyoto Energy Park)
POPULATION: Approx 30,000 adults
SURVEY: 64% in town, 36% out-of-town

P3 Central Tablelands

SUPPORT FOR WIND FARMS:

In NSW: 88% 10km: 82% 1–2km: 63%

WIND PROJECTS:
Installed: 2
11.2 MW (Hampton and Blayney)
Approved: 1
10 MW (Black Springs)
Under Assessment: 2
280 MW (Flyers Creek and Paling Yards)
POPULATION: Approx 157,000 adults
SURVEY: 67% in town, 33% out-of-town



P4 NSW/ACT Border Region

SUPPORT FOR WIND FARMS:

In NSW: 89% 10km: 84% 1–2km: 61%

WIND PROJECTS:
Installed: 2
145.8 MW (Crookwell I and Capital)
Approved: 5
579 MW (Conroys Gap, Taralga, Crookwell II, Cullerin Range, Gullen Range)
Under Assessment: 5
1074 MW (Yass Valley, Crookwell III, Birrema, Carrols Ridge, Adjungbilly)
POPULATION: Approx 101,000 adults
SURVEY: 71% in town, 29% out-of-town

P5 South Coast

SUPPORT FOR WIND FARMS:

In NSW: 84% 10km: 77% 1–2 km: 63%

WIND PROJECTS: None
POPULATION: Approx 234,000 adults
SURVEY: 54% in town, 45% out-of-town

P5 Cooma–Monaro

SUPPORT FOR WIND FARMS:

In NSW: 84% 10km: 79% 1–2km: 60%

WIND PROJECTS:
Approved: 1
30 MW (Snowy Plains/ Berridale)
Under Assessment: 1
146 MW (Boco Rock)
POPULATION: Approx 23,000 adults
SURVEY: 63% in town, 37% out-of-town

How is the NSW Government responding?

A majority of residents considered that they do not have adequate information on wind energy.

As part of the Renewable Energy Precinct initiative, the NSW Government is delivering a suite of information resources and workshops about wind power and renewable energy to increase understanding and involvement in the community and industry.

If you would like to talk with your Renewable Energy Precinct Coordinator the contact details can be found on the Renewable Energy Precinct website: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/climatechange/renewableprecincts.htm.

You can learn more about …

- Community attitudes to renewable energy and wind farms in the **Community Attitudes to Wind Farms in NSW** report
- How many homes a local wind farm will power and the savings in greenhouse gas emissions using the **NSW Wind Farm Greenhouse Gas Savings Tool** based on the report '**Estimating Greenouse Gas Abatement for NSW Windfarms'**
- Wind farms and property values from the most comprehensive NSW study to date overseen by the NSW Valuer-General – **Preliminary assessment of the impact of wind farms on surrounding land values in Australia**.
- The A-Z of wind farms in **The Wind Energy Fact Sheet**
- Large-scale solar power in the **Pre-Feasibility Study for a Solar Power Precinct**

To download the resources currently available, please visit the Renewable Energy Precincts Resources page: http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/climatechange/reprecinctresources.htm.

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