New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

RE: BOWMANS CREEK WIND FARM (SSD-10315)

PUBLIC MEETING

COMMISSION PANEL: PROF. ALICE CLARK (Panel Chair)
ADRIAN PILTON
RICHARD PEARSON

LOCATION: UPPER HUNTER CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC, MUSWELLBROOK NSW

DATE: 2.00PM, THURSDAY 7 DECEMBER 2023

TRANSCRIBED BY APT TRANSCRIPTIONS

PROF. CLARK Good afternoon and welcome to the Independent Planning Commission's Public Meeting into the State significant development application for the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm (SSD-10315).

I am speaking to you from Wanaruah land. I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of all of the Countries from which we meet today. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and to the Elders from other communities who may be participating today.

I'm Professor Alice Clark and I am the Chair of this Commission Panel. Joining me are my fellow Commissioners, Adrian Pilton and Richard Pearson.

Panel members have made conflict of interest disclosures and the Chair of the Commission has determined that the Panel can consider this application. A copy of that decision document is available on our website.

We have a limited and specific role at the end of the planning process: we decide if an application should go ahead and, if so, on what conditions.

We consider the Department's Assessment Report, the application, your written and oral submissions and other materials that the planning law requires us to consider. All of these materials are either already publicly available or will be made available on our website.

In making a decision on this case, the Commission must obey all relevant laws and consider all applicable policies and the public interest.

We're also obliged to consider public submissions and that is the purpose of today.

We want to hear what you think about the merits of this application. This is not a forum for submissions on whether you like or approve of the Applicant, the laws we must obey or the policies we must consider.

The application has already been assessed by the Department on our behalf. Many of you may have already participated in the Department's processes. Thank you for your participation.

There is no need to repeat your previous submissions – they are all available to us for our consideration. The Applicant and the Department have considered your submissions and taken them into account in the application and assessment and recommended conditions we're considering today. Today, we want to hear your response to the Department's assessment, its recommendation and the recommended conditions.

Even if your submission today objects to the application being approved at all, we encourage you to tell us whether any of your concerns could be addressed – either wholly or in part by the imposition of conditions. Your consideration of alternatives does not in any way compromise your submission. It enables the Panel to consider all

options. We will first hear from the Department of Planning and Environment on the findings of its whole-of-government assessment of the application currently the Commission. We will hear from the Applicant second. We will then proceed to our registered speakers.

While we will endeavour to stick to our published schedule this will be dependent on registered speakers being ready to present at their allocated time. I will introduce each speaker when it is their turn to present to the Panel. Everyone has been advised in advance of how long that they have to speak. A bell will sound when a speaker has one minute remaining. A second bell will sound when a speaker's time has expired. To ensure everyone receives a fair share of time I will enforce these timekeeping rules. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the Panel Chair; however, in the interests of fairness to other registered speakers an extension may not be granted.

If you have a copy of your speaking notes or any additional material to support your presentation it would be appreciated if you would provide a copy to the Commission. Please note, any information given to the Commission may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement governs this approach to managing your information and is also available on the Commission's website. Exits from this venue in the case of emergency are located at the back of the room to my right where you entered and the toilets are located either side of the entry and exit. It is now time to call our first speaker and this is Iwan Davies from the DPE. We can't hear you yet.

MR DAVIES: Can you hear me now?

PROF. CLARK: We can. Thank you. Please proceed, Iwan.

MR DAVIES: Thank you, Chair. Confirming that you're able to see the Department's slides.

PROF. CLARK: Not yet. Bear with us.

MR DAVIES: Thank you. I'll perhaps commence anyway the introduction. So good afternoon all, my name is Iwan Davies, Director of Energy Assessments at the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we are joining today's meeting and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. I do apologise for not attending in person. It is due to the Department running several roadshows and workshops for the new energy framework and due to personal circumstances. I will remain available throughout the session.

Next slide please. O.K. The assessment process. So the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm is a State Significant Development project and has been assessed under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act which is the planning legislation under which all developments in New South Wales are assessed. The Department has undertaken a comprehensive whole-of-government assessment, the application, by that I mean that we have included and consulted with key agencies and three host Councils

in preparing our assessment. I do want to note that through the process, as shown by the flowchart, there have been a number of formal and informal opportunities for all stakeholders to provide input and we are now at the determination stage where the final decision will be made by the Commission on the merits of the application.

Next slide please. The Applicant, Ark Energy, proposes to develop a 347 megawatt windfarm with 56 turbines. The Department has recommended approval of 54 turbines with a capacity of 335 megawatts. Before I dive into the assessment issues it's important to provide some strategic context about windfarm development in New South Wales and the project's location.

Noting that all coalfired power plants in New South Wales are scheduled for closure in the next 20 years the project will assist in providing large-scale renewable energy generation to meet increased electricity demand. The Australian Energy Market Operators Integrated System Plan states that without coal a ninefold increase in large-scale renewable energy generation is needed. Several Commonwealth and State policies aim to achieve net zero emissions in New South Wales by 2050 and reduce emissions by 70 percent below 2005 levels by 2035 and these policies also identify renewable energy zones or REZs across New South Wales including in the Hunter-Central Coast which are aimed at unlocking additional generation capacity in order to ensure secure and reliable energy in New South Wales.

In addition, the Department is implementing a new energy policy framework to help achieve the transition to renewable energy, reduce emissions and secure an affordable supply of electricity. The Department considers that the project is consistent with the relevant National, State and local policy documents which identify the need to diversify the energy generation mix and reduce carbon emissions intensity while providing energy security and reliability.

Next slide please. The site is located approximately 10 kilometres east of Muswellbrook in the Hunter region which is a major supplier of coal and energy to national and global markets. Within 20 kilometres of the site there are three operating coalmines, three quarries, one approved gas pipeline and two power stations. The Hunter-Central Coast REZ was declared as it has excellent renewable energy resources and can utilise existing electricity network infrastructure, port and transport infrastructure and a skilled workforce.

There are additional considerations from a regional context that the site would benefit from. The site has access to the electricity network via a new 330 kilovolt transmission line connecting to TransGrid's existing Liddell substation. It is in close proximity to the New England Highway which provides ease of access to the Port of Newcastle. It is located in a rural area away from settlements and there would be no significant visual or noise impacts on surrounding non-associated residences with the implementation of the proposed conditions.

The heritage and agricultural land impacts are limited and overall the Department considers the site to be appropriate for the project and is consistent with the Department's wind energy framework. The project would also provide flow-on

benefits to the local community including up to 156 construction jobs and contributions to all three Councils through agreed upon planning agreements. The Department considers that the project would result in benefits to the state of New South Wales and the community and is, therefore, in the public interest and approvable.

Next slide please. The Department exhibited the EIS from the 31st of March until the 11th of May, 2021 and received 142 public submissions consisting of 131 objections and 11 in support. Advice was received from 18 government agencies along with Muswellbrook, Singleton and Upper Hunter Councils. None of the agencies, Councils or utility providers objected to the project. The Department and its visual expert visited the site in April '22 and met with the landholders near the site. The most common matters raised in public objections were amenity impacts including visual and noise, socioeconomic factors, biodiversity, bushfire, health and traffic.

Next slide please. After the Department raised concerns with the project as it was initially proposed the Applicant made changes. Key amendments to the project design included deletion of four turbines, re-siting three turbines, minor micro-siting adjustments to several turbines and removal and relocation of access tracks and powerlines. The project amendments reduce environmental and visual impacts and result in an overall reduction of approximately 98 hectares of the development footprint.

Next slide please. I'll now talk about the five key issues for assessment being energy transition, visual amenity, biodiversity, noise and traffic and transport. Regarding energy transition, the project, as recommended by the Department, would have a capacity of 335 megawatts which would generate enough energy to power about 172,000 homes. The project would play an important role in increasing renewable energy generation and capacity and contributing to the transition to a cleaner energy system as coalfired generators retire.

Next slide please. Regarding visual impacts. The Department visited the site and several non-associated residences surrounding the project to assess visual impacts and engaged O'Hanlon Design Landscape Architects to independently review Ark's visual assessment. Ark responded to submissions by amending the development application after the EIS exhibition, reducing the maximum number of proposed turbines from 60 to 56. It's important to note that the Department raised concerns about the potential visual impacts of the project from an early stage and throughout the assessment process including following the exhibition of the EIS in mid-2021.

In addition, following receipt of Ark's submissions report and amendment report in late 2021 and additional information the Department raised concerns about the need to address the potential visual impacts of the project. Ark responded to concerns raised by the Department during its assessment of the project by recently securing neighbour agreements with six key non-associated landowners. The Department's visual - the Department assessed the project against the performance objective of its visual assessment bulletin. There are 11 non-associated receivers within three kilometres of proposed turbines. The Department and the visual expert's assessment concluded that

the bulletin's visual performance objectives would be met at eight of these receivers. For the remaining three receivers being S17-2 and Q17-5 most performance objectives are met that there are turbines proposed across multiple sectors.

However, distance, intervening topography and existing mature vegetation would screen or partially screen views of the turbines across the sector and the Department considers that the visual impacts on these residences would not be significant. G17-1 located in Muscle Creek, the Department considers the bulletin's landscape scenic integrity performance objective would not be met as the turbines would dominate the landscape. As such, the Department has recommended the deletion of turbine 64 and 68 and considers that with the deletion of these turbines and additional vegetation screening at the property the visual impacts on this residence would comply with the bulletin.

There are 39 non-associated residences located between three and 4.4 kilometres of the proposed turbines. Turbines would be visible from some of these residences but due to distance, intervening topography and existing mature vegetation, impacts would not be significant and would meet the objectives of the bulletin.

Next slide please. The project would not become a major element in the broader landscape as views would be primarily limited to associated residences and road users due to distance, intervening topography and existing mature vegetation. The Civil Aviation Safety Authority or CASA, advised that the project is considered a hazard to aviation safety and recommended that the wind farm is obscured with low intensity lighting. The visual performance objectives of the bulletin would be achieved given that no turbines are located within two kilometres of a non-associated residence and Ark has committed to implement another lighting mitigation option such as downward light shielding. The Department has recommended conditions requiring Ark to consult with CASA and operate hazard lighting in a manner that minimises any adverse visual impacts.

In conclusion, the Department is satisfied with the deletion of two turbines. The project would meet the visual performance objectives in the bulletin for non-associated residences and would not fundamentally change the broader landscape characteristics of the area or result in any significant visual impacts on the surrounding non-associated residences. The recommended conditions require Ark to offer vegetation screening to all non-associated residencies within 4.4 kilometres and implement all reasonable and feasible measures to minimise the impacts of the visual appearance of the development.

Next slide please. The project was designed to avoid and minimise impacts on threatened species and communities and turbines have been located outside of migratory pathways for birds and bats. The project would not significantly impact threatened species and ecological communities of the locality and any residual biodiversity impacts can be managed or mitigated by imposing appropriate conditions and retiring the required biodiversity offset credits.

Of the 17,000 hectare project site about 280 hectares of native vegetation would be cleared of which approximately 180 hectares of Box Gum woodland derived native grassland listed under the Biodiversity Conservation Act and the Commonwealth EPBC Act. Box Gum woodland is also a potential Serious and Irreversible Impact Entity. There are relevant factors that indicate the project would not contribute significantly to the risk of Box Gum woodland becoming extinct including the impact of the project equates to a very small portion or 0.06 percent of the 331,000 hectares of mapped Box Gum woodland within the four relevant subregions within one kilometres either side of the development corridor there is approximately 6,000 hectares of mapped Box Gum woodland.

In addition, the Department has recommended a condition requiring Ark to offset impacts through credits and enhance and protect in perpetuity 37 hectares of Box Gum woodland derived native grassland to a condition commensurate with the impacted woodland. The impacts on native vegetation and species would generate approximately 5,500 ecosystem credits and 8,400 species credits which Ark must retire prior to commencing construction.

Regarding bird and bat strike. The site is not located near any wetlands or other critical habitat. No migratory flight paths were recorded of mapped within the survey area and no flocking behaviour was recorded or observed during site surveys. Most of the bird and bat species occurring within the site occur below the rotor swept area height. The Department has recommended conditions requiring Ark to carry out detailed monitoring of the bird and bat strike impacts of the project and carry out adaptive management of the impacts are higher than predicted or result in adverse impacts on any threatened bird or bat species.

In conclusion, the Department and the Biodiversity Conservation Division are satisfied that subject to the recommended conditions the project could be undertaken in a manner that improves or at least maintains the biodiversity values of the locality of the medium or long term.

Next slide please. The transport route during construction would be via the New England Highway, Hebden Road South and the new access point on Scrumlo Road for heavy vehicles and heavy vehicles requiring escort. Regarding construction traffic volumes, light and heavy vehicle movements would peak at up to 75 light vehicles and 66 heavy vehicles per day over the 18-month construction period. 560 heavy vehicles requiring escort would be required during construction. Operational traffic is expected to be minimal.

For local roads on the transport route road upgrades or improvements are required at several locations including construction of a new site access point on Scrumlo Road, road widening, widening of cattle grids and gradient reduction at causeways. Councils support the proposed road upgrades subject to the recommended conditions requiring Ark to repair any damage resulting from project traffic, schedule heavy vehicle movements to avoid peak hour traffic and prepare a comprehensive traffic management plan.

With road upgrades, regular road maintenance and the implementation o the traffic management plan, the Department considers that the project would not result in unacceptable impacts on the capacity, efficiency or safety of the road network subject to the implementation of the recommended conditions.

Next slide please. Construction noise levels are predicted to comply with the recommended noise-affected criterion under the Environmental Protection Authority's guidelines at all non-associated receivers. For roadworks, noise levels up to the highly noise affected criterion are predicted to occur to one residence; however, road upgrades would be short term, intermittent and at least one kilometre from the residence so are unlikely to result in significant adverse impacts. Construction traffic noise would comply with the New South Wales Road Noise Policy at all receivers. The project would comply with the relevant environmental noise criteria at all receivers for operational noise and any low frequency noise impacts would be minor and acceptable.

Next slide please. The operational life of the project is about 25 years but there is potential for it to operate for a longer period of time if turbines are upgraded over time. The recommended conditions require the Applicant to rehabilitate the site in accordance with a number of objectives which are that the site must be safe, stable and non-polluting, native vegetation must be restored, aboveground infrastructure, access roads and underground cabling must be removed, wind turbine pads must be covered and revegetated. The land must be rehabilitated and restored to pre-existing use and public safety must be ensured at all times.

With the implementation of these conditions and monitoring requirements the Department considers that the project would be suitably decommissioned at the end of the project life and that the site would be appropriately rehabilitated. Regarding decommissioning bonds, it is the New South Wales government's policy that finance assurances should not be required by conditions of consent and any financial assurances should be dealt with in commercial arrangements outside of the planning system.

Next slide please. The project would provide benefits to the community by providing 156 construction jobs and expenditure on accommodation and businesses in the local economy by workers. In addition, the Applicant would enter into a voluntary planning agreement with the three Councils providing contributions of $686 per megawatt per year for community enhancement projects which all three Councils have agreed to and accepted.

There would be broader benefits to the state through an injection of $569,000 million in capital investment into the New South Wales economy. The Applicant has committed to sourcing workers from the local community to reduce accommodation and service pressures. The Department has recommended a condition requiring the Applicant to develop an accommodation and employment strategy in consultation with Council.

Next and final slide please. In summary, electricity-generating works on the site are permissible with consent and the project is located in the Hunter-Central Coast renewable zone. It has good wind resources, access to the existing electricity network and is in close proximity to the New England Highway which provides ease of access to the Port of Newcastle.

The project has largely been designed to avoid key constraints including noise and amenity impacts to nearby non-associated residences, areas of higher diversity value, traffic impacts and impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage sites. Any residual impacts would be relatively minor and can be managed through the recommended conditions. With the additional neighbour agreements secured by Ark and the Department's recommendation to delete an additional two turbines the Department considers that there would be no significant visual impacts on surrounding non-associated residences.

Importantly, the project would assist in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas-fired power stations to low emission sources and is consistent with New South Wales policy. It would generate over 997,000 megawatt hours of clean electricity annually which is enough to power over 172,000 homes and save over 950,000 tonnes of greenhouse emissions per year. The Department considers that the project achieves an appropriate balance between maximising the efficiency of the wind resource development and minimising the potential impacts on surrounding land users and the environment.

Through job creation and capital investment and a planning agreement with Councils the project would also stimulate economic investment in renewable energy and provide flow-on benefits to the local community. On balance, the Department considers that the project is in the public interest and is approvable subject to the recommended conditions of consent. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Iwan. We have a couple of questions. Richard, would you like to lead off please?

MR PEARSON: Just going to make sure - yes, the mic's working well. Iwan, thanks for the presentation. In terms of (not transcribable) requiring or not requiring a bond or some sort of security to ensure decommissioning is implemented, is there any policy position on that you could (not transcribable). I assume Iwan's hearing what I'm saying.

MR DAVIES: I'm hearing in parts.

MR PEARSON: Do you want me to repeat, Iwan, or - - -

MR DAVIES: I believe it's regarding the decommissioning bonds and if the Department has a policy. So ultimately my answer is consistent with - and do - apologies, do interrupt if this is not the answer to your direct question but if it's regarding the Department's policy or the New South Wales government's policy on decommissioning bonds I'll stick to the answer I provided in the presentation that the

New South Wales government's policy is that we don't support bonds and that is a matter to be dealt with as a commercial arrangement outside of the planning system.

MR PEARSON: Sorry, Iwan, just further to that question. Is there a written down policy on that or is that just a (not transcribable)?

MR DAVIES: Sorry, I'm not catching that, guys.

MR PEARSON: Yeah I'm not sure what's going on with my mic, but is there a written down policy that you can refer us to?

MR DAVIES: Sorry, Richard, I believe your question was is there a - is there a published policy?

MR PEARSON: Yes, correct, yes.

MR DAVIES: Yep. O.K. I'll take that on notice, Richard, and provide further - provide further clarity.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thanks, Iwan. Adrian?

MR PILTON: Iwan, several people when we arrived on site inspecting it - several people raised concerns about the potential noise impact of the turbines. What's the Department's view of the level of actual likely noise impact on the people who live say two kilometres away from the turbines?

MR DAVIES: Thank you. Ultimately our assessment has - has found that the - at all non-associated residences the operational noise criteria would be within the required - the required standards and noting that New South Wales does have one of the strictest noise policies in the world that's our - that's our assessment that there are no exceedances of those noise levels at any non-associated residences during the operational phase of the project.

MR PILTON: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Hopefully this microphone's working better now, Iwan. Can you hear me talking?

MR DAVIES: Yes, I can. It is quiet but I can - I can just hear you, Richard, yes.

MR PEARSON: O.K. Well, I'll speak louder. In relation to dwelling number - one of the four affected dwellings G17-1 where you're recommending deletion of two turbines 64 and 68, are you also proposing some micro-siting restrictions on the other two turbines that are - that are in reasonable visual prominence for that property?

MR DAVIES: That's a good question, Richard. I don't believe we have in the conditions, if you bear with me two seconds. I don't believe we have for those turbines but we have elsewhere for the potential impacts on receiver S17-2.

MR PEARSON: Yes, I notice that, yes, yes. So you think not in relation to 17-1?

MR DAVIES: G17-1?

MR PEARSON: Yes.

MR DAVIES: I think it's fair for me to say now that the Department would not be adverse to - if the - if the Commission felt that micro-siting condition or a restriction to micro-siting was included in the conditions for those turbines the reason we didn't include it in our conditions is that for receiver S17-2 that micro-siting may - may have brought the turbines within, I believe, two kilometres of the residence and in accordance with the New South Wales visual assessment bulletin that would trigger a potential higher impact or at least the assessment would be - would be impacted but the reason for that micro-siting at S17-2 is due to individual assessment bulletin trigger of two kilometres and - but that would not be triggered for G17-1 as the turbines are further away.

MR PEARSON: O.K. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Adrian.

MR PILSON: Just a follow-up question there, Iwan. With G17-1 you deleted or suggested deletion of turbines, I think it was 64 and 68, can you expand on the rationale why those two and why not two of the others or is there any logic behind the specific removals?

MR DAVIES: Yeah, absolutely. So really the Department had concerns with either four or five of the turbines in that south-western corner and it's fair to say that G17-2 is the residence that we are most concerned about the impacts from the project. We considered that in accordance with the bulletin not all turbines would need to be deleted and, therefore, we chose the two turbines or we considered that two turbines would need to be removed and that those were the two closest and most impactful turbines on that residence. By deleting those turbines the criteria in the bulletin would be met or that's our assessment. So the rationale is those are the two most impactful turbines on the residence from - from the residence itself.

MR PILTON: Thanks, Iwan.

PROF. CLARK: Iwan, just one question from me please. When you spoke to the broad capacity contribution that the project will make to energy production was there any consideration for any length of time that it might take the project to reach those sort of capacity limits or is the calculation done on day one, it starts at that kind of contribution?

MR DAVIES: Sorry, could you repeat the question, just for my understanding.

PROF. CLARK: Sure. Can you hear me?

MR DAVIES: Yes, I can hear you, yep.

PROF. CLARK: So you spoke to broad capacity contributions that the project would make in terms of electricity generation in your presentation. In the totals that you presented was the expectation that the project would deliver those large capacity contributions straightaway from the beginning or is there a build-up period before the project reaches those capacity contributions?

MR DAVIES: Perfect. Thank you. I understand the question. That's - if the project - that's the project fully built so the conditions of consent do allow for the Applicant to stage the project but we have based those numbers on the - on the fully operational project for the number of turbines we are proposing for approval.

PROF. CLARK: And I appreciate this might be a question better put to the Applicant but are you able to inform us of how long it does take the project to reach those capacity of upper limits?

MR DAVIES: Happy for the Applicant to have input here. I would - I would - I can only assume it would be immediately upon full operation of the project so ultimately our understanding is it's an approximate 18-month construction period. The project would then need to go through a number of commissioning tests which can take months, if not longer, and once the project is fully operational and has the relevant approvals from AEMO Services or AEMO and others or the network operator it would be able to generate that capacity. That's my understanding but happy to be corrected.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you. And I'm just looking to the back, do we have time for one more question? Thank you. I'm interested in the approach of screening using vegetation and the consideration that's been raised by a number of sites that we visited was around bushfires where there's a conflict between how close this vegetation can be, I guess, grown to the residences but the introduction of an additional hazard. Can you make some comment on whether or not that was considered?

MR DAVIES: Thank you. That is a matter that the Department considers. Now, ultimately this is based on - that recommendation is based on, I suppose, additional screening that the Department does not consider is warranted to reduce the visual impacts of the project, it's simply optional to landowners. However, there are one or two residences that the Department considers that screening is requires and that includes G17-1. That would need to be a matter - a post-approval matter to be discussed between the Applicant and the residents and any - any dispute or discussion there can be - can be referred to the Department for resolution.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Iwan. I don't think we have any other questions. Thank you. Our next speaker is the Applicant. Just let me find where I put that. Rebecca

Riggs and Martin Poole from Ark Energy. Thank you. I think to assist you is, yes, Stewart. Thank you, Iwan.

MR POOLE: Thank you. Chair, Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming this afternoon to this meeting. I'd like to acknowledge the Wonnarua People, traditional custodians of the land that we're meeting and their continued connection to lands, waters and communities. I'd like to pay my respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who may be present here today.

This is a brief overview - sorry, I realised I'm not controlling it. Can we go to the page called Agenda. A brief overview of what we wanted to cover today just earlier. Other way. There's a number of issues. Iwan has already described the basis as has been assessed by the Department so please don't be intimidated by the number of slides, some of them won't take very long.

So if we go to slide number 1, Introductions. My name's Martin Poole, I'm Acting Head of Development at Ark Energy and I'm joined by Rebecca Riggs who's Project Manager of the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm. I've been with the company just over 20 years and this is, yeah, at least 12th or so project that I've worked on on this scale in eastern Australia. Rebecca's been the Project Manager of this project for three - two years. That's the right slide now, thank you. We are the Applicant Ark Energy, formerly known as Epuron. Epuron was a company that I and my colleague Andrew Durran established in 2003 and in 2022 we became part of the Ark Energy family through a friendly acquisition and the name Epuron was retired.

Ark is Australia's leading renewables company by a number of projects, by size of project, by size of individual project and other measures. As I just said, we have over 20 years experience. Our first project was commissioned in Cullerin Range, it was actually commissioned 2009 but officially opened in 2010. That was 30 megawatts. Since then we've developed and have in development another 13 projects. With the completion of Rye Park Wind Farm in 2024 about 2,000 megawatts of Ark Energy projects - projects that were started by Ark Energy will be generating electricity into the national market.

We're very focused on accelerated the energy transition. Since we've become part of the Ark Energy group we have in-house customers now. Ark operates Australia's biggest zinc refinery in Townsville in Queensland, it has aspirations to power 100 percent of that refinery's operations by renewables. As we meet Ark's own requirements for renewable energy and over time for renewable hydrogen then we'll open those sales, those things to third party customers. So we're sort of our own customer and then we're going to use the same products to supply third parties, all part of accelerating the energy transition. Korea Zinc itself, our parent company, first major metal refiner to join the Renewable Energy 100 organisation and commit to powering itself from 1000 percent renewables by 2050.

Can we go to the next page please? Iwan has already talked about the regional context so I don't think I'll use up your precious time in going over this. Yeah, in fact, let's just go to the next page.

I'll introduce Rebecca then to talk about the project itself. First of all, I just wanted to speak to the strategic context which is the big picture as Iwan introduced. He already covered a number of issues such as the policy support and direction at local, state and federal government level for renewables. There is a practical underlying reason that we need to build more renewables which is that the coal-fired power stations that have done such a good job over the last five decades are wearing out. They're machines, they have a lifetime, they're worn out and the cost of being able to keep them running for another few decades is prohibitive.

It is very difficult to finance new coal-fire capacity because investors do not see it as something they want to get into. Nuclear energy is - there are regulatory problems but it's also extremely hard to envisage nuclear making a contribution within 10 to 20 years in Australia. So there are practical reasons why renewables is very important now increasingly so everyday. So what I was going to show you on this page - - -

PROF. CLARK: Do you want to wait until we - we're back. Good, thank you.

MR POOLE: So solar and wind is what it's about. There are various other sorts of renewables like waves and tidal and biomass and biogas and other things. Solar and wind are proven, they operate on a large scale and they are continuously driving down the cost of energy. At Bowmans Creek, in particular, at the top of the right-hand side here you can see wind speed traces that we've been measuring over the last several years. All those lines represent the average wind speed over the time of day in different seasons, different places around the site and you can see there's a very consistent pattern in all seasons that the wind is blowing at its strongest the wind has the most energy in it in the evening, the early evening which makes this site a very good complement to the solar that we're seeing growing throughout the system on people's rooves and big utility scale plants.

This site will really pick up its energy generation towards the end of the day as the solar output across eastern Australia starts to drop. It's highly complementary in that sense and it's one of the reasons that this is an excellent site. Complementary also is the proximity to Liddell as a connection point. We expect there will be a large battery storage system at Liddell one day as a direct connection into the backbone of the national electricity market and a very good spot to inject the outlook from this project and there's good transmission connections to the Port of Newcastle as Iwan's already mentioned. So as I said, thank you for your time. I'll now hand over to Rebecca who will talk a bit about the project specifically.

MS RIGGS: O.K. Maybe it's at the right height. O.K. If I stand like a bit back you can hear me. I'm not quite as tall. If we can go to the next slide please. So Iwan was already talked about the project in general and the overview of how many turbines and so on and so forth. We obviously acknowledge that we have proposed up to 56 turbines and the Department has recommended 54. We are of the opinion that this

could be conditioned to allow us to build the additional two turbines if an agreement is reached. Should I wait?

PROF. CLARK: Yes, so just give us a second. We're having a technical difficulty there, Rebecca, and I think we've - we'll nail it here in a second. I apologise.

MS RIGGS: That's O.K. Sorry, it's very loud.

PROF. CLARK: We're going to take a five-minute break while we resolve this and Rebecca, thank you. Thank you. So if you - we'll reconvene in five minutes. Thanks.

MEETING PAUSED

MEETING RECOMMENCED

PROF. CLARK: Thank you. So ladies and - a few more minutes, sorry. Ladies and gentlemen, audience members, we're ready to restart and thank you for your patience through that interruption. Rebecca, we've got your presentation coming up. There it is. Thank you. And we've got it on our screens now. So I apologise again, we've had a reboot and we should be right to go now. So please if you could continue.

MS RIGGS: O.K. Just checking that's working. All good.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you.

MS RIGGS: Yes. So as I was saying, Iwan has already taken you through the project and the project overview but as I said, we acknowledge that we have proposed 56 turbines, the Department has proposed that we have 54 and we believe that this could be met through a condition if an agreement is reached with that landowner at G17-1 that the turbines could be constructed to prevent going through the process of having to do a modification, just time-intensive on both us, the Department and the local Councils as it requires a significant amount of exhibition periods and documents as well.

So with that we will give this presentation with the 56 turbine layout just to make everyone aware. So we have two onsite construction sites - sorry, two onsite substations from three proposed locations and we're connecting to the existing substation at Liddell. We have 17 kilometres of overhead reticulations, that's medium voltage at 33kv and 14 kilometres of - sorry, seven kilometres of underground to reach Liddell and 14 kilometres of overhead high voltage powerlines to reach Liddell.

There are two construction compounds on site and three concrete batching plants at some of the locations we visited yesterday and we've been - the oversize and over-mass access route comes from the Port of Newcastle via the Hunter Expressway, the New England Highway and onto local roads at Hebden - at Hebden Road South and the site access off Scrumlo Road.

Next slide please. So these are just the key issues that were raised during the EIS process and if you just jump over to the next slide again these are the issues that we will - that I will go through a little bit today, so being visual, noise, socioeconomic, biodiversity, benefits of the project, traffic and transport and the decommissioning.

Next slide please. So there are 47 non-associated residents within 4.4 kilometres of the proposed turbine location shown within the blue and the black line. So there are 20 associated, so that's both neighbour and infrastructure hosts, so turbine hosts within 4.4 kilometres of the proposed turbine location and those guys are shown in red dots. I acknowledge in this scale it's a bit hard to see. And there are six neighbour agreements for the project at six different locations that are listed there on the map and they're much more visible when you have them up closer to you.

Next slide please. So for the visual assessment. So prior to the EIS being submitted Ark, which was then known as Epuron, removed 12 turbines from the original layout so reducing it from 72 to 60. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or an LVIA was then updated in accordance with the visual bulletin and this was submitted as part of the EIS. It was then updated again for the amendment report as four turbines have been removed. As a result of those changes above it was determined that 15 non-associated dwellings at the time, acknowledging that some of those dwellings are not associated, would experience changes to their sensitivity levels being a decrease or a reduction in the visual impact.

So during the assessment there were 20 private photo montages provided in the EIS document, an additional six were provided during the RFI stage acknowledging that there were also several others done that were not provided as official photo montages but provided to landowners as part of the consultation process and there are seven public photo montages that were taken from around the site and two wire frame locations. They are visible on this site. The private location - physical on this map, sorry, the private locations are shown by the green triangle and the yellow stars show the public locations. What is not visible is the wire frame locations which are up to the north-east part of the project around Lake Sinclair.

Next slide please. So this is what the photo montages look like as part of the process of the visual assessment. We also completed what are known as line-of-sight diagrams which where we take what is called a Digital Elevation Model or a DEM and we look at the ground and the way that the topography falls and look at the presence of screening and how that would impact the visibility of turbines. So this is looking at G17-1 and looking at turbine 66, so on the far side of the ridge there and what we're demonstrating is that they can be screened at different distances from the house. Obviously that would require trees of different heights.

So the line-of-sight diagram we started at two metres above ground level to allow for people that are standing above obviously in a house and a footing a bit higher than the regular height and in this case we found that an eight-metre high tree 30 metres from the residence would allow for screening of this particular turbine. I do note that the way line-of-sight diagrams is done is done from one location to one turbine and you have to do it multiple times for multiple turbines.

Next slide please. So the concern that was raised multiple times throughout the process was night lighting and Iwan did already discuss this and as he noted that CASA is of the opinion that we should be lighting these turbines and we had our independent expert note that they didn't think it was necessary. With that being said, the Department of Defence who do use this airspace requested that the turbines are lighted - sorry, are lit during the day starting at 8 o'clock in the morning and turning off at 6.00pm in the evening during times when the turbines are over - when the lights, sorry, is over 5000 lux then those would switch off during the day as well as the request from the Department of Defence.

Next slide please. Noise. So a detailed noise assessment was carried out by Sonus during the EIS phase of the project in line with the noise assessment bulletin. So background noise monitoring was carried out at four locations in the vicinity of the site between October of 2019 and January of 2020. Construction noise are predicted to comply with the recommended criterion at all non-associated receivers and roadwork noise levels are predicted to be high at six non-associated receivers, in particular, at S17-2 due to the proximity of the dwelling to the road. The increased levels at these residences would be short term and intermittent as the Department have already noted. Operational noise levels were assessed in accordance with the noise bulletin and noise at modelling predicts at all locations - at all relevant receivers around the site that they would be below the relevant noise levels.

Next slide please. Traffic and transport. Traffic and transport studies was during out during the EIS phase of the project. So the oversize, over-mass components would be shipped from the Port of Newcastle which can be seen here on the map and the green line indicates the route to the site. So there would be - and that follows the New England Highway, John Renshaw Driver, the Hunter Expressway back onto the New England Highway before turning onto local roads like Hebden. So 560 heavy vehicles requiring escort would be required to deliver the turbine components. It's a general assumption of about 10 heavy vehicles per turbine. 56 turbines equate to 560.

There are locations along the roads where minor roadworks would need to be completed between the Port and Hebden Road including the removal of road infrastructure, traffic lights and barriers and so forth and then along the local roads there would be more significant upgrades that will need to be required along that route.

Next slide please. So this is looking at the local road upgrades and you can see to the bottom of that picture you're looking at Hebden Road South and following it up onto Scrumlo Road and then in the central part of the site which is Albano Road and Bowmans Creek Road. So there are 75 points along the local roads that fall within Singleton Shire Council and Muswellbrook Shire Council that would require upgrades and the type of roadworks include the construction of the site entrance at Scrumlo Road and road widening at four locations and replacements of cattle grids, gradient reductions at causeways and temporary relocation of some furniture along Hebden Road and potential works to increase the load capacity of the bridge at Hebden Road

South and some branch and tree-trimming and embankment modifications along Hebden Road and Albano Road.

Next slide please. So there was a traffic management assessment done during the process and a traffic management plan would also need to be completed before the construction phase was to start and the traffic management plan would consider things, but not limited to, oversize, over-mass vehicles scheduled to avoid morning and evening southbound peaks at the New England Highway and Hebden Road intersection. Council have highlighted to us that that is a very busy time and they are concerned about that so we would acknowledge that and put that in there.

Ensure that the school bus routes are avoided for oversize, over-mass and where they can't be avoided assure that the oversize, over-mass movements happens outside of the bus times. Ensure there are adequate passing bays on local roads and discuss with local mines to ensure that the least amount of overlap between shift changes and oversize, over-mass movements would occur to allow people to get home quickly. As noted in the recommended conditions of consent this will require the proponent to undertake all construction works prior to the use of the road for construction and dilapidation surveys would repair works - and repair works would be undertaken to repair any damage to the road from the project.

Next slide please. So Iwan did already go through a lot of this but the project footprint is approximately 411 hectares and 280 hectares of that is native vegetation. So approximately 232 hectares of vegetation compromising (sic) of four threatened ecological communities would be impacted. The most largest amount would be from Box Gum woodland which Iwan has discussed at length. So Ark has committed to avoid and minimise impact on Box Gum woodland and other threatened ecological communities via micro-siting during the design phase.

Next slide please. We've also committed to avoiding impacts on three serious and irreversible impact or SII entities which have been assumed present on the site being Acacia Pendula, Scrub Turpentine and Native Guava. If the above species are confirmed to be present by targeted surveys during the detailed design phase in the region where they are thought or proposed to occur they would be avoided and clearing of native vegetation would be reduced by approximately six hectares.

The bottom two photos are looking at Box Gum woodlands. So PCT 1608 is on the right-hand side and on the left-hand side is PCT 618 or what is known as derived native grassland or DNG land. So with the impacts to Box Gum woodland Ark has offered to implement additional measures beyond biodiversity offsets to further minimise impacts on the Box Gum woodland, woodland whereby 37 hectares of the DNG land, so the land on the left-hand side would be brought up to the condition of Box Gum woodland status on the right-hand side there just looking at those figures.

The next slide please. The project would generate both direct and indirect benefits to the community over time and during its 18-month construction period there will be benefits to the local community including the creation of employment opportunities and supply arrangements with local businesses. It is anticipated due to the nature of

the area that a large majority of the workforce and supply of materials could be sourced within the local area. Upgrading and maintenance of local roads, the procurement of goods and services by the proponent and its associated contractors and expenditure on accommodation and businesses within the local community.

DPE has recommended that the proponent prepare and implement an accommodation and employment strategy in consultation with the three local Councils and Ark welcomes this idea and we believe with the constructive discussions with the Council there's a great opportunity for the towns as Bowmans Creek Wind Farm is one of the many proposed infrastructure projects in this region at the moment.

There is expected to be a small amount of impact on agricultural activity over the life of the project, mainly during the construction period and would be mainly impacting those landowners who are involved in the project though it is estimated that the impact would be less than .01 percent of the total agricultural activity within this area. This economic impact would not impact the capability of the land in perpetuity. Once the wind farm was decommissioned the land could be returned to its former agricultural productivity.

Next slide please. So Iwan already discussed the VPA but just to go into a bit more detail. Of the proposed 56 turbines there are three turbines within Upper Hunter Shire Council, 41 with Muswellbrook and 12 within Singleton and over the life of the project we've had the discussions with Council about the way the VPA is to be structured. Singleton Council proposed to us that they would prefer a per megawatt payment for the VPA which we agreed to and that number is sitting at 686 per megawatt installed. This offer was then extended to all three Councils and the offer was accepted.

Next slide please. Decommissioning. Ark has developed a decommissioning fund in conjunction with the involved landowners to sit with an independent decommissioning agent. Currently that fund would reach 100 percent of the cost at year 10 of the project and that is not year 10 of operational life, that's year 10 after the start of construction and the fund is proposed to be paid into from the start of construction.

Next slide please. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Rebecca. We have a couple of questions. Richard, could I start with you again if you have anything to ask?

MR PEARSON: Sure. Thank you. Hopefully my mic is working this time. Thank you. In relation to decommissioning fund, yes, look, my question is to what extent are you factoring into that, you know, the potential for recycling and beneficial use of - so in other words, are you going to have money sufficient to cater for worst case scenario or are you factoring in potential reuse, recycling, et cetera.

MS RIGGS: Yeah. So the decommissioning fund - sorry, the decommissioning calculation that we've used up there is gross decommissioning as opposed to net. So we are assuming that there is no - we don't have the assumption for the cost of

decommissioning in there for recycling of materials. Obviously that is then able to be used but we, in this case, used gross decommissioning which we say is the worse case scenario.

MR PEARSON: O.K. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Adrian?

MR PILTON: Given the nature of the siting of all the turbines on ridgelines to get the most wind and so on, that's where a lot of the fairly dense trees occur. Is there extensive tree clearing along the ridgelines to get the access roads in?

MS RIGGS: No. I mean, as most of you have been to the site and you guys came yesterday, the ridgelines are typically quite clear. You do get - we do get vegetation down the side of the ridge and there are sections where there is vegetation but the numbers were included in our EIS, so they're there for the amount of clearing that would be required. With that being said, the footprint that is assumed there is probably much larger than the footprint would be in actuality. It just allows for micro-siting.

MR PILTON: Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: I posed a question to the Department and I'll headline that I might pose the same to you and I think he stated over 950,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas savings per year and my question is how long will it take the operation once - should it be approved but once it is operating to reach that sort of output objective, yes.

MS RIGGS: I agree with what Iwan said basically in that obviously once it's operating there are some testing that needs to be completed for it to be able to - for AEMO Services to allow it to operate at full capacity which is usually several months after construction is complete but then it should be operating at full capacity.

PROF. CLARK: So from that is it like within two years or within one year looking for a date - - -

MS RIGGS: Yeah, AEMO servicing testing would be six to 12 months. Yeah.

PROF. CLARK: Six to 12 months?

MS RIGGS: Six to 12 months, yeah, but it can be at full capacity within that six to 12 month time just with their testing happening in conjunction.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, that's answered that question. Anything else?

MR PEARSON: Just one - one further question, if I may. In relation to roads and the upgrades that you're doing, I know that a number of the Councils and, as you know, there are three Councils, involved have raised the issue of wanting to, I guess, inherit roads that are at the new upgraded construction standard. What are you proposing by

way of, you know, ongoing maintenance for those - the upgraded roads or are you basically just going to build them and then pass them over to Council for maintenance?

MS RIGGS: When you say pass them over do you mean at the end of the life of the project or - - -

MR PEARSON: No. Well, both - both. Certainly in terms of inheriting it after the project but, I guess, during the period after construction because, I guess, you're giving the Council's an upgraded asset but also an increased maintenance responsibility. I know it's certainly an issue they've raised with us so, yes, I'd like a response please.

MS RIGGS: Yeah. No, sure, sorry, I was just clarifying what time period.

MR PEARSON: Yes. No, totally fine.

MS RIGGS: Yes. We obviously intend to do dilapidation surveys at different stages of the project being after construction, heavy vehicles have finished being used. Anytime that heavy vehicles would come into the project I would make the assumption that dilapidation surveys would be done and again at the decommissioning phase once - obviously you need those vehicles again to remove the turbines and the components. With that being said, the footprint of the road can only be brought back to what the Council is managing now and the VPAs generally are sufficient addition to be able to help with the maintenance of the road. If the Council have a different opinion we would be happy to hear that and understand it with them.

MR PEARSON: O.K. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Another one, Adrian.

MR PILTON: Yes. Just a quick question about the structure of the substations. They look fairly wide and I assume that the machinery, as it were, inside them is fairly heavy.

MS RIGGS: Yes.

MR PILTON: Do they have huge concrete slabs and all that kind of stuff?

MS RIGGS: Yeah, there is a concrete slab for the substations. It's very important for substations to be flat, dead flat so that is the most important. They are then built up but they don't have concrete protruding down if that's your question.

MR PILTON: Will they be removed at the end?

MS RIGGS: All aboveground - - -

MR PILTON: Aboveground?

MS RIGGS: Yeah, aboveground infrastructure will be removed.

MR PILTON: O.K. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Two questions and I'll check with my colleagues here if they have any after that. Will the structures have light on them at night?

MS RIGGS: That is - I mean, we have a position on that and CASA is, I believe, the regulatory body on that question.

PROF. CLARK: So it's a question I should put to CASA or is it a question that you have an answer for?

MS RIGGS: Well, we have done our assessment and our assessment says that it is not - sorry, it is not required and CASA have done their assessment and they said that it is.

PROF. CLARK: O.K. Thank you. I know where to go next with that. And I think also the next question I have is around micro-siting where feasible. I saw it a number of times in different parts of the information we have and again on the slide today. When might it not be feasible and when it's not feasible does that mean the impact is what the impact is?

MS RIGGS: Yes. Basically micro-siting it - we generally use the word micro-siting to refer to the exact location or a turbine. When it might not be feasible is when the ridgelines are quite pointy and it can only go in one spot. For example, addition to that in certain situations obviously where the Department have recommended that we don't micro-site for proximity to dwellings and so forth but in general it's in reference to us not wanting to create too much earthworks or any further impacts that would extend beyond.

PROF. CLARK: Is it possible to look at the information provided and easily see which turbines are not able to be micro-sited along the full footprint that's been presented?

MS RIGGS: I think there is reasonable indication to us which turbines would not be micro-sited in great deal. I mean, we've said they're going exactly here, they might go one metre there that I technically would count as micro-siting so - - -

PROF. CLARK: But the footprint can be much larger than one needs?

MS RIGGS: Yes, of course, I just mean the base of the turbine.

PROF. CLARK: O.K. Thank you. Anything else?

MR PEARSON: Look, final question from me in relation to biodiversity offset, the 37 hectares. Have you identified a site that? Does it have to be in the corridor, what happens if you can't find a suitable site?

MS RIGGS: I think we've spoken to some of our landowners about biodiversity offsets and we believe that we'll be able to find them on site.

MR PEARSON: In the - in the - in the development?

MS RIGGS: Within the site boundary.

MR PEARSON: Yes.

MS RIGGS: Yeah, yeah.

MR PEARSON : What would happen if you couldn't for some reason?

MS RIGGS: We would - you either pay into a fund or you have offsite offsets.

MR PEARSON: O.K.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you. I have nothing further. Adrian? Thank you for your presentation, Martin and Rebecca. I believe we now have Grant Piper via video conference next. Thank you. Hello, Grant, can you hear us? Mr Piper, can you hear us? You're online.

MR PIPER: Hello, can you hear me? You're very faint.

PROF. CLARK: We can hear you. There's some delay in the video so - - -

MR PIPER: Yeah, I'm hot-spotting off my phone. We're harvesting and I'm up on top of the hill to try and get through but - - -

PROF. CLARK: Understand.

MR PIPER: - - - yeah, I can switch the video off. If you can hear me O.K. that might help.

PROF. CLARK: I think that that would be a good idea and if you could confirm if you can hear me please.

MR PIPER: I can hear you, you're just very faint. Stand by.

PROF. CLARK: O.K. We can see your - the first page of your submission and we can hear you very clearly. I'll attempt to speak up but please proceed.

MR PIPER: Thank very much for having me. Sorry, I couldn't be there. I'd like to go through my background quickly first. I think it's a peculiar set of experience and skills that I think are relevant to these and other wind farms. I grew up in the country on a farm and from as long as you could hold a hose you were a member of the

Bushfire Brigade and going to - responding to fires throughout the fire season was just a normal part of every summer.

The biggest fire was the Blue Springs Birriwa fire around here in '79, '80, that was the first large fire I remember and then the Sir Ivan fire in 2017 which burnt 55,000 hectares and I was on a truck fighting that and I saw air tankers at work, large air tankers, helicopters and small air tankers and I looked at that with a professional eye because after finishing school I gained an aeronautical engineering degree and worked as an aeronautical engineer and then I undertook pilot training in the Air Force and flew in the Air Force for a number of years, some of that time flying C130 Hercules which was one of the large air tankers I saw working and it is the same type that crashed down in the Snowy Mountains in 2019, 2020 killing the crew and then another job I had in the Air Force was flying forward air control which is a bit like the small aircraft fire-spotters that we use now.

So you're flying a lot of the time at low level liaising with the Army and we were authorised to 50 foot and 150 foot depending on the aircraft we were flying and since leaving the Air Force I've continued to fly recreationally. I'm authorised to conduct aerobatics to ground level and as an instructor I was authorised to train and issue endorsements for other people to fly aerobatics to ground level and I'm also a judge - an aerobatic competition judge where you have to assess the height of a person visually from the ground without any aids. So your eye is fairly cued up to assessing altitude and what's - what's dangerous and what's not.

So coming at this and the other wind project reports I've read is they all seem to ignore a lot of the major risks and they talk about light aircraft colliding with turbines and not being much of a hazard and they talk about visual flight rules and maintaining above 500 foot and five kilometres visibility, et cetera. They only ever talk about the fine weather but most accidents control flight into terrain they call them occur in poor weather and in their risk assessment and Bowmans Creek is the same, they never really talk about poor weather and the off or white turbines without any lights in low cloud or rain very hard to see.

The only time they mention low cloud is saying it will obscure the lights so the lights are a waste of time because they don't want to put lights on them all but in low cloud and poor visibility in conditions contrasting markings on the towers or flashing lights, marker lights would be of great benefit and aircraft can come below 500 feet visually due stress of weather. So if the weather is poor they need to maintain visual, they can descend below 500 feet. They must remain in sight of ground or water and visibility can be reduced to 1500 metres and so then they're not in an enviable situation but they're allowed to do that and you can imagine, you know, the visibility of these turbines and blades in those sorts of conditions would not be good and that's when the accidents are likely to occur, not in fine weather and they only ever talk about fine weather.

The second part regarding the turbines being a hazard is in fire - aerial firefighting. Now, aerial firefighting as we've seen over the last few years has become a much more predominant way of fighting the fires to help inaccessible terrain and also to

support the ground crew and to keep them - not put them at risk as much so they're using bigger and bigger tankers all the time. Now, when I saw them dropping the Sir Ivan fire the C130s were definitely below 500 feet. The KC10 might've been a bit higher. Now, the Bowmans Creek turbines are 720 foot high. The turbines around us here at Coolah, Liverpool Range is 215 metres which is 800-odd feet and the Valley of the Winds are 250 metres which is 860-odd feet.

So in poor weather or in smoke or haze or any - and high turbulence conditions you're not going to have any aircraft down below the level of the turbines or anywhere near the turbines due to safety. The RFS is remiss in not making any decent comments on any of these projects, they just seem to be avoiding it because they don't want to upset the political masters, I think, and they just say, we leave it to the risk management of the aerial operators which is fine, the aerial operators will do their risk assessment but their risk assessment will be we're not going anywhere near them. So they're not going to be able to drop from low level over the fire if that fire is in a turbine project area. That's - that's - there's no question about that, they will not be ducking and weaving between turbines.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you.

MR PIPER: Even small air tankers - - -

PROF. CLARK: Sorry to interrupt.

MR PIPER: - - - fixed wing may not be - - -

PROF. CLARK: Sorry to interrupt - - -

MR PIPER: - - - and helicopters may - - -

PROF. CLARK: - - - there, Grant, I'm not sure if you can hear but your one minute bell has sounded and I'm not sure with the connection if you were able to hear that but if you could please, I guess, come to the conclusion of your time here, Grant, thank you.

MR PIPER: Yes. O.K. I'm almost finished. All I'm saying is I think they've ignored the major risks. They've done a risk assessment but then they ignore the major risks of poor weather, forcing light aircraft to fly below 500 feet in poor conditions and not seeing turbines and for aerial firefighting these large turbines are a definite impediment and large tankers will be ineffective if they have to drop from above eight or 900 feet and it's going to inhibit firefighting and put people on the ground at risk.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Grant. We've also got your written submission which we have reviewed and thank you very much for that. Any quick questions? No. Thank you, Grant, and thank you also for providing your written submission to us, that was very helpful. Next we have - - -

MR PIPER: O.K.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you.

MR PIPER: So no questions?

PROF. CLARK: No, no questions, Grant, and I apologise for the poor connection there.

MR PIPER: No, that's all right. I was planning to come down but work interfered but thank you.

PROF. CLARK: I understand. Thank you. Next we have Nigel Wood who is in person, I believe. Thank you, Nigel.

MR WOOD: I'm concerned the Department of Planning and Environment, the Department, have not adequately addressed the Bowmans Creek wind generation project. The Department has not ensured Ark Energy comply with relevant planning legislation and associated requirements. The Department have ignored their own specialist consultants and advice from other government departments, the RFS is a classical example.

There has been minimal community consultation. There was a community consultation committee, CCC, the Department contrary to the requirements of the wind energy guidelines clause 5.3, disbanded the CCC on the 7th of April, '22. There has been no community consultation in any format for over two years. Ark Energy have not contacted me in any form at all for over two years either and I've got three properties and they haven't been talking to me at all about two of them and minimal consultation about one of them.

Just regarding the recommended consent conditions. Clause A8 says the Applicant may upgrade the wind turbines and ancillary infrastructure on site providing these upgrades remain within the approved development disturbance area. Clause A8 needs to be modified so the height of the wind turbines and length of the blades cannot be increased.

The Department has relied on the photo montages provided by Ark Energy to assess the visual impacts on family homes; however, the Department's own expert, OHD, reported the photo montages including EIS are non-compliant with the appropriate requirements of the visual assessment bulletin. The expert reported the photo montages should not be used for assessing the scale and magnitude of the impacts. The impacts of the turbines is visually diminished. Photographs are that wide, it actually shrinks down by half the height of the turbines in the photographs - in the photo montages.

A photo montage of our home was not included in any EIS; however, photo montage for our home was provided to the Department. Our photo montage is not compliant, it has horizontal fielder view of more than 115 degrees. The horizontal fielder view is double the guideline. The impact on the turbines is visually diminished, they appear a

lot smaller then they will actually be in the photo montages. These are the same photo montages that have been provided to the IPC by the Department and so that's what you're looking at and that's what you've been provided.

The Department identified four to seven non-associated receivers located within 4.4 kilometres of the nearest turbine. The Department is satisfied that the project would not fundamentally change the broader landscape characteristics of the area or result in significant visual impacts on surrounding non-associated residents with the exception of one which has been discussed. The Department has made comments and decisions about the visual impacts of family homes based on the photo montages that do not comply with the visual assessment bulletin and contrary to advice provided by their experts.

Recommended consent condition B13 includes visual impact mitigation to the same non-associated residents within 4.4 kilometres of any wind turbine identified in the final layout plan may I ask the Applicant to implement visual impact mitigation measures on the land to minimise the visual impacts of the development on their residents including the curtilage. Appropriate mitigation measures such as landscape and vegetative screening in consultation with the owner and that must be reasonable and feasible consider bushfire risk.

For our home where we live identified in the report as H12-1 the visual expert has indicated that it will take more than a decade for the proposed vegetative screening to be effective. How do we consider bushfire risk when we live in a bushfire-prone area? The planting and vegetation when considering bushfire risk did not add up and do not align with the advice provided to the Department by the RFS. We will see over 20 wind turbines from our home. Regarding our home, these consent conditions are not reasonable and feasible.

If the IPC approves the project the consent condition needs to include along the lines recommended by the National Wind Farm Commissioner regarding acquisition. For example, for a period of five years from the approval of project the owner of non-associated residents' property or business within 4.4 kilometres of any wind turbines should have the option to trigger acquisition by the developer. The acquisition should include compensation above the property value to allow for the like-like replacement of their property or business, any disruptions and the property should be valued as if the wind farm has not been approved. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Nigel. Any questions?

MR PEARSON: Yes. Just one, Nigel. Thanks for that. Have you - has the Applicant offered to enter into a neighbour agreement with you? Have you had any - is there anything you can - - -

MR WOOD: They did offer a neighbour agreement, I refused it, it was minimal dollars and basically it made me a serf on my own property. Like they gave me - I couldn't sell the property. It's freehold, couldn't sell it without their permission. They could renegotiate my mortgage. The list of things you couldn't complain about

was massive. They could get rid of the agreement if they wanted to, I couldn't. It actually became a burden on my - on my property deeds, if you like, and that's how it was put together and I look at it's like playing Russian roulette with a bullet in every barrel. You just look at it and you go poosh, and I've actually put a copy of it on the - my EIS submission. It is available, the whole lot's available.

MR PEARSON: O.K. Thank you. We'll have a look at that. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you.

MR WOOD: So they offered that because we will be severely impacted.

MR PEARSON: Yes.

MR WOOD: That was verbally told to us. When the email came it said, we want to - we want to share the benefits. Yeah, the benefits of having light splashing in your house all night, every night from 20 turbines and the noise and the visual, yeah, for six grand a year.

MR PEARSON: Yes. Thank you, Nigel.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Nigel.

MR PEARSON: Much appreciated.

PROF. CLARK: So in the interests of time we are proposing to skip the afternoon tea break and try to catch up. So I think our next speaker - there it is. Carolyn Emms who is a telephone call, I believe, is that correct? Thank you.

MS EMMS: Yes, correct.

PROF. CLARK: Carolyn, you're online. Thank you. If you could - if you could commence please. Carolyn. Thank you. We can hear you very clearly. Can you hear us?

MS EMMS: Yes, I can. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. Bowmans Wind Farm name it implies this is a farm. Could you please clarify what a farm is? I have some questions of concern. How is this proposal in the public interest? How much energy is it actually going to produce, I mean, in real - realistically. Sometimes there are claims that are over-exaggerated. Have the cumulative effects really been considered honestly with transparency? What will be the cumulative effects on this region? I'm very familiar with this area, we used to have a business there and I know a lot of people there who are very concerned.

Look, biodiversity is - is - well, this is the whole reason for being for Rainforest Reserves Australia - of concern with the boundary is 16,720 hectare of which seven hectares is Crown land but what they don't tell you is the seven hectares of Crown land it's going to be carved up, it's going to impact and fragment that forest. The

development will include up to 60 wind turbine generators. I mean, it's just huge infrastructure. Is this a farm or is it - what is it? Or is it an industrial site? Please start being honest.

The people are just absolutely - we know this - they're trying to trick us and Ark Energy, I mean, it's the government that is allowing these proposals to go ahead, fast-track and the people - social licence. If you think that people give social licence that destroys the land, destroys the environment and there is no benefit to the community then that probably needs to be considered and questioned. Can we question this now?

Look, our concern and I haven't got long, are increases to bushfire risk. They say they're going to help, you know, the native-positive and all those claims they make and they're quite happy to burn - to burn the bush but it's actually only to actually protect the infrastructure. They call it decommissioning costs. Well, we have evidence that the person that has to bear the cost of this, they just get an oxy torch and they can cut it all up and - and we're seeing ourselves firsthand blades that have just been dumped now in Windy Hill.

So, you know, the blade manipulator transporter, that's to be mandated. Inadequate engineering design criteria and governance. Not enough information on this. There is alarm over increasing structural failures. In other words, you know, when they say they're going to decommission, well, in fact, there's other words - it's another word really is dump or dismantle, get rid of, go into landfill, not pay the cost to recycle, it won't happen and what about the money, who is responsible? Well, it's the owner.

There are some serious questions that I'm asking and if those concerns aren't answered for the public honestly and in a transparent manner the public do deserve in this region, beautiful region, it's really scenic. Chinese dump wind turbines. Well - and the products that they use to make these turbines, it's not nature-positive. There's a huge impact, cumulative impact but, yeah, so the questions that I've just raised, it would be - I would appreciate some answers to that and do they feel that they have to answer the public or is this just a tick and a flick? Is this a sincere independent committee? I give you, and I applaud you, it's better than Queensland. So thank you for having an independent committee on this. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Carolyn, thank you for your time today and for your submission. We don't have any questions for you but are grateful for the time that you've taken to make this submission and you were very clear over the line so everybody was able to hear you. I believe we next have Malcolm Ritter in person. Malcolm, thank you. Thank you, Carolyn. Malcolm, just before you start can I confirm, Carolyn, is still on the phone or - no, good. Thank you.

MR RITTER: Yeah, I strongly object to the - this development right from the start. First of all, visual amenity which requires no explanation except to say that at A6 on page 6 of the final recommendation by the Planning Department it is stated that the height of the turbines is limited to 220 metres; yet, at A8 of the same page of the document it states that approval is not needed for turbine upgrades. Considering the proponent has sought to increase the size of the turbine pads it would appear that

increasing the height of the turbines is part of their agenda. If the turbines heights are increased all of the photo montages used by the proponent will be irrelevant and turbines that may not have been visible initially will now be visible. This is a very serious issue.

These other issues now have not been assessed or acknowledged, things that I've brought to their attention - the DPE. The potential loss of the eagle population resulting from blade strike. We have recently had a wild dog and fox culling operation conducted from aircraft organised by the local land services. Although they are considered pests they do, indeed, put downward pressure on the rabbit and hare population. So in the absence of those predators there is more reliance on the hawks, on eagle hawks because despite myxomatosis and calicivirus measures for rabbit control there always remains a core population ready to multiply to unmanageable levels.

One of the conditions of consent is for the blade strike casualties to be reported to authorities. However, given the historical, untruthful behaviour of wind farm developers and operators in all probability this reporting will not happen and it would be impossible to enforce this. Other things that have been also ignored by the DPE in their final assessment, landowners in the area know there are koalas in the wind farm locality and one landowner I asked the member - one - one of those landowners asked the member of the group who were investigating wildlife in the area if they wanted to be shown where the koalas were. The reply was, we don't want to know. We don't want to know. We're not interested in that.

Also no serious consideration appears to have been given to the very real potential for landslip in the area resulting from ground vibration from the turbines given that it is a landslip area. There's been some big landslips in that area. Further on we were assured that construction traffic would not be using Goorangoola Road, a narrow winding road with creek crossings and no mobile phone coverage; yet, there is a construction compound indicated for Bowmans Creek Road and in all probability Goorangoola Road will be used as a shortcut for workers travelling to and from the worksite from the south.

I'm aware that the Commission doesn't put too much emphasis on the number of objectors or supporters to a project; however, it should be noted that the submissions initially submitted to the Department of Planning, the bulk of the supporters don't live in the local area whereas the bulk of those objecting do live in the area. Surely this has to be indicative of the sentiment of the major number of locals in the area, in the Muswellbrook, Goorangoola, et cetera, area.

In conclusion, I would assert that - and this - you might not be interested in this but in conclusion I would assert that the Hunter Valley has already been scarred as the result of mining and despite the enormous benefits that have ensued from that industry we don't want the valley's amenity further raped by the incursion of wind farms. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Malcolm. We have a couple of questions, Malcolm, if you don't mind.

MR RITTER: Yep.

PROF. CLARK: And could I start with Richard please.

MR PEARSON: Yes. So thanks, Malcolm. One point you raised was about any future upgrades not being able to exceed the height of the approved turbines. I just wanted to be clear, is that you're requesting that that condition, I think it's A8, be clarified to say that there shouldn't be any height exceedance allowed if new turbines are put in place, was that the point you were making?

MR RITTER: Yes, that's very ambiguous the way it is and I spoke to one of the chaps from the DPI yesterday at the Singleton meeting about the new framework and he admitted that, yes, it was really ambiguous, it could be taken as, you know, they can upgrade them, they can take them up to 280 metres if they want to because it says there quite specifically in black and white that upgrades don't require further approval.

MR PEARSON: Yes. Thanks. Thank you. I just wanted to confirm that was your point. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Just a clarification for myself please, Mr Ritter. The - I think at one point, if I understood you correctly, you said that the Commission does not review all submissions and I just want to, for the avoidance of doubt, say we absolutely do, both the ones that were originally through to the Department and the subsequent ones and submissions are also open till the 21st. So if I've misunderstood you I apologise but we absolutely look at all submissions in detail.

MR RITTER: Yeah. No, what I was referring to was issues that were brought to the DPE's attention that were not mentioned or addressed in the final report.

PROF. CLARK: By the DPE you mean?

MR RITTER: By the DPE.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you for clarifying that for me.

MR RITTER: Yeah.

PROF. CLARK: O.K. I don't have any other questions. Adrian?

MR PILTON: Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you. Thank you for your submission, Malcolm, and for your time. Thank you very much. Next we have via video conferencing Stan Moore. So when you're ready. Just a moment. I believe that's Grant Piper's up on the screen. There we have. Stan, can you hear us? Are you able to hear us?

MR MOORE: Hello.

PROF. CLARK: Hello, we can hear you. You're very faint. Are you able to mute us? Just a moment, Stan, while we just work through how to get rid of the feedback. One moment. Sorry, Stewart. Stan, I believe you might have two devices.

MR MOORE: Hello. Yes. Stan Moore.

PROF. CLARK: Yes. Stan, have you got two devices on or just one?

MR MOORE: Yes, I know, I'm getting that, yes.

PROF. CLARK: Yes. Perhaps if you could work with one that might help - - -

MR PILTON: I think it's working now.

PROF. CLARK: - - - with the feedback. Thank you. Thank you, Adrian. Please start your presentation, thank you, Stan.

MR MOORE: Well, all I can do is just log out and log back on.

PROF. CLARK: No, we can - - -

MR MOORE: No, I don't - I'm working on just a little pocket wi-fi at the moment on a laptop.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Stan. We can hear you very clearly. Please commence, we've clarified on our end so please start, thank you.

MR MOORE: All good?

PROF. CLARK: Yes, all good.

MR MOORE: Terrific. I'll hang up, thank you. Bye-bye. You can hear me now? Hello.

PROF. CLARK: Yes, we've got delay, guys, so hold back. Yes, we can hear you, Stan.

MR MOORE: Hello. Goodo. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: O.K., Stan, take it away,

MR MOORE: O.K. All right. Now, you can hear me clearly?

PROF. CLARK: Yes.

MR MOORE: O.K. Goodo. Stan Moore, I'm actually from Goulburn and we have a number of wind turbines around the top of the range. My issue I want to discuss today is issues around decommissioning, recycling and rehabilitation. I've had a look at the proponent's EIS and they appear to be avoiding responsibility for fully decommissioning and rehabilitating in relation to once they decommission the solar - the wind factory.

They say - one of the things here in the EIS they say they'll remove everything above ground but they'll be leaving the infrastructure and some of the concrete pads in place. Now, they use a very lame excuse that they won't be removing underground cables and footings because it will - they'll generally remain, they say, in situ to avoid further disturbance. Now, this is a con because they've already disturbed the soil to put them there in the first place and so they are just avoiding the responsibility of doing a proper clean-up and remediation.

The other thing I want to touch on is the issue around disposal of liquids and particularly oils and lubricants. There's nothing said here that they will be recycling these and, for instance, in the substation there are thousands of litres of oil that should be recycled and there's no commitment to recycling these products. So I think it's - It's - if this - if this is going to be truly, you know, better for the environment surely these sorts of things should be happening.

The other thing is, they say all waste will be recycled where practicable, otherwise it will be disposed of in a relatively - sorry, relevantly licenced facility which is described in section 7.1.7. When you turn to section 7.1.7 the first thing is are the wind turbines blades from them and I'm not sure and I bring it to the Commission's attention on page 250. They plan to dispose of 3,900 tonnes of composite materials when they - when they decommission. Now, when you go further the - these panels will be disposed to a landfill in consultation with Councils. So I just don't think it's appropriate in this day and age that these proposals are allowed to just do their bit, cut up the - cut up the blades and effectively put them into landfill. There should be another solution.

The other issue too with the blades is the contamination of the site and also the potential danger for workers when cutting them up because of the toxic chemicals, particularly bisphenol that are in there and I'm not - I haven't seen any mention of that in the EIS as how they're going to protect their workers and also how they are going to recycle and finally, the developers and operators of these facilities they're not likely to be the owners when it comes time for shutting them down and decommissioning.

These - these facilities regularly change hands and, therefore, to avoid what could be potentially a disaster of these things being left there to rot there should be a requirement upon these developers to pay upfront a rehabilitation bond that is held by government. So a security bond held by government to ensure that the decommissioning, the remediation and the rehabilitation is undertaken. That's all I wish to touch on. I don't want to take anymore of your time but those areas I find are a major concern for a project and for what keeps being claimed as these are

environmentally friendly. Very much distance from that based on what's in the EIS. Thank you very much for your time.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Stan. You came across very clearly and the video worked particularly well, I don't know if you can hear us as clearly but we could certainly hear you and thank you very much for your submission today.

MR MOORE: Thank you. And thank you for the opportunity. We got there in the end.

PROF. CLARK: We did. Thank you, Stan.

MR MOORE: O.K. Bye-bye now.

PROF. CLARK: Next we have Rod - Rob Cumming, I beg your pardon, via video conference. Rob, can you hear us?

MR CUMMING: Yes, how are you?

PROF. CLARK: I'm well, thank you, Rob, and we can hear you very clearly. You're ready to commence your submission at any time please.

MR CUMMING: Thank you. And thank you for having me speak. I spent quite a bit of time working in the Hunter Valley and say this about wind turbines. They're a blight on the landscape and using the industry's numbers they've got payback period of at least 11.6 years and a lifespan of less than 20. These things have got a dubious advantage and must be rigorously assessed with proper investigation to how the proposal has been formulated. In many cases that have been proposed the numbers and economics are just simply absent.

In my experience Ark Energy, Epuron, Korea Zinc are the worst offenders and with Chalumbin in Far-North Queensland the proposal fail to deal with objections attempting to win community acceptance by using bribes to the community. The light pollution which - which up here is known as a black night is startling with light affecting a large area. This was never expounded by the constructed Kaban proponent being Neoen, a French company, and the Chalumbin proposal to the south of me, less than five kilometres in both ways, will just add to this night pollution and Bowmans Creek is going to be similar even though there's less - less turbines.

There's been a serious situation here arising in recent weeks where Ark Energy is improperly attempting to influence the Minister, Minister Plibersek. This influences against in excess of 750 negative submissions properly made which reject the Chalumbin proposal. Ark Energy even went to the length of changing the name as it would appear to be trying to distance itself from its original proposal. Even misstating the number of turbines applied for in the initial proposal to the regulator in Queensland from 200 to 90 and now less than - or around 45.

On Ark Energy's own admission the company failed to report all or any submissions on the second iteration of Lotus Creek. I'm serious of the view that the company will attempt the same with Bowmans Creek despite assurances, no doubt, that this will not occur. Our northern experience, as I say, is quite different. The removal process - and I have information about a Crookwell proposal as well, where similar things went on. The removal process on decommissioning is even more unclear as a broad-brush approach is used and there are no compulsory deposits taken to ensure a full clean-up - full clean-up.

We don't have proper declarations of material involved in the blades, turbine, oils and degradation shedding of phenols, for example, and the blades and other materials which could impact - which impact the area around the turbines which will likely render surrounding areas to be contaminated lands by definitely under the EPA Act. The change in classification will clearly result in areas being sterilised from agricultural use post removal of turbines. The areas proposed for agriculture should remain so. The gradual erosion and industrial sterilisation in the local area within a region that is one with a large range of agricultural outcome should be stopped and the - and not allowed and the determination be to disallow the proposal.

The local visual impacts are huge due to light pollution and being of a height close to the size of Centrepoint Tower. There are serious issues for crop-spraying, bird migration together with aerial firefighting. Sound generation is poorly dealt with and from experiences with Kaban in Far-North Queensland the sound impact which affects sleep patterns and local amenity is in a range of up to 10 kilometres. The proposal should be simply rejected as being an unsuitable industrial proposal. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Rob, thank you for your submission. Any questions?

MR CUMMING: Just a moment please.

PROF. CLARK: O.K. We'll hold on. Can you hear us?

MR CUMMING: Yeah, I can now, yep.

PROF. CLARK: We have one question.

MR CUMMING: Go ahead.

MR PEARSON: Thanks Rob. In relation to light pollution you're referring to lighting on the turbines required for aviation purposes?

MR CUMMING: Yes. They're the - yes, yes, correct.

MR PEARSON: And - - -

MR CUMMING: And - - -

MR PEARSON: Sorry, go on.

MR CUMMING: And up here with the Kaban proposal and it's similar to Epuron/Ark Energy/Korea Zinc for the Chalumbin proposal to the south is that there was no indication that we'd be dealing with lights that are - that half the size of a house hanging up on these towers and up here we get overcast and you do around in Muswellbrook when the fog's come in and at night time it just bounces off the overcast and creates serious light pollution.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Rob.

MR PEARSON: Thank you for clarifying that.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you very much for your submission and we are ready for our next speaker who I believe is in person and that's Nola Connor.

MS CONNOR: Thank you. Hi, my name is Nola Connor. [redacted]. My home is 3.3 kilometres from the nearest tower at T57 and looking at the updated photo montage on your website I see at least nine towers. My problem as a neighbouring residence with no financial gain from this project is that I have to go and deal with the visual, the noise, the possibility of major fire risk and all the mental anxiety that goes with this project.

The visual aspect of my property is one of the reasons I built out there in 2017. It's such a beautiful area with amazing views, beautiful flora and many, many animals. It's a beautiful quiet area to live in that it's a lifetime goal for many to have. This is what this area provides. The landscape and animals are incredible and soon to be decimated with the clearing of hectares and hectares of land, the construction of access tracks and construction of 220-metre high wind turbines. This has been highlighted and objected to for many years with written and verbal complaints but unfortunately with little respect for the land and any animals' existence. There's koalas, spotted quolls, wedge-tailed eagles just just name a few that just simply are being disregarded.

The noise. I do not want to hear the noise, the constant spin day in and day out which is proven to be mind-altering. The levels of noise I'll be hearing has never been a topic of keen discussion. I asked for noise monitoring equipment at my residence in the early stages to get an understanding of what levels I have currently have and what is to come. This request was denied. I have no idea what the noise level will actually be. It's fine to toss numbers around but the true levels unfortunately will be when it's built so then it's just too late. Surely this is not an unreasonable request to provide this information. It's almost like come in and smash the area, walk away and out of sight, out of mind.

Fire. I understand a fire can possibly happen anywhere at any time but the problem is, I've seen photos of these turbines on fire and this risk is surely increased with the installation of an oil-filled rotating unit that is going to be installed on the ridgelines and bush areas that are picked out as ideal sites. I'd just like to know if this was to happen what's the plan in place for my personal safety. One way in, one way out with

the speed of fire can travel means this is a death trap for me. So how are they - how are the approving bodies in this project ensuring my safety?

Mental anxiety. I've been fighting this project since 2018 along with my neighbours. We have had many, many meetings and I was also a member of the CCC committee all this time and effort involved trying to communicate with these project officers that really was not of any substance. The problem stems from the lack of communication of this project. I'd just like to point out I am not against wind farms, just the location chosen is way too close to residences. I have never been contacted or spoken to or had a visit from Ark Energy. It's been over three years since any form of contact. I don't know how this is possible.

I have never had a definite location for towers, no noise levels communicated, the safety plans given and no mental support. The information is so misleading and as far as I'm concerned a deliberate plan to get the project over the line. False radio announcements last week saying everyone within the four kilometre radius have been contacted is absolutely not true. I have not been contacted in over three years and never spoken to anyone from Ark Energy. Obviously with the defined radius of four kilometres stated this is an admission on their behalf that these people are most affected and should be in constant contact. The communication has been atrocious.

In closing, please, as I'm speaking from my heart this project is changing people's lives and that of their families. This cannot be taken lightly, it's way too close to residences. I built out there for the natural beauty of the area and that can never be replaced. I'm hoping with some sincerity that you can see the passion that we share here today. Most of us do not enjoy public speaking, I know I don't, it feels very uncomfortable but we do it in fear that if we don't speak we don't have a chance.

For myself and my family this project cannot be approved, the location is way too close to residences and needs to be changed. I have welcomes anyone of the approval bodies, as I have said for many years, to come out and see the area that we have built with the landscape, it's actually - and not rely on photos or internet-based photos. The whole project seems unfair to have such an impact on our lives and decisions made by others elsewhere. Thank you and hopefully my words are taken seriously.

PROF. CLARK: Nola, thank you. Thank you for your submission. We do appreciate how difficult it is for public speaking but thank you very much for your submission today.

MR PEARSON: Can I just clarify? Did you say turbine 57 was the closest to your property?

MS CONNOR: Yes, it is.

MR PEARSON: I thought so. Thank you.

MS CONNOR: Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you. So next we have Leonie Ball in person.

MS BALL: Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to share my thoughts on the transformative potential of the proposed Bowmans Creek Wind Farm. I'm Leonie Ball and with my husband Greg we own a property at Bowmans Creek. I wish to share a short summary of the history of our farm [redacted]. This property has been in the Ball family since original selection in 1864. For 160 years our family has forged deep connections to the soil and profound commitment to its preservation. We are proud custodians of this agricultural land with sixth, seventh, and eighth generations still living on this property and hoped for the tradition continuing for future generations.

Our connection to this land drives our passion for sustainability. We want a sustainable and resilient future for the land we call home. It holds a deep sentimental place in our hearts. The introduction of a wind farm represents a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation by embracing sustainable energy solutions, we honour our past while ensuring a resilient and vibrant future for generations to come. As stewards of this land for generations we understand the delicate balance between progress and preservation. The decision to seek a wind farm in our locality has not been taken lightly. We have been exploring this possibility for over a decade. We believe we have made a well-informed decision and this has been supported by our fellow land - adjoining landholders.

Our farming activities have evolved over the years. Initially we were focusing on sheep on our property and later shifting to beef cattle to adapt to the market demands to better fit with the farm sustainability. Embracing change is a critical part of our farm's survival. The proposal of the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm represents a natural progression with the values we hold as our ethos.

The integration of a wind farm within our beef cattle operation aligns with our commitment to sustainable land management. Agriculture is inherently susceptible to market fluctuations and weather patterns. A wind farm provides passive opportunity for the landowners to have resilience during unpredictable times while having the benefit of assisting us to succession plan for the future generations.

The Ball family have been good stewards of the land for over 160 years and the wind farm represents a commitment to environmental stewardship. By harnessing clean and renewable energy we actively contribute to the land and the broader ecosystem. In the face of changing weather patterns and persistent threat of drought the wind farm offers a reliable resource to better manage our natural resources. We do understand that the wind farm will impact the visual outlook and amenity of our valley and these may not be to everyone's liking; however, the Hunter Valley landscape has been changing for more than 200 years.

The vision for a wind farm are Bowmans Creek transcends more than a mere investment in infrastructure, it symbolises the commitment to preserving our heritage, overcoming challenges with innovation and ensuring sustainability of this land for future generations. The wind farm is not just a development, it's a commitment to be

sustainable, co-existence between agriculture and clean energy. The Ball family with its legacy of resilience and adaptability stands at the forefront of progress ready to embrace the wind of change. With the next generations in mind hand in hand let us move towards a future that is sustainable but environmentally conscious. Together we can create a legacy that not only respects the past but paves the way for a sustainable and prosperous future. Along with our fellow involved landholders we support the wind of change. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Leonie. Leonie, we have one question for you please.

MR PEARSON: Thanks, Leonie. How many acres or hectares have you got and how many turbines are you going to be hosting on your holding roughly or precisely?

MS BALL: We have 1313 hectares, our land's massive and we have three different holdings - three separate holdings that will be hosting turbines. So some of them are part turbines and some of them are solely so I think in total it's about five. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Five - Five turbines?

MS BALL: Yes.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you for your submission.

MS BALL: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Great, thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Next we have Clint Thomas also in person. Thank you, Clint.

MR THOMAS: Hi. My name is Clint Thomas. [redacted]. The property was bought with the intention to eventually build and reside there. Five years ago we were informed of an application to build Bowmans Creek Wind Farm. We have put those plans on hold as this project is proved will adversely affect our lives. Communication from the start has been very limited from Epuron/Ark Energy. Early in the process I requested photo montages and they were supplied by Ark Energy/Epuron.

After no more communication I contacted Julian Casby from Epuron and was informed I didn't have a residence and didn't count in the assessment process. After contacting Iwan Davies from the DPE, Ark Energy was contacted by the DPE and informed that my property has building entitlement attached and must be included in the assessment for the project. Since then I have had no communication or information from Ark Energy.

The DPE has since done a site visit to my property which included Iwan Davies, Nicole Brewer and Clay Preshaw. They noted that the photo montages supplied by Ark Energy were incorrect as they omitted a number of turbines. During the visit it was discussed with the possibility of removing turbines on the ridgeline above mine

and Robertson's property which is at G17-1. It was also noted that the project would have a significant impact on my property if approved. Since then I have not been contacted by either the DPE or the wind farm proponent. The DPE has discussed my situation with my neighbour which I think is very inappropriate as I should've been contacted directly.

Two separate properties on my boundaries are now associated properties. Where does that leave me? I'm not the only person in this situation as there are a number of other properties that do not yet have a residence and have been ignored. I feel that those of us who find ourselves in this position, that acquisition would be appropriate and fair and to be a condition of consent as we did not want to be put in this situation. This morning you, the Members of the IPC travelled through my property to visit my neighbour at G17-1. While you would've seen the impact to his and my property and the whole community of Muscle Creek the vast majority of people affected by this project do not want it to happen. That's about all I've got on this project.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you. Thank you, Clint. Do you have any questions?

MR PEARSON: Just - just in relation to property G17-1, which is the Robertson's and the proposal to remove turbines, would that improve the situation for your property as well?

MR THOMAS: When the DPE was out and visited my property there was mention of removing a lot of those - that area because of the impacts, as you would've noted, on both sides of Muscle Creek heading out there but again no further contact or information in any form from either the DPE or the proponent of the wind farm.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MR THOMAS: So I - and on that, I have not even been allocated a number and I am inside the black line so the future does not look very good.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thanks, Clint.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you for your submission. So next we have Robert Worth in person. Thank you, Robert.

MR WORTH: I'm a little bit different to some of the others. So I purchased a property in January 2022 in Muscle Creek of a thousand acres or thereabouts. We contacted Epuron and they told us that our property would - wouldn't have a wind turbine within six kilometres of our property. Since recently I found out that the whole property's inside the 5k radius. So I did some enquiries and we had a meeting with Rebecca last week which was very nice for her to come but there's still a lot of questions there to be answered because I suffer badly from Meniere's and the air - the noise that you don't hear they tell me is the noise that does the problems to my head and we also have a four year old autistic grandson which is light and noise sensitive

and we're wondering what the impacts are going to be on my health and the grandson's health in that situation and I found out this morning, I was sent a text to say that there's a wind turbine syndrome and I'd never heard of this and it causes headaches, sleeping problems up to 10 kilometres, ringing in the ears, I get that regularly, mood problems, concentration and memory, equilibrium, dizziness and nausea can be caused by this syndrome and this is all straight off the website that we looked at this morning.

So we're wondering whether any of this has been addressed in the situation. Our place is 4.2 to the nearest turbine. So I'm not sure whether this has been addressed but it's something that really concerns us because we brought the place for peace and quiet, not to have noise and, yes, I've been offered vegetation but in the situation the vegetation won't do it because our house is elevated and the wind turbines are elevated and there's a big valley between us. So I'm just - yeah, I've got nothing else to say.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Robert. Any questions Adrian, Richard?

MR PEARSON: No, not on this occasion. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you very much for your submission, Robert. Give me a moment to find out - O.K. We have Lynette LaBlack who, I believe, is a telephone call. Thank you.

MS LABLACK: Hello, can you hear me O.K.?

PROF. CLARK: Hello, Lynette, we can hear you. You're very clear. Can you hear us?

MS LABLACK: Yes, I can hear you.

PROF. CLARK: O.K. Please proceed with your submission.

MS LABLACK: If addressing climate change is about a liveable climate, protecting human health and wellbeing why are we wasting our time considering such inferior, unreliable, weather-dependent, unaffordable wind, solar generation such as Ark's with a hopeless capacity factor designed to deprive us of cooling and heating power? All of the aims and objectives of the New South Wales Government's numerous climate change targets and builds are defied by this plan.

Key issues identified in the Department's whole-of-government assessment of Ark Energy's application include energy security, biodiversity, noise and should also include public health and safety. New South Wales electricity infrastructure roadmap has been summed up by the most credible experts as shambolic policy-making, dangerous to grid operation and totally mad. With AEMO's 2022 ISP electricity grid design also shredded by reputable experts stating, it cannot provide Australians with reliable power and no responsible power systems engineer would proceed with such a non-viable plan.

Furthermore, the implications for the economy and for national security by relying on China which dominates the market for wind and solar equipment and materials is extremely negative. Instead of energy security these CCP-reliant wind, solar plans are enabling Beijing to turn our lights off. Australia's future fund is exposed to Chinese companies, a risky business.

There is unethical reliance on modern slavery and New South Wales DPE is carelessly and irresponsibly inflicting moral hazard through their risky experiments on rural Councils and ratepayers when they are not substantiated by scientific rigour, engineering facts, integrity or ethics. My family and I do not consent to Ark Energy's risky Bowmans Creek plans and detrimental impacts as supported by the dodgy DPE.

First photo. Ecocidal industrialisation of rural New South Wales, Australia is not for the greater good. Photos 2 to 9, 8 photos (not transcribable) wind electricity generating works are not clean, green or sustainable. They are environmental vandalism, irresponsible, non-sensical, irreversible, mass destruction of nature. The first series of these photos are of Rye Park wind construction, Yass Valley at various stages showing extensive clearing and denuding of the landscape, invasive roadworks, unmitigable water sediment runoff and erosion damage. Introduction of invasive contaminating feral species that will never be removed from Ark's Bowman Creek site if built including the massive energy-intensive cement bases of wind turbines left to spoil this land forever.

Probably the whole lot of the 56 degrading turbine monstrosities will be left for the foolish host to deal with as this state green nightmare implodes. The scale of wind turbine environmental vandalism is enormous and irreversibly catastrophic. Far superior Australian nuclear power has the minimal environment impact requiring only 1-360th of the land mass that inferior energy-depriving wind turbine junk needs for Ark Energy's reckless Bowmans Creek plan. Note the tiny car on site - well, I can't really see which photo but in the photo of the site for a substation you can get an idea of the immense scale of ruination. Can see a tiny little silver dot down at the tree line along the road, that's a car. So you can see the scale.

Photo 10. You're able to see the steep gradient of the site which obviously or equals water sediment runoff and erosion, contamination of our life-sustaining local creeks and rivers. 11 to 16, water runoff. Fake green renewable wind, solar energy poverty grift and Ponzi scheme is creating an environmentally destructive nuisance throughout New South Wales and Australia. These are pictures of the damage caused at Wagga Wagga which is now a case for litigation.

This is typical, irresponsible behaviour of wind and solar developers. The photos following show the totally illogical fake green propaganda is rampant in Australia with carpet-baggers trawling around and deceitfully selling their self-benefitting wares when overseas countries are recognising reliable energy reality.

PROF. CLARK: Lynette, just to make sure you did hear the one-minute bell? You have 30 seconds left. Thank you.

MS LABLACK: Global coal generation is soaring, records are being broken, solar is cheaper is blah, blah, blah - - - [redacted] - - - cut me off.

PROF. CLARK: Lynette, we can still hear you and we're looking at a slide on the energy transition, thank you.

MS LABLACK: I thought you just hung up on me.

PROF. CLARK: No, no, my interruption was to make sure that you heard the one-minute bell and if you could please conclude your presentation your timeslot is up. Thank you. If you could - - -

MS LABLACK: You've just made my thing disappear, that's the trouble.

PROF. CLARK: No, we can see your presentation here.

MS LABLACK: Yeah, but it just made me lose my place because it was in my notes. O.K. Well, are you up to photo 22?

PROF. CLARK: No, we're looking at page 18 of 32.

MS LABLACK: What's the photo of?

PROF. CLARK: And now we're looking at slide 20, renewables are the future. Lynette, I'm sorry, but you have run out of time.

MS LABLACK: I'll just go through - just - just slide through a picture of the bread which shows the skyrocketing - excuse me - skyrocketing energy prices for basic food that we are now suffering from, suffering unnecessary hardship and potential death because we can't afford our power bills and you'll see the reckless, irresponsible public health and safety risks that are being caused with children being forced to wear earmuffs because of wind turbines, infrasound causing people to be sick. This phenol-A shedding from turbines - - -

PROF. CLARK: Lynette, I'm going to have to interrupt you there, I'm very sorry. If you could provide the rest of your submission in a written form and, of course, we have the copy of your slides which we will consider but we now, in the interests of time, do need to move onto our next speaker and I want to thank you for your submission. Thank you, Lynette. And I believe we have Kim Granger next in person. Thank you, Kim. When you're ready, Kim.

MS GRANGER: Hi, I'm Kim, [redacted]. I'd just like to - I asked Rebecca when we had our technical difficulties what number house I was, she said she thinks I'm E17-6. While we were sitting there I was flicking through and I can't find any information on it so can somebody give me what I need would be great. O.K. I'd like to express my concern as a resident living in close proximity. It's very upsetting to learn that this project is nearing its decision period considering I have not had any communication from the organisation. I brought my house in July 2022, there

should actually be a clause or something should be legislated that you get handed over all the information that Epuron or whoever - like virtually old owner, it should come to us. I find it very concerning and disrespectful. I would've thought that living in the area I deserve to be acknowledged and consulted. Instead I've been trying to navigate on the internet on all the sites and it's not very user-friendly to find the information you need, and the maps aren't very well illustrated that I've come across.

I moved out of town for the quiet, peaceful life. We brought in a one-way in with limited structural impact, example, on a dirt road. There's no street lights, no noise. I would like to know the effects this project will have on my property and our health, what health impacts being so close. People in my household already have significant health issues.

We knew when we purchased our property we were in a bushfire zone. Living in a bushfire-rated area I think it significantly increases the risk of fire with only one way in, one way out. I said that. On a government website it actually states that there's an increased fire and lightning strikes. So the way I look at it I'm in a deathtrap as well. I'd like to know what the impacts of our wildlife, the natural habitat destroyed to make room for the turbines. Not only that, the road infrastructure to get the turbines and the power to be put through to the turbines. Yeah, that's about it.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Kim. Thank you. Do you have any questions?

MR PEARSON: Quick one.

PROF. CLARK: Yes.

MR PEARSON: So did you have any awareness of the project before you bought your property in a kind of big picture sense?

MS GRANGER: When we drove out there there were signs "no wind farms", all the rest of it. You ask people around town. We did - I did actually ask the real estate agent and he said that there had been a proposal put through but nothing was definite. So we sort of assumed that everybody would be contacted and have some sort of input, rather, to get to this point and then, yeah, we're at this stage.

PROF. CLARK: And that was July 2022 you made that purchase.

MS GRANGER: We bought, yep.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you. Next we have Peter Yolk - York I beg your pardon, Peter York via video conference. Hello, Peter, we can see you. Can you hear us?

MR YORK: Hello, Commissioners, can you hear me?

PROF. CLARK: We can hear you. Please proceed with your submission.

MR YORK: Good afternoon. My name's Peter York. My two properties 11-1 and 12-3 cover 220 hectares, it will be impacted by the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm and I object to the project's potential approval. I'm an environmental scientist that works in the field of environmental management within the Hunter Valley for the past 16 years and I currently manage all aspects of post-approvals at a large open-cut mine near Muswellbrook. I was also a member of the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm CCC before it was disbanded.

As a professional environment community manager who is passionate about my work I've been deeply disturbed and outraged about Ark's conduct throughout the EIS process including the consultant Hanson Bailey. They have simply held our local community in contempt and never attempted to conduct community consultation in a genuine manner. This is clear to see from a large number of objections and the small number of supportive submissions received from the project. The fact is simple, the Department of Planning and the IPC Commissioners have spent more time at my property than anyone from Ark Energy. Due to time constraints I'll touch on the following points and I'll provide more detail in my written submission.

I dispute the Department's claim that there is no visual impact to my property. The only controls detailed in the assessment report is the vegetative screening installation of my property. This is wildly known that vegetative screening is ineffective within the Department and also the Wind Farm Commissioner or the Renewable Commissioner as he's now known. This is a known fact and when the Department has assessed other wind developments throughout New South Wales it will take 10-plus years for the trees to reach the height required to block out the turbines due to poor soil quality on my property.

The trees may reach the required heights just in time to see the turbines decommissioning. The vegetative screening is also introduced as a fire hazard within the asset protection zone of my property and as the Commissioners would've noticed during their site visit today the access along the northern section of Sandy Creek Road is a major hazard for our community, even when there is no large bushfire approach with one road in and one road out and very narrow with steep drop-offs on each side.

There's no visual impact graph for my property H12-1 depicting how effective or how many metres the vegetative screen needs to be from my property. The installation of the screen would need further clarity in the consent and I anticipate that Ark Energy will require me to sign some form of agreement with an easement placed over my property before they pay for the landscaping to be completed. The vegetative screening requirements must be listed in a schedule of land for non-associated landholders.

The visual impacts of aviation lights have not been assessed either in the EIS or the assessment report provided by Planning. We've asked for photo montages from Ark Energy but they were never received. There's also no restrictions on the number of

blasting that can be undertaken each day. This should be a consent condition with a maximum of one blast per day. The Department did also not independently review the noise assessment report, complete noise impact report completed by Sonus. It's well-known through recent court proceedings that all (not transcribable) wind farms, that industrial wind sites regularly exceed background noise criteria greater than 35dB plus five dB and the Commissioners should refer to those court cases when they're making their determination on Bowmans Creek Wind Farm.

There's a number of conditions requiring noise monitoring but there's no condition for a noise management plan which is unacceptable. The Commissioners should also impose a condition regarding the use of real-time noise monitors which are linked to an automatic curtailment strategy based on the wind turbines themselves so when the wind's blowing directly towards non-associated residents and high impact noise environment is identified turbines are shut down or curtailed.

The Department also makes a statement in their assessment report that the project will save 950,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases. This number has not been independently verified by the Department and they've only used Ark's word for it. Ark's assessment does not include an assessment on the earthmoving, blasting construction transport, shipping costs, energy use to ship the blades from China; therefore, overestimating the greenhouse gas reductions for the project.

There's also been no independent review of the wind resource itself. So there's no determination on the overall performance of the wind generation. Ark has estimated the wind resource based on two monitoring towers which one of those was built illegally to then measure a project area 13,000 hectares.

PROF. CLARK: O.K. Peter, just to make sure you can hear the timing bell. Sorry to interrupt you, Peter.

MR YORK: As Martin Poole said earlier, they're looking to power homes in New South Wales - - -

PROF. CLARK: Peter, appreciating that there may be a delay on the line - - -

MR YORK: - - - but we all know that Ark Energy actually wants to build an export hydrogen facility - - -

PROF. CLARK: Are you able to hear me? Yes, the one-minute - the final warning bell has gone, Peter.

MR YORK: Yep.

PROF. CLARK: Could you quickly summarise please?

MR YORK: And one condition I'd like the Commissioners to draw their attention to which is A14. This - the Department in its correspondence to myself has stated that the draft 2023 Wind Energy Guidelines will not be considered in the assessment of

Bowmans Creek Wind Farm but I ask the Commissioners that condition A14 allows the Commissioners to ensure the latest version of the Wind Draft Guidelines 2023 are considered and, therefore, best practices apply to all aspects of the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm. In closing, the Bowmans Wind Farm will forever change the beauty of my property, introduce unacceptable fire risk to my young family and I ask the Commissioners to refuse the approval of Bowmans Creek Wind farm.

PROF. CLARK: Peter, thank you very much for your submission. In the interests of time I might press on unless you have a question. And yourself? Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Peter. We'll now move to Brigitte Thomas in person.

MS THOMAS: My name's Brigitte Thomas [redacted]. This has been really stressful. We didn't buy out there for any other reason other than the fact that it's really gorgeous, as you saw because you parked your cars at the intersection of my view, also my partner's. I would like to say that if this project is approved you should make some modifications. I feel that there's a few turbines that should be removed, number 66, 67, 69, 70 and 59 would maybe make it tolerable but probably not.

The other thing is that there has never been any discussion of any substantiation regarding noise. I'm not a noise person but I noted that the noise modelling has been completed on Vesta turbines at a hub height of 140 and a blade length of 80 metres. Ark Energy have left this same but included - increased the megawatt output of what they're proposing so I would assume that means that they turbine itself is going to be taller and the blades will be bigger but they haven't addressed that.

I think that you really need to consider the noise that will be the issue, you could maybe get used to looking at these things but probably not but noise is going to be a problem. We had to close our window last night because we could hear what we think was possible a dozer at the Muswellbrook Coal last night. I can't imagine how that's going to compare to turbines but I don't think it will be favourable and we have to live there. There's 47 non-associated houses that are going to be affected by this proposal if it's approved. I would ask that it not be approved, it's not the right location for this and I'm not really sure why we're here because only eight percent of the people affected have agreed and support this and the rest of us don't want it so really you need to listen to the people in the community and they don't want this proposal.

I also note that earlier when we were talking with the DPE, Iwan Davies avoids the questions that he can't answer or don't put this project in the right light, i.e., the demobilisation and how they're going to fund that. How are they going to fund it? There needs to be a fund set aside now to dismantle these things in the future the same as for a mine. It seems to me that there's a lot of - basically you're buying approval for this project. You pay Council, where does that money go? Does it come back to the community that's affected or the greater community? What are they going to do with it? This is Council so it's not right.

Also I'm concerned about the night lights. That's also similar to sound, it hasn't been properly addressed and it's going to affect our neighbourhood significantly as is the firefighting issue and the one road in which we've already discussed, that's a problem and it needs to be addressed. If it can't be addressed the project shouldn't happen and I don't see how you're going to fix that. Thank you.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Brigitte. Any questions? Any questions? Thank you. And our last speaker is via video. Bob Hawes. Hello, Bob, can you hear us?

MR HAWES: I can. Can you hear me?

PROF. CLARK: Yes, we can. Please proceed with your submission, thank you, Bob.

MR HAWES: First of all, thank you very much for the opportunity to present today. I'm the CEO of Business Hunter. Business Hunter was formerly the Hunter Business Chamber and it has been independent voice for business in the Hunter region since 1886. We currently represent over 4,200 members and affiliates across the Hunter region in virtually all industry sectors and all sizes of business. Business Hunter's interest in this project stem from our concerns that the progress for the region, the state and, for that matter, the nation to transition away from non-renewable energy to renewable energy sources of energy generation is taking far too long.

In doing so, we are risking our community, our business and our industry being able to decarbonise and be supplied with reliable and affordable power. Elements of the uncertainty are already playing out in our region and our plain to see. We note that the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm project and accompanying planning application are enormously complex. We also note that the planning assessment process has been very thorough and very time-consuming. In reviewing the Department of Planning and Environment's extensive development assessment report we note that the Department has stated and I quote, "The project aligns with a range of national and state policies which identify the need to diversify the energy generation mix and reduce the carbon emissions intensity of the grid while providing energy security and reliability." We very much agree with that statement.

The report also notes that the project is located in the Hunter-Central Coast renewable energy zone, a region which has excellent renewable energy resources. The project would have access to the electrical grid at a location with available network capacity on land where the wind development is permissible on RU1 zone land with consent under the infrastructure SEPP. We are certain the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm project, if approved, and constructed will play a very small part but an important part in contributing to replacing the loss of coal-fired energy generation within our region and within the state of New South Wales.

In this context, the Department's assessment report also notes and I quote again, "In terms of the energy security the project is in the public interest as it would play an important role in increasing renewable energy generation and capacity and would contribute to the transition to a cleaner energy system as coal-fire generators retire."

We also agree with that statement. Our observation of the Department's assessment report is that it is in response to an extensive list of assessment requirement and the project proponents have been able to satisfy the Department to the extent that the approval of the application subject to conditions is recommended.

We believe that that's critically important. Why? Well, it's important that we send a positive message to the community and the investment industry that where project applications of this nature transparently meet or exceed the requirements of the planning heads of consideration and the relevant criteria, they should be approved. This is particularly important in the renewable energy sector where in recent times we are seeing investment decisions falter or be delayed or cancelled altogether on the back of planning and pricing uncertainty.

We can ill afford to create further uncertainty and send a negative message by not approving the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm proposal. We support the IPC in adopting a recommendation to the Department of Planning and Environment and approving the application. Thank you very much.

PROF. CLARK: Thank you, Bob. Thank you for your submission. We have no questions for you. And that brings this session to a close. I do have a closing statement which I'd like to make at this time. Thank you everyone, many people here have participated this afternoon. This brings us to the end of this public meeting in the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm project (SSD-10315). Thank you to everyone who has participated in this important process. Adrian Pilton, Richard Pearson and myself have appreciated your input.

Just a reminder that it is not too late to have your say on this application. Simply click on the make-a-submission portal on our website or send us a submission via email or via post. The deadline for written submissions is 5.00pm next Thursday, the 21st of December, 2023. In the interests of openness and transparency we will be making a full transcript of this public meeting available on our website in the next few days. At the time of determination, the Commission will publish its statement of reasons for decision which will outline on how the Panel took the community's views into consideration as part of this decision-making process.

Finally, a quick thank you to my fellow Commissioners, Adrian Pilton and Richard Pearson and thank you for everyone online watching. From all of us here at the Commission please enjoy the rest of your evening and good night. Brad has something additional.

I beg your pardon. The deadline for written submissions is extended to the 21st of December. Thank you, Brad, and I apologise for that error. Thank you. Thank you.

MEETING CONCLUDED