



TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: POTTIGER WIND FARM (SSD-59235464)

PUBLIC MEETING – DAY 1

PANEL:

RICHARD PEARSON (CHAIR)
MICHAEL WRIGHT
SARAH DINNING

SPEAKERS:

TIM MEAD
(Someva)
JACK BOND
(Edward River Council)
WILL HOOKE
ROSS JOHNS
(Wimmera Mallee Environmental and
Agricultural Protection Association)
BOB KING
CAROLYN EMMS
(Rainforest Reserves Australia)

LOCATION:

DENLIQUIN TOWN HALL
170 CRESSY STREET, DENILIKUIN

DATE:

10:00AM – 12:00PM
WEDNESDAY, 4th JUNE 2025

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

[Music until 00:18:46]

- 5 **MR RICHARD PEARSON:** Okay. Thank you. Good morning everyone, and welcome to Day 1 of the NSW Independent Planning Commission’s public meeting into State Significant Development Application for the Pottinger Wind Farm.
- 10 I am speaking to you today from Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa land, and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all of the land on which we meet today and pay respects to Elders past and present and to the Elders from other communities who may be participating today.
- 15 I’m Richard Pearson, I’m the Chair of this Panel, and joining me are my fellow commissioners, Michael Wright and Sarah Dinning. No conflicts of interest have been identified in relation to our determination of this application.
- 20 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. With regards to projects such as this one, located in an already designated Renewable Energy Zone, the Commission must consider government policy. The government’s policy supports the rollout of large-scale renewable energy projects and connection to the electricity network. And as such, we do not have the jurisdiction to re-prosecute that policy.
- 25 We consider the Department’s Assessment Report and recommendations, the application, your written and oral submissions and other materials the Planning Law requires us to consider. All of these materials are either available publicly or will be made available on our website.
- 30 In making a decision on this case, the Commission must obey all relevant laws and consider all applicable policies and the public interest. And we also consider public submissions and that is the purpose of the meeting today.
- 35 We want to hear what you think about this application. It’s not a forum for whether you like or dislike 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 will have already participated in that process. There is no need to repeat previous submissions – they’re all available for us to consider.
- 40 The Applicant and Department have considered your submissions and taken them into account in the application assessment and conditions we’re considering today. Today, we want to hear what you think about the Department’s assessment and the recommended conditions. Even if you want to continue to object to the project, which is of course your prerogative, we want to know whether any of your concerns could be addressed either wholly or in part by the imposition of conditions. So, your consideration of alternatives does not in any way compromise
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your submission, and it enables the Panel to consider all options.

Shortly, we'll proceed to hear from registered speakers. At the conclusion of presentations today, I will summarise the key issues the Commission has heard at today's forum. And we will use those views expressed and the submissions to the Commission to assist us in coming to a final decision on the project and, if it is approved, how it should be conditioned.

I'll introduce each speaker in turn when it's their time to present to the Panel. Everyone has been advised in advance how long they have to speak. A bell will sound when you have one minute remaining, and a second bell when your time has expired.

To ensure everyone receives their fair share of time, I'll enforce timekeeping rules. But given the limited number of people who are speaking today, that probably won't be quite as strict as normally would be the case.

And if you want to provide your speaking notes, as mentioned in the introduction, to the Commission, you're welcome to do that. Please note any information given to the Commission may be made public, and our privacy statement governs our approach to making information available on the Commission's website.

In the interests – I'm getting close to the end – in the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure a full capture of the information, today's meeting is being recorded, and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website.

So firstly we're going to hear from the Applicant, who will discuss where they're up to with their application following its public exhibition, and any changes that may have been made to the project through the assessment process, just so everyone's on the same page in terms of what the project now is being sought approval for. And after that, we'll hear from our registered speakers.

I'll just also, and as you can see on the banner on the screen, if any speaker's registered to speak at Day 2 tomorrow in Hay, are available and would prefer to speak today instead of tomorrow, we're very open to that because we have a limited number of speakers today and you will just need to call the Commission on that phone number and we can certainly jump you over to today rather than tomorrow. No pressure.

Okay. I'm going to ask the Applicant to come forward and address – I think you've got 10 minutes to address the Commission. Oh, sorry, 15 minutes, you're correct. So, Tim Mead, if you could please come to the microphone. And hopefully the audio is okay, I think we had a few issues there but it seems to be settling down, so.

MR TIM MEAD: Thank you, Chair. All right. Good morning, everyone. My name is Tim Mead, I'm the Development Director at Someva Renewables. I'd

firstly like to thank the IPC commissioners for giving us the opportunity to present today on the Pottinger Project and also welcome the community members that are here today in the room and also those who are online.

5 Next slide please. I'd like to start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land and waters upon which we meet today. We would like to acknowledge and respect the traditions of the Wamba Wamba, Perrepa Perrepa, Nari Nari and Wiradjuri peoples, and respect their continued special relationship with the land and waters of the areas where the Pottinger Energy Park is proposed to be located.
10 We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

I just wanted to draw your attention – sorry, just back one slide, just the artwork here, just to acknowledge that's an artwork called *Emus* which the project has licensed from a local artist named Marbie, around the Deniliquin region.

15 Next slide please. Someva is an Australian family-owned renewable energy developer based in New South Wales. And we partnered with AGL Energy, one of Australia's oldest companies, to develop the Pottinger Energy Park. The Riverina is a truly unique region and it's been a privilege for the Someva and AGL teams to spend so much time working with the community over the last four years.
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Next slide please. That enthusiasm and respect for this region is one of the reasons we've sought to pay homage to the iconic and proud agricultural history of the Riverina by naming the proposed wind farm in honour of Manny Pottinger. For those of you who don't know, the Pottinger family was one of the first families to install and maintain windmills in the region. This adoption of wind power in the early 1900s helped to develop a thriving local agricultural industry by providing access to water for crops and animals. And the Pottinger Energy Park seeks to build on that legacy, to help create a prosperous future for this region.
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Next slide please. While many of you here today will have an understanding of what is being proposed as part of the project, the Pottinger Energy Park, it's approved, will generate up to 1.3 gigawatts of clean energy from up to 247 wind turbines supported by a 500-megawatt/2,000 megawatt-hour battery, all connected to the new Project Energy Connect Transmission Network.
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Pending final approval, the initial phase of construction expected to start in late 2026, will see Pottinger generate approximately 831 megawatts and comes after EnergyCo award Pottinger an access right to the South West Renewable Energy Zone in April of this year.
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Pottinger was one of just four projects to receive an access right in this REZ in what was an extremely competitive tender process led by the NSW Government. Not only would Pottinger deliver substantial benefits to the broader Riverina region but it is potentially a critical project for the State of NSW, aligning with the legislated NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap.
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The proposed wind farm will be hosted by two local landholders, the Moronas and

the Hooke families, located near Booroorban approximately 60 kilometres south of Hay, and 75 kilometres north of Deniliquin. Both the Moronas and Hooke families operate multi-generational family farming businesses, and it's been a privilege to both work and get to know these innovative families who both have a deep care for their land, for their families and for their community.

The project also offers a neighbour benefit program providing locals living within 10 kilometres of the project the opportunity to benefit for decades to come.

We've heard how important Pottinger could be for these families and farming businesses in helping to create a climate and drought-proof revenue stream, and we're excited about our partnerships with these families and landholders. We're also excited about what the future could hold for them and this community by working together to bring Pottinger Energy Park to life.

Next slide please. We're really proud of the deep and broad community support Pottinger has received since we first started meeting face-to-face with the landholders, local councils and the broader community in 2021. That enthusiasm is clear when you understand that there were no local objections from anyone living within 20 kilometres of this project during the Environmental Impact Statement process.

Pottinger also has strong backing from both the Edward River and Hay shire councils, and we're very thankful for the collaboration to date with those councils. It's been a privilege for the Someva and AGL teams to spend so much time in this region over the last few years, getting to know many locals on a personal level and working closely with this community to ensure locals in Hay, Deniliquin and everywhere in between can share in the benefits of this project and the broader rollout of renewable energy in the region.

Next slide please. Not only is Pottinger important to New South Wales energy transition, but it also has the potential to be transformational for the Riverina region. For the local community, the Hay Shire and Edward River Shire councils, for local businesses, for First Nations groups, and for those local landholders and families involved in the project.

If Pottinger were to proceed, independent economic analysis undertaken during the EIS process suggests it will deliver hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect economic benefits to the Riverina over the next 35 years. This would include over 900 jobs during construction, nearly 50 full-time local jobs during operations, and a community benefits program of up to \$34 million in funding to the Hay Shire and Edward River councils for critical community projects and services. We have an MOU signed with both councils for that funding. And an additional dedicated First Nations fund of up to \$6 million that would be co-administered by Pottinger and First Nations groups.

We're also looking forward to distributing a further \$500,000 in coming months to local First Nations and community groups as part of Pottinger's REZ Success

Fund. Recipients include Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council, Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre, RFS Mid Murray, RFS MIA District, the Boooroorban Social Club, Giz a Break, and Hay Inc. This funding will go toward local Indigenous economic projects, the purchase of fire-fighting equipment, youth mental health programs as well as youth education and training programs.

If approved, Pottinger also has the potential to supercharge the local economy through our commitment to partnering with local businesses through construction and operations. For example, we already know that (if approved) the types of jobs and skills that will be required for this project include fencing, road grading, earthworks, concreting, catering, electricians, fitters, civil engineering, mechanical technicians, accommodation and transport providers, and that's just to name a few.

We are deeply committed to working with local businesses through a local employment and procurement strategy that will set local content targets for construction and operations. Already we have received more than 400 expressions of interest from local businesses keen to partner with us on 22 work packages. And we have a strong desire to ensure Pottinger creates as many new jobs in the Riverina as possible over the next 35 years.

Next slide please. By embedding ourself in this community and developing true partnerships within the region, we've been able to listen to and understand community perspectives and make sure they are considered and incorporated into planning of the project. This has included over 2,000 unique interactions with locals over the last 18 months, including community hubs across the EIS phase in Deniliquin and Hay, and face-to-face meetings with over 60 local organisations. Just last week we were in Hay and Deniliquin, and we met with over 100 businesses in support of EnergyCo's community and business roadshows. This community engagement and listening has been critical in helping us to shape a truly local project.

In terms of responding to the community and the outcome of the many independent environmental and technical studies, there have been four separate junctures where we have made many changes to the proposed wind turbine layout and associated infrastructure. Each time reducing and mitigating potential concerns and impacts.

These four stages have included: prior to lodging the scoping report with the NSW Department of Planning, which is predominantly around site selection in the early days; ahead of delivering the Environmental Impact Statement; during the response to submission stage, where we reduced the turbine layout by six turbines to respond to environmental and technical assessment; and at the final RFI stage where the Department and other state agencies have provided us with further requests for information on the proposed project, which we've been responding to over the course of the last six months.

Throughout this process we have heard loud and clear the importance to this community of protecting the local environment, including habitat for the iconic

plains-wanderer. This has included working closely with technical specialists and our host to redesign part of the project layout to avoid and protect areas of habitat for the plains-wanderer. We have reduced impacts of important mapped habitat for the plains-wanderer down from 5.16 hectares as exhibited in the EIS, to
5 2.67 hectares in the final project.

In addition, we're committed to a nature positive approach for plains-wanderer habitat, which means the construction and operation of Pottinger would result in the protection of more habitat for the plains-wanderer than is impacted or
10 proposed to be impacted.

Pottinger has also been carefully designed to operate alongside existing agricultural businesses and lifestyles. Throughout our initial investigations, we worked with host landowners to identify, avoid and protect areas of high-value
15 agricultural land, as well as existing conservation areas. This co-design and engagement means Pottinger will avoid high-value land such as irrigated areas for cropping, heavily timbered areas, and biodiversity conservation areas.

When it comes to First Nations peoples, we have sought to engage respectfully and face-to-face from the earliest moment. This has been a privilege. Throughout the development process, we have worked closely with seven registered
20 Aboriginal parties to understand on-site cultural heritage values. And we've made many design changes in consultation and in response to those on-site studies with the registered Aboriginal parties.

When it comes to visual amenity, right from the start the proposed site was selected due to its location away from the Cobb Highway. The fact that turbines are being proposed to be placed over 10 kilometres from the Cobb Highway has been well received by the community. The independent visual assessment has also
30 concluded that the visual impact for this project site is very low, in accordance with the NSW Guidelines.

Finally, we've been engaging deeply with both Hay Shire and Edward River councils to make sure Pottinger delivers for this community. We've been working
35 closely with teams from each council to consider community enhancement funds, and housing and accommodation strategies to benefit communities across the decades to come.

We've discussed mitigations for issues such as roads, waste, and water supply, and many others. We have management plans and strategies that are required as part of secondary approvals if this project is approved, and we will continue to work
40 closely with both local councils to execute these.

As my time wraps up – oh sorry, next slide. As my time wraps up, I would like to thank each of you for making the time to be here today and those joining online. Throughout the development process, we've been buoyed by the broad enthusiasm and support for Pottinger and renewables in this region more broadly. Particularly here in Deniliquin and up the road in Hay.

From our collaboration with both Hay and Edward River councils to our host landowners, Pottinger neighbours, to First Nations groups, local businesses, community groups and members of the community who have engaged with us, we've heard their views, and we thank you for your collaboration to date. Thank you for your willingness to engage with us and for your support as we seek to develop this potentially transformational project.

Ultimately, we want this Pottinger Energy Park to support the growth and prosperity of the region for decades to come, helping to write a new chapter in the proud and iconic history of this special and unique region of Australia. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thanks, Tim. Commissioners, questions of the Applicant?

MR MICHAEL WRIGHT: Yes, thanks Richard. Thank you, Tim. Can I just ask a question about the potential staging of the project. You've indicated that the project has access to, I think, 831 megawatts on the transmission grid as part of the REZ. The project is for 1,300 megawatts, which is obviously in excess of that. So, how does that then play out on the ground in terms of how this project proceeds?

MR MEAD: Yes, sure. Yes, so I appreciate that it can be confusing because we've obviously got a planning stream and then we've had a separate REZ access rights process. Of course, any wind farm planning in New South Wales is very thorough, so we made decisions for the size and scale of the projects many years ago to arrive at this point. So, at that time we were sizing the project on the basis of what we thought the maximum capacity into Project Energy Connect could be, which we later found out was 1,270 megawatts, so around the 1,300 megawatts that we're seeking approval for. So, they were the original decisions.

Now that we've been allocated an initial stage of 831 megawatts. From our perspective and we had to have a written RFI response that's available to the public on this, there are many opportunities for increased capacity in the future. So, right now we're noting that our target to get to financial close and start of construction for the end of next year for the 831 is certain, because that is the outcome of the current tender. But there are many opportunities for further capacity in the future. Those things could be that EnergyCo make a network augmentation to the infrastructure in this Renewable Energy Zone and then they would conduct what's called a "headroom assessment" to understand if there's greater capacity that could be tendered in this region. So we'd be interested to tender into that.

Also from our perspective, the megawatt size capacity of turbines is – there's a range. So, whilst typically in the market at the moment it's 6 to 8 megawatts, which means that there's still a range of the number of turbines of the 247 that we'd need to build. There are still turbines at a capacity of about 4.5 megawatts that are being offered into this market, so from our perspective, we've sought to have a lot of flexibility for how we could design and optimise the final layout. And that's why from our perspective it's important to still seek the 247 turbines.

MR WRIGHT: I understand. So, Tim, do you have a sense of how many – I understand what you said about uncertainty in terms of procurement. Do you have a sense of how many turbines might be required to deliver that 831 megawatts of supply?

MR MEAD: Yes, I would think it's most likely a range of 110 to 140, and that's really in response to that 6 to 8-megawatt capacity of turbines that are more commonly sold into this market, albeit there is still 4.5-megawatt turbine capacities but I'd say more likely we'll be in the 6 to 8 megawatts.

MR WRIGHT: Okay. And then I'm presuming the decision to proceed with other turbines would depend on, based on what you're saying, access to other transmission opportunities in the future.

MR MEAD: Yes, that's right. There needs to be a pathway to market. And so there could be many, but I'd say most likely it is that EnergyCo undertake a headroom assessment and are able to extract greater capacity out of this region which we would successfully tender.

MR WRIGHT: Yes, thank you.

MS SARAH DINNING: Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much, Tim, and understanding the big picture benefits, very positive. But as you said, this is initial phase and coming back to the 831. So, those total jobs injected from the local economy and the injection of money into that will also be at the end, that amount, but scaled back initially, I would imagine. Is that correct?

MR MEAD: That's right. So, from a community benefits perspective, in terms of dollars, the revised NSW Wind Energy Guidelines which were formalised later last year, they set an advised rate of \$1,050 per megawatt. And so our MOUs with both local councils have sought to align with that. So, it would be based on the number of megawatts finally built times 1,500. And as I mentioned, there's an allocation of 15% to a dedicated First Nations fund. So, it would be 85% into the community enhancement fund and then 15% of that funding into a dedicated First Nations fund.

And as for the jobs, that's correct. It's not exactly linear with megawatts because there's a peak workforce and it's more about how long the peak workforce is on site. But we would estimate somewhere between 500 to 600 construction jobs of that 900 that we mentioned for the full 1.3-gigawatt allocation.

MS DINNING: Okay, thank you. And I imagine that there would be some preliminary works that, as you say, the workforce won't be linear, there will be some things that can be done now that will be available then for the later stages, should you have access.

MR MEAD: Sorry, do you mean in terms of infrastructure on site?

MS DINNING: Yes, infrastructure works, which is equals jobs. Yes.

MR MEAD: Yes, that's right. I think we would be seeking in some way to futureproof the design so things like connection assets and things could be futureproofed for further capacity in the future. Yes.

MS DINNING: Great, thank you.

MR WRIGHT: I just have one question. About workforce and workforce location once the project is in operational mode, I think you talked about up to 50 ongoing full-time positions. And I know that there's a proposal to have a combination camp on site. Is it likely that those 50-odd employees would locate in places like Deniliquin or will they be on site?

MR MEAD: Oh no, so the proposed accommodation camp would be just be a temporary accommodation camp for construction, if it was to be built. In terms of the operational workforce, we would certainly expect that they're spread between Deniliquin and Hay and perhaps Boorooban, but obviously a lot smaller town. Yes.

MR WRIGHT: Yes, I see, thank you.

MR MEAD: No problem.

MR PEARSON: Just one question, Tim, from me. You mentioned the plains-wanderer habitat reduction in loss of habitat came down from around 5 hectares to 2.67 hectares. And I think you mentioned the word "iconic", I think maybe there's only 700 of these individuals left in – I'm not sure if that's in New South Wales or more broadly. But what would it take for the project to have a neutral impact on plains-wanderer? Is there any potential to reduce that to zero, rather than 2.67 hectares?

MR MEAD: Just in terms of your question around a neutral impact. I think I'll answer in two parts. Firstly, in terms of avoiding the original impact with our layout. The reason I raised the plains-wanderer specifically in this speech is that it was the only potential SAI candidate, so it was obviously a very important focus area for us in terms of our assessment. And I mentioned there were sort of four different junctures of design. In each of those different junctures, we sought to make changes to reduce it down, and that changed from 5.1, I think it was, down to 2.6, was just in the step from EIS to the final.

But the residual impact there, the 2.67 of that important mapped habitat is almost exclusively where we have existing tracks, where we sought to follow existing tracks for the reason of reducing disturbance. And we seek to do that wherever we possibly can where there's existing disturbance on site. It makes sense for us just to upgrade those areas rather than carve new impact. And then so the majority of that impact is just simply road edges within that mapping that, from our perspective, is unavoidable unless we're carving a whole swathe of new tracks

through the site.

And the other thing I would mention is that of course the plains-wanderer was one of the really critical constraints, but there are other critical constraints that we have to consider, not least Aboriginal cultural heritage, for example. And so, from our perspective, we got that really as low as we thought we practically could. For a site that's, I think, 26,000 hectares, we're down to sort of 2.6, we got that residual as low as we could get.

But in terms of the neutral or nature positive impact, what we sought to do in conversations with the Department of Planning and BCS was not only offset through credits our final impact, but to offer an additional offset, which we've committed to in our conditions of consent, which goes above what our actual physical impact is, to further offset that species.

MR PEARSON: Okay. And where, I think that was 13 hectares, as I recall, where is that site going to be?

MR MEAD: Yes, so we will, our biodiversity offset strategy will most likely include biodiversity stewardship sites. And those sites could be on site within the project area or most likely either on site or just near neighbouring farms, depending on the available habitat that we can offset.

So, what that will practically mean is that we'll offset that additional hectares and not generate credits for it, so it'll be an additional offset that is not commensurate and above our actual footprint impact.

MR PEARSON: Okay, thank you. Any final questions?

MR WRIGHT: Just one other question on that offsetting issue, Tim. Is the intention of the proponent to seek to offset locally wherever possible – I'm thinking about the larger set of biodiversity offsets required.

MR MEAD: Yes, that's right, yes. So, it's the same. We'll focus on biodiversity offset sites either on site or nearby. And from our perspective, that makes a lot of sense. One, we are trying to offset like-for-like habitat, so it makes sense to try and offset it nearby. But also, we're obviously in conversations with our hosts and our neighbours and many of those farmers are happy to have a register offset site on their properties, it makes sense to keep it local. Yes.

MR WRIGHT: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: All right. Thanks, Tim. Our next speaker is Jack Bond, the CEO of Edward River Council. Jack, if you can come forward.

MR JACK BOND: It's all good. Good morning, Commission members. Welcome to our beautiful community and the ute capital of the world. We hope you've enjoyed your time visiting site and being accustomed to our unique

landscape.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and I'm addressing you as the CEO of Edward River Council, representing an organisation that is committed to supporting sustainable development, economic growth, and the sound land use planning within our local government area.

While I've only been in the role since the end of January, I was previously at a neighbouring council within the South West REZ and very aware of the project. In commencing with Edward River Council, I knew the access announcement was coming very shortly, so I decided to wait the access result before focusing on working with the successful proponents, and congratulating the team of Someva and AGL for getting the project this far.

While Council wishes to formally express its support for the proposed wind farm development, subject to the appropriate planning and environmental conditions being rigorously applied and monitored throughout the approval process. I would like to highlight an ever-increasing challenge of our Council, I'm sure the same of my neighbouring council, we are under-resourced over a very large area, and are unable to satisfactorily deliver ongoing monitoring and fair assessment of the behaviour of these state significant projects in our backyards once they commence.

We acknowledge that projects of this scale naturally raise a range of questions and concerns, particularly in relation to impacts on local roads, water use, waste management, native vegetation, and cumulative social impacts such as health services, housing and accommodation.

Council has carefully considered these matters and is confident that they are being, or will be, properly addressed throughout the established planning mechanism and ongoing assessments led by the relevant agencies. But we see the problem would not be any individual REZ or transmission project going forward; it will be the cumulative impact and timing of the projects if they all coincide in similar timeframes.

Council's infrastructure team has been collaborating with the proponent on local traffic conditions, traffic management and movements, required road and intersection upgrades and treatments. Council is concerned with damage to the local road network during the construction activities. Local roads in the area have been constructed to support low traffic volumes and agricultural plant and equipment. Any upgrading of the road network should be done prior to the commencement of the construction, so that the impact on the road is mitigated.

Through the planning process, the preparation of a biodiversity management plan will be conditioned and restrictions set on key habitat and native vegetation clearing. Biodiversity offsets will be required strictly in accordance with the NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme and *Biodiversity Conservation Act of 2016*. A bird and bat adaptive management plan will also be required and put into place to manage the impacts.

From Council's perspective, this project presents a significant opportunity to contribute to regional economic development, provide local employment during both construction and operation phases. Once operations cease in decades to come, we also are wanting to ensure that there are very strong binding legal and financial agreements in place to ensure decommissioning and rehabilitation of the project that are satisfactory.

Importantly, Council support is not based on aspirations alone, it is grounded in the belief the integrity of the New South Wales planning system supported by technical assessments and robust conditions of consent, provide an appropriate framework to manage impacts and ensure community expectations are met.

In summary, Council supports the proposal and trusts the Panel will carefully consider the full body of evidence, technical advice, and public submissions in its determination.

Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Yes, I've got one question, which was in relation to local roads, which I totally appreciate that's a big issue for Council. And the draft conditions of consent do specify requirement for road upgrades. Has Council had an opportunity review that yet, and are willing to provide a submission to the Panel as to whether your concerns in relation to local roads are addressed by those conditions?

MR BOND: Yes, we are still planning to put in a final submission regarding those road conditions. We do think there is enough wording in those conditions that we can work with the proponent on that main upgrade that needs to happen and the intersection on the Cobb Highway.

MR PEARSON: Okay, great. So, the other issue that you mentioned that I think is important is the cumulative impacts of other projects in the South West REZ. I think there's four projects that have been granted access rights in this first tranche of projects. Are you comfortable that within that first batch of projects, cumulative impacts are manageable, or do you see as a sort of sticking point at which you might start to have more significant concerns about cumulative impacts?

MR BOND: Yes, I wish I had a magic board to tell the answer to that one. At this point in time, the [unintelligible 00:53:44] the proponent are known. We know that they are working with EnergyCo to start working on those cumulative impacts. Waste and water are probably the first ones that really need a lot of interest taken on.

All the four sites are very far away from potable water access to Hay, Deniliquin or Jerilderie. And I think there's a great opportunity that the four proponents would build a water treatment plant site so much closer to the area that they don't have to cart water that far and damage other regional roads leading into those

communities.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, and I think you also, I recall in your submission, had any issue with any waste going to your facilities from this project. Was that correct?

MR BOND: Yes. I think our intention is that we won't be accepting any general waste to our own landfill at this point in time. We have worked over the last 12 months to deliver a three-bin system into community because we are almost reached in full capacity of that site.

MR PEARSON: Okay. Thank you.

MS DINNING: May I?

MR PEARSON: Sarah, yes.

MS DINNING: If I could just go back to waste and probably to do with management of sewage. So, is that one of the concerns as well, to do potable water, manufactured water and ...?

MR BOND: Yes, sewerage isn't probably as big as a concern. We know that it can be most likely treated on site and any of the hard waste might come into Council's region, but we can manage that through our treatment works.

MS DINNING: And you mentioned water treatment plant. Could you just expand on that a little bit, please?

MR BOND: Yes, so again, whether each town, I believe Hay doesn't have the capacity to bring anymore water down, Deniliquin probably has the capacity but we don't want to see those truck movements coming through town, you know, whether it be three or four trucks a day making that action.

MS DINNING: Yes.

MR BOND: So, I think there's a very good opportunity, there is raw water supply in those regions that they could tap into and build a temporary water plant on site that would be managed for five or six years and would probably be of financial benefit to these projects too, rather than the cartage.

MS DINNING: Great. Thank you.

MR BOND: Thank you.

MS DINNING: Thank you, Chair.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MR WRIGHT: And Jack, just a question about human services. You talked about the increased demand for those services are likely to happen because of this project and other projects to come. Have you had a discussion with the proponent about how that future burden might be shared? I think I know the proponent's talked potentially about providing health and medical services on site, but do you have a particular view about how that might be best managed?

MR BOND: Yes, look, health is probably the biggest challenge for our community. No one can book in to see a GP at this point in time and even have to travel to neighbouring towns to get GP access. So, we're willing to work with these proponents to see if they can deliver health services either on site so they can support these communities and not take up the short demand that we have currently. Or whether they can bring them into these communities and maybe give priority to those sites but also be able to provide a local benefit too.

MR WRIGHT: Okay, thank you.

MR BOND: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Good, Sarah?

MS DINNING: Yes, thank you, Chair.

MR PEARSON: I think that's it for us now, Jack. Thank you. Cheers.

MS DINNING: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Okay. Our next speaker is Will Hooke. Will, if you want to come forward, please.

MR WILL HOOKE: Good morning, commissioners and community and other guest speakers. I'm here as one of the host landholders. I just felt it was important for myself and my family to talk about our experience along the journey of becoming host landholders and probably reveal some of the things that happened behind the scenes that we've experienced and how we view this project and the South West REZ.

I'd like to break it down into five areas. Firstly, the South West REZ; secondly, community support; thirdly, all Australian developers in AGL and Someva; the Pottinger size; and then our farm as the southern host landholder.

Obviously, the South West REZ is quite unique in itself, which has attracted a lot of these developers and possibly government may have considered putting more transmission lines or more capacity into the area if they knew. Because obviously there's lots of projects that have missed the opportunity to have access rights. And where there is such support within the community, it's hopefully that may be considered into the future.

5 Out in the Hay plains, you know, it's still a farming area and there's still families, so it's critical that everything is respected as it would be anywhere else. But there is a lower population and a lower density of housing, so the appropriateness of renewables is there. There is flat terrain and much of the farming land is grazing, so there's minimal disturbance to our general farming operations.

10 Community support. As I discussed, this region is viewed as the goldilocks region for renewables because of the openness, the low population, which has created community support. And I think in a region that's a distance away from the capital cities, to be getting some of that skilled labour for a five-year period, but 50 ongoing skilled technicians or engineers is something that, you know, will be great for the community in going forward.

15 I think the opportunity to have these renewables will enhance the community and add some vibrance with ongoing jobs, you know, expressed not just from those 50 but the extra works that are built from that. So, we're deriving some income outside the farming community, which I think, you know, when we see dry times happening in rural areas, any of this alternative income is vital to keep the communities going.

20 The all-Australian one is quite special and partly why we teamed up with the AGL and Someva team. I think they're the only developers within this region that are all-Australian. As a smaller Australian developer, I've watched Someva work tirelessly throughout the project in a field dominated mainly, or commonly, by 25 foreign multi-nationals. I've gone far enough to quote to a lot of people that I think that Someva is that unique, that they are an Australian success story in the renewables industry.

30 I think what Tim was discussing earlier, you can hear repeated over and over again, but I think it's important to recognise that they do have this unique capability to connect with the community. They've got systems designed that they're able to work with the neighbours, work with the Indigenous groups and all the stakeholders and bring them together to get the best result.

35 They definitely have attention to detail. And I think when we start talking about biodiversity and offsets, I know once you understand and you dig down into the EIS's, their EIS was so thorough that they were able to minimise some of their impacts which then requires less offsets. And even I think another benefit I had written there, was that the EIS and some of the biodiversity research has 40 discovered new species, plant species within the region, which we are able to capitalise on a community and protect.

I've got a little bit to go, so if you're happy for me to keep going ...

45 Just about Pottinger itself. Pottinger is set on two intergenerational family farms that have vision for generations. I think this vision for generations is a unique thing in Australia and in the world. Not many businesses have vision beyond 10 years, but family farms are really unique that they're thinking about their

children and their children's children. So, I think this is important for us when we're being brave landholders putting our land forward, because we're thinking about what happens in the future and that we're putting our land forward to be part of the solution to what's happening.

And I will just move to our farm, and I think it's important for me to talk about our farm and how we feel about our farm and what our philosophies are around farming. And what I was just getting at before was our philosophies as family farms and our beliefs align with AGL and Someva as developers.

So, we need to have as social licence on our farm, and I think part of our social licence has been in our minds as we've worked through this development process, working with Someva. Because we have to take care for the land because we're committing to long-term contracts and we have to make sure that our land is going to be protected.

I think one of the most important things for us in working through the development is we were just discussing there earlier about the plains-wanderer. Well, we have, over the last 10 years, we've been identifying high-value environmental areas on our property. And we have two large biodiversity conservation trust stewardship agreements. One is for perpetuity, and one is for 15 years. The 15-year stewardship agreement is actually the plains-wanderer. So, we have 1,200 hectares set away in the plains-wanderer stewardship agreement.

So, as vital as those areas that were being discussed and being minimised earlier, we've actually been focused on protecting these highly environmentally valuable areas for a long period of time, before the project's come along. And I think this gives us as landholders real comfort in knowing before we started this process, that we'd been working hard to identify those areas and they have been excluded from the footprint. So, I think for us, that's a really important characteristic of the project.

MR PEARSON: Probably good to wrap up, Will, if you could.

MR HOOKE: Yes, all right.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MR HOOKE: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: You could have a concluding sentence, if you like.

MR HOOKE: Well, I just had here, I think obviously there's a lot of grievance with whether it's right or wrong with projects. But finally, I think if you care for the people, the land and the planet and future generations, renewables is part of our path forward. We have a responsibility to act. The South West REZ is a great place with great support. And Pottinger is a unique site for wind and will take us forward and protect our future generations. So, thank you.

MR PEARSON: Great, thanks Will. Just a quick follow-up from me. Did you say 1,200 hectares of plains-wanderer habitat [audio freeze 01:07:57 to 01:08:15].

5 **MR HOOKE:** So, 20 to 30% of that is. But you've got to remember that that's just a circle on a map, so it's a lot better off protecting the fringe areas, the whole areas around that.

MR PEARSON: Yes, thank you.

10

MR WRIGHT: Can I ask a ...?

MR PEARSON: Yes.

15

MR WRIGHT: Will, just in terms of your agricultural enterprise and the proposal, is there any conflict there at all? Will the proposal, if it goes ahead, constrain what you can do on that land from an agricultural perspective?

20

MR HOOKE: Not really. I think as any sort of project on your farm, it'll be planning in how we approach it. So, there will be some changes, but I think the long term, you know, this jumper here is made from a brand that we have long-term contracts to supply wool – that is more exciting for us than the short-term implications. Yes.

25

MR WRIGHT: Okay.

MS DINNING: Nothing, thank you.

MR PEARSON: Do you do cropping on your farm?

30

MR HOOKE: Yes, so there's 400 hectares of irrigation that's excluded from the development footprint.

35

MR PEARSON: Okay, so none of the cropping land is within the development footprint?

40

MR HOOKE: No, no. And like the great thing about these guys and the transparency and communication is, when you're working through that process in early days, you know, you're sitting and they're like, "This is your opportunity, just if you think that you want that area excluded, this is the opportunity to do it." Because there'll be opportunities in the future, but this is, you know, this is out of bounds [cross-talk 01:09:50].

45

MR PEARSON: Understood. All right. Well, thanks Will, very much for that.

MR HOOKE: Thank you.

MS DINNING: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: So, we'll move on to our next speaker, which is Ross Johns.

5 **MR ROSS JOHNS:** Thank you, Richard. I was planning to use this session as an introduction session. But if you'd like, and I appreciate there's time pressure in Hay, I might deliver some recommendations here as well, which will take a little longer, if that's okay.

10 **MR PEARSON:** So, I think you've got 5 minutes allocated.

MR JOHNS: Sure.

15 **MR PEARSON:** But, you know, we haven't got a lot of speakers, so if you want to speak 2 or 3 minutes longer, that's fine.

MR JOHNS: It'll make your time better in Hay tomorrow.

MR PEARSON: So, were you registered to speak in Hay as well?

20 **MR JOHNS:** Yes, I am.

MR PEARSON: Oh, okay, so you just want to cover off on – let's just do it all today.

25 **MR JOHNS:** Okay. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

30 **MR JOHNS:** So, the Wimmera Mallee Environmental and Agricultural Protection Association was established late last year as a result of a huge influx of projects for renewable energy in the Wimmera Mallee. Today, we have 260 members, we're growing at around about 10% per month. There is a huge amount of fast-tracked renewable build in Victoria.

35 Our group is basically made up of farmers and community members from the Wimmera Mallee, passionate about agriculture and passionate about the environment. And one of the biggest things that we had to consider was whether the environment was more important than agriculture. It was quite a long, lengthy discussion, and the conclusion was that we should put environmental issues
40 number one and agricultural issues number two.

Today I'll speak briefly about the strategy, about community, environment and agriculture.

45 The strategy. Today's domestic carbon emissions are 1.1% of global emissions and yet Australia continues to export one million tonnes of coal plus gas, and we've just approved a new gas project, which accounts for 5 to 6% of global emissions. Our government has failed to prioritise what will really make a new

difference. Now, I know that's outside your remit, and I'll leave that there.

MR PEARSON: Yes.

5 **MR JOHNS:** Because you probably can't do much about that. The relationship between government and corporations, I think, needs a lot of examining, and I think that's also outside of your remit, so we'll also leave that there.

10 Secondly, the communities. Community consultation is essential. And what I see here, community consultation has been more thorough and more genuine. In Victoria, we've got country councils being ignored and it's a significant issue for project approval processes.

15 Building standards. What standards are these things to be built to? There is no set genuine Australian standard.

20 The decommissioning. I think decommissioning issues are a huge issue, and my strong preference is that decommissioning funds be held at the commencement of a project for decommissioning at the end. No one knows who's going to own these projects in 25 years. The landholders who have these projects on their land are there left to decommission these projects once potentially some of these wind developers are long gone. So, I think there should be an organised process where funds are held upfront.

25 A 2-kilometre buffer zone to neighbouring properties. In Victoria, we've doubled the size of the turbines and halved the buffer zone, and I think that's completely unreasonable, and I do appreciate Victoria's probably more closely populated than New South Wales.

30 Thirdly, the environmental issues. When I was very young, we had plains-wanderers in a little district called Willenabrina, and I can recall them being there. But they are no longer present at Willenabrina and I haven't seen them all of my adult life. There's areas around Birchip and further north in Victoria, there are some plains-wanderers. But there are something like 15 projects being planned on those areas, and I think that's a significant concern. So, I would say it's going to put additional pressure on plains-wanderer populations in Victoria.

35 According to eBird, which is an electronic birding organisation, the highest density is virtually right where this planned wind farm is to be located in Australia. So, it is a significant issue. I would highly recommend that a fully independent environmental impact, particularly in relation to the plains-wanderer, be adopted. I feel a consultant employed by the wind developer is at risk of being conflicted and may not necessarily provide full independent review.

40 Fire suppression. Australia is an amazing place. Droughts and flooding rains. And the whole joint burns, occasionally. If higher temperatures are to be a result of climate change, fire suppression on each and every wind turbine is essential. In Victoria, I think it's only about less than 50% have fire suppression units. And I

think it should be mandatory on every new wind turbine that fire suppression be available.

5 Lastly, agriculture. Why is it important? Agriculture is important to the world because we have 8.2 billion people on the planet today. We're forecast to have 10 billion by 2061, according to the United Nations Population Committee. Why is agriculture important to Australia? Agriculture feeds the country and provides 14% of our export revenue. And why is agriculture important to Victoria? Victorian farmers control 1.5% of Victoria's land mass and yet we produce 25% of Australia's agricultural output. So, agriculture is an important consideration.

10 There are impacts on agriculture. Each of these blades sheds microparticles, microplastics and BHA into the environment, which can enter the food chain. I think particularly for meat production, that's a significant issue. For wool production, it's nowhere near as large an issue, and that's where the Hay plains with its quality wool would potentially have an advantage.

I guess I will leave it there. If there's any questions, I'm more than happy to answer them.

20 **MR PEARSON:** There'll be a question or two. I mean, I've got a question in relation to that last point on agriculture. Noting your comment about microplastics, which we do have some, I guess, expert advice on that, that gets to the point that the issues from wind turbines are not significant and it's, you know, we have to rely on expert advice that's provided to us.

25 But what do you see as the other agricultural impacts of wind farms? I can understand solar farms, because they're covering terrain, but wind farms, and we've heard from the landowner that he doesn't think there'll be significant impacts on his farming operations. Can you unpack that one a bit?

30 **MR JOHNS:** Yes, sure. In grazing areas, I think what you've got is nowhere near the impact, it's really just the land for the tracks, the pads and the concrete base. In cropping areas or irrigation areas, what you actually lose is viability of the whole farm potentially with the different water flows, movements.

35 The Normanville Wind Farm in northern Victoria, 7.4% of the land area is being taken up by the wind farm, which is quite large, when most wind developers would promise that only 2% of the land area would be taken up by wind developments. So, I think it's loss of land, but equally it's a restriction on how cropping could be done, which way you can cultivate or plant the field actually provides a restriction.

40 **MR PEARSON:** Yes. And we're talking now about this – our remit, as I said, is this specific project and we've heard that they've avoided cropping land in their design of the project.

45 **MR JOHNS:** Sure.

5 **MR PEARSON:** So, I guess it comes down to site selection, really, a lot of this, about whether you can deal with biodiversity issues or cropping issues. So, I guess, a lot of the issues you're raising are kind of relevant to the site selection process, which appears to have been thought through in this site selection process, whether you agree with the outcome or not.

10 **MR JOHNS:** That is true, exactly right. Site selection is a critical factor. And I would suspect that not every single project should be approved. Some projects aren't relevant or have a significantly higher impost, and therefore they should be dismissed.

MR PEARSON: Yes.

15 **MR JOHNS:** I guess I lean back to the environmental issues because once species are gone, species are gone. It's the Tasmanian Tiger that the Tasmanian Government put in place a – I'm not sure what you call it exactly – but it was a one pound per tiger bounty. And that was a very poor government decision that led to the extinction of an iconic species. And once we lose these species, they're gone forever, they're not coming back, and I think we have to absolutely allow
20 extra leniency towards unique Australian species. We do have a lot of unique wildlife in Australia, it's worthy of protection.

25 **MR PEARSON:** Okay. Michael?

MR WRIGHT: Thanks, Richard. Ross, you mentioned fire suppression per wind turbine. I hadn't heard of that as an issue. Is the concern that the turbines themselves catch fire, is that what you're saying?

30 **MR JOHNS:** Oh, absolutely. There was one at Bulgana just very recently, only last week.

MR WRIGHT: And you seem to suggest that you could procure turbines with fire suppression systems, is that what you suggested?
35

MR JOHNS: What I'm suggesting is that to erect a wind turbine without fire suppression in Australia is exposing Australians to higher risk, and I don't think that we should be doing that.

40 **MR WRIGHT:** Okay, thank you.

MS DINNING: Sorry, could I just seek clarification. You mentioned about bird density being highest in Australia. What was the reference you made?

45 **MR JOHNS:** eBird, which is an electronic bird identification program. And if you Google plains-wanderer on eBird and look at the distribution, you'll find that the distribution between Deniliquin and Hay is the highest in Australia. There's spatterings of populations in northern Victoria, but they're very disconnected,

whereas this one's quite a core population of plains-wanderer.

MS DINNING: Great, thank you.

5 **MR PEARSON:** All right, great, thank you very much, Ross.

MR JOHNS: Thank you for your time.

10 **MS DINNING:** Thank you, Ross.

MR PEARSON: Bob King is on the phone, I believe. So, we'll just wait till Ross resumes his seat and ... Hi Bob, you have 5 minutes to address the Panel, please. Sorry, we're just sorting this out. Yes. Okay. Please go ahead, Bob.

15 **MR BOB KING:** Good morning, commissioners and the community. I've been thinking about what I might say and try to concentrate on things that [unintelligible 01:23:53]. I'd like to play – I've got some feedback in the ... Can you hear me all right?

20 **MR PEARSON:** [Audio glitch 01:24:08] deal with the audio. Can you keep talking, Bob?

MR KING: Thank you. Yes, that's a bit better. I still have some feedback from my line. I'd like to play a section here from Jordan Peterson, it's just 1 minute and 20 seconds, and I think it's relevant here, if I may, I'll bring it forward.

25 **MR PEARSON:** Are you on a loudspeaker there, Bob? Maybe turning off the live stream could help.

30 **MR KING:** I'm on my own landline.

MR PEARSON: Yes. Please continue, Bob.

35 **MR KING:** Thank you. Now, I had it set up and it's not going to come through, sorry.

MR PEARSON: Are you trying to play a video or just an audio, what ...?

40 **MR KING:** It was an audio.

MR PEARSON: That might be proving technologically difficult. Perhaps you could just talk to what you were going to play us and you could send it through to us subsequently and we can view it subsequently. But if you want to just talk to it, it might be simpler, Bob.

45 **MR KING:** I have it here now and I'll see whether you can hear this now.

[Audio of Jordan Peterson plays from 01:26:09] ... on or off, or even more to the

point, do you want to be able to go to the hospital and make sure that there's electricity when you're having emergency surgery etc.? There are signs, for example, that places like Australia ...

5 **MR PEARSON:** Bob, it's not possible to hear that with any clarity. Bob, no one can hear this with any clarity. I can't hear what is it. Well, he said it was going to go for one minute, so we've just got to let it ...

[Jordan Peterson audio continues but is inaudible]

10

MR PEARSON: Can we cut this or ...? So, we'll let it do its 1 minute and 26 seconds and then ...

MR KING: I'm here now.

15

MR PEARSON: Yes, hi Bob. Look, unfortunately there was no great clarity in what you played then, so as I mentioned, if you could just send that to us separately and the commissioners can view it separately. Did you just want to talk to the main points you wanted to make to the Commission?

20

MR KING: Yes, certainly. Jordan Peterson's video there had 1,600 comments on, and those [unintelligible 01:28:03] renewables affect the [unintelligible] ...

25

It's a storage issue. Maybe you should ask an electrical engineer about psychology. And this is what happens. Give it time, [unintelligible 01:28:28] as we sleep etc. And those supporting Jordan were saying that in Germany we have 30,000 turbines and they produce just a small 30 terawatt hours. Somebody else said, "You've hit the nail on the head." Another person said, "You also need standby grid running, because building up to full power is not instantaneous."

30

So, I'd like to turn now with those comments in mind to the Pottinger wind facility. And the 247 turbines, \$2.2 billion worth, they propose to have 900 construction jobs, and I notice that the 40 operating jobs in the EIS has now increased to 50, which is good.

35

In relation to the jobs, it doesn't always translate to benefits for the local community. Because, for instance, the project [unintelligible 01:29:50] facility it's connecting the South Australian border through to Wagga and a branch into Victoria, they've got three camps of 400 to 450 employees each, and they're entirely self-contained. So, I'd like to ask the commissioners please, if you're proposing to accept this proposal, that I know that the proponent was talking about the work he would provide locals and the ongoing jobs. I'd like you to make that please, rather than an enticement, that be a condition and that maybe in the 50 employees, be located within 100 kilometres.

40

The second point is oil. Now, the average they're proposing may be 5 megawatts, although I heard this morning saying 6 to 8, if you were just to take the 5 megawatt size, that has 1,400 litres of oil, in the gearbox, and that's changed

every 8 months or 12 months. I know they're trying very hard to attempting to make it up to 16 months – that's quite a lot of oil changes.

I'll give you an idea of the size of 1,400 litres. That's seven 44-gallon drums. Now, used oil is a liability and this facility is over 660 square kilometres, I'd like the commissioners, please, if you're going to approve this, to make very specific conditions and [unintelligible 01:32:04] oil, otherwise you're going to find [unintelligible 01:32:05] kilometres.

Fire, that's got a [unintelligible 01:32:13] chance per annum. So, you'd expect four or five fires, I think tight conditions need to be given to ensure a thorough cleanup.

On inertia, a sharp rotating at 1,500 revs a minute has one-eighteenth the inertia of a similar sized steam turbine shaft running at 3,000 revs a minute. And you need inertia to maintain stability and enable a [black start 01:32:54] in the grid. I would like to see that this facility has to pay for [unintelligible 01:33:07] to provide such stability subsidies.

In a recent [unintelligible 01:33:17] in Denmark, which had no subsidy, had no bid. And the recent [unintelligible 01:33:27] with a high contract difference, [unintelligible], that was not sufficient either to attract any bids. And this facility will only exist with subsidies and because of subsidies. Subsidies will weaken Australians' prosperity and our national security.

In conclusion, I'd just like to say it's no wonder that America is no longer going through this winds thing. I'm happy to take questions.

MR PEARSON: Okay, thank you, Bob. Just to follow up on your local jobs point, there is a commitment for the Applicant to prepare a housing and employment strategy, and the Commission is absolutely keen to see a greater share of local jobs as possible ...

MR KING: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: ... both during the construction and the operational phase. So, that is an issue we will definitely follow up with the Applicant should we be minded to approve the project. And as I say, if you want to send that audio through, we can listen to that. We will call you – the Commission officers will call you as a follow up on that, Bob. But I thank you very much for working through those technological difficulties and addressing the Commission.

MR KING: Thanks very much for having me speak today.

MR PEARSON: No problem, thanks Bob.

MS DINNING: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: I have Carolyn Emms on the phone, Rainforest Reserves Australia, and Carolyn, you've got 10 minutes to address the Commission, please.

MS CAROLYN EMMS: Thank you, Commission, thank you for having me.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MS EMMS: Before I begin – can I start?

MR PEARSON: Yes, you can start, absolutely.

MS EMMS: Okay. Look, before I begin, I sincerely hope the decision makers will take all presentations into account, as many people are time poor and most people are not aware of the long-term significant residual impacts that will be irreparable should this go ahead.

We would like you to value our incredible biodiversity that is under serious threat across our whole Great Dividing Range National Park State Forest. There is no end in sight of the destruction that lays ahead. We've just done mapping for New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria. And I think most people would just be alarmed.

I respectfully urge you to prioritise long-term wellbeing of community values, land stewardship over the short-term gains of vested interests who perhaps do not value or recognise the value of our [carbon sea 01:36:43] forest, land, rivers, waterways, otherwise this proposal would not have been considered.

The visual impact assessments, biodiversity assessments of Pottinger Energy, bushfire impact, there are so many aspects to this proposal. They talk about the disturbance footprint being over a thousand hectares, but it's the whole site that will actually be impacted, including aerial impacts.

So, I mean, we can see from the EIS report, birdlife is abundant, and native vegetation is uniquely Australian. There are many more sustainable ways of working with nature than actually destroying it.

Next slide. We did think the transition to renewable energy, we thought it was going to address climate change, but we now realise after losing two or three entire ecosystems in north Queensland, we have actually proved and we have enough evidence to support that it actually is going to drive wildlife towards extinction. Roger Martin, our koala expert, ecologist and other ecologists are on our side now. They're just realising, yes, this is going to be ecologically devastating for our country.

Next slide. We have Elders who feel betrayed by the people who are supposed to protect land and country. And so I think we'll go to the next slide, but it says, it speaks for itself, that slide.

Next slide, number 5. You can see a beautiful sea eagle and his mate sitting on eggs. That eagle's no longer there. And now we ask, does – this is Kaban Wind, which has just been bought by Brookfield, a trillion-dollar global investor group. And honestly, it's just incredible that nature has now just become a global commodity.

And I question, does nature have a right to live? Well, yes, it does, in legal theory, the concept of rights of nature recognises that natural elements have an inherent right to exist and flourish, according to CQ University, also New South Wales.

So, next slide. The Kaban Wind was a massive area of destruction. Like its dry, wet, [unintelligible 01:39:52], dry country, prone to bushfire, but there's also rainforest pockets as well. And these turbines dwarf the Sydney Harbour Bridge, honestly, they're not little things, they're massive. And they do kill birds, bats and insects. That needs to be recognised.

And what Professor Tim Nevard said on Chalumbin, he said, "Look, these are massive, and we actually don't know the consequences, let alone the land clearing." But it's actually worse than any mining, really.

Next slide. We come to a picture that we did in 2023. So, we started off with 68 species of birds that were observed across the site. There are now only 39 species that have been detected. We're finding dead birds, bats, migratory species, endangered species, and they're not really recorded, and they're not required to really – they can't physically go to every turbine and monitor them day and night. Don't forget we have pigs, and they would pick up the carcasses. There's a lot of issues with this.

The next. We had two trigger points. In 2024, there was a trigger event, spectacled flying fox and white-throated needletail deaths. Well, we've seen a lot since then. And another trigger event, with a controlled burn, that ended up in a wildfire which impacted the magnificent brood frog habitat.

In 2022, there was an increase in cane toad breeding habitat, with the construction footprint. Then there were two uncontrolled fires that destroyed entire ecosystems. It is a disaster. So, we can actually speak from experience – this is why we care deeply about what's happening to our country. So, there's a list of the carcass surveys at that time, but that same ecologist actually said to me, he wished they would publish the real figures that there were actually 900 bats that died, but that was never published. Just letting you know this is what goes on.

Next slide, number 10. Bountiful jobs. No, there wouldn't be a handful of jobs. This slide speaks for itself. But there wouldn't even be a handful of jobs. It's driven businesses away. The visual impact at nighttime of the red lights and the people now suing Kaban, that they're launching legal action now, they can't live with the noise nor the visual impacts nor the desecration of wildlife which we are losing on a daily basis.

So, next slide. There's your visual lights at night. And this was once a pastoral lease, I knew the farmer, he was kicked off. And he wrote an affidavit to support that.

5 Next slide. It all started at Mount Emerald, 2018, I think. So, this was a beautiful hiking track for tourism, a beautiful pristine habitat. It now resembles just a quarry really, an industrial site. They're having problems with some of the turbines. We've seen a gravesite of turbines that have just been left there to rot from Windy Hill. And I've got the photos of all that from photographers.

10 So, then decommissioning is another issue. Mount Emerald Wind Farm – next slide – they're only tiny, those wind turbines, compared to the ones we've got. So, when we go through all the slides, we're looking at large-scale, the Kaban ...

15 Have I finished, have I? No, I hope not.

So, some of these, it's devastating, the cumulative impacts are not going to address. Put the other slides on, if you like, if you've got time, just while I talk, if that's okay.

20 **MR PEARSON:** We are doing that.

MS EMMS: The film. Have you got a few minutes for the film?

25 **MR PEARSON:** Oh sorry, you've got a film to show. Yes, we can do that, Carolyn.

MS EMMS: Just while I talk.

30 **MR PEARSON:** All right, okay. Just hang on. Okay. Start talking, please.

MS EMMS: Okay. What we're concerned of is the cumulative impacts that haven't really been addressed – they say they have, but they haven't. Then let's look at the toxic legacy, a hidden fallout of green energy. It's a smokescreen. So, in other words, we've got as of 2025, Australia has over 3,000 wind turbines in operation, with hundreds more in construction.

40 So, we've actually got globally – we won't talk about globally, let's just talk about Australia. These turbines are actually shedding microplastics and they're over 80 metres long, and they're constructed from materials such as fibreglass, epoxy resins, nano-silica, BFAS-laden polymers and all sorts of materials that are actually toxic. And these tiny little toxic chemicals are actually fragmenting and going into the environment.

45 Each turbine is estimated to shed 20 kilograms of these substances annually. The resulting – well, we won't talk globally – but it's just going to actually add to the toxicity of the land that may not be useable, it's going to affect our waterways, our great oceans. And when we now look at the Great Dividing Range which is being

plundered now as we speak, however, we've had some hope, the new State Premier is calling in wind turbines, these wind destruction, because it's upsetting the communities enormously, but due to the environmental impacts. So, please consider that. Their decision, it's not an environmental decision, but they've taken the environment into account, and consultation, proper consultation.

So, when we look at what these particles do, going back to that, the microplastic particles released from the turbine blades, they're then sitting, they actually don't break down, they accumulate in soil, water and air. And they've been found in human lungs, bloodstreams, placentas, even breast milk.

So, I think please consider this very carefully about what we want for the future. Do decision makers value our biodiversity? We ask that. And then the last and final thing is for you to consider the whole aerial impacts far beyond the actual site itself. So, far and wide, the aerial impacts will impact national parks, your state forests, and everything that flies. We've got enough evidence to support this now in north Queensland where we did – and those eagles have gone now.

And this is why I'm really talking about the environmental impacts today, and the cumulative impacts goes way beyond the cumulative impact offsets that are stated in the EIS report there, they underplay/downplay what is really happening. And I invite the Panel, come up and stay with us, we're happy to show you north Queensland collapsing ecosystems.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Carolyn, and all your audio and visuals worked well, so thank you for that. Commissioners, any specific questions for Carolyn? Yes, look, we understand the issues you're raising. Our remit, as I said at the start, is to consider this specific project, which we're doing, and we are mindful of the biodiversity impacts of the project, particularly on plains-wanderer habitat, it's a key issue for the commission in finalising its determination of the project. So, I do – we have no specific questions. But I want to thank you for your time presenting to the Panel.

MS EMMS: Thank you for having me.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Carolyn. Okay, we don't have any other registered speakers, unless we had some late arrivals? No, we don't. So, that concludes the speakers. I'll just run through some of the points that we heard today, and this won't be a hundred per cent comprehensive, but some of the main issues we heard.

Certainly, the Applicant talked about the employment and energy benefits of the project as to be expected. They did note that 831 megawatts was their initial allocation to the network and that they would rollout the project as an initial stage to address that 831-megawatt allocation, but they're hopeful of getting additional allocation going forward.

They talked about a nature positive outcome sought for the plains-wanderer and it's certainly something the Commission will take a close interest in. And also the

ability, hopefully, to provide offsets for biodiversity locally. Again, that I think is an important thing to try to achieve.

5 Edward River Council mentioned the fact that Council is not sufficiently resourced to monitor compliance of renewable energy projects and state significant projects, and that's totally understood. The Department does have a compliance, the Department of Planning does have a compliance function, and it will be their role to monitor compliance should the project be approved.

10 Council also talked about concern over cumulative impacts and it's from other projects and that's an issue the Commission shares, so thanks for raising that.

15 The need to proactively upgrade roads before construction of the wind farm occurs. There is a schedule of road upgrades that are required, and Council will review that and provide comments to the Commission. We do think it's very important that projects manage their impacts on roads and other infrastructure.

20 We've also heard about the potential impact on health services and housing in the local area, would be accommodation camp being provided is an important proposal by the Applicant, and as is the ability to provide on-site health services, and they are both things that we will be mindful of. And also looking at the impacts on water and waste.

25 One of the host landowners ran through the fact that he didn't think there would be agricultural impacts to his property, that he'd been able to work constructively with the Applicant to exclude cropping land, for example, from any proposal for wind turbines. The importance of obtaining a social licence, that's very true, it's something that the mining industry ultimately lost, I think, so it's very important that this newish industry does have a social licence both on farm and in the
30 broader community. So, the importance of proactively protecting important and local habitat, including the plains-wanderer is again something that came forward.

35 We heard a bit about microplastics and the potential impact of turbines on that. That's something that we'll look through our determination of this project.

40 The importance of local jobs, which the Commission supports, trying as far as possible to, for these projects to engender local economic development and employment is really important, and I think towns such as Deniliquin and Hay do see some potential for these projects to revitalise their local economies. And I think if that can occur, that will be very important.

45 We heard a lot about biodiversity impacts from projects in north Queensland and I think we could agree from some of that footage that that's not the sort of thing we necessarily want to see in New South Wales. But this project and other projects that we're dealing with are in fairly different natural environments, so the impacts are somewhat different, and we need to look at the impacts project-by-project.

Decommissioning was another issue raised by several speakers, and the

Commission does have, I'm going to say, a stronger view on decommissioning than in the Department of Planning's recommendations. We take a stronger approach to ensuring that at the end of the project life, decommissioning does occur and we don't, in 30 years' time, end up with ghost wind farms. We don't want that. We want turbines either to continue longer term or for them to be removed from site and the natural landscape to be returned following the completion of the project.

They were most of the issues that were raised, there was other stuff, but we've made furious notes, and we are appreciative of the contributions today and the comments that people have made. And as mentioned, today is a little bit of a shorter day than our meeting tomorrow in Hay where we have more speakers registered.

But I'll just sum up by saying that brings us to the end of day one of the public meeting and thanks everyone for your thoughtful presentations. We will have a transcript of today's meeting made available on our website in the next few days.

We are accepting written submissions up until 5 p.m. next Thursday the 12th of June. And it's very helpful if you can focus your submissions on the Department's Assessment Report and/or recommended conditions, and whether you have comments that the Commission should take into account. Submit your submission using the "Make a Submission" button on our website or by email or by mail.

The second day, tomorrow, starting at 10, similar to today, this meeting will be livestreamed on YouTube and can be accessed through our website. Thanks again, everyone, and from all of us at the Commission, enjoy the rest of your day, and we may see some of you tomorrow as well – we will see some of you tomorrow as well.

And thank you to the Department for the Commission staff for conducting an efficient meeting and assisting us, as always, and our audio men, as well. Thank you all.

MS DINNING: Thank you.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED