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April 2025 - Valley of the Winds Wind IPC MEETING – SAL EDWARDS

SUMMARY OF REQUESTED CONDITION CONSIDERATIONS BY THE IPC

1. Could the IPC and the Department please review the government's assessment made on Cumulative Impacts? It appears the proponent has attempted to meet the necessary requirements imposed on them in their planning, but to me what is glaringly still missing is the **whole-of-government detailed assessment of cumulative impacts for the CWO REZ**. Such as Biodiversity loss, bushfire risk, water security and risk, socio-economic, roads and transport, telecommunications and others.
2. Could a condition of consent be considered to **conduct and record baseline data for air, water and soil health and existing contamination levels**? This would help protect the community and landowners in the event of a contamination issue in the future.
3. I would also request that the IPC consider imposing a condition on the NSW Government and the proponent to undertake **ongoing operational noise and vibration monitoring from the township** eg. Coolah Central School, Coolah Hospital, Coolah Caravan Park etc. to monitor the cumulative impacts of noise and vibration from two large-scale operating wind projects in close proximity to a town.
4. Request a delay in the IPC Assessment process until the **VPA is publicly negotiated and agreed to**. Is it fair or equitable that this project be assessed prior to a VPA being negotiated and agreed to by the Warrumbungle Shire Council? There has been no community consultation around the VPA terms and agreement and I ask the IPC if it is required that this takes place before approval or at least be best-practice to allow the community and their local elected representatives to consider and agree to the VPA terms. I know without a doubt that the IAP2 Framework for Public Participation would demonstrate that there should be sufficient community involvement in such an important part as the VPA of a SSD project.
5. **Social Impact Mitigation** - I ask the IPC to consider that neither of the existing 2 conditions mitigate the social impacts already occurring in loss of community cohesiveness, established Community Division, loss of community character and impacts to Community Health and Wellbeing nor mitigate them in the future. Can the Panel consider that these issues faced by community are decreasing the functionality and capacity of the back-bone of rural towns – the people? Community Division and Community Health and Wellbeing, are issues that need to be addressed and considered appropriately. Socio-economic issues were the No.2 key issue raised in the Public Submissions. 2nd to Landscape and Visual.
Could the IPC please consider additional conditions to mitigate the impacts already felt by the community? I suggest that the considerations may need to be revolutionary, as I have yet to witness any tangible condition that can help restore to community what is lost through a

terrible planning and consultation process. The NSW Government needs to raise the bar and demand that the IAP2 Framework be stringently followed (all 5 steps) and clearly demonstrated at it was originally designed and adopted, not merely utilised to indicate a promise or intention to. Delaying the final assessment until the VPA is negotiated and agreed to, would go a long way in respecting the Communities **involvement and ability to collaborate** in this project (step 3 and 4 of the IAP2 framework).

6. I urge the IPC to review all project and assessment concerns and seek to have them scrutinised and addressed in the best interests of the community, not the best interests of the process or the NSW Government and targets.

RECORD OF PRESENTATION SPEECH

Good Afternoon Chairperson and the panel commissioners.

I appreciate the opportunity to present to you my concerns about the key issues identified in the Department's assessment of the Valley of the Winds project.

My name is Sally Edwards, my family and I have called Coolah home for 18 years. The state level significance of this project, the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone and the concern regarding the likely significant project and cumulative impacts to this region, has me standing here today.

My husband and I didn't grow up in Coolah. We both grew up near Gloucester on the mid-north coast. From there we moved to Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory. Upon moving home to NSW, we moved to the Dungowan valley, Echo Hills station for a farm position. We worked for this farming business for a number of years on Echo Hills before transferring to their property at Garoo near Nundle. We left Nundle and moved to the Quirindi and Pine Ridge area on the Liverpool plains, again for work choices and in agricultural related positions. After the birth of our first baby, we wanted to move back into a live-in farming position and this is what brought us to Coolah. Our life story is not what I want to share, what I want to highlight to the Panel and to the Public IS THIS:

Not one of these rural areas, that have been stepping stones for our careers and our life's journey in both Agriculture and Regional Australia are either safe, or protected.

Every single one of these areas is now facing a change to their landscapes, a significant interruption to and reduction of farmland and production, an introduction to significant electricity generation and associated transmission infrastructure, and ALL are impacted by the Rapid (and poorly planned) Transition to Renewables.

They are all impacted by existing or proposed projects, the locals are not armed with sufficient information nor are they involved in the planning and decision making, they are all experiencing community confusion, angst and division and above all – the very character and essence of rural and regional Australia is being eroded.

Gloucester – is home to the Stratford Solar and Pumped Hydro CSSI Project

Tennant Creek – home to potentially the world's largest solar project, the Sun Cable Australia-Asia Power Link.

Dungowan – overrun by the New England REZ Transmission Project

Nundle – potentially losing sub-alpine forest and farm land in the destruction of the Hanging Rock ridge tops for the controversial and now legally questionable Hills of Gold Wind project

Quirindi – site of a proposed solar project capable of powering over 2000 homes.

Coolah – surrounded to nearly 270 degrees by turbines belonging to both the Liverpool Range Wind Project and the Valley of the Winds wind project.

How many regional Australian's share a similar story? How many rural communities and landscapes are safe from this industrial development? Why don't they have a choice? What is happening to agriculture and to the industries that support the agricultural service towns? Will they be elusively drawn to a promise of a new economy to then experience what we know as boom and bust scenarios? Why don't these anecdotal stories cause alarm, that maybe the summing of cumulative impacts is not in the consideration or therefore the interest, of the future of rural and regional Australia as most would wish to see?

The very reason we are even meeting here today in this hall, is due to one region's, and our communities concern and active objection. I understand this is part of the Government's process, but I feel quite certain that this process is more about us helping' the NSW Government avoid any potential glaring delivery mistakes and in refining the project, than actually hearing and considering substantial community concerns. Concerns around risk, around loss, around cumulative impacts, around sensibility and whether this project and this Renewable Energy Zone is actually fit for purpose – we funnily enough, never got a say in the process when that was decided.

For some, and if the marketing is correct, for the community, this project and the transition offers substantial economic opportunity. It gives hope of invigorated local economies, a flow of Government grant money that dangerously lacks the people and skills to actually deliver and build the funded projects. It puts forward a potential drought or future proofing mechanism for participating farms and on the flip-side the reluctant consideration to sell-out by those who don't wish to live close to these types of projects and the disruption and destruction they bring.

Over decades, rural communities have unfortunately become dependent on and are thirsty for hand-out government funding, and by government design too, begging by persistent grant applications to try and maintain infrastructure and provide needed services in small rural towns where our voice is repeatedly unheard. This dependence has certainly led to many seeing the REZ Community Benefit and Employment Fund as the silver-plated savoir for our regions.

I fear that in reality, in rural Australia, we are just frogs being brought to the boil, and in the next 5-20 years, as this is constructed, we will reach boiling point. And with that the heavy realisation that rural Australia has been sold out... step, by deliberate step over many years.

I would like to address a number of key concerns that I have from reading the Departments Assessment of the project.

The submissions to the Valley of the Winds Wind project demonstrate 88% objections and 5% in support.

Whole-of Government Assessment of Cumulative Impacts

Could the IPC and the Department please review the government's assessment made on Cumulative Impacts? It appears the proponent has attempted to meet the necessary requirements imposed on them in their planning, but to me what is glaringly still missing is the whole-of-government detailed

assessment of cumulative impacts for the CWO REZ. Such as Biodiversity loss, bushfire risk, water security and risk, socio-economic, roads and transport, telecommunications and others.

For 18 months I voluntarily participated in EnergyCo's Community Reference Group, seeing to have information disseminated and community questions answered. One of the biggest issues that remains incomplete is a whole-of government assessment of cumulative impacts and detailed findings made available to the impacted communities.

To me a concerned community member, it would seem reasonable and sensible to delay the completion of this projects assessment until such assessment is undertaken and the findings dutifully considered.

Project Cumulative Impacts

My particular concerns around project cumulative impacts, particularly with the LPRWF are visual, operational noise and vibration, and long-term residual contamination of air, water and soils.

Could a condition of consent be considered to establish baseline data for air, water and soil health and existing contamination levels? This would help protect the community and landowners in the event of a contamination issue in the future.

I would also request that the IPC consider imposing a condition on the NSW Government and the proponent to undertake ongoing operational noise and vibration monitoring from the township eg. Coolah Central School, Coolah Hospital, Coolah Caravan Park etc. to monitor the cumulative impacts of noise and vibration from two large-scale operating wind projects in close proximity to a town.

I think it is fair to say, that even the best modelling forecasts, are nothing compared to actual data.

While a cumulative visual assessment has been carried out by the proponent, I note the omission of cumulative visual assessment for the Coolah township (similar to Figure 4) in the Assessment report to assess visual assessment clusters of BOTH major projects relative to the town. Figure 4 demonstrates that the township is just outside the northern residential boundary for consideration by the proponent. Given the proximity of both major projects, I believe it would be irresponsible to not carefully assess the visual, noise and vibration from the town's perspective.

Throughout the EIS and Government assessment process I have communicated with both the proponent and the NSW Government requesting visual and noise/vibration assessment for the Coolah Township and can provide this to the Panel if requested.

VPA

The timing of the VPA. Is it fair or equitable that this project be assessed prior to a VPA being negotiated and agreed to by the Warrumbungle Shire Council? There has been no community consultation around the VPA terms and agreement and I ask the IPC if it is required that this takes place before approval or at least be best-practice to allow the community and their local elected representatives to consider and agree to the VPA terms. I know without a doubt that the IAP2 Framework for Public Participation would demonstrate that there should be sufficient community involvement in such an important part as the VPA of a SSD project.

Community Impacts

From the Assessment report it reads that all socio-economic impacts will be mitigated by:

The preparation of an Accommodation and Employment Strategy for the project in consultation with Council

And by entering into a VPA with Council prior to commencing construction

I ask the IPC to consider that neither of these conditions mitigate the social impacts already occurring in loss of community cohesiveness, established Community Division, loss of community character and impacts to Community Health and Wellbeing nor mitigate them in the future.

Can the Panel consider that these issues faced by community are decreasing the functionality and capacity of the back-bone of rural towns – the people? Community Division and Community Health and Wellbeing, are issues that need to be addressed and considered appropriately. Socio-economic issues were the No.2 key issue raised in the Public Submissions. 2nd to Landscape and Visual.

I would like to reiterate that those who speak to object to this project come to do so from a place of deep care and concern for the place we call home, raise our children and provides our means to live. The disappointment to see our community fractured and in a desire to mend broken relationships. We seek to protect our community, our landscapes and environment, and preserve our unique rural character for the future.

CONCLUSION

I urge the IPC to review these assessment concerns and seek to have them scrutinised and addressed, and sincerely thank you for your efforts in doing so.