

This submission is made without prejudice:

The Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance Inc has a number of objections to the Department's recommendation for this project, this is a sample:

1. The Department states that the project would not fundamentally change the broader landscape characteristics of the area yet Energy Co in their discussion on cumulative impacts for their transmission project clearly state turbines "will strongly influence the landscape".

Has the commission considered that Department appears to have rehashed this recommendation from previous recommendations for expediency?

2. The Government is yet to complete a Cumulative Impact Assessment for the CWO REZ.

Does the Commission consider that it is inappropriate to decide on any development in the CWO REZ until such assessment has been completed?

3. The Department state that the project would not result in any significant impacts on the local community. Yet the department has neglected to investigate or mention:

- a. Real and documented evidence of buyers walking away from purchasing land or homes in this area.

- b. the numbers of workers camps in the area between Birriwa Solar, Liverpool Range Wind, Energy Co (with 2 camps) and Valley of the Winds. The town has a population of 722 (as per 2021 Census) the above-mentioned workers camps will accommodate over 4500 workers, the nearest town for these workers will be Coolah. Has the commission considered how an additional population of 4500 could impact on the local community? We currently don't have the services that everyone on the East Coast expects are basic rights.

- c. Has the commission considered where are the builders of the accommodation camps are going to be housed? At present Tilt is seeking accommodation for 80 construction workers for their

Temporary Workers Accommodation (TWA). This is a community with very little accommodation available for tourists/contract workers/visiting health workers. Has the commission considered where will ACEN accommodate the construction workers for their TWA for Birriwa Solar? Has the commission considered where ACEN will accommodate the construction workers for Valley of the winds? Has the commission considered whether there is going to be another call out to the community to provide accommodation for these workers. Has the commission considered how when all the visitor accommodation is full of construction workers for TWA the tourists/contractors/visiting health workers will find accommodation?

- d. Aerial agriculture. It was obvious from the response by the Department to the public meeting that there is no understanding of aerial agriculture. As mentioned, multiple times, some contact with Australian experts in crop dusting would be educative to not only the department but also the commissioners. Note also that this is the first wind project in NSW that is impacting on BSAL cropping country and no research has been done on the impact of wake turbulence on aerial agriculture. Note also that given weather conditions and aircraft availability once the aerial job is booked the landowners will not necessarily receive advance notice of when the job can be done. For example, one of our members booked an aerial job on 20 December for 2 January, the aerial contractor was shutting for Christmas at close of business on 20 December. On 23 December the contractor called and said he had a pilot and aircraft that could do the job the following day – 24 December. After a rush to set up for the job it was completed by 12 noon on 24 December. This is normal. No time to call the wind farm operator and book a shutdown of turbines. At other times jobs will be booked and aircraft will be diverted for aerial firefighting elsewhere.

- e. Aerial culling of feral pests. Has the commission considered how the Local Land Services (LLS) be able to continue aerial culling programs in the district? We note that the last LLS aerial cull excluded the entire Liverpool Plains (Tilt) Project. Likely for obvious reasons – it is difficult to be shooting feral pests such as pigs, deer, foxes and cats when there are potentially hundreds of people in the area involved in the wind farm planning and construction. Has the commission considered if the next LLS aerial culling program will exclude the entire Valley of the winds (ACEN) project? Likely yes for the same reasons. Has the commission considered that the result will be that for the construction years and potentially beyond there will be no LLS aerial culling programs on the vast areas of the Valley of the Winds and Liverpool Range projects? That will be a big win for the feral pigs, deer, foxes and cats that devastate our native wildlife, livestock and crops.
4. The departments continual reference to us as residents of the CWO REZ infers that we should be treated differently. Does the commission consider that we are second class citizens? Does the commission consider that we are being discriminated against because the NSW Government without our consultation or consent drew a line around our homes/land and labelled it a renewable energy zone?

Does the commission consider that we are not treated the same as residents of other areas? It appears to us that cumulative impacts don't get addressed because we are residents of a REZ. Does the commission consider that residents of other areas would be expected to accommodate two massive wind projects that dominate their homes, landscape, environment and local town and villages?

5. Does the commission consider whether the department cherry picked visual guidelines by using some of the 2016 guidelines and some of the 2024 guidelines? The example the 2024 guidelines use the grid system taken on a 180-degree photo (supplied by the proponent). The 180-degree photo visually recedes the turbines in

the centre of the photo. Does the commission consider this could be perceived as obfuscation? Under the 2016 guidelines there is a subjective decision required by a real person, the 2024 version removes this and purely involves the number of grids. The 60-degree photos always show a more realistic view.

Could the commission please advise if the Department has stopped pulling up developers for always depicting turbines in a photomontage against a cloudy background?

The proponent will place great emphasis on vegetation screening the views to turbines yet the visual guidelines state “consideration should be given to the potential for existing vegetation to be lost”. Trees fall over, trees lose limbs in windstorms, trees lose vegetation in bushfire, trees are removed for safety reasons.

ACEN and the department’s total reliance on vegetation screening to block turbine views as a mitigation strategy does not consider the department’s own guidelines.

In the department’s meeting with the commission panel (prior to the public meeting) it was obvious the department had little knowledge of the specific project as the answers to the panel’s questions were largely generic and found replicated in previous panel meetings on previous wind projects.

6. CASA have recommended lighting for the turbines. Tilt turbines too. Has the commission considered the impact to Coolah and Uarbry and the non-associated neighbours? Has the commission considered how many residents will lose their dark skies at night as well as their visual amenity during the day? We note that substations and BESS are lit 24/7 – has the commission considered how many non-associated residents will be impacted by this lighting? It is not good enough that the department state the “addition of lighting is unlikely to impact the assessment rating”. The “unlikely” is not sufficient.

We note that CASA recommends lighting for all wind turbine projects, has the commission considered why the proponent does not address this at the outset? Has the commission considered that this so as no

night lighting montages can be assessed by the public before the project is approved?

7. Has the commission considered whether the property Tomahawk has been independently assessed for its Box Gum Woodland? Has the commission considered that the Department has simply accepted the proponent's assessment? As locals we know this property and question the suitability for offset of Box Gum Woodland that will be destroyed in the construction of this project.
8. Social licence – ACEN say that 250 people have visited their office – given that their office has not been open for over a year, has the commission considered that they are counting repeated visits by team members, land hosts and those on a neighbour agreements? Many in the community may not know much about the Valley of the Winds project but they know that ACEN is well practiced at retaliating if they perceive any real or imaged criticism. Given that there are still 87 landowners within 4.95 km of the project this shows that there is no social licence for this project. Given the ability to “micro” site the turbines, has the commission considered how many more landowners will fall into the 4.95 km?
9. Can the commission consider the amount of diesel the project will use during construction and during operation. Some believe they are accommodating these wind turbines for self-less reasons to reduce the reliance of fossil fuels. Can the commission please consider the following:
 - a. Will the accommodation camp be run on diesel generators?
 - b. Will the BESS be running diesel generators?
 - c. Will the Substations be running diesel generators?
 - d. One contractor working on the construction of Wollar Solar used 9000 litres of diesel per week, there were 15 construction teams on site. How many construction teams does ACEN plan for and how much diesel will each one use per week?
 - e. What does the commission consider will be the cumulative impact of the vast increases in diesel use in the community?
 - f. Telling us that this will be dealt with in an emissions management plan after approval is not appropriate.

10. Water.

- a. Does the commission consider that the construction contractors and quarrying contractors accessing ground water bores be using licence bores with metering equipped to monitor water level and how much is being used from each bore?
- b. Does the commission consider that the bore meters should submit real time activity?
- c. Has the commission considered who will be monitoring the bore reports
- d. Has the commission considered whether the contractors are buying water from landowners with stock and domestic bores?
- e. Has the commission considered whether contractors will be permitted to take water from public access points to rivers and water holes?
- f. Has the commission considered whether there is security to neighbouring landowners that their stock and domestic water sources will not be depleted or contaminated by the multiple constructions going on in the community with many to overlap?
- g. Telling us this will be sorted out after approval in a Water management plan is not appropriate.

11. Traffic

Notification received today that Merotherie road is closed for 6 weeks given the construction of transmission infrastructure. Saxa Road has been closed for going on 2 years with many promises of funds for repair by developers.

Has the commission considered what roads the proponent plan to close?

With construction work being carried out by contractors and subcontractors and subcontractors of subcontractors, has the commission considered how it can be guaranteed to the community that all workers know which roads they can access and which ones

they cannot. Cameras and satellite trackers only work if someone is monitoring.

Telling us that this will all be sorted out after approval in a traffic management plan is not appropriate.

12. Workers

- a. Has the commission considered whether all workers will be made aware that they are being placed in a bush fire zone with one 50,000 litre water tank?
- b. Has the commission considered whether there will be a drug and alcohol policy for all workers and regular testing?
- c. Has the commission considered whether all workers will be aware that they will need to contribute to firefighting activities? Or else rely on volunteers.
- d. Has the commission considered whether all workers will be aware that this is not like the mine, there will be no team skilled and equipped to handle workplace and medical emergencies?
- e. Has the commission asked how many of these workers are going to commute back to distant homes during their time off? Has the commission considered how these additional vehicles on the road been accounted for in terms of cumulative impact and cumulative emissions?
- f. Has the commission considered how many of these workers will be on temporary visas?
- g. Telling us that all this will be dealt with after approval in a management plan is not acceptable.

13. Fire

It appears that “cash for comment”, relying on global agencies or local agencies with specific government roles in the renewable energy sector is accepted.

But did you know:

- a. Ground fire crews each carry about 200 litres of water, when this runs out, they need access to a large source of water where they can fill quickly.

- b. Ground fire crews are certainly important in a bushfire but are incapable of extinguishing a large fire especially in heavily timbered/steep terrain.
- c. Aerial support is vital – both fixed wing and helicopters.
- d. In large fire like the Sir Ivan fire ground crews and aerial fire fighters cannot be everyone all at once. For example, one house that burnt was the home of a fire captain who was elsewhere fighting the fire. The aerial fire fighters attempt to control the fire front, and the ground crews mop up around the perimeter.
- e. Roads help ground crews but without aerial support ground crews are not sufficient.
- f. Bush fires burn best in timbered or heavily vegetated areas, not nicely along a road.
- g. Given the wind during a fire and the swinging water bucket from a helicopter sometimes the helicopter misses the fire front because the bucket is swinging so wildly.
- h. No helicopter will go near wind turbines or transmission during a fire with a bucket swinging wildly beneath them.
- i. Our numbers of volunteers to fight fires is dwindling, we expect that this will continue as land hosts move away from the turbines.
- j. We are increasingly frustrated with agencies such as the RFS who sign off on projects such as this one without the courage to say that they don't fly the aircraft (that's up to the contracted pilots) and the aerial firefighting will be ineffective or non-existent in areas such as ours with ridges covered in turbines and the added interference of substations, BESS and transmission lines.
- k. No amount of water will put out a fire in a BESS
- l. Volunteer fire fighters have no procedures for BESS fires.

- m. There are an increasing number of battery fires.
- n. Turbine fires are increasing, and turbine blades can spread the fire
- o. The Department and the commission are not being informed on the fire risk and the fact that aerial fire support will be reduced or non-existent because all government departments and agencies are more interested in NSW meeting government emissions reductions targets above all else and at any cost.

14. Decommissioning

Reportedly this is a commercial in confidence agreement that the land hosts have with the proponent.

We understand the land hosts are signing a contract for 30 years with at least one 20-year option.

We expect that the Australian taxpayer and electricity consumer will have run out of funds to continue propping up this project long before the contract is up.

Has the commission considered whether the land host is aware that if the project owner is broke or has absconded that they are individually liable for the decommissioning of this project?

The land can never be returned to its previous state given the cement, gravel and electrical equipment in situ. Has the commission considered how the NSW Government can protect us in perpetuity from the potential toxic effects of eroding electricity equipment include BESS being left abandoned on this site? Our water sources and our soil must be preserved. Has the commission considered how the Government will do this?

15. Carcass counts and offsets

Has the commission considered who will report the carcass counts of birds and bats destroyed by turbines?

Has the commission considered whether reporting carcass counts protects vulnerable, endangered and protected species of birds and bats?

Has the commission considered how carcass counts and paying money to the NSW Government for offsets protects native flora and fauna from extinction?

Repeatedly we read about the destruction of Box Gum Woodland, and it is having a serious and irreversible impact, yet every project is given permission to clear Box Gum Woodland. Has the commission considered why they are expected to approve the destruction of this critically endangered ecological species in order for the NSW Government to achieve emissions targets? Has the commission considered that trees help reduce emissions?

16. The proponent and the department have not considered all homes within 5 km of this project. Has the commission considered these homes?

This project should not be approved.