



**Australian Government**

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**Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner**

# **Ag + Energy Charter Round Table**

**20 September 2023**

**Andrew Dyer**

**Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner**

**[www.aeic.gov.au](http://www.aeic.gov.au)**

# Background

- Commenced as the inaugural *National Wind Farm Commissioner* in November 2015 – for an initial three year term.
- Role was created in response to a 2014-15 Senate Select Committee inquiry into the wind farm industry and its impact on communities
- Independent role, reporting to the Federal Parliament and relevant Minister
- Extensive review of the role and stakeholder feedback by CCA in 2018
- Re-appointed in October 2018 for a further three year term. The role was also extended to include large-scale solar farms and storage facilities.
- In March 2021, the Minister announced the further expansion of the Commissioner's role to include new major transmission projects.
- In October 2021, was re-appointed for a four year term
- Role name also changed – now known as the *Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner*.

# Role

- The Commissioner's primary activities include:
  - ✓ Facilitating the handling of complaints from concerned community residents about proposed and operating wind farms, solar farms, energy storage facilities and new major transmission projects;
  - ✓ Identifying and promoting best practices for industry and government in relation to community and landholder engagement, planning, development, operation and maintenance of such projects; and
  - ✓ Improving information quality, access and transparency – by industry and government – to the community about proposed and operating projects.

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# Annual Report: observations and recommendations

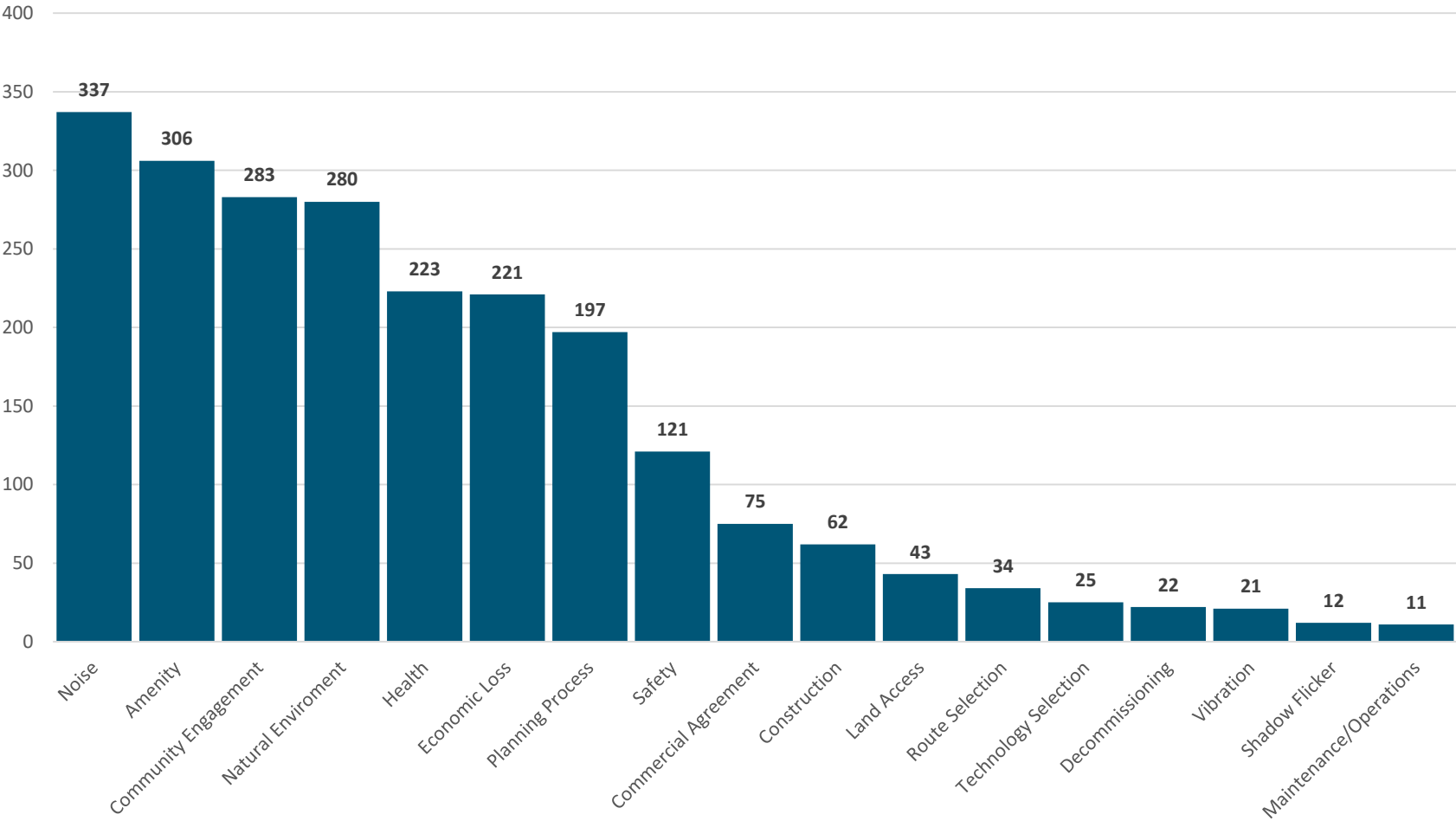
1. Host landowner matters
2. Neighbour matters
3. Community engagement
4. Planning process and timeframes
5. Governance and compliance of standards and permit conditions
6. Use and selection of experts
7. Complaint handling and emergency procedures
8. Site selection
9. Health and safety matters

# Case data

- As at 30 June 2023, the Office had received 891 cases since the inception of the Office.
- These include the following:
  - 443 cases about proposed wind farms (across 83 projects)
  - 98 cases about operating wind farms (across 27 projects)
  - Six cases about proposed Offshore wind farms (one declared zone)
  - 22 cases about proposed solar farms (across 15 projects)
  - 169 cases about proposed large-scale transmission projects (across 6 projects)
  - 11 cases about proposed storage facilities (pumped hydro – 3 projects)
  - 142 cases were general enquiries or did not specify a particular project.
- Overall, as at 30 June 2023, we have received 651 complaints about *proposed* projects compared with 98 complaints about *operating* projects.

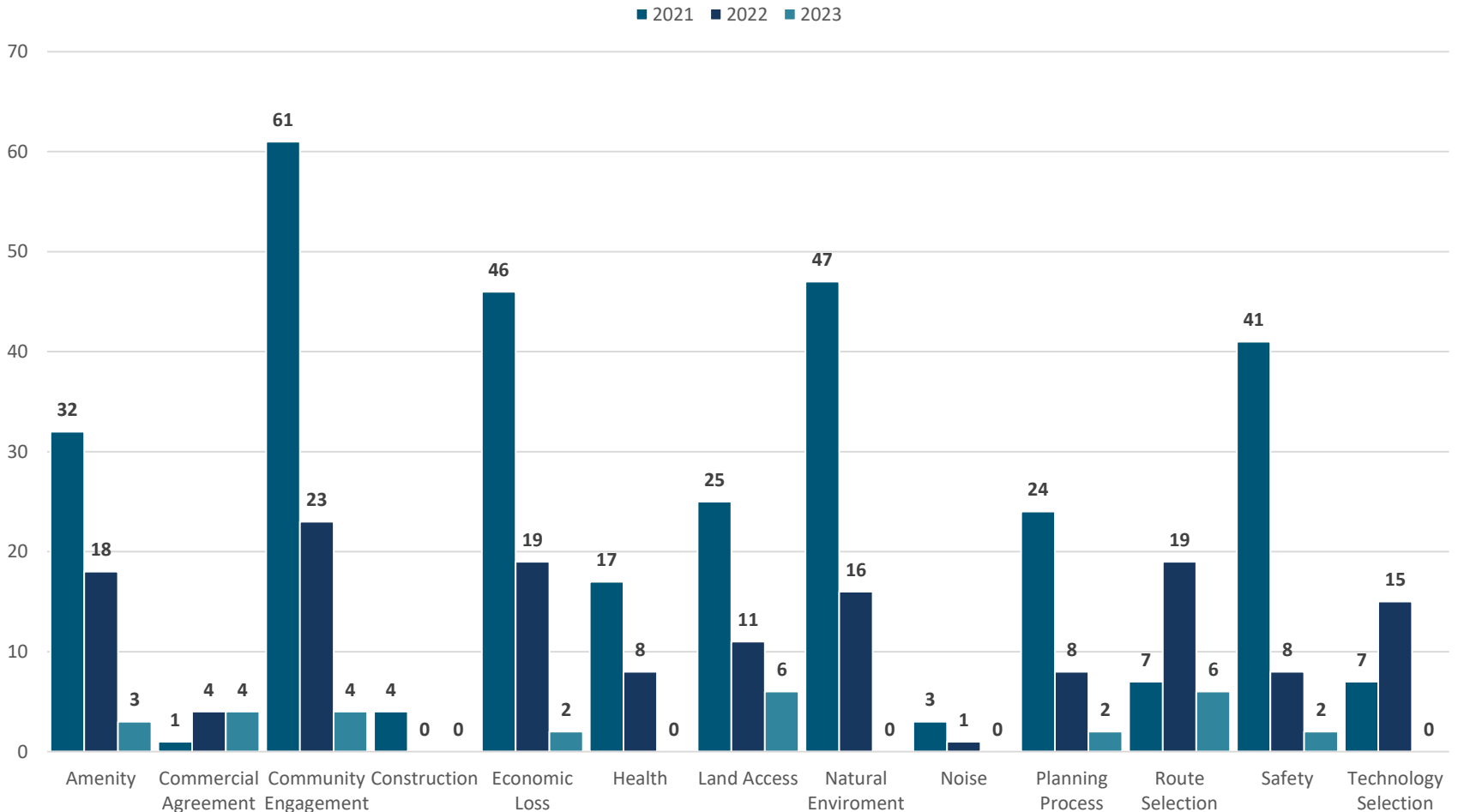
# Total issues raised in cases

(As of 30 June 2023)



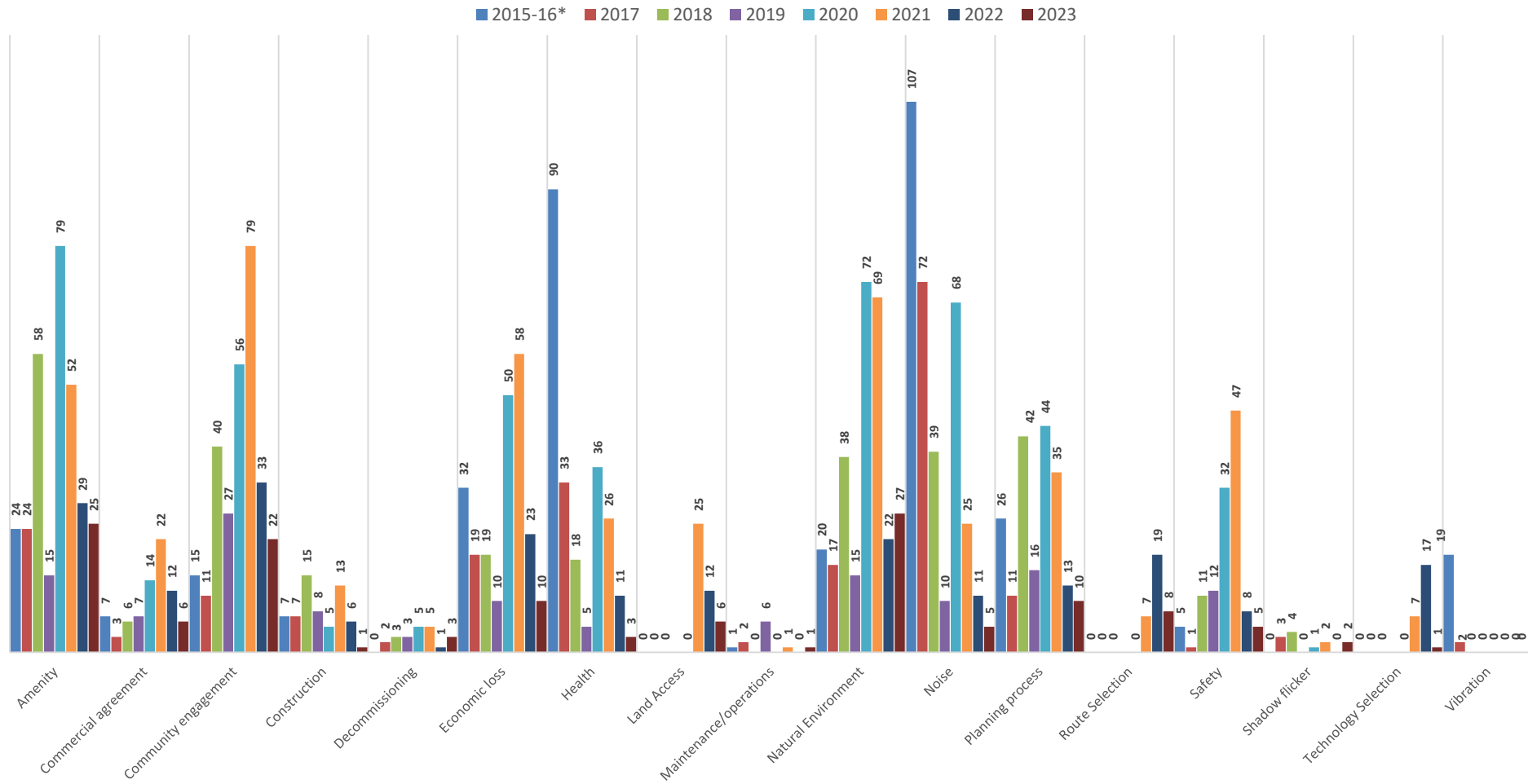
# Issues raised in cases (transmission)

(As of 31 March 2023)



# Total issues raised in cases per year

(As of 31 March 2023)





# Recent concerns – wind and solar

- Wind farms – concerns relating to visual impacts, commercial agreement, safety incidents, decommissioning, aviation safety lighting, recycling of blades.
- Solar farms – concerns relating to hydrology impacts, loss of use of agricultural land, visual impacts, bushfire ignition and fire-fighting limitations, recycling of panels.
- Construction issues – damage to property, re-routing of roads, gates, road design impacts on farming, extended land use, rubbish removal, sub-contractor issues.
- Community – noise and dust, disruption and inconvenience, impacts to local businesses and resources, dislocating the social order.
- Litigation challenges – planning & permit procedures, allegations regarding noise impacts, health impacts and nuisance.

# Current concerns - transmission

- Commercial discussions happening at the end of the process rather than the start
- Skills and capabilities of landholder liaison and community engagement personnel
- Quality and timeliness of communications and correspondence
- Economic disparity c/f wind, solar – including impacts on neighbours
- Perceived impacts on visual amenity, property values, farming practices/capacity, natural environment, bushfire ignition and response
- Proliferation of wind/solar/storage developers descending into the area
- Impacts and imposts as a result of land access for surveys/assessments
- Impacts and imposts during construction of transmission line.

# The Review

- Independent Review – announced 4 July 2023 by Minister Bowen
- Known as the Community Engagement Review
- Due to report by December 2023
- Lead by Andrew Dyer, with Secretariat provided by DCCEEW
- Public submissions, including a survey, open from 4 September 2023 until 1 October 2023
- Roundtable meetings and interviews (in person and virtual) during September and first half of October 2023
- This week in Sydney, Dubbo and Tamworth
- Meetings include NSW Government, AER, ETU, Muswellbrook Shire, Wellington Aboriginal Action Panel, NSW FA, Dubbo Regional Council, Community Groups, Host Landholders, Lawyers, New England Councils

# Review – Areas of Focus

- Engagement requirements and responsibilities related to:
  - Developers/Proponents
  - Landholders (hosts)
  - Near Neighbours
  - Broader Community
  - Councils and Shires
  - Other key stakeholders (e.g. Agriculture, Farming, Environment, First Nations, Emergency Services, Transport, State and territory governments, Federal government, etc.)
  - Other reviews
- What is working well, what is not, what needs to be fixed and how

# Contact and Resources

## Contact details:

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## Resources:

[2022 Annual Report](#)

[Considerations for Landholders before entering into Commercial Agreements](#)

[Presentation to Energy Ministers' Meeting](#)

[Opening Statement to Senate Estimates Environment and Communications Legislation Committee](#)

## Website:

<https://www.aeic.gov.au/>

# Questions/discussion

