

Energy development in regions across Queensland

Community perspectives 2025

Background

This report summarises the findings of a comprehensive survey of 1,950 community members across Southern Queensland, Central Queensland, and North Queensland, covering more than 17 LGAs. Conducted as the fourth data collection in this ongoing program, the survey builds upon baseline sentiment data from 2021/22, 2023 and 2024. The 2025 survey provides valuable insights into community attitudes toward energy development, the construction of supporting transmission infrastructure, and Powerlink's role in enabling these projects.

Support for new energy projects

The community is positive about Queensland's energy future and the need for new development projects to achieve it. Strong ratings are consistent from 2021 to 2025. This support is dependent on the community's trust in Powerlink and their belief that they are meaningfully involved in key decision-making processes.

- Levels of agreement were similar across SQ, CQ and FNQ regarding the suitability of their region for solar (52%, 50%, 62%, respectively) and wind farms (40%, 37%, 41%),
- However, 50% in SQ, 47% in CQ, and 52% in FNQ indicated they did not know what was involved in developing new renewable projects.

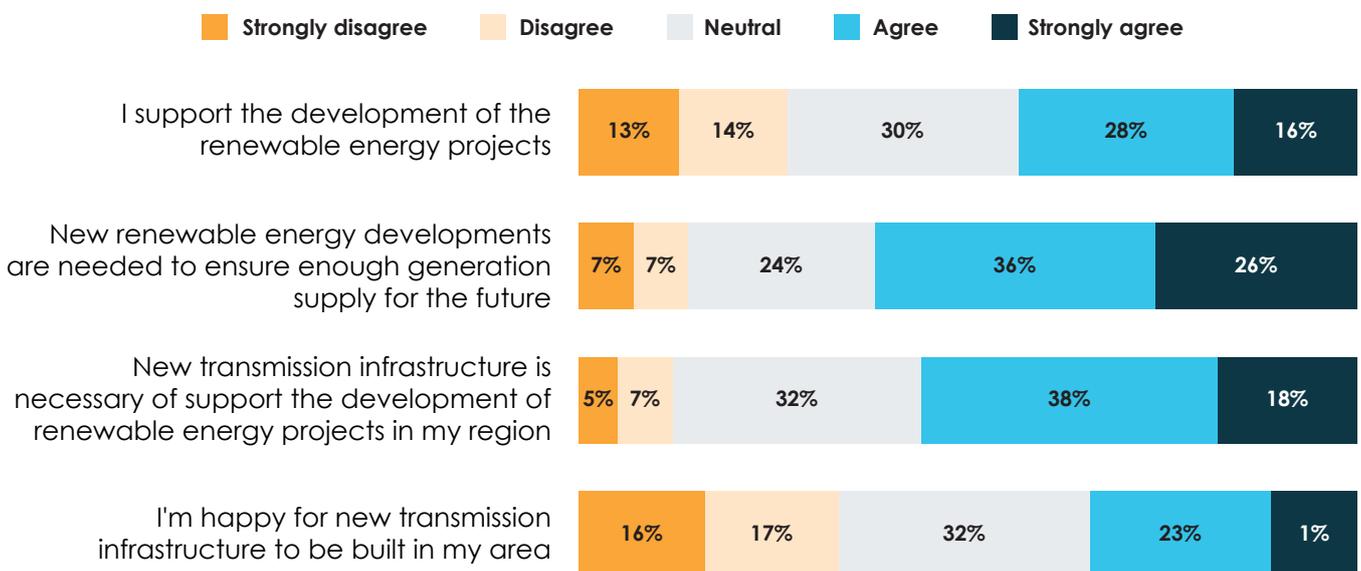


Figure 1. Distribution of 2025 responses on items relating to support for renewable development.

Key statistics

- **1,950 surveys** analysed in total
 - Southern Queensland n = 747
 - Central Queensland n = 485
 - Far North Queensland n = 706

- **17 Local Government Areas (LGAs)**
- 63% female, 36% male, 1% other
- 24% Powerlink landholders
- 15% own or operate a business
- 12% considered themselves as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage

**These figures reflect the demographic profile of the full sample across all regions.*

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Value proposition for development

The key elements of a local value proposition for energy infrastructure development were consistent across regions and with sentiment reported in 2024:

- Creating local employment,
- Opportunities for local businesses to supply goods and services,
- Meaningful community input into planning processes, and
- Effectively managing environmental impacts of development.

It is worth noting that this pattern may shift as development intensifies. It is important to ensure that communities have realistic expectations of both short- and long-term impacts and benefits.

As in 2024, Powerlink landholders rated most measures higher than non-landholders in 2025. The greatest differences between the groups were observed across the following:

- Contact quantity,
- I see myself living in this area long-term,
- Satisfaction with availability and affordability of housing,
- My community is good at handling adversity,
- Experience with Powerlink.

Current Powerlink impacts

Community members, including landholders, did not frequently report negative experiences with Powerlink. The highest perceived impacts were:

- Negative impact on local flora and fauna
- Dust caused by Powerlink's activities, and,
- Increases in general noise.

However, the large proportions of neutral responses to these questions indicates that daily impact from Powerlink's activities is not currently apparent.

The proportion of neutral responses has increased since the 2024 survey, which may indicate emerging risk for Powerlink as development progresses.

When examining these impacts by LGA, modest differences were found on these and other measures in the survey. Residents of Cairns, Charters Towers, South Burnett, Gympie and Isaac were more positive toward Powerlink and new development. Those in Banana, Gladstone, and Maranoa were more negative in their views.

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Community Resilience

The following section outlines how community resilience varies across different regions surveyed for Powerlink.

Southern Queensland showed a mixed pattern of results across key metrics. While there was strong positive sentiment on community resilience items in earlier years, scores declined in 2023 before rebounding slightly in 2024. The scores have continued to increase in 2025. Health services ratings dropped noticeably between 2021/22 and 2023. In 2024 ratings increased slightly and has continued to increase in 2025 to 3.30.

Central Queensland displayed consistent inclines across multiple areas. Community resilience and health services ratings both trended downward from 2021/22 through to 2024, however all scores have increased in this area in 2025. Housing affordability scores remained low but showed a slight upward trend in 2024 and 2025, suggesting a modest improvement in this area.

North Queensland maintained strong scores in comparison to other regions. Community resilience initially declined but recovered in 2024 and 2025, demonstrating relative stability in the community's capacity to manage adversity. Health services showed a continuous upward trend, with North Queensland residents reporting improved satisfaction over time. Housing affordability remained stable, with only slight changes, indicating that liveability perceptions in this area are comparatively consistent.

Powerlink Acceptance

Community acceptance of new energy infrastructure development is influenced by the quality of relationships a developer cultivates with the communities it operates alongside. Participants most commonly identified health, housing and the environment as most important to them. Similarly, responses were generally positive when participants were asked about Powerlink's responsiveness to addressing community concerns and following through on commitments. Neutral responses on these items were also high (i.e. between 48% and 57% of responses across all items and regions), indicating there is a need for Powerlink to continue working to demonstrate how it is being responsive in these relationships to more members of the community.

How much do you accept the continued operations of powerlink in your community

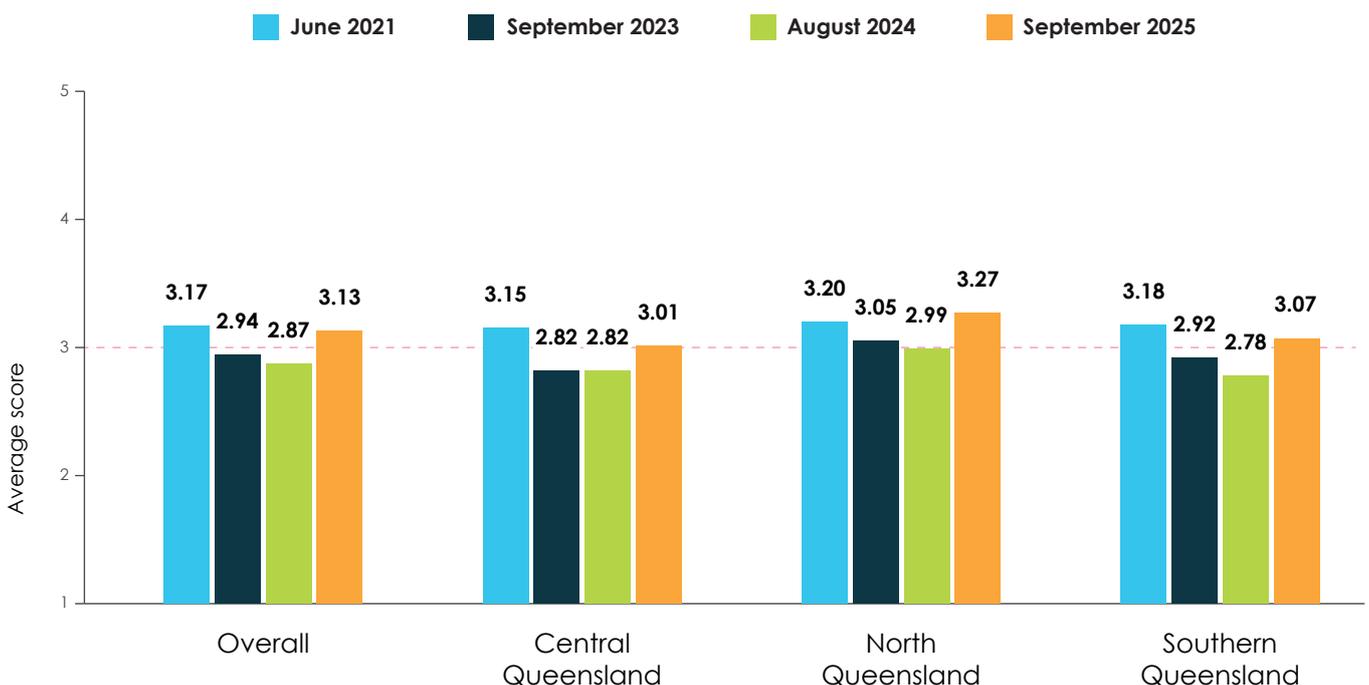


Figure 2. Average ratings of acceptance of Powerlink activities overall and by region (1=Not at all, 5=Extremely)

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Trust and acceptance

Current community trust and acceptance of Powerlink's activities is slightly above the midpoint of the scale in all three regions. Trust scores have improved across the board, compared with 2024. Landholder trust ratings were similar to broader community participants. Acceptance ratings of Powerlink's activities have improved significantly, from 2.87 in 2024 to 3.13 in 2025. This significant increase is noted for landholders as well. As project intensity increases, prioritising the fundamentals of building strong, productive relationships is critical to effectively managing future challenges.

Communities consistently identified the belief that project benefits outweigh impacts, fair distribution of benefits, and regulatory confidence as the most influential drivers of trust. However, neutral responses remain high across many measures, particularly for procedural and distributional fairness, indicating a need for more transparent communication and visible action.

A model for social licence

Path analyses were conducted in each region to identify the primary elements of its social licence to operate and their relative importance. Common patterns revealed seven main factors influencing trust and acceptance in all models examined:

- 1. Benefits of projects outweigh impacts:** belief that the benefits of Powerlink's projects, such as local employment and environmental management, outweigh potential negative impacts.
- 2. Procedural Fairness:** community perceptions of Powerlink's responsiveness, transparency, and ability to follow through on its commitments.
- 3. Distributional Fairness:** how fairly people feel benefits of the development are shared,
- 4. Regulation:** the extent to which people trust internal governance and external regulation to hold the organisation accountable.
- 5. Support the development of renewable projects:** alignment between Powerlink's energy initiatives and community priorities.
- 6. Environmental impacts:** demonstrating a commitment to minimising negative environmental impacts
- 7. Support coordination of development and community investment:** demonstrating Powerlink's long-term commitment to community prosperity and resilience, fostering shared value and fairness.

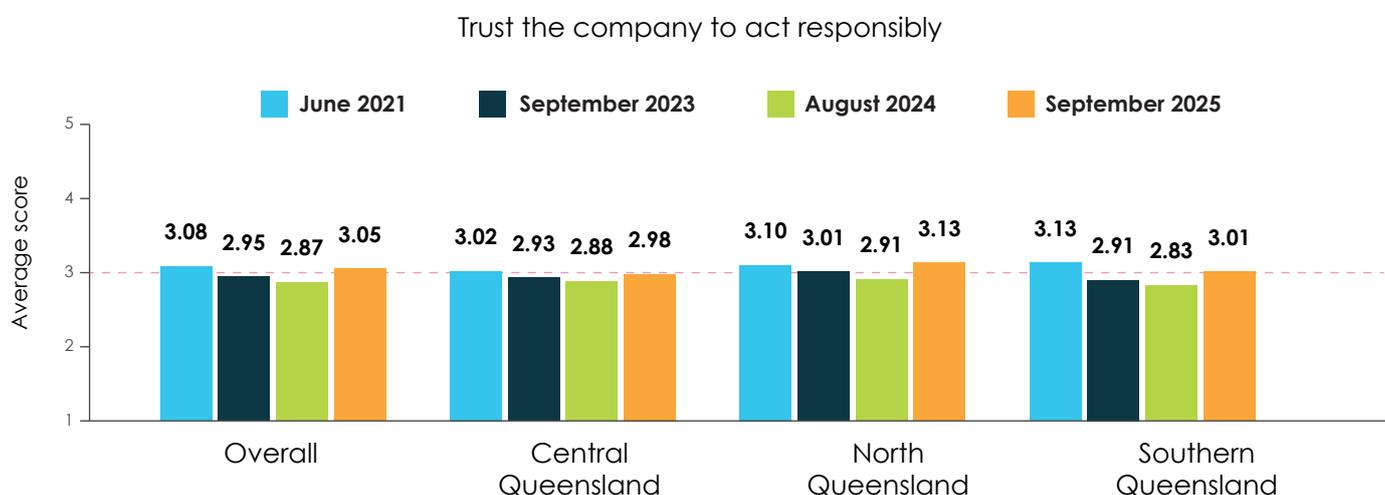


Figure 3. Average ratings of trust in Powerlink to act responsibly overall and by region (1=Not at all, 5=Extremely)

Powerlink Queensland Path Model 2025

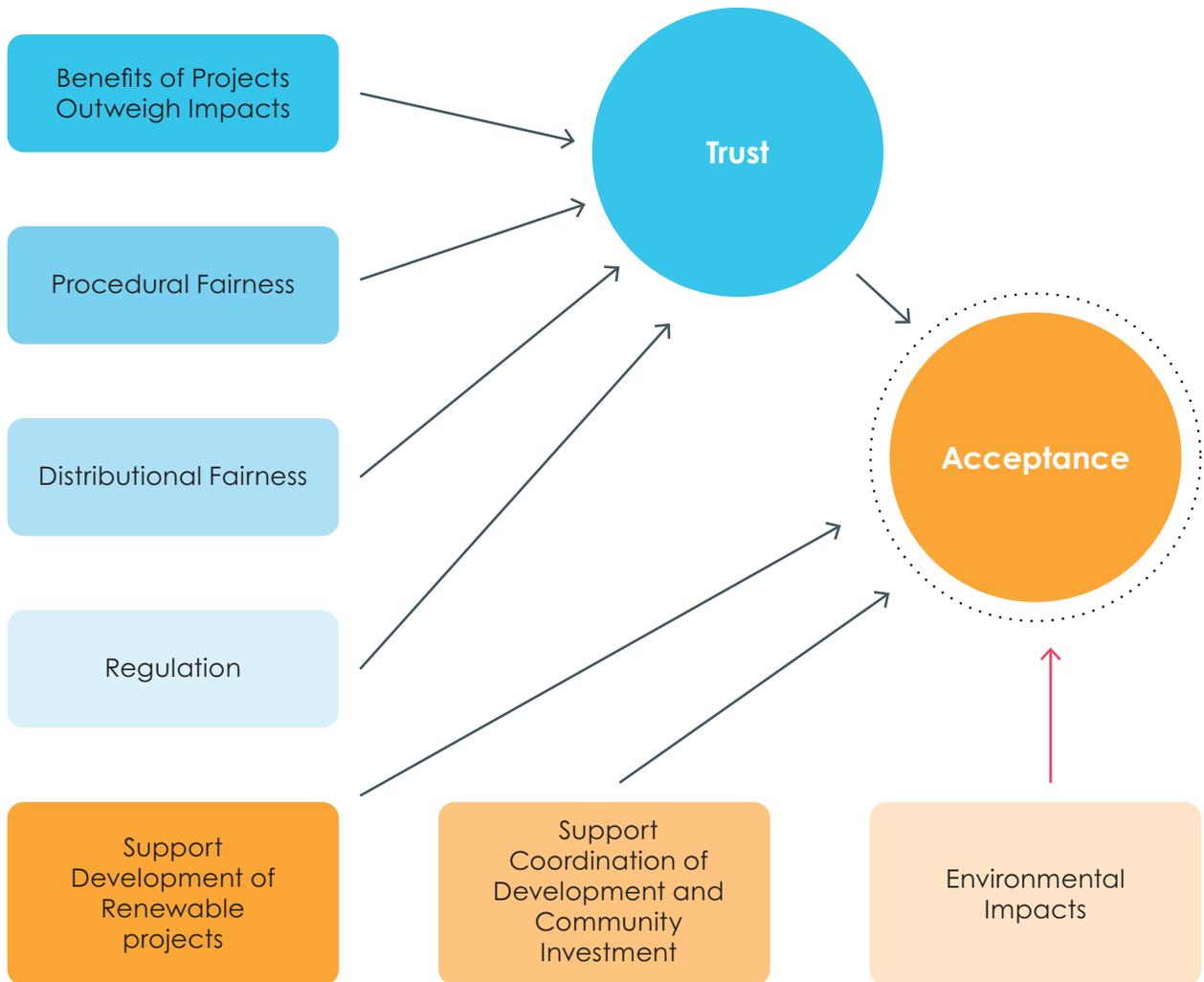


Figure 4. 2025 social licence path model

Notes on the path model:

- Black arrows signify a positive relationship, and red arrows signify a negative relationship.
- Shade of driver reflects strength of relationship (i.e. the darker the colour shade the greater the driver strength).
- Direction of arrow reflects direction of relationship.

Reflections on the data

- The case for new infrastructure remains strong, but Powerlink must manage community expectations about the development process and its impacts.
- Regional variations reflect notable variability at the LGA level.
- Satisfaction with livability features increased across all three regions.
- Genuinely involving community perspectives in decision-making fosters trust and shared ownership, while ensuring local benefits are distributed fairly helps strengthen community support.