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ABSTRACT

Surrendering Control: The role of procedural fairness in ensuring equitable energy transitions

Transitioning to a clean economy is going to require more than just changing infrastructure or managing environmental impacts; the voice of the community is going to play a large role in the transition's success. Framing the energy transition as a set of "impacts" that need to be "managed" risks overlooking the vital aspect of procedural fairness. Effective management of trade-offs, as well as preventing or resolving conflicts, that arise from the transition to clean energy hinge on examining the decision-making frameworks that exist – or do not exist – between impacted communities, governments, and project proponents. This paper will define what procedural fairness is and illustrate its significance in shaping how communities experience and perceive impacts. The paper will then examine how procedural fairness is addressed in social impact assessments, arguing that current SIA approaches and mechanisms in place are inadequate relative to the importance of procedural fairness. Such approaches undermine the potential to achieve a genuinely sustainable and accepted clean energy transition. This research is based on a rich body of community sentiment data across the energy transmission, agriculture and mining sectors that underscores the criticality of procedural fairness. Drawing upon that data, we are able to identify ways in which procedural fairness can be measured, understood and acted upon.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Sefton Darby

Sefton Darby leads Voconiq's Advisory team. He specialises in navigating the space between communities, companies and government agencies. He has worked for governments, resources and infrastructure companies, and NGOs in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the US, West Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. He has a bachelor's degree in politics from the University of Otago (NZ), and a master's degree in international security from University of St Andrews (Scotland).

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Courtney Bailey

Courtney Bailey is the Voconiq Rural Industries and Training Program Manager. Courtney is an agricultural educator and psychology graduate passionate about creating informed consumers and positive community engagement. Courtney is a 2020 Horizon Scholar and a 2023/4 Australian Rural Leadership Fund Future Drought Fund Mentee.

Adel Pitcaithly

Adel Pitcaithly is Voconiq's Social Impact Research Officer. At Voconiq, she works with various industry clients on data collection and analysis, and providing social performance advice to clients. Prior to joining Voconiq, Adel completed a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in political science from the University of Queensland and was an exchange student at the University of Cambridge.

Dr Kieren Moffat

Dr Kieren Moffat is the CEO and Co-Founder of Voconiq. Prior to the founding of Voconiq in 2019, Kieren was responsible for CSIRO's research program that redefined what social licence means and understanding the mechanisms that underpin it. Across more than 200,000 community surveys gathered across diverse sectors and countries, Voconiq has developed critical insights into what makes and breaks trust between communities and organisations.