New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING

BULLAWAH WIND FARM (SSD-50505215)

PUBLIC HEARING

COMMISSION PANEL:	NEAL MENZIES (CHAIR) SUELLEN FITZGERALD MICHAEL WRIGHT
SPEAKERS:	AIDAN O'MAHONY (Applicant) NICOLE BREWER (Department of Planning Housing & Infrastructure) RHYS MCCULLOCH (McCulloch Pastoral) ALAN MORAN (Australian Environment Foundation) JACK BOND (Edward River Council) KATHRYN REYNOLDS RAFE CHAMPION CHERYL O'DONNELL ANDREW SLEIGH (Bundure District Landholders Inc) JEANINE BIRD JASEN CRIGHTON CAROL OATAWAY (Hay Shire Council) IVAN KENNEDY NOEL HICKS ANNETTE SMITH LYNETTE LABLACK (Save Our Surroundings Riverina) GRANT PIPER (National Rational Energy Network Inc) RAMILA CHANISHEFF ANNIE HARE MARTEENA MCKENZIE (Applicant)
LOCATION:	DENILIQUIN TOWN HALL 170 CRESSY STREET, DENILIQUIN
DATE & TIME:	9:00AM – 1:00PM TUESDAY, 1st SEPTEMBER 2026

THE PUBLIC HEARING COMMENCED

PROFESSOR NEAL MENZIES AM: Good morning and welcome to the NSW Independent Planning Commission's public hearing into the Bullawah Wind Farm, State significant development 50505215. I'm speaking to you from Wamba Wamba and Perrepa Perrepa land. I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the countries from which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to the Elders who may be participating today. My name is Neal Menzies, I'm the Chair of the Commission Panel and I'm joined by my fellow Commissioners Suellen Fitzgerald and Michael Wright. We've checked for conflicts of interest between panel members and issues related to this project that may affect our judgment and no conflicts have been identified.

Our role is to decide whether the project should go ahead and if so under what conditions. Our consideration will take into account the project application, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's assessment report, all written and verbal submissions and all relevant planning laws and policies. All material before the Commission will be published on our website. In making a decision we must follow all of the relevant laws and consider all of the policies that apply to the application. Public input is an important part of this process and that is why we're here today. Thank you everyone who's made a submission already. Each and every submission will be read by the Commission.

At this public hearing we want to hear your thoughts on the Department's assessment and recommendation and the Department's recommended conditions. If you oppose the project, please also tell us if your concerns could be addressed through conditions. We will consider all options. We want to make sure that everyone has the chance to be heard. Please be respectful of all speakers. We ask that you be courteous and mindful of the diverse views and experiences within the community. Please also be respectful to the Commission staff. Any participants here today show disrespect, I will ask them to leave the room.

I will introduce each speaker when it's their turn to speak. All speakers will know how long they have to speak today. A bell will sound when the speaker has one minute remaining. Yes, and there's the bell. A second bell will sound when a speaker's time has expired. An example of the two ding bell when it's all over for you. To make sure everyone receives their time I'll apply timekeeping rules. More time may be given if time allows. And if, let me be clear, we're here to learn, so if somebody is telling us something that is novel that we haven't been thinking about, then we will keep giving them time to allow that to happen. So I will keep time fairly rigorously but I will also make allowance if there's something that we need to hear.

Any information given to the Commission may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement is available on the Commission's website. Today's event is also being filmed and broadcast live on the Commission's YouTube page. First we will hear from the applicant and from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. We will then hear from community members who have registered to speak. Then at the end of the public hearing the applicant may be asked to address any questions the panel have in relation to issues raised during the public hearing.

Just before I call the first speaker, I know that a lot of people who are going to address us today have strong views about the future of renewable energy. And I just wanted to make it clear that we're not deciding government policy here today. We have no power over that whatsoever and we have no ability to do anything to change what the government policy is. The government's already decided that renewable energy is a lawful use of land in particular zones in New South Wales. And if that legislation is something that you disagree with or oppose, that is your right, but the place to register that opposition is with your local member of parliament. We have no ability to change government policy.

That's usually what happens to me but it happened to somebody else. So just a useful reminder, pull your phone out, have a look and turn it on to silent.

Yes, so I just wanted to stress the Commission is here today to do one very defined task which is consider this particular proposal and whether it should go ahead. So, you know, if you're here to tell us that the government policy is wrong, I'm sorry but we can do nothing about that. And I certainly won't give you additional time to tell me that the government policy is wrong. Okay, yes, I can see some nodding heads. So, yes, not part of my formal script but I think a useful constraint to the way we're going to run the course of our day. Okay, let me move to calling our speakers. Find the right piece of paper. That was hard. The applicant's going to speak first. Aidan, are you up?

MR AIDAN O'MAHONY: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, everyone. My name is Aidan O'Mahony and I'm the Project Development Manager for Bullawah Wind Farm. I want to start by thanking the IPC Commissioners for the chance to present to you today both in the room and online. Today I'm going to provide a quick overview of the project and its key features. Next slide, please.

BayWa r.e. would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, seas and waters across Australia. We acknowledge First Nations leaders, past and present, and thank the many Aboriginal people who contributed to the development of this project. We hope that our work can benefit both people and country. Next slide, please.

We've been in the Riverina for nearly five years developing the project, starting with host landowners, the nearby neighbours, local community, local community groups and councils, which has been a very positive experience. The project is located approximately 36 kilometres south east of Hay and 66 kilometres north east of Deniliquin in the Riverina region of New South Wales. And is located within the Hay Shire, Murrumbidgee and Edward River local government areas and is within the South West Renewable Energy Zone.

Bullawah Wind Farm was one of the four projects in this region to receive an access right to the REZ in an extremely competitive tender process led by the New South Wales government. The project is seeking approval for up to 141 wind turbines, equalling to 803.7 megawatts of clean energy, enough to power approximately 530,000 homes, as well as a 359 megawatt to hour battery energy storage system.

The project will be constructed, commissioned and operated in two stages. Stage one of the project will connect to the 220 kV transmission line. Stage two of the project will connect to the 330 kV Project Energy Connect Line. The project covers an area of 20,629 hectares across three farming families that host the project. Agriculture is the predominant land use and farming will coexist with the project during construction and operations. It's been great working with these families and helping to create a drought proof revenue stream for their farms and we're excited about our partnerships with these families. The reasons the site was selected is because of low dwelling density, reliable strong wind resource, close proximity to electrical transmission infrastructure and existing state road networks. Next slide, please.

Now, I'm pleased to share some of the social and economic benefits associated with the project. The project will create up to 380 jobs during construction and 40 operational roles. The project will prioritise local workers and we have commitments around employing First Nations people, learner workers, apprentices and underrepresented groups. We are also committed to supporting local business during construction and operations and have 44 packages with 2,200 expression of interest on the ICN gateway.

The project will support economic growth through direct and indirect economic stimulation. The project will provide new participation opportunities for local people and businesses. In terms of benefit sharing, we've already delivered significant community benefits and between 2022 and 2026, the project provided direct community payments through sponsorships, scholarships and community funding totalling $160,000 and directly supported First Nations cultural events in Hay, Deniliquin and Griffith. We will continue to support local people and build legacy projects that respond to local priorities.

These include neighbour benefit sharing. We've made offers to all neighbours within 11 km of wind turbines and this will amount to 1.9 million over project life. Voluntary planning agreements, terms agreed between the three local councils, funding will go towards community benefits and the total expected VPA payments will total more than 15.7 million. An additional dedicated First Nations fund of 2.8 million, which will be administered by Bullawah Wind Farm. South West REZ access fees associated with Stage 2 will go towards the EnergyCo Community and Employment Benefit Program, amounting to 9 million over 15 years. And we have further commitments to local communities including education and training, First Nations programs, supply chain and innovation initiatives. Next slide, please.

We're proud of the deep and broad community support Bullawah Wind Farm has received and we've met extensively with landholders, local councils and the broader community. Over five years this has included in-person meetings and briefings, community information sessions and employing a local person during the early stages of development. This local presence was invaluable in setting up early connections, identifying community leaders and sharing community concerns and priorities. We are pleased to see no objections from anyone within 15 km of the proposed project. We've worked to embed ourselves into the community while developing trusting relationships over the past five years. We've listened to and understood community perspectives and they've been incorporated into the planning of this project. Next slide, please.

In terms of addressing community and government agency feedback, the implementation of the avoid and minimise principles has been a strong focus in the design process for this project. In terms of biodiversity, we've avoided all New South Wales important habitat mapping, i.e. primary habitat, for the Plains-wanderer. We've avoided and minimised impacts to native vegetation. We've maximised setbacks to Oolambeyan National Park of at least 450 metres, but generally more than 600 metres. We've minimised unavoidable interactions with biodiverse riparian land and we will conduct a comprehensive biodiversity mitigation strategy, will be developed including site specific Plains-wanderer management plan and a biodiversity offset approach.

In regards to Aboriginal cultural heritage, we've had a collaborative approach with 14 traditional owners and Registered Aboriginal Parties with extensive surveys undertaken on site. This has resulted in the removal of two turbines and infrastructure in a sand dune system and a number of project refinements throughout the disturbance footprint. We've minimised amenity impacts by locating infrastructure away from residences and project boundaries and the project is compliant with visual guidelines.

Recognising the shortage of housing availability in the area, we've included a 345 bed temporary workers accommodation with health services and we're supporting the local councils with their housing programs. In terms of transport, we've a proactive approach to maintenance with pre and post dilapidation surveys and regular inspections, with a construction maintenance crew available to rectify defects in a timely manner to ensure safety. A traffic management plan will be developed in consultation with councils, EnergyCo and Traffic for New South Wales.

In terms of agricultural land, existing agricultural practices will co-exist. Our disturbance area accounts for 3% of the project area which will host infrastructure and we've avoided irrigated cropping land and conservation sites. In terms of waste and decommissioning, waste will be avoided, reused and recycled where possible. Where waste needs to go to landfill, waste management agreements will be entered into with the councils. At the end of life, components will be recycled and used where possible and land will be rehabilitated back to its original condition in line with the proposed conditions of consent. Next slide, please.

Thank you, Commissioners, for the opportunity to present today. Thank you for everyone who will present both online and in person. When we embarked on Bullawah Wind Farm, we knew that true success wouldn't be measured just in megawatts but in the trust we built with the community. Today we stand here backed by the invaluable input of the people who actually live and work in the Riverina. To the councils, our host landholders, neighbours, First Nations custodians and community groups, thank you for welcoming us into your towns, your halls and your homes. Your feedback has been instrumental in refining the proposed project to ensure it balances critical energy needs with the protection of biodiversity values, agricultural operations and heritage.

I want to reaffirm our primary goal, to deliver a project that is built with the region, not just in it. We look forward to delivering a lasting legacy of economic resilience, employment and shared prosperity for decades to come. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Aidan. Questions? Yes.

MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD: Only one, Neal. Time frames. You mentioned, Aidan, that you'd been in the area for four or five years developing the project to date?

MR O'MAHONY: Yes, correct. Yes.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes. And your next stage, if this project was approved, your next stage of construction would be how long?

MR O'MAHONY: It would likely be Q3 2027 when we would start construction for stage two of the project.

MS FITZGERALD: You would start, you would finish?

MR O'MAHONY: Finish would be in early 2030.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay, good. Thank you.

MR MICHAEL WRIGHT: Yes, and Aidan, you talked about stages one and stages two for the project.

MR O'MAHONY: Yes.

MR WRIGHT: I think when we were on our field trip yesterday, things had sort of inversed, so to speak.

MR O'MAHONY: Yes.

MR WRIGHT: So do you want to briefly explain how the stages now operate?

MR O'MAHONY: Yes, so stage two is north of North Boundary Road, so that's the one that has been awarded access rights. So that is the project that will start first, given the milestones under the EnergyCo and the New South Wales targets. And then stage one, which is south of North Boundary Road, will start three to six months after stage two, subject to grid connection and analysis of the grid connection that's available for that project.

MR WRIGHT: So stage two first?

MR O'MAHONY: First, yes.

MR WRIGHT: And stage one second, just to be clear?

MR O'MAHONY: Yes. The way to think about it is stage two north and in the northern section will start first and stage one in the south will start second, which is confusing I know.

MR WRIGHT: Good to clear. Yes. Thank you.

MR O'MAHONY: Yes. Apologies.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Aidan.

MR O'MAHONY: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Just flagging, we may ask you to come back at the end of the hearing if there are questions we want to put to you. And just for everyone's understanding, we've already met with the applicant and we spent yesterday looking around the site and in particular going to look at things that we were concerned about to understand in the context of the landscape what's being done. Nicole, if you want to – so in calling the Department to speak to us, I just wanted to flag that this is a public hearing rather than a public meeting. So the Department's evaluated the project and given us a report but they do not make a recommendation. So it's the panel who make the decision as to whether the project goes ahead or not. Nicole, over to you.

MS NICOLE BREWER: Thank you, Chair and Commissioners. Good morning. My name is Nicole Brewer, Director of Energy Assessments at New South Wales Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. I'd like to start by thanking the Commissioners for the opportunity to provide a summary of the Department's assessment. Next slide, please.

I'll give a short overview of the proposed Bullawah Wind Farm. The proposed – the project is south east of Hay in the Hay, Murrumbidgee and Edward River local government areas. The project comprises up to 141 turbines with a generating capacity around 804 megawatts and a 359 megawatt battery. The project is located within the declared South West Renewable Energy Zone and is intending to connect to both the existing Transgrid 220 kilovolt transmission line and Project EnergyConnect. EnergyConnect has completed construction and is in the commissioning and testing stage. EnergyCo has granted project access rights for around 260 megawatts to Project EnergyConnect, the REZ transmission line. The site is predominantly grazing land and is surrounded by other approved and proposed renewable energy developments. Next slide, please.

The Department considers the project is consistent with relevant Commonwealth and state policies, which identify the need to diversify electricity generation sources while maintaining energy security and reliability, particularly given all coal-fired power plants in New South Wales are scheduled for closure in the next 15 to 20 years. The project would generate up to 804 megawatts of renewable energy, enough to power more than 460,000 homes, reduce emissions by around 1.7 million tons annually and support the transition in New South Wales to a reliable low emissions electricity system. The proposed battery would further enhance energy security by storing energy for dispatch during periods of high demand or lower wind generation. Next slide, please.

The Department has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the project. This includes exhibition of the EIS, consideration of submissions, requests for further

information from the applicant, consultation with government agencies and an independent expert review of key biodiversity matters. Next slide, please.

The Department consulted with agencies, councils and the community throughout the assessment process. The Department also engaged the Independent Expert Advisory Panel for Energy Transition on the potential impacts of the project to the Plains-wanderer. Next slide, please.

Of the 68 objections received for the project, none resided within 15 kilometres of the project and most lived more than 50 kilometres away, including several interstate submitters. The most common issues raised in objections related to renewable energy projects generally, decommissioning and waste, biodiversity and agricultural impacts. Next slide, please.

The Department undertook a detailed assessment of environmental, social and economic impacts. I'll focus today on two key assessment issues, biodiversity and transport. Next slide, please. The applicant demonstrated avoidance and minimisation of biodiversity impacts through the project design, including avoiding mapped important habitat for the Plains-wanderer and minimising impacts to threatened ecological communities. The project design largely avoids areas of higher quality native vegetation, with 87% of all clearing being non-threatened vegetation. And this is primarily native grassland and shrubland that has been subject to long-term grazing activities. The Department is satisfied that the impacts to native vegetation, threatened ecological communities and threatened species habitat can be appropriately managed and offset in accordance with the NSW biodiversity requirements. Next slide, please.

The assessment of impacts to Plains-wanderer, a small ground dwelling bird, is dealt with in a different way to most other species. While the species was recorded on site and some suitable habitat would be impacted, no mapped important habitat would be directly affected and so no species credits are generated for offset for this species. There are specific requirements under the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation where an impact is to be regarded as a serious and irreversible impact, SAII or SAII, if it is likely to contribute significantly to the risk of extinction of a threatened species or ecological community.

The Department considered advice from the New South Wales Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water, which considered the nature and extent of potential impacts of the project may result in SAII. Due to the complex nature of the species and the difference in conclusions drawn by the applicant and New South Wales DCCEEW, the Department sought independent advice from the Independent Expert Advisory Panel for Energy Transition. The panel concluded that the scale of impacts from the project would not significantly contribute to the risk of extinction of the species. The Department reached the same conclusion and has also recommended conditions considering potential for cumulative impacts by requiring participation in a regional Plains-wanderer working group to develop a strategy with other wind farms in the region to monitor and manage any cumulative impacts to the species across the South West REZ. Next slide, please.

Now to transport. Construction would result in increased traffic, including oversized and over-mass vehicle movements associated with turbine deliveries. The applicant is proposing to transport wind turbine components from either the Port of Newcastle or Port Adelaide to Hay before using local roads to access the project area. The assessment identified the need for state and local intersection and road upgrades to enable vehicles to safely travel to site. The Department assessed the potential impacts of the project in consultation with Transport for New South Wales and councils.

The Department's recommended conditions require necessary road upgrades, maintenance and repair of project related damage to roads, management of oversized vehicle movements, consultation with the relevant authorities and upgrades to the intersection of Cobb Highway and Jerilderie Road. The Department considers traffic impacts can be appropriately managed through these measures. Next slide, please.

The project would provide a range of economic benefits to the community through 380 construction jobs and 40 ongoing operational jobs. The project has a capital investment value of around $2.5 billion. The applicant has committed to a community benefit sharing in accordance with the current New South Wales benefit sharing guideline at a rate of $1,050 per megawatt generated. 85% of these funds would be split between the three host councils with 15% dedicated to a First Nations fund. The terms of the benefit sharing have been agreed with the three host councils and would be delivered through voluntary planning agreements.

The applicant proposes to construct a temporary workers accommodation facility within the project site that would accommodate up to 345 workers to manage the potential impacts to housing and short-term accommodation availability in the region. The applicant would be required to provide health and medical services to occupants of the accommodation camp and investigate options for prioritising employment of local workers for the construction and operation of the project. Next slide, please.

In summary, the Department has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the project. The project is strategically located within the South West REZ and the Department considers that the key environmental impacts have largely been avoided through project design, with residual impacts capable of being mitigated through mitigation measures and the recommended conditions. The project would deliver substantial renewable energy generation, storage capacity, employment and community benefits. The Department considers the project achieves an appropriate balance between the benefits of renewable energy generation and the management of potential environmental and social impacts. Thank you for your time this morning.

MR MENZIES: Thanks, Nicole. We certainly do have some questions for you. I'm interested in the battery energy storage. So at this point we know that there's going to be a battery energy storage system built if the project's approved, but sensibly the exact technologies that are going to be used aren't defined because they are changing so rapidly. My concern, the battery energy storage introduces a particular fire risk into the landscape. So I was interested in how the Department will evaluate the particular technology chosen before the Planning Secretary approves that to be built.

MS BREWER: Thanks for your question. The assessment of the project included a preliminary hazard analysis that was included within the environmental impact statement and that included a number of assumptions around broadly potential types of technology and separation distances through that preliminary hazard analysis. If approved, the recommended conditions for the project also include a fire safety study which would be completed in consultation with the relevant authorities that would outline the detailed design of that battery facility in accordance with the relevant guidelines. And that fire safety study would need to be completed prior to the construction of the battery. So that would include all of the details of the final proposed design of the battery.

MR MENZIES: Okay. And a follow-up question from me. On Jerilderie Road, we drove along Jerilderie Road yesterday and noted that in parts it's quite a good road, in other parts it's already quite deteriorated. And the conditions that are laid out expect the applicant to evaluate that road, if there's deterioration, to repair that. But my question relates to Pottinger and Bullawah if they both proceed. It's potential – potentially they'll proceed at the same time. And so I just wondered how you manage two companies using the road, both made responsible for assessing deterioration and maintenance of the road. How does this work in practice?

MS BREWER: Thanks for the question. This is quite common for state significant projects. In this instance, so Pottinger Wind Farm has been approved and includes requirements for dilapidation surveys and any maintenance that might be required following construction of the project. Similarly, the recommended conditions that the Department provided also includes the dilapidation surveys and rectification. But in each circumstance, it's for development related impacts. And so it would be for each applicant, through their traffic management plan, to define that development related traffic. For example, it might be that that is a proportion to each project, depending on the traffic travelling down that road.

MR MENZIES: Okay. Michael?

MR WRIGHT: Yes, thanks, Neal. Thanks, Nicole. Just you talk about 463,000 homes potentially being powered. I think the applicant has a different figure of 530,000, is that correct? I wonder if someone could explain the discrepancy in those two figures?

MS BREWER: There are a number of different factors that you can use in the conversion of megawatts to homes powered and it's just the nature of different factors. In fact, there are different factors that are considered within different government departments as well. So it's an approximate number.

MR WRIGHT: Okay, thank you. And one other question. In terms of the Independent Expert Advisory Panel on Energy Transition's advice on SAII for Plains-wanderer, and I know the proponent reached the same conclusion and the Department has as well, the Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water contended there may be a serious and irreversible impact on the Plains-wanderer. My question is whether they, with the advent of that expert advice, whether they continue to hold that position or whether they've changed their position in view of that independent expert advice?

MS BREWER: The Department hasn't gone back to the Department for a further conclusion because we had received their conclusion and we considered their conclusion with the conclusion of the Independent Panel.

MR WRIGHT: Okay, thank you.

MR MENZIES: Suellen? Okay, thank you, Nicole.

MS BREWER: Thank you, Commissioners.

MR MENZIES: We now move to our members of the public who are going to speak to us and our first speaker is Rhys McCulloch. Yesterday we had the pleasure of travelling around on Rhys' properties and looking at where the various pieces of infrastructure are going to go. So, Rhys.

MR RHYS MCCULLOCH: Good morning, Commissioners and good morning, everyone. My name is Rhys McCulloch and I'm representing McCulloch Pastoral, the current landholders of Bullawah Station. I wanted to start with the photo on the left here, which is a recent photo of Bullawah. These are our sheep and beneath them is native grass and beneath that healthy protected soil. There's no fertiliser, no cultivation, no artificial improvement. We've been able to achieve this because today we have something that I believe is one of the most valuable assets as a grazier can have in marginal country and that's choice. The choice to move livestock and rest paddocks, the choice to stop grazing when the country needs rest and having that choice requires infrastructure. Fencing, watering points, containment areas, feed equipment and transport, but it also requires education and an understanding of grazing management.

This choice has been aided and accelerated by the income generated from the BCT and the LLS Plains-wanderer programs. But as you can see on the right, Bullawah hasn't always looked like the first photograph. This photo was taken on 22 March 2019 and we were in drought, 190 ml rainfall for the previous year. There was very little grass, poor ground cover and sheep spread across the landscape looking for feed. I think this photograph demonstrates something important about farming in this environment. When low rainfall coincides with poor livestock and wool prices, the financial pressure on farming businesses can begin to influence decisions made on the land. A farmer might know that a paddock needs six months rest, but knowing what should be done and having the financial capacity to do so are two very different things.

And that is one reason why we have been open to opportunities like the Bullawah Wind Farm. We've been working with BayWa r.e. for several years now and throughout that process they've taken the time to understand how we manage Bullawah and what areas of the property are important to us. We have worked with them to identify the conservation areas and productive cropping country and to design the project around those areas wherever possible. That has been important to us. We don't want a wind farm that prevents us from improving Bullawah as an agricultural business or compromises the conservation work we are already doing.

Some of those conservation areas are managed specifically for Plains-wanderer habitat through the BCT and LLS programs. We already manage grazing pressure and ground cover in these areas to maintain and improve that habitat. The Plains-wanderer has also been an important consideration in the design of the wind farm, with the project working to completely avoid identified important habitat. Bullawah itself is well suited for this type of development. It is predominantly flat, open country with very low density of surrounding dwellings. The turbines and associated infrastructure will occupy only a relatively small part of the property, allowing our grazing and farming operations to continue around them.

So from our perspective, the wind farm doesn't have to replace agriculture or conservation. Ag, conservation and renewable energy can work alongside each other. Importantly, the income generated from the project has the potential to give us even greater capacity to manage the land in the way that we believe it should be managed. That's where our experience during the drought becomes more important. Next slide, please.

After the drought, government funding and the income from the Plains-wanderer programs was available, which with desirable rainfall managed to generate a positive spiral. Next slide, please. These are some examples of the infrastructure that can support our grazing practices. Next slide, please. On the left is the positive spiral. Alternative income gave us financial relief. Financial relief allowed us to invest in infrastructure. The infrastructure gave us choice to rest paddocks. Rest improved ground cover and allowed perennial and native vegetation to recover. That improved soil protection and habitat. And financial resilience began creating landscape resilience. So for our family, agriculture and conservation haven't had to compete. Strengthening one has helped strengthen the other.

As a grazier, you are ultimately at the will of the climate. Drought is inevitable, but the long-lasting damage it can cause to native vegetation and habitat does not have to be. Our experience has shown us that when our farming business has financial resilience, it can make better decisions earlier, reduce grazing pressure, protect ground cover, and give the country time to recover. When we look at the Bullawah Wind Farm, we don't simply see wind turbines. We see another opportunity to give our farming business something that experience has taught us is incredibly valuable. Choice. Choice to reduce stock pressure before the country deteriorates. Choice to rest paddocks. Choice to invest in and protect native habitat. Choice to prepare properly for drought and fire. And the choice to continue improving the way we manage Bullawah.

Our experience working with BayWa r.e gives us confidence in that opportunity. They have listened to us as landholders, understood what is important to us, and worked with us to develop a project that can sit alongside both agricultural and conservation goals. For our family, wind income isn't about extracting more from Bullawah. It's about giving us the financial security to ask less of the land. And ultimately, our goal is very simple. We want Bullawah to be more resilient and in a better environmental condition than when we began to manage it. I believe this project can help us achieve that. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thanks, Rhys.

MS FITZGERALD: Neal, I've got one question for Rhys. Water supply. If this project was approved, the construction of it will be, as I understand it, taking off property groundwater for the construction purposes. Do you see any impact on then the available water for agriculture post construction?

MR MCCULLOCH: No, not at all. Our deep ground bore has an extraction limit which is well above what we need. So we have a lot of surplus water to support the project, yes. And our stock water is mixed between rain catchment dams and small stocking domestic bores which don't use much water at all.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. So you don't have any concerns with say a bad year next year for rainfall?

MR MCCULLOCH: Not with our infrastructure as it is now and as it is getting better. We should support our own water and we made ourselves resilient from that last drought with that water because we did have issues with relying on rain catchment dams. And we have the Coleambally Outfall Creek which supplies water through our flushes for the Wargam Lakes which is further downstream from us. So we do extract some water from there for our dams as well.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay, thank you.

MR MCCULLOCH: So plenty of security, yes.

MR MENZIES: Thanks, Rhys.

MR MCCULLOCH: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: And just to comment, one of the things that we learned in looking around the property yesterday was the cell grazing approach that is now being used was giving an increase in agricultural productivity and gains ecologically for the Plains-wanderer. So as an agriculturalist it was a great thing to see. I appreciated that, Rhys. Our next speaker is Alan Moran from –

MR ALAN MORAN: Hello, can you hear me?

MR MENZIES: Oh, yes, Alan. We can hear you very loud and clear.

MR MORAN: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Fire away.

MR MORAN: Okay. The Bullawah project is a major impost upon the Australian taxpayer and the energy consumer. The project itself will offer no value, indeed negative value, to the communities as a whole. It is not a commercial project. It's a project that depends entirely on government assistance, either directly or indirectly through requirements on suppliers to increasingly include renewable energy in their aggregate supply.

The total cost of this sort of assistance is at least $19 billion per year in Australia. And that assistance or subsidy comes in several forms, notably through the LRET and through the capacity investment scheme. The latter is Orwellian Newspeak because no capacity is offered by wind facilities contracted. It is the opposite and requires capacity from other sources in order to operate reliably, even in its high cost, inefficient form. Thus we have Snowy 2, at a proposal originally costed at $2 billion, is in place solely to shore up, or will be in place, the reliability of wind and solar. Its costs are now likely to exceed $30 billion and may even reach 40 billion.

Because these facilities enjoy subsidies, they are able to bid into the supply system at negative prices, thereby driving out more competitive energy sources, principally coal and gas. The batteries are proposed to accompany the facilities, but they provide at best some two hours of coverage. However, wind droughts can last for many days.

We can readily see the effects of this policy in Australia's energy development. Electricity prices have more than doubled in the past 10 years as a result of government interventions to subsidise wind and solar and penalise coal. Those countries that have done less of this than Australia, as China, India, Korea, now enjoy prices roughly half of those of Australia. Those countries that have done more to subsidise renewable energy than Australia, and we're talking about the UK, Spain and Germany, have even higher costs than Australia.

The higher level of wind and solar and the greater risks of blackouts follow these things, these facilities. We have already seen these blackouts in Australia with an extensive outage in South Australia and a smaller level in Broken Hill. In Europe last year, an even more serious blackout covered Spain and Portugal and parts of France, resulting from the failure of wind and solar. That failure will inevitably occur unless we fully cover the supply of wind and solar with more dependable energy. And of course, all that does is simply double the capital costs as well as incurring all the additional costs of transmission and balancing that inevitably accompanies wind and solar.

Finally, the rationale for providing the proposed source of energy is to achieve net zero emissions in greenhouse gases on a global scale. It is pointless for Australia to achieve that locally since Australia is only slightly more than 1% of global emissions and the countries that have more than half of the emissions, China and India and other developing countries, are doing very little to actually replace coal with non-emitting sources. There is no possibility that Australia can do anything about global warming, if in fact it's occurring, on its own. The major heavy hitters in terms of power supply and associated greenhouse gas emissions, that's China, India et cetera, have been joined by the United States, which has pulled out of the Paris Agreement.

Finally, the EIS mentions that government commitments and implies that the opposition shares them. The panel should be aware that the Paris Agreement is no longer one of consensus. The Liberal Party has plans to scrap zero emissions and their costs, including Labor's carbon taxes and the safeguard mechanism, which is driving industry offshore. Without the subsidies wind and solar can't exist.

BayWa r.e. cites the AEMO integrated plan as saying as coal retires, investment is needed to meet a significantly increased electricity demand, et cetera. But that plan is a political document designed to accommodate the preference of the government of the day and the destructive nature of wind and solar to the energy market is now recognised by major political parties that are likely to win office within the next year and a half.

So basically the sponsor, the applicant, ought to be aware that although Australia does not resile from undertakings, it is at risk because it does require government assistance ongoing for transmission connections and may require bonds for rehabilitation and permit installations on prime agricultural land. So I think the panel will be –

MR MENZIES: We've heard the bell. So you are now over time. Can you wrap up?

MR MORAN: Okay, thank you. I'll wrap up. The panel would be well advised to reject this in terms of the national interest and the interests of particularly consumers. Thank you very much.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Alan. Okay. Let's move on now to Jack Bond from the Edward River Council who I think is here in person.

MR JACK BOND: Thank you, Panel Chair, Professor Neal Menzies AM, Commissioner Fitzgerald and Commissioner Michael Wright. Thank you each for hearing directly from our region and welcome back, Michael. I'm not here to debate national energy policy. I'm here to speak for my council and my community. These conditions come from a state led process and we often hear the Renewable Energy Zone is being approached through a whole of government framework. Yet that framework appears to have forgotten the younger sibling of government, local government. We are on the ground, owning, maintaining and delivering local roads and essential services. Council is consulted but consultation is not authority. That is the gap I ask the Commission to close.

Council's adopted renewable energy position statements support renewable energy projects delivering sustainable energy and regional development. Council supports Bullawah proceeding subject to stronger practical and enforceable conditions. Projects of this scale take us to new territory. Conditions must protect our community now while retaining flexibility to capture opportunities we cannot yet predict. And put simply, national priorities need local solutions.

First, roads. Conditions B44, B46 and B48 are a sound foundation. However, for roads council owns and must maintain, consultation alone is insufficient. North Boundary Road, Bullawah road, Willurah road, Carrathool Road and Conargo Road are work and rural roads. Not spare construction corridors. Condition B48 should require a traffic management plan and any material amendment affecting our network to be prepared in consultation with and to the satisfaction of Edward River Council. It should require baseline surveys including pavement condition and capacity, joint inspections and ongoing maintenance. Upgrades must occur before use with all maintenance, repairs and restoration funded by the developer, not ratepayers. It must address school buses,

stock and agricultural traffic, wet weather, community notification and cumulative REZ traffic.

Second, a voluntary planning agreement. Condition A19 requires a VPA before construction but the words, "Unless the Planning Secretary agrees otherwise" weaken certainty. That expectation should be removed or require the affected council's written agreement. The VPA must include clear and enforcement and dispute resolution provisions, preserve the agreed bank guarantee and bind any future owner. The purchaser must inherit the commitments, not merely the asset.

The assessment identifies the approximate $1 million up front and up to $233,000 annually for Edward River Council, dependent on capacity and indexed to CPI. Council must retain flexibility to invest these funds through its community benefit framework as community needs, the opportunities evolve over the next 30 years.

Third, emergency management. Conditions B61 requires consultation with Fire and Rescue New South Wales and Rural Fire Services but not council. Edward River Council and through the Local Emergency Management Committee should help prepare and update the emergency plans including access, evacuations, communications, fire-fighting and water, aerial operations, battery facility and cumulative pressure and local capability.

Fourth is waste. Condition B63 should prohibit the use of any council waste facility without council's prior written agreement. Our rural facilities are unsustainable for large project waste and Deniliquin's facility is nearing the end of available life. This is a whole of REZ challenge across construction, operation and decommissioning. The state must work with councils on a properly funded regional recycling and waste solution, again noting that national priorities need local solutions.

Fifth, financial security for decommissioning. Council resolved on 28 July to support adequate financial assurance including rehabilitation bonds so decommissioning and rehabilitation are fully funded and enforceable. Conditions B67 to B70 impose decommissioning obligations but do not secure the money if the owner later becomes insolvent. Council asks the Commission to require and formally recommend an independently assessed, indexed and periodically reviewed rehabilitation bond or bank guarantee that survives any ownership change.

An end of life obligation is only as reliable as the finance standing behind it. Landholders, communities and ratepayers must not inherit that liability. These five requests protect local infrastructure, make commitments endure and allow the community to turn disruption into lasting opportunity. Edward River Council supports the project subject to these strengthened conditions. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thanks, Jack. Thanks for a very, very clear presentation but also submission from council. And I know I'm repeating myself to you but it's said more for everyone else. We welcome further submissions, we welcome commentary on conditions and even suggested wording for how conditions could be improved. So we would certainly welcome further input from Edward River Council.

MR BOND: Absolutely, thank you.

MR MENZIES: Questions?

MR WRIGHT: Yes. Thanks, Jack. Just in terms of those local roads, just to be clear, Edward River Council has a preference for upgrades to some of those roads prior to construction traffic entering those roads, is that correct?

MR BOND: Yes, certainly the lessons learnt from the Transgrid project where some of those roads that were outside the scope of the traffic management plan because that mainly picked up the heavy vehicle mass or the oversize, there was a lot of rat running on local roads that weren't approved and we saw those deteriorations come through. Council are trying to still work with Transgrid almost 12 months later to finalise a solution on some of those roads, which is very disappointing.

MR MENZIES: Yes. We're very aware of that as an issue with these major projects.

MS FITZGERALD: Just one, Neal. Jack, the issue of complaints and compliance came up in our earlier meeting with council. In your experience, what are the key actions for a successful complaints and dispute resolution method? What are the key things you need –

MR BOND: Yes. I mean, are you talking about council complaints or community complaints?

MS FITZGERALD: Complaints from the community that may often come to council, thinking that you're the point of contact for these projects.

MR BOND: Yes, look, and most of the time we are that point of contact because we are the known source, so we do pass them on as quick as we can. But if they are escalated, I believe the council has the opportunity to be able to step in and advocate on behalf of those community members to escalate their complaints. And we have seen that work through Transgrid on its different project conditions but –

MS FITZGERALD: Through a committee type arrangement, Jack, or –

MR BOND: No, I don't think so. No, I think either the applicant should have the power to be able to resolve and if not then back to the Secretary.

MS FITZGERALD: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Okay, thank you very much.

MR BOND: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Our next speaker is Kathryn Reynolds and Kathryn's online. Kathryn, can you hear me?

MS KATHRYN REYNOLDS: Yes, I can hear you.

MR MENZIES: Great, the floor is yours.

MS REYNOLDS: Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I wanted to talk to you about the cumulative impact plus the harms that are known and ignored, the lack of investigation into the unknown harms and will there be any lessons learned from the experience so far in the CWO REZ? Those on this panel today have also been on plenty of IPC panels involving Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone projects.

Is there a comprehensive cumulative impact study? There has been no comprehensive cumulative impact study completed on the CWO REZ. Instead, we got a regional infrastructure study, which was finalised leaving local communities and councils blindsided. Has there been any study done on the South West REZ? Too many of the issues below are being left to management plans that will be divulged after approval and after construction. All management plans for this project should be clearly documented prior to project approval.

Water. Potable water and non-potable water. In the CWO REZ we are already seeing issues with bore water supplies and few projects here are in the construction phase. Water trucks carting potable water are contributing to heavy vehicle traffic on local roads. Will water be prioritised for projects such as the Bullawah Wind over the water for local communities? In our community there is no transparency as to where much of the water is coming from. Will there be transparency for the communities around Bullawah Wind as to where the water comes from?

Waste. Much of it will likely be transported from site, adding to the trucks on local roads. What about the damaged and non-recyclable wind turbine blades? We have seen multiple wind turbine blades in New South Wales and Victoria discarded due to damage and fire. Where do they end up? We have seen multiple fires in solar sites and nobody ever divulges where the broken panels end up. What transparency will there be for this community in regard to the waste? Will the IPC safeguard this community?

Trucks. How many drivers will be inexperienced drivers who have had their licences expedited? We have already seen multiple rollovers of heavy vehicles in the CWO REZ that were laden with solar panels. This was under-reported and there was next to no clean-up procedures of broken panels. The New South Wales Transport didn't want to know about it, the EPA didn't want to know about it, and I understand it all rests with the councils.

At present we are experiencing multiple wide loads attempting to use the narrow stretches of road at the same time and we only have one project under construction at this time. It appears we will all have to wait for the management plan before we find out that we cannot get our stock to market or the processor, we cannot transport wool, grain, feedstocks as a result of lack of trucks or the inability for trucks to access the roads. Is the same coming for Bullawah Wind Farm community?

For example, all the intersections on the Golden Highway appear to have had their speed limit reduced permanently. On 100 kilometres of Golden Highway there is

currently at least 15 roadworks, all because of OSOM loads coming our way. Yet there is no overtaking lane planned, they are all pullover bays, so there is no benefit to the ongoing community after our 15 years of construction.

The extensive road upgrades required by the developer to bring OSOM and heavy vehicles into the site will slow all traffic down to a standstill. OSOM, with multiple projects in the area, how will the local communities and agricultural trucks maintain their use of the local roads? With one wind project currently under construction in the CWO REZ and another with at least 51 to go, there is one turbine blade transported from Newcastle Port six days a week. It takes three days to get the blade to site, as there are two overnight stopovers. Some days the blades cannot be transported as there are not enough to police to accompany the OSOM load. But we don't have advance notice of those days. Will it be any different for those in the South West REZ?

Environmental shadow flicker and noise. These turbines will change the environment to one of shadow flicker and noise pollution. Birds such as the Plains-wanderer will likely abandon this noise polluted area and go where? The so-called South West REZ is inundated by wind turbines and transmission infrastructure. Wind proponents throwing money at the Plains-wanderer breeding program does not atone for them wrecking their environment. Are these Plains-wanderers destined to live forever in the Dubbo Zoo because New South Wales has allowed foreign developers to make their environment so hostile they cannot live there. We know there have been 20 deaths of wedge-tailed eagles in Rye Park in 18 months. I've got not much to go. Can I continue, please?

MR MENZIES: Yes, but briefly, please, Kathryn.

MS REYNOLDS: To date we've seen massive environmental destruction to the HumeLink. Total destruction of Aboriginal sites in the Central West Orana Transmission Line Project. Removal of wildlife corridors in breeding season along Merotherie Road and baby birds destroyed and orphaned. Add to that the increasing buyers remorse that the land hosts allude to as they discover that they've actually lost choice over their land as their land is not theirs anymore and they have little control over the placement of infrastructure.

I'm just going to wind up quickly for you. I want to say that we're worried about contamination in all areas where there are wind projects. We know that the Meat Livestock Association requires us to complete on our audits that we – whether we have host this infrastructure. I want to know when it will be that we cannot actually sell our produce and what compensation will we get for actually being in vicinity of this so-called contaminants, potentially from wind, solar transmission.

For those that followed the recent Land and Environment Court case regarding [cross-talk 01:09:24] –

MR MENZIES: I really need to bring this to an end.

MS REYNOLDS: Yes, I've got one line to go. At Coolah, you'll be aware there are many examples of the proponent downplaying the impacts. Where are the protections

to the people and the environment? Minister Sharpe and EnergyCo executives say we're building a plane while flying it, but is it a plane or is it more like the Hindenburg? Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Kathryn. Questions?

MS FITZGERALD: Not for me.

MR MENZIES: Thanks, Kathryn. Our next speaker is Rafe Champion who is also online. Rafe, can you hear me?

MR RAFE CHAMPION: Hello.

MR MENZIES: Hello, Rafe. You have the floor.

MR CHAMPION: Thank you. This small project is a part of a massive worldwide effort to achieve net zero. That has cost many trillions of dollars. [unintelligible 01:10:23] accounted 15 trillion spent on inputs and you could count another 15 trillion on the damage as a result of that spending. The damage has come from higher power prices, causing deindustrialisation, loss of jobs, fuel poverty for people on low incomes, looming blackouts in the leading wind nations, Germany, Britain and Australia, and tragic divisions in rural communities where they see their surroundings and their livelihoods under attack.

On your way back to town, look at the landscape and imagine that with three or four times as many windmills and solar panels on it, it's destroying agricultural production, destroying the harmony of rural communities and it's not going to work. The grid has to have continuous input. Windless nights cut off supply of sun and wind. Storage isn't enough, totally inadequate in relation to the scale of the need. And so it's just not going to happen. It will fall over quite soon and it's basically all over except for the recriminations and the clean-up and hopefully recovery on the back of cheap and reliable coal power.

Now, I know you panel have to tick off on this project, that's your job, but you've been warned. You can't go any further without knowing, or at least you've been told, that it's a wreck, a ruin and it's reckless. It will not work, it's not going to work and I hope you can at least take that message away and just think about it. Just see if you're prepared to take on board the full reality of this disaster, surely the worst public policy blunder in history. What comes second? Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Rafe. Questions? No. Okay, thank you very much for a clear statement of your view, Rafe. Our next presenter has dropped out, so we move to Cheryl O'Donnell, who is online. Cheryl, can you hear me?

MS CHERYL O'DONNELL: Yes, I can.

MR MENZIES: Excellent. You have the floor.

MS O'DONNELL: Thank you. Chair Professor Menzies, Commissioners Fitzgerald and Wright, thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is Cheryl O'Donnell. I live beside the operating Crookwell 2 and 3 Wind Developments. Families around Bullawah deserve to know what can happen when predictions become their daily reality. Speaking publicly places me personally at risk. It is deeply difficult, but I cannot remain silent about what our family and many others have experienced.

Our home was my husband's sanctuary. He has post-traumatic stress disorder after two workmates were killed while working for New South Wales Police Driver Training. Both helped us build our home. It was the one place he still felt close to them. Since the turbines began operating, that sanctuary has been taken from him. He told the EPA inspectors he was running out of places to hide. I really fear losing him.

Our experience bears little resemblance to what we understood before the construction. We were told the turbines would be 45 metres high, we would see only two and hear nothing. Today, approximately 10 Crookwell 3 turbines and three from Crookwell 2 dominate our ridge line. The closest is approximately 1.5 ks away from the house. We also sit 70 metres below them and it feels similar to being in a wind tunnel.

I raise this because Bullawah residents need more than assurances. They need an assessment that confronts what will happen if actual impacts differ from predictions and conditions that provide effective protection and relief. After spending more time at home, I developed vertigo, severe head pressure, tinnitus, blurred vision and frightening chest pressure. I lost hearing in both ears for almost three weeks. I sought specialist assistance and my GP advised us to leave for our health and wellbeing.

Sleep deprivation and health problems contributed to my retirement as a CEO. Since I spoke publicly, hundreds of people have contacted me about health problems they associate with nearby turbines. Some have left the homes they love, grown men have broken down in tears, some confided that their distress became so unbearable they considered taking their own lives. They must not be dismissed because a project is said to be compliant.

Following our complaints, approximately eight weeks of acoustic data was reportedly excluded as contaminated. We requested testing for infrasound low frequency noise and ground vibrations but it was rejected. We have not been shown an assessment that adequately explains our combined exposure to both Crookwell 2 and 3, yet we experience both together.

Professor Ken Mattsson from Sweden undertook specialised modelling of our property. I ask the Commission to examine his report and methodology. My written material also links to a January 2025 report co-authored by Professor Mariana Alves-Pereira about what conventional noise assessment may fail to capture. I acknowledge that the relationship between turbine and emissions, particular health conditions, remains contested. I'm not asking the Commission to diagnose us. I'm asking you not to confuse scientific disagreement or regulatory compliance with proof that families will be safe.

Before deciding Bullawah, please ask, if the predictions are wrong, who carries the risk? If residents become unwell, who will investigate? If homes become unbearable, what enforceable remedies will exist? Will families have to spend years of their own money proving that their suffering is real? If Bullawah is approved, please require independent baseline testing and ongoing full spectrum monitoring inside and outside potentially affected homes. Retain complete data turbine operating records and weather information for independent scrutiny. Access combined exposure from the whole project and other relevant developments. Establish an independent complaints process, investigation timeframes and enforceable remedies where serious impacts occur.

The Commission's task is not merely to decide whether Bullawah can meet a predicted number. It is to decide whether the assessment and proposed conditions will protect real people if life beside the operating development does not match the modelling. Compliance will not restore my health or career, it will not give my husband back the sanctuary we built together. I have one more sentence if that's okay?

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MS O'DONNELL: Developers should have to demonstrate that their projects are 100% safe. Families reporting health problems deserve to be heard and their concerns investigated, not ridiculed or dismissed as spreading misinformation. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Cheryl. No questions but I just wanted to thank you for sharing that personal experience.

MS O'DONNELL: No problem.

MR MENZIES: Okay, our next speaker is Sue Pearse who is here in person, may be here in person. Nope. Then we move to Andrew Sleigh, who is joining us on telephone. Andrew.

MR ANDREW SLEIGH: I'm here.

MR MENZIES: Welcome, Andrew.

MR SLEIGH: Thank you. Good morning and thanks for the opportunity of speaking today. I represent the Bundure District Landholder Group, a group of near neighbours to Dinawan substation, 40 kilometres north of Jerilderie. We will also be neighbouring both the Origin and Spark Wind and Solar projects. These two projects alone account for 70% or 2.5 gigawatts of the access rights allocated in the South West. Several of our members have EnergyConnect transmission lines running through our properties. Combined, the four current renewable energy projects who have been granted access in the South West Zone will potentially total 660 wind turbines between the Cobb Highway and the Kidman Way. The cumulative impact on our landscape and environment will be horrendous. No question.

The process by which these projects such as Bullawah received access originally lacked credibility. Not enough clarity was provided to ensure the best projects received access. AEMO were vague in outlining their decision-making criteria. The process

itself lacked the transparency that projects of this scale would in normal circumstances be an essential part of their determination. There has never been any disclosure of how the capacity investment scheme has supported the Bullawah Wind Farm and other projects that were unsuccessful in gaining grid access in the South West.

The recent findings of the New South Wales parliamentary inquiry highlighted the poor planning in the roll out of projects in regional New South Wales. By example, in our own patch, the location of the Dinawan substation on the eastern boundary of the energy zone is now landlocked by Spark Renewable, who are denying other companies transmission line access to the substation. As a result of poor planning, additional transmission lines at a greater cost will be required on neighbouring properties, resulting in further unnecessary disruption to our landscape and native vegetation. Had the Dinawan substation been more centrally located within the South West Zone, greater access to proponents further west would have been achievable.

The Bundure landholders have already experienced the impacts these major projects have on our local community. Poor connectivity, no phone reception, local road damage, security vulnerability, destruction of our flora and fauna, increased fire risk, increased insurance premiums, potential asset valuation decline, significant mental and social and economic costs. We are continually challenged by developers, EnergyCo and Transgrid to gain respect and acknowledgement of the costs their developments bring to our businesses and our small community. No one is listening.

The community funding programs offered by companies such as BayWa r.e. in gaining local town support are far too removed from those who are to be impacted the most, those neighbouring the developments. In this instance, the people of Deniliquin or Hay will not experience the visual or the sound of the turbines, nor will they experience any of the aforementioned impacts to near neighbours. The government's haste for renewable rollout and the relaxing of regulatory requirements of the energy projects has enabled them to take full advantage of unacceptable development applications and environmental impact statements, all at the expense of our local community and environment.

Energy companies themselves need to be made more accountable for the construction and management of their projects going forward and show far greater respect to nearby landholders and communities that we have experienced so far. Our small community is extremely concerned and anxious that these developments such as Bullawah Wind and Battery are operating under a separate set of rules and that we are not recognised for the increasing costs these projects will have on our businesses. We feel threatened by the imposing presence of these projects.

We urgently need a more detailed plan and a coordinated approach to minimise the cumulative impacts Bullawah Wind and other developments have on our landscape. Regional New South Wales is going to pay a huge price for the lack of planning, coordination and leadership in this renewable energy rollout process. I, along with other neighbouring landholders and communities to renewable infrastructure, are frustrated and disappointed by the lack of support and feel let down by the process. None of us have chosen to live under transmission lines or next to renewable energy infrastructure. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Andrew. I'm not quite sure how to ask this question without implying the number of people matters, but I wondered how large your group is, but I also wondered whether you're aware of similar other groups around the REZ.

MR SLEIGH: Well, the first part of your question, our group consists of approximately eight to 10 family farming businesses. And like we experienced with the Spark Independent Planning Commission hearing, I was the designated speaker at the time rather than inundating the hearing with eight particular –

MR MENZIES: Sure, yes.

MR SLEIGH: So and yes, there are other groups, I believe, or I understand, that are concerned and small communities. I think what we need to understand is that we live in a sparsely populated area and that's hence our vulnerability and potentially that's probably why we've received so much interest in the renewable energy infrastructure. That doesn't mean to say that we're not loud enough to get our point of view across and so population isn't really a concern to us.

One thing I would say is that a number of these projects in the South West REZ that have been given access, there's a lot of absentee owners. And so they don't actually live on the properties in which the infrastructure is going to be present. And I understand that the need and the want of securing the interests of renewable infrastructure because it pays very handsomely. But it's interesting to me that a lot of the people who have agreed don't actually live on the property and that there is a concern.

And so we live in that area and so we feel, as I said, we feel intimidated. We feel as though our livelihoods are going to be spoiled and what we have built. As Cheryl O'Donnell pointed out, the previous speaker, we've built livelihoods around and lifestyles around living out on the plains.

MR MENZIES: And it is a beautiful place, as we've [cross-talk 01:27:56].

MR SLEIGH: It is absolutely a beautiful place. And unique as it is, we treasure every square inch of it. And the native vegetation we've got and the flora and fauna, full stop, Plains-wanderer, the whole work.

MR WRIGHT: Andrew, you talked about coordination and your view that some of these projects haven't been coordinated at that regional level by the sounds of things. Do you want to expand on that?

MR SLEIGH: Look, to be totally –

MR WRIGHT: And sorry, I suppose my other point is if it had been better coordinated, would it –

MR SLEIGH: Yes, great question and thanks for asking. You know, EnergyCo have been atrocious. You know, their major role is to coordinate and manage the rollout.

And they haven't. They absolutely haven't. They turned up in the district two weeks ago with $60 million worth of money to splash around the community to sweeten the deal. But their role in coordination in the South West Zone has been atrocious.

The location of the Dinawan substation is only one of the examples. But adding to that, Origin have had to redesign and modify their project, that you'd be aware, to accommodate the fact that the Dinawan substation has been landlocked. And furthermore to that, the camp that they built to build the Dinawan substation has now got to be moved. They're going to upgrade the Dinawan substation, but they didn't do any planning for the incoming lines coming through. Who pays for that? It's the taxpayers and the energy users. They're the big losers in this, plus our local environment. And so, look, you know, EnergyCo are a big cross. They just haven't cut the mustard. You know, no coordination, no planning. Put them out there. AEMO granted the access. That's where we're at.

MR WRIGHT: Thanks, Andrew.

MR MENZIES: Suellen?

MS FITZGERALD: No, no. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Okay, Andrew. Thank you very much.

MR SLEIGH: Thank you very much.

MR MENZIES: We've had a couple of people that have dropped out of the sequence, so we're actually ahead of schedule. So we're going to take a short five minute break now to bring us back onto timing.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

MR MENZIES: Okay. Welcome back, everyone. Our first speaker was to be John Clark. I understand that John's not well and hence not able to speak to us. But our next speaker, Jeanine Bird, is going to read John's presentation. Jeanine, I think you're online?

MS JEANINE BIRD: Yes, I am.

MR MENZIES: Okay, so the floor is yours both to read John's statement and then present on your own behalf.

MS BIRD: Okay, I'll read John's now. The Bullawah development, like all wind farms, is a massive con on Australian taxpayers. These turbines cannot produce cheap electricity. They are unreliable and are a proposal to satisfy the lunatic left in the Labor Party who think the sky is about to fall in and think nuclear energy will kill us all. Despite the Lucas Heights ANSTO having operated safely with over 60 years of experience in nuclear science and technology, Chris Bowen, the relevant minister, will say anything but I think his audience is starting to wake up.

The renewable industry is on the nose all over the world. Hay Council claims renewables like Bullawah present an opportunity for change to our local economy. That can't happen without cheap power and Bullawah won't do that with turbines. Turbines are expensive to build, expensive to service and unbelievably expensive to decommission when their working life has expired. Their blades are known to shed toxic PFAS into surrounding pasture which could affect grazing animals and further affect humans, placing at risk the entire Australian meat industry.

If Hay Council want to broaden the local economy, they need to encourage a return to coal-fired power generation, nuclear and gas, like every other country in the world is doing. Without cheap electricity, Australia and the Hay region will not be competitive. Your report quotes an independent economic test indicating hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect benefits for the Riverina over the next 35 years. This includes jobs. Where? And a community benefits program of millions of dollars to the impacted council for community projects and services, et cetera, all of which the state government is paid to do. Please do not build any more kids play parks. We've already got more play parks than kids.

I remain highly sceptical of the Bullawah project. This town goes well with all the Bullawah and Pottinger – without, sorry, this town goes well without the Bullawah and Pottinger pots of gold. Yet they've done a top job in bribing pretty much every community organisation with buckets of cash. That will stop as soon as they get and if they get their planning approval. These development companies are not here to make local councils and communities like Hay wealthy. They are here to make themselves wealthy and they will do that when they set their electricity prices. Up the prices go again but Chris Bowen says the prices are going down.

Australia's electricity prices are now approaching the dearest in the world and Albo is talking about encouraging industry to reestablish to provide jobs. Industry demands solid permanent energy and that is what solar and wind is not. The sooner government acknowledges that we must revert to coal fired generation, gas and as soon as possible nuclear generation, the sooner Australia will be back on track. All over the world renewable power generation has been found wanting and being dumped daily. Developments such as Bullawah, if approved, will be a sorry saga for generations and generations to come. Every member of the Hay, Murrumbidgee and Edward River Council must have a serious rethink. Thank you for the opportunity to respond. John Clark from Tabratong, Hay.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Jeanine. If you now want to move to your presentation.

MS BIRD: Yes, just let me have a sit, please.

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MS BIRD: Okay, are you right?

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MS BIRD: Okay. I am disappointed that local people, if they even know about this meeting, are only allowed to have five minutes to speak about something that's going to impact their lives for a long time. Also that you're trying to stop people from interstate and overseas from making submissions. Many locals have family who are working away or have moved away and have a vested interest. The secret energy company sucking all of the taxpayers' money out of the system are mostly overseas owned. They are allowed input but locals and people living interstate who are concerned about the black hole of all the secret energy businesses are being restricted.

Interstate people have a vested interest because the toxic smoke from a wind tower fire or a BESS fire doesn't respect borders. If the wind's blowing the right way it can blow from Victoria to Queensland in a heartbeat. Yet our concern is being muted. The wind towers have asbestos in them. How do they get into Australia? We supposedly don't allow it and yet wind towers are allowed to have asbestos which will flake off and get into our soils and aquifers or blow or leach into rivers and creeks. Wind towers flake off bisphenol A or BPA which the Swedish EPA says is the most toxic substance they know. BPA flakes will break down and get into our soils and subsoil water tables and aquifers.

Accompanying wind towers are battery energy storage systems and solar panels and between all of them we have PFAS and PFOS contamination, BPA and asbestos. Why would we want it? Already in the Wagga area they are diluting the aquifers with water because of PFOS and PFAS contamination. I believe there are unknown risks associated with this and if we weren't entertaining these industrial [ruinable(?) 01:57:25] swindle factories, we wouldn't be inviting these problems which will become big issues long after the energy companies have sold or gone back home.

The health risks associated with toxic smoke blowing from wind towers or BESS fires, which can travel for miles, are unmitigated. We got smoke from the Canberra fires here, so did New Zealand I believe. We got smoke from Asia here. This is a supreme health risk for the nation and yet they continually get approved and are rolling out, riding roughshod over landholders' common law rights and the community's wishes. Turbines and BESS systems are catching fire and will again. Australia hasn't escaped this. Bushfires will spread toxic smoke everywhere.

These energy companies have totally lost their social licence. They ride into town and dish out money which are just bribes and talk up how effective it is. However, the only thing that's really up are our power bills and these will continue to go up as these projects fall short of completion funds and they expect mug taxpayers to fund the shortfall. At the end of the day, councils are going to be responsible for this clean up. They'll have to do this because the originating company generally sells it and then it's on sold several times. So at the end of the day, if they collapse there will be no legal recourse to communities who will be left with the clean up costs and associated problems and we've just seen climate change and ruinable energy promoter Professor Ross Garnaut's Zen Energy collapse, owing $1 billion dollars, with a B. This is happening more and more and people around the world are waking up.

And communities in this region have already experienced what it's like for governments to ride roughshod over them with the water buybacks in the Murray

Darling basin. Compounding this will be the contamination of our aquifers with asbestos, BPA, PFAS and PFOS from these ruinable installations. This contamination will be the asbestos of the future.

Wind towers too are bird blenders. They kill off our protected species and yet anyone else doing this is up for huge fines. Ruinable power is not stable and can never be in the near future with current technologies but coal is a truly renewable resource yet this is not taught but denigrated and ruinable solar and wind farms are unreliable, inefficient, intermittent, uneconomic, a blight on the landscape and downright dangerous causing fires, toxicity and threatening endangered bird species because the turbines are bird blenders.

Agricultural land should be protected in the national interest. It provides our food security but this argument is devalued. And on that note, landholders, not the energy corporates will be held accountable and they'll get a rude shock when they find they have nowhere to go. Just as EVs in Europe and the US aren't being insured now, when turbines and BESS systems catch fire, landholders will have trouble with insurance and they'll end up losing the farm possibly over it because all the neighbours for 100 miles could sue them. Shire councils could be sued. This hasn't been given due credence and the measly millions thrown at LGAs will be chicken feed at the end when they're sued over BESS and renewable fires, toxicity or artesian water contamination.

And already underwriters are building sneaky questions into farm insurance such as excluding silica dust. Of course, PFAS and forever chemicals which turbines are coated with will break down and when it's in our water supply, artesian basin soil and food chain via livestock, it's a future problem not considered and who is going to pay for this asbestos of the future when it blows up in 25 years or so's time? We have a golden opportunity to stop all these problems and lower our power bills with stable power. Why don't we do it and why aren't we, who have to put up with all this in our backyards, listened to? Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Jeanine. That was a very clear statement. Questions? Okay and also thank you for reading John's presentation.

MS BIRD: Yes, that was a pleasure. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Our next speaker is Jasen Crighton, who is here in person. Jasen, welcome.

MR JASEN CRIGHTON: Thank you. Thanks to the ICP for the time today and for everyone giving their time to be here. A lot of opinions and a lot of different ways of looking at this but I guess when I decided to break my day and come across here I was sort of looking at the tasks that the ICP have and, you know, you've got to try and determine what the outcomes will be for the communities and look at the impact of the developments and also look at the suitability of where the sites are placed. And, you know, I think that I've lived in Hay most of my life. I went to school there, I was born there, I was born with a local doctor and a local midwife to deliver me and when I moved through school, I stayed there for high school.

I went in as a peak enrolment that I think there were 108 kids in our Year 7 that went into high school and we had 300 and – sorry, 380 in our year, so we're probably a couple of hundred behind that when the last of my kids went through the school. Had five kids in Hay, married my school sweetheart, who I'm still very happily married to and very connected to the region. Our kids, when they came through the school, seen a different town and the reality is that our towns are declining. Our towns need all the help that they can get and any form of secondary industry or support that these regional communities can get is essential to keeping our towns functioning and operational.

You used to be able to get your tooth pulled and go to one of seven pubs to drown your sorrows after you did it. We're back to two pubs. If you looked at the – and it's not a slight, it's not one factor that causes these things. Ag's changed, there are absentee farmers, there are less people on the land, the farming is probably bigger scale irrigation now rather than just dry land farming and there's a really good blend. We have a very reliable ag industry and any secondary industry that can coexist alongside ag I feel is essential to the outcomes of our communities.

You know, Crighton's, who are we? We're in our 49th year this year. I've got three of my sons in our business and I took over from my mum and dad. So we're a third generation family-owned business. We know the people, we know the region, we know the needs of the region and if we are to I guess give the opportunity for my grandkids to be able to go to school and stay in their local town, there's a need. There's a need for improvement of our numbers and more industry around us. My son's children now are probably – eldest grandchild is seven and, you know, another four or five years they're going to be trying to attend high school and when my eldest two went through high school in 22, they only had 15 in their cohort and they were a set of twins, which topped the numbers up. So to see this next generation have that same opportunity, we need to do whatever we can to attract secondary industry.

The suitability of the land, we're a big vast area where these things are going. I share some of the concerns about what they'll look like but I probably won't have to drive past them every day and there's not a lot of homes close. So the power lines there and we've been through that development phase, it seems a reasonable fit. The community on the whole, from what I've seen and I've been to many of the meetings and many of the forums and formats where it's discussed, are predominantly welcoming and opening and I think the community realise that they need help. Ag is great. We'll always depend and rely on ag but ag's up and down, you know.

Yes, water reforms, one of the ladies mentioned a minute ago we've copped our fair share of battering from water reform and water buybacks and in some forms we've got regulatory imposed drought. I run an irrigation business with 26 staff, we keep a lot of families in the community, and we've had to reach out, you know, up to 1500 ks for projects last year alone. So we have to chase water, we have to chase viticulture and horticulture, we have to move away from our ground of comfort and diversify. But we're at a point where growth's not that conceivable without secondary industry.

So I just ask that the considerations of the communities be taken at hand, that the promises that have been made, we have had false promises in the past. I really feel that the partners or the developers that I've spoken to have good intent. I hope in the

consent process that the localism and the legacies that are promised are kept there and that the partnerships grow. So thank you.

MR MENZIES: Jasen, can I ask a quick question? You're running an agricultural food production business and, you know, part of the appeal of Australian food production is that it's clean and green, that's a world perception of us. Are you at all concerned that this sort of development changes perception of the quality of the environment that you're producing food from?

MR CRIGHTON: Well, the alternate I suppose is not that clean. You know, like there's a reason for going to alternates and renewables and it is to try and clean up our act environmentally. So yes, anything that you do that's not natural will have some impact and it needs to be managed and there's plenty of regulatory reform – I assume these guys, I know how hard it is to get a development application for a shed. Anyone that's stayed in the process this long is invested and, you know, the regulatory guidelines are there to support the process and from my point of view it's not a want, do we want wind farms, we wouldn't have gone out looking for them. It's a need. It's a real need of our region.

MR MENZIES: Okay. Very good. Thank you very much.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can I ask a question?

MR MENZIES: No, I'm sorry. We don't take questions from the audience. Our next speaker is Ivan Kennedy, who's online. Ivan, are you with us?

MR IVAN KENNEDY: Can you hear me?

MR MENZIES: Yes. Yes, I can.

MR KENNEDY: Okay. This is a bit strange at the moment. I'm trying to get my PowerPoint up. Can you hear that?

MR MENZIES: Ivan, do you have any other device that you've been watching this on? Could you turn that device off?

MR KENNEDY: Oh okay. I wanted to see the slides. Okay, all right. No, I'll switch that off, okay. Okay, I'll switch that off. Okay. Yes, I have. Of course I've been watching on the YouTube.

MR MENZIES: We're going to come back to Ivan once we've got his technology problem sorted. Our next speaker is Carol Oataway, who's the mayor of the Hay Shire Council. Welcome Mayor Oataway.

CR CAROL OATAWAY: Thank you, Chair, Commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to appear. For more than 150 years Hay's identity and economy have been shaped by industries of the land, wool, livestock and broadacre agriculture built our town and sustained generations of families. Hay has experienced transformative technological change before. The Wolseley shearing machine was initially resisted by

workers, who feared for their livelihoods. Yet within a few years, 15 machine stands were operating at – sorry, Toganmain station, just upstream from Hay. The windmill and bore were also once considered intrusions. Together those technologies transformed production and became part of the rural landscape we now value.

Wind turbine generated electricity was used by our farmers before connection to poles and wires was extended to our most remote properties. A child born in Hay today will grow to adulthood during the operating life of Bullawah. The decision made now will help determine whether that child can find skilled employment, build a life in Hay and contribute to a community supported by a stronger and more diverse economy. The consequences of this decision are not abstract. They will be lived by the next generation. That is the context in which council considers Bullawah Wind Farm.

Council's general manager has taken you through our position on the proposed conditions of consent. I do not intend to repeat that evidence. I want to address a different question, why this community wants this project and what council believes is at stake in your decision. Hay Shire is a small open economy at the end of a very long supply chain. Primary production accounts for 33% of our employment and 40% of our economic output. Our visitor economy is our third largest employment sector, worth around $30 million each year. Agriculture and the visitor economy are Hay's two economic engines. Both are exposed to international markets and the prices that determine their fortunes are largely set beyond our shores.

Our producers do not control global commodity prices or the international cost of fertiliser, fuel and other essential inputs. Our tourism businesses do not control the global oil price that influences whether families can afford to travel through regional Australia. In April this year we saw exactly what that exposure meant when a global fuel price shock reduced visitor spending in Hay by 25% in a single month. One month a quarter of the takings disappeared from our cafés, motels, service stations and museums. Nobody in Hay did anything wrong. A price moved on the other side of the world.

Our visitor economy has historically helped carry us through drought. When agriculture and tourism can both falter in the same season, our responsibility is to look for economic diversification. There are regions in New South Wales with economies broad enough to turn away a project like Bullawah and assume another opportunity will take its place. Hay does not have that luxury. We cannot afford to turn away an entirely new industry that can reduce our exposure, diversify our economic base and provide greater structural strength to our community.

Pressures on rural areas like Hay are not the result of communities failing to work hard or adapt. It is a structural challenge and it requires a structural response. For Hay, renewable energy provides that opportunity, not to replace agriculture but to establish a new industry alongside it and strengthen the environmental, community and economic systems that sustain us. For participating producers, renewable energy income provides a floor that arrives whether or not it rains. That certainty can allow lower stocking rates, adjustment to lower water allocations, continual investments in properties and technology and the retention of staff and local spending. That is structural strength flowing across all three systems.

Bullawah is also expected to support approximately 35 skilled operational jobs over the next 30 years. In a city, 35 jobs may appear modest. In Hay, they are structural. Thirty-five ongoing positions are equivalent to almost 3% of Hay Shire's employed workforce. Anchored locally, they mean reliable household incomes, children in local schools, stronger demand for services and wages circulating through local businesses. With the right training partnerships, they also give young people pathways into skilled careers without having to leave Hay permanently. That is structural change.

Skilled employment embedded in Hay for a generation, strengthening the economy and supporting families, services and volunteers. Those jobs strengthen the economic system by diversifying our skills and income base. They strengthen the community system by supporting families, school enrolments, local services and the volunteers on whom rural communities depend. They strengthen the environmental system by providing an industry that coexists with agriculture. We have some of the best primary producers in Australia, who as hosts remain the custodians of the environment.

The developers of Bullawah Wind Farm have actively supported the work of local producers to protect the habitat of the Plains-wanderer because our producers know that a healthy environment is good for the whole of Hay community. That is what structural change looks like. It is not a temporary construction workforce that leaves when the project is complete. It is skilled employment embedded in the community for a generation.

The opportunity extends further with a local Hay farming family developing a proposal to use locally generated wind energy to produce low carbon ammonia each year for use as fertiliser across the Riverina. Manufacturing this essential agricultural input close to where it is used rather than relying on imports produced overseas. This is the economic multiplier we are seeking, not simply hosting infrastructure that generates electricity for distant markets. Sorry. But using that energy to strengthen the industries and communities within the Renewable Energy Zone.

Hay can remain a strong agricultural community while also producing energy. That is not the abandonment of our identity. It is the next stage of it. That is why council supports Bullawah. However, support does not mean accepting development on any terms. We continue to press strongly on roads, accommodation, environmental protection and local procurement. That is the legacy on which this project should ultimately be judged. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Carol. Do we have questions for the mayor?

MR WRIGHT: Yes. Mayor, in terms of – hear what you say about the opportunity for Hay Shire to diversify with renewable energy projects, some of those impacts you talked about towards the end of your presentation there about roads in particular. We have been having a discussion about whether roads are, if the project goes ahead, whether roads are reactively or proactively repaired. Do you have a – does Hay Shire Council have a particular view?

CR OATAWAY: Yes, we would like the road to be in a state where it's able to withstand the amount of transport that will be happening on there. So we would be asking that that road is not maintained but developed to the state where it can handle the oversize and over mass transport.

MR WRIGHT: Up front, so to speak?

CR OATAWAY: Yes, up front.

MR WRIGHT: Yes, okay.

MS FITZGERALD: No, I thought the mayor's presentation was very clear.

MR MENZIES: Okay. Thank you very much, Mayor.

CR OATAWAY: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: And once again, just so everyone understands, we have already had an excellent submission from the council and met with the council to explore various things that have been raised in their submission. Let's go back to Ivan. Ivan, can you hear me? Ivan, are you able to hear me?

MR KENNEDY: Hello?

MR MENZIES: Hello, Ivan, you have the floor.

MR KENNEDY: Okay, thanks very much. Thanks very much, Commissioners. I'm very pleased to be able to make this presentation, which is scientific. If the PowerPoint can be progressed to the title with a click, 'Quantifiable scientific evidence on infrasound and ecological risk from downstream wake turbulence, drying the landscape, reducing productivity and increasing bushfire risk.' And I also have a section on infrasound. Can we go to the to the next slide, please?

My expertise at the University of Sydney has been in environmental risk and management. I've had about 50 postgraduate students who are now out there doing this kind of work based on science. Can we go to the second slide, please? We have published in this area, I don't have time to go into this, but can click on. You should see the title of our paper of 2023. And if you click on again, you'll see the actual method by which we calculate power output from wind turbines. So this is the one with three graphs of different lines of different colours. And this is to do with different angles of wind incidents. I don't have time to dwell on that. Go to the third slide, please.

Reverse infrasound power varies with blade length. That's my main message. Here we calculated different wind speeds and in particular the very high speed blades which can approach a big fraction of the speed of sound are shown by the increasing work rate at different wind speeds. So this is going to be published in a paper, 'Quantifiable Scientific Evidence,' which is the title of my presentation. Please go to slide four.

The interaction of turbine blade tip impulses with wind towers causes infrasound. Infrasound is in audible pulses of pressure with frequency less than 20 hertz. It covers at the same speed of sound and is only absorbed by resonant structures with many metres across like dwellings, travelling much further because low frequency sound is absorbed very quickly in air but very low in audible infrasound, much slower. And really the frequency and wavelength is an equation that enables us to deal with this scientifically. So we are continuing this research. Click again please. Click again. Click again. Still on slide four.

And I reproduce here the work of Mattsson that Cheryl spoke about earlier. And this is what started our work in this area when we were put in touch with Ken Mattsson in Uppsala. Can we go to slide five? Drying landscape. We've done research at the Bodangora Wind Farm. On this slide and if you can keep clicking, you'll see the wind farm, you'll see its layout in the region. You'll see power output from Bodangora while we were there doing our sampling. The arrow on the right, which might need to be clicked, is when we did our sampling at 8 am, 8.37 and 9 am in June. The last click on this slide shows that we had done some sampling the previous day during the curtailment period when very little power was coming out.

Go to the next slide and this shows our data. And in particular I want the presenter, you'll need to go on, you'll need to get the title up so that's one click. And then you should stay on June the 30th. If you see that, can you click on the HTTPS using control click? I would be much rather in charge of this myself but if you look at this video which was done with an Air 2 when we were doing our meteorological sampling, it shows turbulence. In particular at the beginning of the slide, you can see grass on the horizon which is shimmering in all directions. And the same is true of trees. If you go to about one minute in the video, so click along to one minute, you should be able to see a tree which is shimmering also in all directions. That's wake turbulence.

I don't have time to show the control slide upwind but there's no turbulence whatsoever. The laminar flow then meant that there was no wake turbulence at all. So how am I going for time?

MR MENZIES: You're at time now, Ivan, so if you could just wrap up.

MR KENNEDY: Well, I can't wrap up. That's impossible because you simply have not seen the evidence, the scientific evidence that I'm presenting. I do ask you to examine this yourself, go through it and then act as an independent organisation and make a decision about the need for more research and certainly I'm available. The University of Sydney has recently closed down its zero carbon.

MR MENZIES: I suggest at this point you provide us whatever material you would like as a submission.

MR KENNEDY: Okay, well I have got another – I did ask for extra time but I wasn't granted it. I have got a fuller description of this which I'll place online after I've heard the speakers today.

MR MENZIES: Thank you.

MR KENNEDY: Yes. So thank you. Okay, so this process is actually inadequate for emerging science.

MR MENZIES: Ivan. Thank you, we're moving on at this point.

MR KENNEDY: You're going to have to deal with this in the future. Many people will –

MR MENZIES: Okay, let's move on to our next speaker. Grant Piper was to be our next speaker but he's having some technical issues, so we'll shift him to a little later. So Noel Hicks, who's joining us by telephone. Noel, can you hear me?

MR NOEL HICKS: Yes, Mr Chairman. Yes.

MR MENZIES: Thanks, Noel. You have the floor.

MR HICKS: Okay, thank you. Well, thank you to members of the independent panel for taking the time to visit. Five minutes does not permit me the time to express my dismay that the whole sorry mess our governments have got this nation into at enormous expense to the taxpayer while thrusting on the nation an unestimated and unreliable power system. The Bullawah Wind Farm. How any Australian company, although I understand mainly foreign owned, could suggest a wind farm with all its ancillaries to the detrimental repercussions of both social and practical that goes with this proposed location is beyond comprehension. However, rural and regional areas that are the main export earners in Australia have for some time been carrying this unnecessary burden at no gain to their regions apart from handouts to some landowners, many of them absent, and pitiful grants, considering their budgets, to local government councils.

On 21 July in 2025, the New South Wales Premier Chris Minns said the government could not risk delaying its renewable energy transition even if regional communities paid the sacrifice. Sounds a bit like Russia in the 1920s. The proposal is to locate the development of this Bullawah development on a large acreage of grazing land which has ephemeral creeks running through it and is immediately adjacent to the Oolambeyan National Park. The damage to the bird life alone by bird strike caused by – I've got written here 300 metres but it can't be that high, third of a kilometre, not on the Hay plane, by the blades can only be imagined.

There is reason to believe that because of contamination part of the land upon which these constructions are proposed to be placed may never be used again for agricultural production. Despite contracts being signed after a 25 years minimum period with companies constantly changing hands in a rapidly changing world, who or what company is going to restore this land to its original condition? One can only imagine the legal battles taking place to see who's the responsible party. I'm not a prophet but by necessity within 10 to 15 years I predict that with advances in nuclear technology, some which have been developed in Australia, much of the infrastructure that is now destroying farming land will be just detritus to somehow be disposed of.

Whilst Australia has a large percentage of its land mass, 55%, able to be grazed, most of that land is arid or semi-arid land. Therefore where usually the reliable grazing land or any other farming land exists, it should be cared for and not used to house solar industrial complexes. Any solar industrial complex on agricultural land, combined with unavoidable suburban expansion, along with the rapidly growing populations, is a threat not only to Australia's food security but to those countries who depend on us for sustenance. No food security along with a non-reliable power source means no security at all.

Recently the first so-called wind farm at Codrington in Victoria, which became operational over 25 years ago, was closed down. In their initial environmental statement, the proposer stated that the solution would be found in the ensuing 25 years to be able to recycle the blades. Despite much research, some presently ongoing, this has not been the case and those now proposing wind farms will still be trying to find a way to safely dispose them. What is the present proposal for the disposal of the blades from 143 turbines proposed for the Bullawah project when the blades have to be replaced or when that operation ends its life? I think you'll find that the developers will be saying the same thing as the Victorian operation did 25 years ago. The only difference being the gigantic size of the blades that will be an even bigger problem than Codrington. I trust they won't be burying them.

As we would all be aware, the sudden introduction of AI to Australia has initiated the need for power and water. Due to a succession of governments, we have neither of these in abundance. Added to this, we were also aware that investment in wind farms is falling away, mainly because of increased costs particularly in offshore construction but also of political pressure from coastal residents who politically form the majority of our population. This will bring further pressure on farming land as the wind farm proponents seek a relatively easier solution, a cheaper land and building cost. BayWA r.e. is going to put incredible pressure on our agricultural land, also on our very limited water supplies. The outcome will be the price of water, especially to irrigators, will increase dramatically as [unintelligible 02:31:31] developers fight for water prices irrigators cannot match, unless handled very carefully could spell the demise of our irrigation areas.

The state government has recently made an announcement that the present system which already provides a lose-lose situation for most of the rural population is going to be speeded up. This is in their rush to sign contracts to spend more money quickly on renewables, hoping for a point of no return for any government wishing to install a reliable and cheap power system. One can only hope that in the near future common sense will prevail over warped and outdated ideology.

May I just say, I'm of an age where what is happening to my once great country won't be bothering me, but it will be affecting my children and your grandchildren. As for our rural populations, shamefully the age of Dorothea Mackellar is dead. Thank you, panel members.

MR MENZIES: Thank you very much, Noel. We'll move to our next speaker who is Annette Smith. Annette's joining us by telephone Annette, can you hear me?

MS ANNETTE SMITH: Yes.

MR MENZIES: Okay, the floor is yours.

MS SMITH: Thank you. My concerns focus on the environmental damage and distorted promises of flow on benefits to communities. This project will impact over 600 hectares of native vegetation, requiring over 15,000 ecosystem credits and 74,000 species credits, 41 ecosystem credits to compensate for the destruction and disturbance of habitat for eight native birds that are listed as vulnerable under the Biodiversity Conservation Act. Bio credit bitcoin does nothing more than a band aid or a feel-good to validate widespread ecological destruction. Clearing of native vegetation results in complete loss of biodiversity values, complete loss of individuals occupying that area of vegetation and complete loss of any habitat values. This will primarily affect the barking owl, the little eagle and the southern bell frogs. There are 17 different species of bats listed as vulnerable that are known to inhabit the development area. Kangaroos, emus, echidnas, skinks, goannas will also be impacted, though they're not referred to in the EIS.

There is an estimated 3,000 hectares of Plains-wanderer habitat on the project site and this proposal removes over 500 hectares of habitat. Based on that density estimate, 56 birds may be indirectly impacted. That is 15% of the site's population. The Plains-wanderer is vulnerable to death, injury and nest destruction during clearing and vehicle strike during construction and operation. The New South Wales population is estimated to be only 200 birds, suggesting 28% of the population may be indirectly impacted, making the amount of land clearing and habitat destruction for this proposal unconscionable.

I fail to see whether community benefit contributions ensure ongoing sustainable infrastructure to the town. Recipients like the Hay Rainbow on the Plains Festival, the Business Awards, the Hay Show and the Giz A Break donation of $45,000 to host teenagers for weekends away or a $20,000 mobile cool room for a community of less than 20 people hardly fit the criteria of sustainable infrastructure.

Planning agreements. Section 3 equates annual payments of just over a million dollars or $350,000 per annum per council. This paltry amount of money is laughable. It would not even cover the costs of the road upgrades required to widen the roundabout in Hay or maintain and restore the roads leading to and from the development area. I am a supporter of section 2.6.1, do nothing. We only need a change of government and the do nothing option will be actioned. I have no concerns regarding potential hosts losing their opportunity for them to diversify. After all, it is not drought proofing farmers, it is merely providing a taxpayer subsidised additional income for a few hosts to allow developers to desecrate that valuable farming and grazing land.

Supposedly, the project will generate jobs during construction, support trade supplies, accommodation, retail services, et cetera. Yet the EIS has a conceptual design of workforce sleeping accommodation, offices, meal, medical, laundry facilities, ablutions, an onsite retail shop, a tavern and a gym. We already know how far short these claims are with our recent experience of Transgrid, where only two local people were employed. There was talk of contractors being used and opportunities for various

trades but no evidence. There was promotion from the Hay Shire Council when construction was completed, that demountable buildings would be moved into Hay to offset our accommodation shortage. None of that happened either.

There are plenty of witnesses to Coles vehicles from Griffith delivering to the site and a constant stream of FIFO workers coming from the airport in Griffith. Accommodation in Hay is already sparse. I don't see how these projects are assisting the economy when they block book any available accommodation, preventing real tourists and visitors from visiting and staying in Hay. There is a small area of SSAL within the project area, state significant agricultural land. Future legislation to protect SSALs from renewable project construction and ensure their status as agricultural land will pose difficulties, developments that are hampered by constraints of wind and solar projects. Cumulatively the construction and operation of Bullawah, Pottinger, The Plains and Dinawan will remove 120 years of agricultural farmland.

Lastly, I note in the key stakeholders, as Sussan Ley is no longer in office, has our new elected member, David Farley MP for One Nation been consulted about this development? Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Annette. Okay our next speaker is Lynette LaBlack, who is also joining us by telephone. Lynette, are you with us?

MS LYNETTE LABLACK: Oh hello, are you speaking to me?

MR MENZIES: I am indeed. Lynette, you have the floor.

MS LABLACK: Oh, I'm going to speak a whole lot in one go, is that okay?

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MS LABLACK: All right. Thank you. Three things are clear about the Climate Authority chair's diabolical New South Wales electricity infrastructure roadmap. Many landscapes will never be the same, our life sustaining soil and water will be contaminated, electricity will become far more expensive and much less reliable. None of this will alter the climate and Australia's electricity grid will be under the control of our most hostile enemy, the Chinese Communist Party.

The planned Bullawah swindle factory is like all other ecocidal inferior pathetically intermittent weather dependent industrialised wind solar junk and BESS bombs that don't work most of the time. Set to be enabled by the totally unnecessary insidious interconnected nightmare revolving around ElectroNet's 45.89% state grid corporation of China's controlling project EnergyConnect and Transgrid's part owner, Cheung Kong's spin-off Spark Infrastructure, now Spark Renewables, dodgy Dinawan lynchpin.

The fact that the Australian energy regulator has instituted proceedings against Transgrid for alleged breaches of the national electricity rules in December 2025, following their plethora failures over many years in relation to the 2024 Broken Hill outages, clearly should pull the plug on this whole experimental failure that's primarily

focused on disastrously fulfilling China's energy dream against Australia's best interests via Tenaga Nasional Berhad's Spark renewables ASEAN power grid agenda, where they openly state Tenaga Nasional Berhad are forging a strategic alliance with China's state-owned utilities to revolutionise the ASEAN power grid.

BayWa's Bullawah swindle factory is another treacherous part of this national security catastrophe. By prioritising this, the New South Wales government is completely failing its first priority to protect its citizens. They are doing the complete opposite, as the renewable trojan horse is socialism masquerading as environmentalism, absolutely not for the greater good of New South Wales and Australia. The deliberately harmful impacts for rural communities was made pretty clear by the sinister policies of the New South Wales government's authoritarian dictatorship when, as Noel already stated, the New South Wales premier told us on 22 July the government could not risk delaying its renewable energy transition, even if regional communities paid the sacrifice. Such desperate vested interest driven ruinable policies are dangerous, divisive and downright dishonest. That sounds like something the prime minister recently said.

Where is BayWa's reputable independent peer-reviewed scientific determination in this Department assessment? That's been long sought by objectors and always from this dodgy department and non-independent complicit planning commission has been totally missing. They've continually failed to require that the essential diligent risk research is done. Instead they're just trusting the developers, showing a lack of care that demonstrates reckless disregard for the safety or lives of others, which is so great it appears to be a conscious violation of other people's rights to safety.

The irreversible toxic contamination, the public health and safety risks from China's unregulated, unclean, unsafe, unreliable, uneconomical, unethical, insecure renewables is the asbestos of the future, poisoning our land and water forever. This has all been deliberately admitted by the Department, including toxic bisphenol A, lethal to young children and as toxic as blue asbestos, shedding from wind turbine blades, as well as PFAS and banned asbestos along with highly hazardous Bis-FASI BESS chemicals and lethal hydrogen fluoride gas plumes. A Royal Commission is long overdue to unravel all the tentacles of this anti-Australian fake green renewable swamp. The following photos, which do you have up on the thing?

MR MENZIES: Images?

MS LABLACK: Yes. Are they there?

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MS LABLACK: Oh okay. So they're fairly self-explanatory. They're predominantly of recently damaged toxic-contaminating wind turbines and highly hazardous lithium-ion batteries, beginning with the obvious toxic hazard warning. The second photo is – can you just move through the photos as I say them?

MR MENZIES: Yes, we are moving through them. There's a delay, so just please proceed.

MS LABLACK: Okay. The wind turbine fire is Bulgana Green Power Hub in Victoria, May 2025. The full commercial operation was only December 2021. Developed by Neoen and sold to Julia Gillard chaired HMC Capital in December 2024. The next photo is the collapsed two year old Berrybank wind turbine. That collapsed in a windstorm, 4 February 2025, owned by GPG. The next photo is Iberdrola's broken Flyers Creek wind turbine blade near Orange and Blayney, cracked before 10 August 2025, only energised a few months prior to that. A mere few months to failure. It's recently been damaged again and reports are from locals that there's at least five turbines damaged at Flyers Creek.

The next two photos are of toxic bisphenol A, lethal to young children, as toxic as blue asbestos, shedding from wind turbine blades within a few years as they soon suffer from leading edge erosion. The leading edge blade is only guaranteed for five years. The facts are that wind turbine blades do shed material. Next pictured is a trained worker wearing respiratory gear to deal with the typical erosion and shed toxic material but notably there is no containment at all for the contaminated particles as they are sanded away, drifting off into the air over our life sustaining irreplaceable food growing land, vital water sources and rooftops that feed our drinking water. This won't only stay on the gullible host property. This will end up everywhere and I wonder who's going to be paying all the compensation when this stuff all ends up in court.

The next photo is showing the banned asbestos or picturing that, which was found last year in numerous turbines in the lift brake pads and other parts of Chinese wind turbines scattered all around the country. Vestas, Goldwind, Squadron's wind turbines, despite the importation of asbestos containing goods being legislatively banned since 2003. Following this is a photo hopefully of the toxic contaminating debris left by the spontaneously exploding wind turbine at the Yendon section of the Lal Lal swindle factory, which was only commissioned in 2020. That's Moorabool Shire, southeast of Ballarat. Previously a lightning strike incident occurred in September 2019 but this incident only occurred in May. And the exploded turbine is located only 600 metres from the Bungal Dam, which feeds into the Ballarat water supply.

I have an additional six photos, I think it's six, which show all the debris scattered widely around the area, all over the ground. This is, you know, toxic bits of bisphenol A, PFAS, parts of the turbine blade. And according to the – these photos were taken, which you'll see later, were taken in July 2026, so you know this is extensive environmental pollution on an industrial scale caused by this fragile weather dependent toxic contaminating wind turbine blade. And the company, Atmos Renewables, primarily owned by Igneo Infrastructure Partners as well as Northleaf Capital Partners, claim there's no risk to the public. Well, the facts prove otherwise.

There's nothing in the Department's assessment that mentions any of these typical incidents which are occurring everywhere. Now, hopefully is there – is the next photo of the lithium battery warehouse fire at Cheltenham, Melbourne?

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MS LABLACK: This is owned by Phoenix Technology Group, containing 3000 highly hazardous, extremely toxic lithium batteries. That fire occurred on 30 January 2025. The smoke from that, in the next photo, billowing all over the area. Toxic hydrogen fluoride gas plumes are actually lethal to your lungs. So I don't know – haven't seen anything about containment of that in the Department's assessment.

Following that photo is the Hume Highway closure caused by that truck trailer full of lithium ion battery waste near Yass. That was last December, 20 December 2025. Subjecting locals and travellers to another toxic hydrogen fluoride gas plume, which, you know, no one seems to properly investigate afterwards to see what the public have actually suffered from this. You know, there's going to be babies and little children who are forced to be breathing in this smoke because no one's doing their due diligence as far as assessing these properly.

Now, following that is obvious picture of the Department, the previous IPCN bulldozing the community against our will with no social licence by approving all these disgusting projects. And then finally we've got Bobby Gallagher's one megawatt Unity nuclear micro reactor, which fits on the back of a ute. Gallagher hopes to get the cost of power down to 5 cents per kilowatt hour. At this point, the only sensible thing to do is to pause our entire grid development, repair the coal plants and wait a few years. The last thing we want is to invest 200 billion on an outdated, fire prone, unreliable, expensive, disposable renewable grid destined for landfill. Venezuela, here we come. Now, have I still got some time left now?

MR MENZIES: Lynette, two minutes.

MS LABLACK: Well, I would like to just finally read our assessment of the response from the official feedback received on 3 February this year from the Environmental Goods and Product Safety section within the Australian Border Force regarding importation of banned PFOS, which is coating all of the solar panels, which will include Coleambally's 2 million panels, the Deniliquin solar clean peak energy, that'll all be coated in PFOS, and asbestos in the solar wind battery components, which has been provided or which will be provided to the Commissioners.

What this response clearly confirms is there is no effective border level prohibition on PFAS, PFOA or bisphenol A in renewable energy components. The system relies on voluntary industry compliance and future legislation, not enforceable controls. Responsibility is fragmented and deflected between agencies. Australian Border Force, Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water, states and territories. Importers are effectively given a regulatory grace period to establish compliant practices without penalties. This seems to go on forever. The Anti-Slavery Commissioner's doing nothing about it.

That last point is the most damning. What the letter unintentionally admits is Australia is knowingly allowing high risk chemicals into the country while acknowledging their environmental and health risks. Enforcement is aspirational, not operational. The Commonwealth currently lacks the legal tools it claims are necessary yet continues to permit imports. Renewable energy infrastructure is being treated as a regulatory exception zone. This is classic regulatory capture by delay. We agree it's dangerous

but we'll act later. So typical of ruthless, reckless renewables, the asbestos of the future.

Structural failure is exposed. There is no due diligence. There is no reputable independent risk research. There is no independent accreditation body for toxicology risk of renewable infrastructure. There is no lifecycle regulation, import, use, disposal. There is no precautionary principle applied despite PFAS being globally recognised as persistent bioaccumulative toxins and various types including PFOS banned in Australia that's coating all these solar panels. There is no mandatory disclosure requirements for chemical [cross-talk 02:54:09].

MR MENZIES: Missed the bell but you are at time.

MS LABLACK: I've just got one sentence. Can I just finish that?

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MS LABLACK: In plain terms, the system is built to facilitate roll out first and manage harm later, if ever. This document is a strong piece of evidence for future use because it documents official knowledge of risk, establishes foreseeability of harm, shows government awareness without enforcement and weakens any future claim of unanticipated consequences. The Border Force response is substantively an admission of regulatory –

MR MENZIES: Lynette, we need to move on. We need to move on. Thank you for your submission.

MS LABLACK: Thank you. I've finished.

MR MENZIES: Okay. Our next speaker is Ross Johns. Ross, are you online? No, we haven't been able to contact Ross. So let's move on. We'll try Ross again later. Andrew Phelan? Just go to a break. What a good idea. Thank you, team. We'll have a short break just to catch back to correct time.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

MR MENZIES: Welcome back, everyone. We took a short break so that we'd fit back onto the expected time frame for people calling in. Our next speaker is Ellarose Hare, who was going to be here in person. Next. Gary Hare and Annie Hare. Okay, we'll check again later just in case they haven't got in yet. We'll try Grant Piper, who was having technical problems earlier. Grant, can you hear me? Okay. Break once again just to get our times aligned with the people who are going to be calling in.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

MR MENZIES: Welcome back. We're now back on time schedule, so we'll see whether we have some of our presenters available. So I start by asking Ellarose Hare, if you're available. Gary Hare? Annie Hare? Just so everyone's aware, the people that we're calling who aren't able to join us, we will contact them later to see whether they

want to make a submission, just in case it's a technical fault on our part. So we will keep trying to get their input. Grant Piper?

MR GRANT PIPER: Yes.

MR MENZIES: Grant, welcome. You now have the floor.

MR PIPER: Thank you, Commissioners. Apologies for my absence earlier. You've got my slide pack in front of you, have you?

MR MENZIES: So Grant, I've been made aware that you did submit a slide pack. Unfortunately, they can't get it into the system, so if you could just make your presentation now. But let me assure you, we have the slide pack. It will be put up online and as a set for Commissioners, we'll work through it in the context of what you have to say to us now.

MR PIPER: Yes, okay then. All right, well slide one is representative of a map done by Rainforest Reserves Australia, now the Australian Biodiversity Alliance, mapping all the projects, wind, solar, batteries across the country. They've totalled 41,000 turbines plus solar plus BESS across the country and if you go to their website, you can see that. It's noteworthy that no government department, state or federal, or Clean Energy Council, or Climate Change Authority, or AEMO, or any of the other supposed authorities have ever tried or provided a map to the public of where all these projects are, the expanse and the impact they're going to have. It's been left to private individuals to do that. And I think that's indicative of the way we're treated in the country. It's not really an informed discussion because the whole discussion has avoided the expanse of these projects.

Now, the bushfire, I'm going to talk mainly about the bushfire problems with these projects, the wind projects in particular. Most bushfire plans in these projects only talk about the risk to the project infrastructure from bushfire. They don't talk about the risks to the other local inhabitants and the local environment from bushfire caused by the projects. I think you've had another presenter show turbine fires and my slide pack has some pictures of turbine fires over the last two or three years in Australia and these aren't unknown. They're a known hazard. They're a known ignition source.

As these turbines age over their life and are poorly maintained or just wear out or leak oil, which is also recorded, they're going to become more of an ignition source risk than they are when they're new. So you've got to think what are they going to be like in 25 years' time. Are they going to be causing more fires than they caused in the first two or three years when they're brand new. So BESS fires are also well known causing a toxic hazard. So these things shouldn't be ignored or glossed over. They're a real hazard to the local inhabitants and the environment and they must be addressed by the proponents rather than just left and not discussed.

Moving past that, there's a video in the slide pack of a 737 tanker dropping on a fire near where I live a couple of years ago. Some of you may have seen it before, but you can see the 737 descends in a straight line, has a long lead line up to the target drop. It almost virtually becomes invisible in the smoke when it drops and then it reappears

and flies off. Now, this job is incompatible. The tanker operators have exemptions from maintaining strict BMC around fires. It's incompatible to remain clear of smoke entirely around these fires if they're going to be effective in their job. That tanker dropped at approximately 200 feet. Given the length of the tanker, you can work out how high off the ground it was and that is what they work to typically.

The next slide is a tanker fire that occurred – sorry, a tanker crash. The same sort of aircraft in 2023 in West Australia, a Boeing 737 tanker, hit the ground while it was being led to a drop by a smaller aircraft. In their investigation, this is an ATSB report. The reference is in the documents. It clipped a hill and ended up crashing. The crew survived, which was quite lucky. It wasn't hilly terrain, mountainous terrain at all. It was reasonably undulating flat terrain, as WA mostly is, and this tanker yet was obscured by smoke. The pilots said – the captain reported at interview that the second approach was conducted through drift smoke from the fire and they were unable to identify the target until they exited from the smoke. The copilot reported not being able to see the target on final. So as they approached, they could not see the target and they ended up clipping the ground, not being able to recover and coming to a skidding halt and destroying the aircraft. Luckily, the crew walked away.

So it is a hazardous occupation and as soon as you put large obstacles in their way such as turbines, they are not going to be able to get to 200 feet to drop over the target if there is any smoke anywhere whatsoever because of the risk of collision. If they drop from above the turbines, 900 odd feet, the retardant would be basically ineffective. So you're going to lose the use of large air tankers around these turbine project areas and it will be wholly on the local volunteer bush firefighters to go and fight these fires on the ground without large air tanker support or wait until the fire comes out of the project areas, in which case it's probably increased in size and is more hazardous than being able to get a big tanker in there quickly at the beginning.

So that's a real consideration. It's a known hazard and it's not addressed by the proponents. Or you get this boilerplate response that's oh, no, we've fought around turbines with helicopters and air tractor, smaller aircraft and we can do that fine. But that's not 130 or 40 turbines in a random pattern over the countryside with a big fire. That's just single lines or smaller projects where you still have relative clear air that the small aircraft can operate around the turbines and below the turbine height and not run into things but the large air tankers will be excluded.

MR MENZIES: Grant, you're at time.

MR PIPER: Yes, I'm done now.

MR MENZIES: Great, and you made your point very well.

MR PIPER: Can I just finish by saying that's based on my experience as a C-130 pilot, as a forward air controller in the Air Force operating at low level and so it's not just some farmer blowing off about wind turbines. It was my profession in the past and I'd just like the panel to take it on consideration seriously and not gloss over this real hazard to us who live in these areas.

MR MENZIES: Yes, thank you very much, Grant.

MR PIPER: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: We now move to Cameron Arnold, who is going to join us by telephone. Cameron, can you hear me? No, we haven't got Cameron at the moment. So we move to Ramila Chanisheff. Ramila?

MS RAMILA CHANISHEFF: Yes, I'm here.

MR MENZIES: Excellent, you have the floor.

MS CHANISHEFF: Thank you very much. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ramila Chanisheff and I am the president of the Australian Uyghur Women's Association and we have been working with the government and industries in terms of eradicating modern slavery. So in this aspect on this floor I'll be talking about the human cost of the very product that you wish to bring into New South Wales. I'm sure that everyone is aware the Anti-Slavery Commissioner, federal and New South Wales, have been talking about human rights due diligence. Hello?

MR MENZIES: Yes. We hear you clearly Ramila.

MS CHANISHEFF: Sorry, sorry there was a static noise. Human rights due diligence in supply chains that make the very product that you want to bring in and China, as you know, are notorious for using humans as, you know, forced labour, forced into slave labour and when you're talking about slavery in other aspects you might be talking about industries but in the Uyghurs, regarding the Uyghurs, it is the government, the Chinese government that is state sanctions forced labour in the very products that make the wind turbines.

So from the very raw products, minerals that are dug out from the ground to every supply chain that processes the product, especially in the green energy sector. So when you're talking about millions of Uyghurs that have disappeared into the labour camps, into the concentration camps which turned into labour camps and they also being trafficked into mainland China to make the products.

Now, we know that the Australian government is looking into tightening its laws on bringing in products that are made by Uyghur forced labour and industries are also liable to ensure that the products that they bring in do not have any forced labour in their supply chains. We know that this is quite impossible to audit when it comes to China but it is up to the industries and also the local governments to ensure that the products they're bringing in to local government areas do not have forced labour where people are losing their lives, being ethnically cleansed and disappearing over the last five, six years intensely. This has been happening for decades but intensely in the five, six years in the very products that Australia is importing.

Uyghurs have been losing their lives, being ethnically cleansed, for making cheap turbines, wind turbines or any other green energy that hits our shores and to bring it in at a large scale and to bring it in as solar farms or wind turbine farms. This is a scary

thought for me and my family that we hail from East Turkestan or North West China because these are the very products that my family members have disappeared into and every Uyghur that lives in Australia can vouch for this as well and in the diaspora.

My association is working very closely with the Anti-Slavery Commissioners, both federal and state, to ensure that legislations and penalties do apply to industries and local governments that continue to bring in these products that are tainted by the blood and sweat and tears of the Uyghur people, who are not only working but who are actually losing their lives, their traditions, their culture, their history, their land to ensure that Australians benefit cheaply for these products. I believe that every Australian who would understand and is educated in this field would understand and would stay away from products that is made by forced labour where people are losing their livelihoods, their lives, not just their livelihoods but their lives in ensuring that we bring these things in.

Now, we know most things that come from China are extremely cheap and we know that the reason we do have to question what is the reason for these products to be brought in that are extremely cheap. So I implore everyone who is making the decision to ensure that these products are not tainted by Uyghur forced labour. I think that was my bell, is that correct?

MR MENZIES: Yes, Ramila. Thank you for raising a really important issue for us, so thank you very much. No questions, all right. Annie Hare, who I think just nipped out, all right. We'll just try a couple of other people but if, yes. Let me move to Ross Johns, no. Andrew Phelan, no. Sue Pearse, no. Okay, once again let me stress we will make every effort to reach out to these people and get their submissions and hopefully Annie can be retrieved in a timely fashion. Yes, we'll just pause for a couple of minutes while Annie comes back.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

MR MENZIES: Welcome back, everyone. We now have the opportunity to hear from Annie Hare. Annie, over to you.

MS ANNIE HARE: Okay, thank you for allowing me to speak. I'm here, I don't support this project proceeding at all. Along the same lines for the Pottinger Wind, I'm concerned about what comes off the blades and goes onto the land and is there forever in the food, in the water, on the sheep, in the fibre. It's a major industry development of 141 wind turbines operating for decades. My concerns are we're being asked to accept the immediate benefit and generations to come might be left with the financial liability.

The long-term degrading of the turbine blades is a concern. Turbine blades are composite structures with fibreglass and resin that are exposed to mechanical stresses, ultraviolet radiation, rain dust and leading edge erosion is a recognised issue. What exact materials are the coating on the blades of the Bullawah installation? Are they disclosed and are they tested? Do we know? In particular, I want I want to know whether PFAS or persistent fluorinated substances are present on the actual blades and the coatings. My concern is that there is a recognised gap concerning environmental

releases of PFAS from operating wind turbine blades under world conditions that certainly needs to be resolved before approval.

We should establish baseline testing, surface water, groundwater and independent monitoring throughout the whole project. If material is degrading, then small particles enter the environment. Then there are concerns around soil, water, pasture, cropping, livestock, food. It's agricultural land that is protecting our food production capacity must be a priority. The project's own documentation proposes that 642 hectares of agricultural land be removed during the project. Will it be returned to an equivalent land capacity after decommissioning? I want that restoration to be independently verified, not assumed.

And I've researched, there's a bit of a warning from Sweetwater. We also need to concern what's happening to the enormous turbine blades when they reach end of life. We don't have to really imagine what can go wrong. Sweetwater, Texas has thousands of turbine blades and components accumulating in two sites after the company involved to supposedly recycle them failed the proper disposal. One Texas Legislative Council described one location as 30 acres of graveyard of wind turbines. Is this what we want happening? Do we want to risk this happening here?

When Bullawah reaches its end of life, we don't want the community to be left with hundreds of enormous turbine blades, associated infrastructures, waiting for somebody to remove them. That is why I believe legally enforced financial bonds must be there before they begin. Who pays in the end? Who removes the turbines? Who pays for the blades, for the foundations, the roads? Who removes them? Who restores the land? Who pays the companies owning the projects if they cannot or will not? I believe the liability must never be transferred to communities, farmers or the taxpayer or the next generation.

The economic assessment on average is approximately for this installation is 990 jobs with an approximate of 140 ongoing. Those employment figures have been presented as a community benefit. Are they? Pottinger Wind advertised for employment in Bendigo, not really local. As said by Emma Webb at the Bush Summit, don't confuse willing hosts with willing communities. I'd add don't confuse willing local councils with willing communities.

Therefore, I ask the project to provide substantial legal and financial security for the community. I propose the federal government, New South Wales government, local councils require registered decommissioning and rehabilitation bonds to be held independently of the project company. One benchmark is if there's 147 jobs with an average salary of 100,000 a year for 10 years, that equals 140 million. Now, I'm not saying $140 million is necessarily the cost of decommissioning, but bonds should be ultimately based on an independent assessment with a full removal of the turbines, detailing where the waste goes, where it's restored and it should be renewed and increased if needed.

The money there, if the project becomes obsolete, becomes uneconomical and the company disappears or the community is left with the bill and the landholders, the host

landholder should be rezoned and have higher rates because it will become an industrial zone.

Concluding, we are taking agricultural land out of food production and the future of our rural communities. We are a farming community. If we cannot farm them, what do we do? Once this infrastructure is built, reversing the decision is very difficult. It's an unspoken reality. We as a community are forced to spend thousands of hours understanding, grappling with the torrent of information detailing, it is unfair. People get ground down with the pressure of cost. No one's paying all these community members to be here and no one's home doing the farm jobs that are not getting done by everyone today.

I don't believe uncertainty in long-term environmental impacts should be resolved by building first and finding out later. At the very least, no proposal should be given without independent testing of an actual turbine material coating, the soil, the water, enforceable rehabilitation and financial security be guaranteed for decommissioning. I object entirely to this project. What am I up for time?

MR MENZIES: Your time's out now.

MS HARE: Okay. Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you, Annie. If I could ask the applicant to – second break.

SHORT ADJOURNMENT

MR MENZIES: Applicant, welcome back. One of the issues that we've heard repeatedly through the course of the day, but also in our discussions with the councils and not only this project, just about every project of this nature that we talk about, there's a lot of discussion about the jobs that are going to be generated and the extent to which those jobs are going to be filled locally. So we just wondered if you could flesh out for us the sort of skill set that you'll need from workers during construction and then post construction, the sorts of people that will be maintaining, looking after the facility that – I think the mayor indicated 35 new jobs will be created around town. We wondered what sorts of skills those people would have.

MS MARTEENA MCKENZIE: Yes, I can take that.

MR MENZIES: And in the context of local employment too. Yes.

MS MCKENZIE: Thank you. Thanks for the question. So we've talked a lot about local employment outcomes for this project and the question about what those jobs will be for local people specifically during the construction. During the project development, the focus will be specifically for local jobs, probably on the balance of plant. So for local people, that would mean civil works, fencing, those sorts of jobs. So there's obvious jobs that come with building a wind farm, electrical contractors, all sorts of concreting and engineering jobs. And we do have a focus on supporting local businesses to upskill.

So the scale of this project is very big for the region and we acknowledge that. The way that we're doing targeting local people is to work with EnergyCo, who've got a jobs and skills coordinator, excuse me, in the South West REZ. They will act as a sort of business concierge, supporting local businesses to understand what they need to tender into projects of this scale. So things like modern slavery, we heard the very pertinent comments from the last presenter. We're aware of that issue and we're aware that when you're a local person contracting into jobs of this scale, that you need to have policies around that, policies around diversity, equity, inclusion, all sorts of policies that the normal backyard sparky or water carter might not have.

So we're geared up to support local businesses to be ready to tender into those projects. So that talks about the construction aspect of the project, but there'll be other support roles that are associated with the project. So the temporary workers accommodation camp will support some of those local businesses. For example, cleaning will be a big one, catering, bus driving. So, for example, one way that we can help the temporary worker accommodation staff interact with the local economies in Deniliquin and Hay is to run a local bus. And the more local that bus service could be, for example, the better the outcome for the local people.

So that's another example and we've already done a business road show with EnergyCo through the region to start and meet with local communities. We've had a portal on the ICN website for two years now. So we have a very large number of expressions of interest from businesses and we have a very deep connection, deep commitment to identifying local communities, local businesses and helping them scale up to take the best of the opportunities of this project.

I would add that First Nations businesses are a particular focus for us. We've started to talk to senior Aboriginal staff in New South Wales government about how they are already surveying the Aboriginal businesses in the region to identify what capacity already exists and what upskilling and cross-skilling they might need to have the capacity to very quickly act when these projects come to fruition. So that's very live in their minds at the moment. And then the local land councils, as the people on the ground, we're working with them and our construction contractors to identify opportunities for Aboriginal businesses also to be in there and working.

MR WRIGHT: Could I just follow up with another question? So the ongoing operational jobs, 35 odd, are they primarily maintenance activities or what sort of?

MS MCKENZIE: I might pass over to Aidan about what those jobs –

MR O'MAHONY: Yes, it will be a mixture of maintenance, rehabilitation works on site as well. There will be also other ongoing jobs like administration jobs. There will be the asset management from the client side of that. So reviewing the scatter, the energy and everything like that to production, making sure it's performing to what's been agreed in the contracts. So they're the type of jobs that would be.

MR WRIGHT: And in terms of accommodation for those 35 odd people, we've heard from Hay Shire Council there's an accommodation deficit in Hay. So I'm presuming that a lot of those people would choose to locate in Hay. Does the company have any

view in terms of how that housing deficit might be dealt with if you end up with 35 additional people plus their families, of course, living in Hay.

MS MCKENZIE: We know that the councils want local enrolments in their schools. They want more people here, but there is a tension because of the very real issue of 0% of rental vacancies. So we can't fix that problem ourselves, but we can support council for their own programs to address those local issues. So the one, the core one that we're working with is on the Hay Shire Council Legacy Housing Project, which is a program in partnership with the Murrumbidgee Local Health Service. There's a block of land adjacent to the Hay Hospital, which they're working on having access to. And the idea of that program is to put some housing, say 10 to 20 individual, say one and two bedroom units on that property that the construction staff associated with this project would use potentially during the construction phase and then be handed back to council for essential worker housing.

But also, Hay have done a very close look at their housing stock and they know that there are a lot of elderly folk in town who are in very large houses who would like to downsize, but there's nowhere to move down to. There's no smaller housing stock. There's not very many units. And so the other avenue for that housing in the long term is that those elderly folk can downsize into a really energy efficient, fit for purpose home for them in their elder years and those big four bedroom homes can be freed up for potentially those operational staff. So that's one practical example that we're working towards.

MR WRIGHT: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Suellen?

MS FITZGERALD: Water. I believe one of our earliest speakers, Kathryn Reynolds, was talking specifically about potable water for the site during construction in particular. Could you tell us a little bit about how you intend to supply potable water and also construction water for the project?

MR O'MAHONY: Yes. So I might start with construction water and non-potable water. So you may have heard from earlier speaker, Rhys. So they have an extraction limit of about 600 megalitres per annum. Our water impact assessment has about 224 megalitres required for construction for the project. They use about just, I think, just around 200 megalitres per year. So there is a surplus in their allowance per annum to allow for that water to be used for the construction and we verified that with them.

In terms of potable water, we have spoken with Hay Shire Council. They have a surplus of water as well. I believe they have about an allocation of about 2.15 or 2.25 megalitres per day allowance and they use about 0.95 megalitres of that. So they have confirmed that they have sufficient allowance to service our potable water needs on site.

MS FITZGERALD: Right. So water carting out to the accommodation camp.

MR O'MAHONY: That is the current plan that we think we will do for the project. Yes.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. Coming from Hay. Great. Thank you.

MR WRIGHT: I might just ask another question, Neal. Roads has come up as a bit of a perennial from councils in particular, and it appears as though the issue obviously appears to be goodwill on the part of the proponent to repair roads. The view from councils we're hearing is that they would like those roads to be upgraded before the damage occurs. So that we're hearing this again and again and again. So again, just your response to that, would there be a willingness on the part of the proponent to upgrade before construction traffic arrives?

MR O'MAHONY: Yes, look, I think we've assessed [unintelligible 03:57:27] in our ability with the road and it's Jerilderie Road is an OSOM proof road and an NVHR portal. We've assessed it from a traffic impact assessment and we've responded to Hay Shire and their RFI. We think we can use that road, maintain it, be very proactive with our maintenance to get down that road for our project. And I think to answer your question, I think we'd probably have to take that on notice and maybe provide a response to that in the submission if that's okay.

MR WRIGHT: Yes.

MR MENZIES: Okay, I think that we've asked our immediate questions. Thank you very much.

MR O'MAHONY: Yes, appreciate it. Just want to say thanks very much for your time. And yes, thanks, Commissioners.

MS MCKENZIE: Thank you. Thanks very much.

MR MENZIES: I thought it would be useful for me to just tick through some of the things that we heard today. And this is sort of, you know, my personal set of things rather than a comprehensive set even from the panel. And of course, we've been taking copious notes and we will work through a lot of things. But the immediate things that impressed on my mind, the landowner's view was interesting that their intention to use their income from the development to support sustainable farming practices and the alignment between increasing their agricultural productivity and achieving an environmental outcome, both in terms of the quality of their pastures, but also the native creatures that live in their pastures and the Plains-wanderer in particular. And their clear view that renewable energy was compatible with their agricultural enterprise.

The councils, we've heard repeatedly about roads, roads are a big issue for them. Understandably, having driven around the roads that are there are not built for heavy construction, they're built for local transport. So clearly that and also we've heard from you as the applicant that you're very aware of this as something you'll have to manage.

Emergency management measures are clearly a concern for the councils and the community. And also the destination of waste, both produced during the construction phase that we've been hearing predominantly from the council, but ultimately the recycling of the whole system at the end of life that we've heard from the community.

Rehabilitation requirements, there's the building view that financial bonds are a way to ensure an outcome in 30 years' time. And we've also heard from the councils regarding the voluntary planning agreements, which of course are a key way that the community broadly benefits from the development. And as you would have gathered from our questions, we're very interested in how jobs that are produced by the project diversify and sustain the local economy. We think that's really important. And also the opportunity to provide training into the local community so that they're better able to participate in the project. We think that's mission critical.

From the community, we've heard a lot of concern about cumulative impacts, that there is so much happening in the REZ that we need to put this project into the broader context of adjoining projects and across the whole region projects. There was many people have raised the desire for a greater level of transparency in how projects are planned and how decisions are made. We've heard a lot of concern about the habitat impacts, particularly on the Plains-wanderer. But having been out in that landscape yesterday, the Plains-wanderer is the sort of well-known public image. Suellen, what am I trying to capture here?

MR WRIGHT: Iconic. Iconic.

MR MENZIES: Iconic. I'm trying to capture iconic. The Plains-wanderer is the iconic species, but there are a lot of species that are going to be potentially impacted by projects like this, potentially impacted by the way that the farming community might change their grazing practices, et cetera. So clearly something that community is concerned about. We've heard a lot about contamination. What are the poorly understood or unknown risks? Whenever we consider a wind farm, the issue of the noise produced by the turbines is a concern. And as I flagged earlier, the concern about decommissioning and rehabilitation of the site.

We've talked about water use. We've talked about waste. And those are things that the community is clearly concerned about. I was surprised that supply of gravel to the construction didn't show up, but that's something that I personally have been interested in and it's a concern. And finally, a thing that keeps coming out of consultations with the community is how these projects are planned and coordinated, not just the individual project, but the broad set of projects that are taking place. So those are things that we've heard today that will all be part of our consideration when we reach a view as to what should be our decision on this project.

So I have a closing statement to read that brings the show to an end. And it starts by saying thank you and I truly do mean that. We appreciate the input that we get from the community at these hearings. It's useful to us. It sometimes changes our decision. It certainly changes the way that we view what conditions we would use if we approve the project. So it's critically important to us.

So this brings us to the end of the public hearing into the Bullawah Wind Farm project and I thank everyone who's participated. I do want to remind you that there is still an opportunity to make a written submission on this application. Please visit our website to make a written submission via the web form before 11.59 pm next Tuesday, 8 September.

In the interests of openness and transparency, we will be adding a full transcript of this public hearing to our website in the next few days. Once a decision is made about this application, the Commission will share a document explaining how we took the community's views into consideration as part of the decision-making process. I thank my fellow Commissioners, Suellen and Michael. And from all of us here at the Commission, we wish you a safe and pleasant day and safe travels home. Good afternoon.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED