



Renewable Energy Projects on Farmland and in Farming Communities

Summary Report
February 2025

A large field of solar panels under a cloudy sky. The panels are arranged in rows, and the sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall scene is bright and clean, representing renewable energy.

CONTENTS

KEY INSIGHTS 3

METHODOLOGY 7

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 9

A photograph of a wind farm at dusk or dawn. The sky is a mix of soft orange and pale blue. Several wind turbines are visible, with the largest one in the foreground on the left. The text 'KEY INSIGHTS' is centered in a large, white, sans-serif font.

KEY INSIGHTS

KEY INSIGHTS

9 out of 10

people who own, work or have a close connection to farmland are opposed to renewable energy projects

Respondents were asked to identify where they lived and their connection to farmland.

1846 respondents, **90.1%**, of respondents own, work or have a close connection to farmland.

92% of all respondents opposed or strongly opposed renewable energy projects on farmland. This survey found a distinct opposition to renewable energy projects on farmland.

Over 80% of neighbours are opposed to renewable energy projects

Uniquely, the survey asked respondents to identify if they were a neighbour to an energy project (within 2 kilometres).

Of the 729 people that classified themselves as neighbours to a renewable energy project **81%** of these respondents were in **opposition** to the energy project.

Lack of communication and consultation a common theme

The feedback was that there was a **lack of community consultation** and more importantly a **lack of communication between neighbours.**

One respondent stated that, "We are adjoining neighbours and have never been asked our thoughts, just told about projects which might happen, and subsequently happening. Not consulted. Not informed by a host."

KEY INSIGHTS

Only 7.5% of people support renewable energy projects

The survey showed an overwhelming opposition to renewable energy projects on farmland.

However, one respondent positively noted that “Many of us already co-farm successfully with renewables. Can’t avoid the future, energy demand is consistently increasing, we have to move forward.”

Another respondent said, “It brings jobs and other financial benefits into the local community.”

7.5% of all respondents **supported renewable projects in farmland** and **11.8% of neighbours** to energy parks were in **support**.

People are concerned for their communities and rural people

The majority of the feedback from participants indicated that energy proponents employed **divisive business models** to obtain social licence, and to encourage locals to host projects.

Respondents were concerned about the lasting effect that hosting renewable energy projects in their area was having on **community cohesion**.

Comments from respondents also indicated high levels of **stress and anxiety** where they were neighbours to energy projects.

KEY INSIGHTS

Some comments from respondents

“Primary production has contributed more to the economy and our communities in the past 150 years and will continue to do so for another 150+ years whereas renewable energy on the same productive land will only last a fraction of that and reduce the quality of our communities along the way.”

“The mental health toll this is taking in my community is immense.”

I am scared and worried for my neighbours who are directly affected.”

“Please listen to those of us who are neighbours of proposed projects but strongly OPPOSE and are not being listened to when we voice our concerns.”

Our neighbourhood is opposed to the project but we feel we have not been heard! There is no effective community consultation and projects are being rushed through. Please pause and review the renewables rush!”

“Agriculture should be at the forefront of any renewable decision.”

“We are 5km from Murra Wurra wind farm and that is too close!”

“I worked on the construction of the biggest wind farm near me, and it does not return above 20% efficiency.”

The property is a mess and surrounding countryside has not recovered in the past year.”

METHODOLOGY

A large field of solar panels is shown, with the panels arranged in rows and tilted towards the sky. The sky is overcast with grey clouds. The ground is covered in green grass. The word "METHODOLOGY" is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

To understand the attitudes of rural people towards renewable energy projects on their land and in their communities, Farms For Food advocacy group conducted an online survey.

The survey ran for 15 days in December 2024 and was launched from the Farms For Food social media platform. The survey was open to the public.

The survey received 2872 responses from across Australia with the majority from Victoria (1736 responses), 462 from NSW, 368 from QLD, 225 from WA, 60 from SA, 15 from TAS and 6 from NT.

The survey asked 5 questions including their connection to farming and renewables, their level of support and questions related to being a neighbour of renewable projects. There was also a section where respondents could leave a comment.





SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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The majority of respondents had the following concerns regarding renewable energy projects on farmland:

- Cohesion in small communities is being affected by the business models employed by energy proponents who use non-disclosure agreements, exclusivity contracts and who seek to gain social licence through donating to community organisations prior to planning approval being granted.
- Many felt that the rights or voice of the neighbours to renewable energy projects were not being heard. People expressed a concern for 'neighbours' mental health as well as their loss of agency in the planning process.
- State legislation is fast tracking planning approval times and respondents felt that community consultation was not genuine. Many respondents were sceptical about the process of gaining social licence and community agreement by the energy proponents.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Rural communities in renewable energy zones (REZ) felt that they had been targeted to host large numbers of renewable energy projects and they also held concerns about the lack of planning between the different energy proponents, the organisations that managed the energy grid and state planning.
- Respondents indicated that prime farmland needed to be protected from renewable energy projects and that there were more appropriate places to host energy parks where the land was arid and unproductive.
- Other respondents felt that energy should be harnessed closer to where it was needed the most, near cities, and not in rural areas.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Survey question

Please describe your connection to farming:

1846 of respondents own a farm, work on a farm, or have a partner or immediate family member who works on or owns a farm OR grew up on a farm or in a farming region

743 of respondents are not directly connected to farming, but live in a farming area

280 of respondents don't live in a farming area

3 people did not answer this question

Survey participants:

90.1%

own or work
on a farm, have
close connections
OR live in a
farming area

9.8%

don't live in
a farming area

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

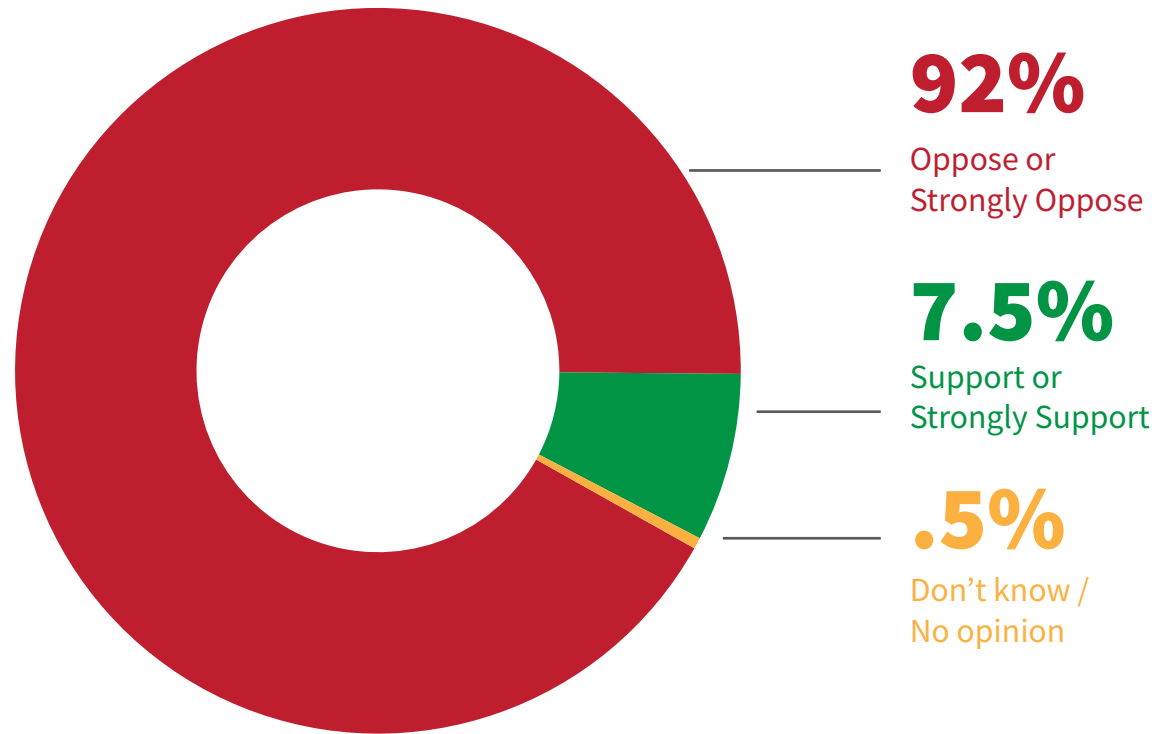
Survey question

In general, how strongly do you support or oppose renewable energy projects operating on farmland in and around your local community?

There is strong opposition and little to no support of renewable projects operating on farmland.

9 in 10 people oppose these projects

Fewer than 1 in 10 people support these projects



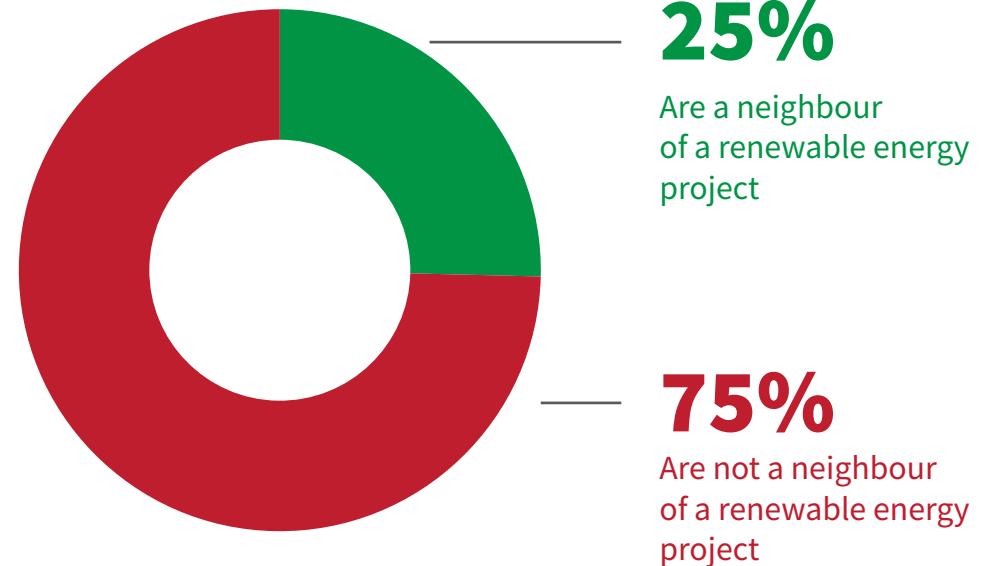
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Survey question

Are you a neighbour to a renewable energy project (within 2km)?

**729
respondents**

are neighbours to
a renewable energy
project



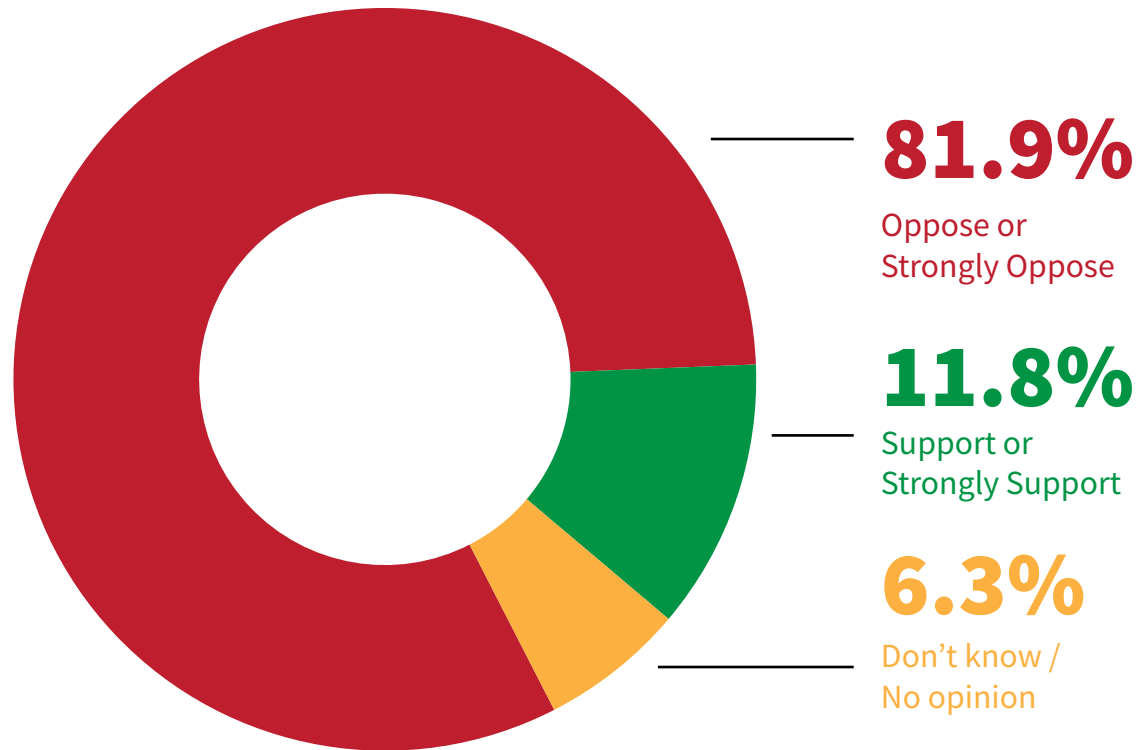
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Survey question

As a neighbour to a renewable energy project (within 2km) how strongly do you support or oppose the project?

81.9%

of neighbours to a renewable energy project oppose them



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

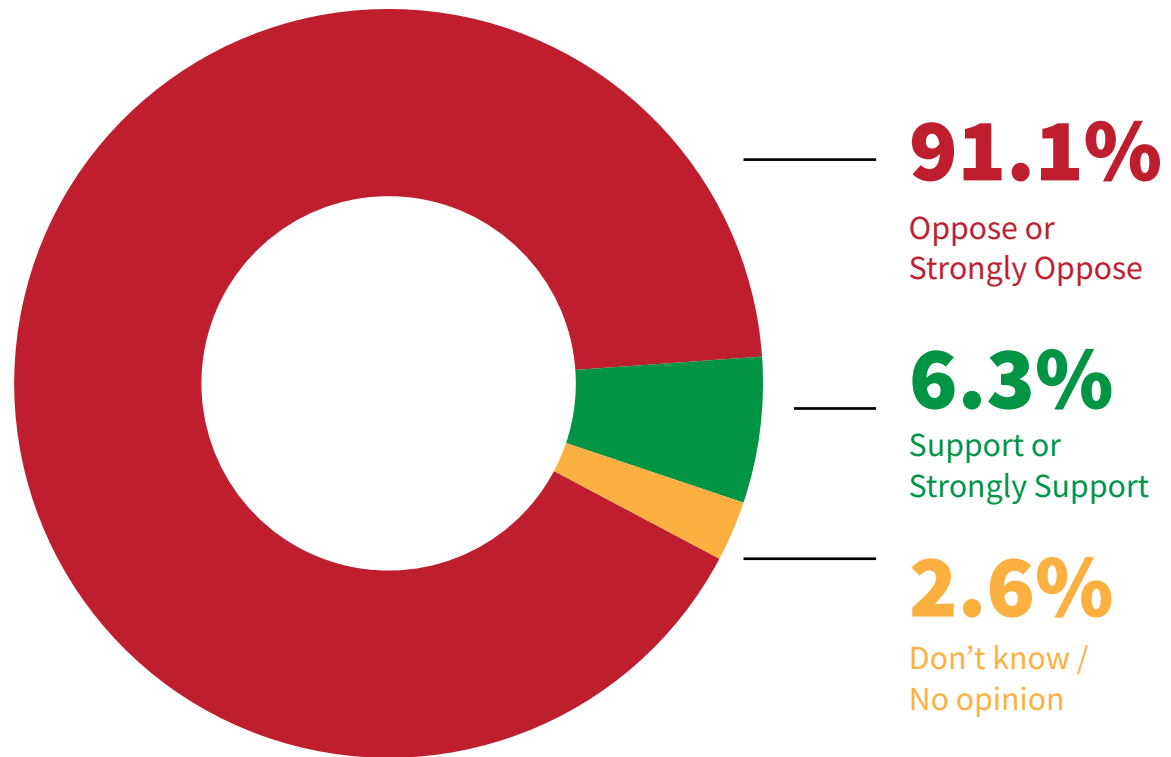
Survey question

If you were approached to be a neighbour to a renewable energy project (within 2km) how strongly would you support or oppose the project?

There is strong opposition and little to no support if approached to be a neighbour of renewable projects.

9 in 10 people oppose being a neighbour

Fewer than 1 in 10 people support being a neighbour





Farms for Food is an advocacy group based in the heart of the Victorian wheatbelt concerned about the pressure on rural communities from companies wanting to harness renewable energy and mine for minerals.

Their goal is to empower rural communities through education and advocacy.

www.farmsforfood.org



THANK YOU

For more information, please contact

Farms for Food

www.farmsforfood.org