



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: VALLEY OF THE WINDS WIND FARM (SSD-10461)

PUBLIC MEETING

PANEL: RICHARD PEARSON (CHAIR)
 SARAH DINNING
 SUELLEN FITZGERALD

OFFICE OF THE
INDEPENDENT STUART MORGAN
PLANNING
COMMISSION:

SPEAKERS: MEGAN RICHARDSON (ACEN Australia)
 JASON NEWTON (Deputy Mayor, Warrumbungle
 Shire Council)
 ALAN MORAN
 NOEL GILBERT (VRA Coolah Rescue Squad)
 ROSEMARY REYNOLDS
 KATHRYN REYNOLDS (DL and MD Mackander and
 Individual)
 ANDREW REYNOLDS
 MEGAN SULLIVAN
 EMMA BOWMAN
 VIRGINIA KNYVETT
 GREG PIPER
 JULIE LEWIS
 PETER LEWIS
 PETE ROTHWELL (VRA Rescue NSW)

RUTH WHITE (Uarbry Hall Inc.)
MARSHALL BAILLIEU (Individual and Wiltara Farms)
SALLY EDWARDS
ANNETTE PIPER
MALCOLM ROUSE
GEMMA PRIDE
RICK CAMPBELL
IVAN KENNEDY
VAUGHN PETTET
MICHAEL HILL
AIDAN MORRISON (Centre for Independent Studies)
MARGARET CONN
AMBER PEDERSON (Burrendong SOS)
TERRY CONN
RAMILA CHANISHEFF (Australian Uyghur Tangritagh
Women's Association)
LES HUSON
GRANT PIPER (Individual, CWOREZist Inc., and
Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance Inc.)
NICOLE BREWER (Department of Planning, Housing
and Infrastructure)

LOCATION: COOLAH YUOTH & COMMUNITY CENTRE
10-12 BINNIA STREET, COOLAH

DATE: 10:00AM – 3:30PM
THURSDAY, 10th APRIL 2025

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

5 **MR RICHARD PEARSON:** Okay, hello everyone, good morning, welcome to this meeting of the Independent Planning Commission into the State Significant Development Application for the Valley of the Winds Wind Farm. Thank you very much everybody for attending today.

10 I'm speaking to you from Wiradjuri land and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the countries from which we meet today. And I pay my respects to Elders, past, present and emerging, and to Elders from other communities who may be participating today.

15 I'm Richard Pearson and I'm the Chair of the Panel today, and joining me are fellow Commissioners, Sarah Dinning and Suellen Fitzgerald. No conflicts of interest have been identified in relation to our determination of this application.

20 We have a limited and quite specific role at the end of the planning process. We decide if the application should go ahead and if so, on what conditions. We consider the Department's Assessment Report, the application, your written and oral submissions, and other materials that the Planning Law requires us to consider. All of these materials are either publicly available already or will be made available on our website.

25 In making a decision on this case, the Commission must obey all relevant laws and consider all applicable policies and the public interest. We're also obliged to consider public submissions, and that is the purpose of today's meeting. We want to hear what you think about the merits of this application. It's not a forum for submissions on whether you like or approve of the Applicant, the laws we must obey, or the policies we must consider.

30 The application has already been assessed by the Department, and they have published their Assessment Report. Many of you may have already participated in the Department's process and thank you for doing that. There is no need to repeat previous submissions, they're all available to us for our consideration, and
35 Commissioners are reviewing those submissions.

40 Today we want to hear your response to the Department's assessment and the recommended conditions. So, even if you do object to the application being approved, we encourage you to tell us whether any of your concerns could be addressed either wholly or in part by the imposition of conditions, as recommended by the Department. Your consideration of alternatives does not in any compromise your submission, and it does enable the Panel to consider all options.

45 We'll shortly hear from our registered speakers. I just have a few more points to make, and this specifically relates to speaking. So, we're going to endeavour to stick to our published schedule, depending on the speakers being ready to present at their allocated time, and you've all been allocated a time to speak.

5 I'll introduce each speaker when it's their turn to present to the Panel, and you come to the microphone at the front of the hall. Everyone has been advised in advance how long they have to speak, and a bell will sound when you have one minute of your speaking time remaining. Very well done by Kendall over there. And a second bell – well done, Kendall – will sound when a speaker's time has expired.

10 To ensure everyone receives their fair share of time, I will enforce timekeeping rules. Extensions can be granted on a case-by-case basis, however, in the interest of fairness to other speakers, an extension may not be granted.

15 If you have a copy of your speaking notes or any additional material to support your presentation, it would be appreciated if you could provide a copy to the Commission. Please note any information given to the Commission may be made public, and the Commission's privacy statement governs its approach to managing your information and is available on the Commission's website.

20 So, a couple of practical things. Exits from the venue are located, well, this tells me at the rear of the hall, that's the front of the hall. Okay. So, I'm on the ball. And the toilets are located inside to the right of the entrance, which is correct.

25 So, firstly we're going to hear from the Applicant, and I would ask them to speak about any changes they've made to the project in response to the public submissions. At the conclusion of the meeting, we'll hear from the Department of Planning and also the Applicant to respond to issues that we hear throughout the course of today.

30 So, firstly the Applicant and then we'll move to registered speakers. We'll have a lunch break around about 12:30 for 30 or 40 minutes and then get back into it. So, thank you everyone. I think the room is reasonably okay in terms of temperature control.

35 So, let's begin with the Applicant – if you could come forward, please, Megan Richardson, and present to the meeting.

40 **MS MEGAN RICHARDSON:** Thank you, Commissioner. We appreciate the opportunity to support this process. Good morning. My name is Megan Richardson and I'm the New South Wales Wind Team Lead at ACEN Australia, who is the proponent of the Valley of the Winds Project.

45 Next slide. Sure. Wonderful. Thank you. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on today, the Gomeroi people and the Wiradjuri. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and to those that continue to care for country.

Next slide. In my presentation today, I'll provide an overview of the project, how we've responded to feedback, where changes have been made to the project and

how we have followed the New South Wales planning process. I will also outline our commitments for mitigating impacts not addressed through the project design changes.

5 Next slide. If approved, Valley of the Winds will generate approximately 943 megawatts of energy from up to 131 turbines. That's enough to power about 475,000 New South Wales homes. The project is located across 20 agricultural properties, primarily used for stock grazing with some cropping operations.

10 The project will connect to the National Grid via the CWO REZ Transmission Network. The project will deliver direct financial benefits to the region via the Planning Agreement with Warrumbungle Shire Council of \$1,050 per megawatt per annum and the CWO REZ access fees of \$2,300 per megawatt per annum for community and employment purposes. Our expected construction start date for the
15 project, if approved, is late 2026 to early 2027.

Next slide. The ACEN team, including my predecessor, Jeremy Ellis, and others, have been in the region for more than five years. We held our first community information session for Valley of the Winds in March 2020 here in Coolah. In
20 total, we've hosted 11 community information sessions, in addition to regular on-ground involvement and collaboration with stakeholders. Members of our team live in the region, and we have offices in both Coolah and Gulgong.

Several concerns have been raised through the feedback process, including
25 changes to visual amenity in the landscape, questions about traffic and transport including local road upgrades, impacts to biodiversity, questions regarding aviation safety, and concerns about bushfire risk and cumulative impacts. In response, we've made some changes to the project design both before and following lodgement of the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement). I am now
30 going to run through how this feedback informed the project's proposed design.

Next slide. Key changes to the project design made in response to stakeholder feedback have included: removal of 17 wind turbines to reduce visual impact and clearing of Box Gum Woodland; removal of met masts and relocation of seven,
35 together this has resulted in a 44% reduction in the total project footprint. Relocating access to the Girragulang cluster away from the village of Uarbry –in direct response to feedback from local residents, we moved it to an alternate location approximately three kilometres west on the Golden Highway.

40 We also removed a number of light vehicle access routes. In response to community and Council concerns about traffic impacts on local roads. We undertook a detailed assessment of road upgrades to the Black Stump Way and Moorefield Road western end, which was done in close consultation with Council. A number of other design changes were made to the project.

45 Next slide. Visual impact was the key point of feedback from the community. ACEN consulted with the community on visual impact, offering photo montages and has followed the relevant planning guidelines. The reduction in turbines and

offering our Benefit Sharing Program has reduced the number of non-associated dwellings within 4.95 kilometres of the project.

5 The visual impact assessment has concluded that there is only one non-associated dwelling with a high impact. The Department's Assessment Report also concluded that the project is suitable for the site and any potential impacts are within acceptable limits.

10 Screening of impacts will be offered to all non-associated receivers within 4.95 kilometres of a turbine. Our Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program is open to all residences within five kilometres of a turbine.

15 Next slide. The proposed local road upgrades have been designed through extensive consultation with Warrumbungle Shire Council and Transport for New South Wales. The road upgrades include Mount Hope Road, Moorefield Road (western section), Black Stump Way, and associated intersections.

20 The timing of upgrades will be coordinated with the relevant roads authorities. We will undertake pre and post dilapidation surveys to ensure any impacts are made good. Oversize and over-mass vehicles for turbine components, we will use the approved Port to REZ route being upgraded by EnergyCo and its contractor.

25 We will prepare a Traffic Management Plan to minimise disruption to local road users. We are committed to working with EnergyCo and our fellow CWO REZ participants to minimise the cumulative traffic impacts associated with the REZ. I will say more about cumulative impacts later in the slides.

30 Next slide. The project has been designed to avoid impacts to native vegetation and species where possible by reducing turbines and removing or relocating associated project infrastructure, locating turbines in cleared areas, and avoiding areas of high conservation value, locating turbines 200 metres away from cliff lines, relevant for certain bat species.

35 We are committed to a number of mitigation measures during construction and operations. We will look for opportunities to minimise clearing impacts during detailed design. We will retire the required number of biodiversity offset credits prior to construction. We are securing a 282-hectare parcel of land for the purpose of restoring, enhancing and protecting Box Gum Woodland as an additional measure.

40 A Bird and Bat Adaptive Management Plan will be prepared to include additional at-height monitoring for bats, along with other specific measures. A Biodiversity Management Plan will be prepared in consultation with the relevant government agencies. This will focus on measures to minimise and manage any impacts to biodiversity.

45 Next slide. Aviation safety. Concerns were raised by the community regarding the potential for wake turbulence and obstacle impacts at Turee and Tongy airstrips.

Additional technical assessments were completed by expert consultants, one appointed by ACEN and an independent consultant appointed by the Department. They considered the risks for planes landing and taking off at Turee and Tongy airstrips in detail. Both technical advisors and the Department concluded that the risks to aviation safety are very low and can be effectively managed.

As a condition of approval, we will be required to develop an Aviation Management Plan in consultation with the operators of Tongy and Turee aerodromes. In addition, a Bushfire and Emergency Response Plan will be prepared prior to commissioning and will address aviation-related bushfire risks.

Bushfire risk. A Bushfire Risk Report was completed at EIS stage. And the recommendations of the report were supported by the Rural Fire Service. Mitigation will include establishing an asset protection zone around key project infrastructure, developing and implementing a comprehensive Bushfire and Emergency Response Plan, and detailed emergency procedures for the development. And committing to mitigation measures, including the provision of on-site firefighting water supply.

Next slide. ACEN acknowledges that the cumulative impacts within the CWO REZ need to be carefully managed. The project's potential to contribute to cumulative impacts for noise, visual amenity, traffic and roads were assessed as part of the EIS and found to be manageable. For example, the assessment concluded that the project's contribution to noise and visual cumulative impacts in conjunction with Liverpool Range Wind Farm is low. The Department's Assessment Report supported this conclusion.

We know that cumulative traffic impacts in the REZ are an important concern for the community. We are supporting EnergyCo's work along with other REZ proponents to coordinate on vehicle movements along the Port to REZ route to help manage these impacts.

Next slide. In conclusion, the Valley of the Winds Project was developed in accordance with the EP&A Act and New South Wales Wind Energy Guideline. ACEN agrees with the Department that this is an approvable project. We have made significant changes to the project design as a direct result of community and stakeholder feedback. And we are committed to ongoing engagement through the life of the project.

Thank you for listening.

MR PEARSON: Okay. Thanks, Megan. Do Commissioners have any questions for the Applicant? Sorry.

MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD: Not at this stage, thanks Richard.

MR PEARSON: Sorry, Megan, I just have one. In the event of a bushfire, do you have the capability to shut down turbines to enable aerial firefighting activities to

occur?

MS RICHARDSON: Yes.

5 **MR PEARSON:** And would that be something – where would you specify the protocol for that? Would that be in one of the bushfire management plans that –?

MS RICHARDSON: Yes, that – exactly, that would be in the Bushfire Emergency Response Plan.

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MR PEARSON: All right. And can they be shut down quickly or is that a long process, can you just talk briefly to that.

15 **MS RICHARDSON:** It can be done remotely from the operations centre. And I think it takes about a minute for turbines to fully stop operation.

MR PEARSON: Okay. And that is likely to be one of your bushfire mitigation measures that you propose ultimately?

20 **MS RICHARDSON:** Absolutely, yes. In the event of a bushfire, we can shut the turbines off.

25 **MR PEARSON:** Okay. Thank you. And the only other – the other question I had, just your Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program, is that still open or is that something that's concluded now or can people still gain access to that?

30 **MS RICHARDSON:** Yes. So, our Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program is entirely voluntary. It's open to residences within five kilometres of the project, and it is very much still open and we're more than happy to have conversations with local residents about that.

MR PEARSON: Okay. Thank you. Nothing further from me.

35 **MS RICHARDSON:** Wonderful. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. So, now we're going to move to our registered speakers, and firstly we have Councillor Jason Newton. Jason, if you could come forward and address the meeting, please.

40 **CR JASON NEWTON:** You've beaten me to it. Can everybody hear? Much better. Thank you. Good morning, Commissioners and welcome to Coolah. My name is Jason Newton, and it is my privilege to be a Councillor of Warrumbungle Shire Council. The shire is facing a massive disturbance and change arising from the 11 REZ projects to be located at least in part in the shire, with 40 plus across
45 the whole REZ.

There may be a temporary doubling of the shire's population over the next decade with construction workers. The environmental, social and economic costs are

staring us in the face. We're yet to be convinced of the benefits.

Unfortunately, Council has to say that the State Government has been derelict in its duties in planning by not conducting upfront cumulative impact studies to identify actions that can be implemented to alleviate the pressures of cumulative impacts from all of these projects on local and regional infrastructure and services.

On the 11th of November '24, the *Financial Review* reported the Port of Newcastle's CEO, Craig Carmody, as saying, "The port needs to bring in about 9,500 wind turbines and 30,500 components for the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone in the next seven years. We already do 86% of all wind turbines into New South Wales. You can only move six trucks a night," he said. "If you extrapolate that out, it will take us 11 years to move the wind turbines that we're supposed to do in seven years. That's even before we start talking about roundabouts, roads and bridges."

Yet, in the DPHI's Assessment Report for this project, it asserts on page 64, "There is ample spare capacity on the Golden Highway." Council does not support the proposition that the Golden Highway has or will have ample spare capacity. Rather, even now, road safety is compromised because there are inadequate overtaking spaces and very few slow-traffic lanes.

It's not just the Golden Highway. Council is also concerned about impacts on local roads. This includes the significant increase in maintenance post construction, post upgrades, re-powering and post-decommissioning, and the resultant costs. That cost burden must not be shifted to the ratepayer. The developer must be required to carry it.

Socio-economic impacts are also front of mind, including impacts on emergency services, police, fire brigade, ambulance, medical services, etc Impacts on the availability of medical and other social services. Social and amenity impacts on the local residents. And impacts on the social and cultural fabric of the shire.

In this room today, there are lots of people who may have not spoken before at a public meeting run by the State Government. In comparison, you and your organisations are very powerful and used to such undertakings. Together with the developer, ACEN Australia, and the Department of Planning, you wield the power to decide what happens in the backyard of the citizens who are at the heart and soul of this region.

Thus, the Council calls on the IPC to share some of that power with the locals. And with the councils that are elected to govern for their ratepayers. Please listen to and act upon their voices. The Council also encourages the IPC to be forthcoming and acknowledge that the focus of the EP&A Act is on project-level assessments. Thus, the cumulative impacts that arise from these multiple developments across the broader regional space and over time tend to be overlooked.

To conclude, given the critical and urgent nature of the need for the REZ-wide robust cumulative impact assessment and the identification and implementation of mitigation measures, and the enhanced road safety risk on the Golden Highway, Warrumbungle Shire Council urges the IPC to not approve this project until such time as the Golden Highway cumulative traffic types and volumes, including both the Central-West Orana and the South-West REZ's are recalculated to include heavy traffic travelling to the South-West REZ, with revamped upgrade measures committed to. And cumulative social impact assessment and mitigation actions are implemented immediately to alleviate the pressures on local and regional infrastructures and services.

Commissioners, thank you for your time and thanks to the public for being part of this.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Thanks, Jason. Just a quick question from me. Is Council participating in some of the cumulative impact work that EnergyCo is doing? Are you across that or is that something maybe staff are participating in at Council?

CR NEWTON: Thank you, Mr Chair. Staff, I believe, have been participating in cumulative impact studies. But the cumulative impact study on the Central-West Zone, I believe, has not been completed.

MR PEARSON: I think that's correct, yes. Yes. Thank you. Any further questions? No, we're good. Thanks very much, Jason.

CR NEWTON: Once again, thanks Commissioners and thanks to the public for being part of this project.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. So, the next speaker is Alan Moran, who is by phone, I understand. So –

MR ALAN MORAN: Yes, that's correct.

MR PEARSON: Yes. Good, Alan. You have five minutes. Please address the public meeting.

MR MORAN: Thanks very much, Commissioner. The proposal is predicated on the basis that more renewable energy power is required to support some pre-ordained energy transition, and its aim is to replace coal, which presently supplies 60% of this state's electricity supply and which is said to be aging and more costly than wind and solar and has unacceptable emissions of carbon dioxide.

But it should be noted, without subsidies to renewable energy, none of that energy would be commercial. Those subsidies have risen steadily since their original introduction 20 years ago, and now nationally amount to about \$16 billion a year, and they comprise requirements on energy retailers to incorporate designated renewable sources within supply mix. They include direct purchases by the

government at premium prices of these energy sources. And taxpayer subsidies which in New South Wales amount to \$386 million in addition to those paid by the Commonwealth.

5 And then there's the requirements on consumers to reimburse the additional cost of transmission lines like the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone, which are needed because the dispersed and less dense supply of electricity which is wind and solar.

10 So, in spite of these subsidies, increased levels of wind and solar cause higher energy prices. And the greater the subsidies, the higher the prices. It can be seen from international comparisons that price and solar/wind market shares cheapest electricity is found in nations with the lowest renewable share – that's Russia, India, Korea, and others. The dearest is in those with the highest shares of
15 renewables – Germany, UK, Netherlands, Spain, Italy.

So, though commercial for the sponsors, the project cost to the community is considerable. Valley of the Winds Wind Farm, in addition to its market revenue, will obtain a subsidy through the large-scale generation certificate scheme which
20 is currently \$23 per megawatt-hour. So, if this facility operated at the proposed 1.8 million megawatt-hours a year, its subsidy from that scheme alone would amount to \$42 million a year.

So, the people of New South Wales are being required to pay \$42 million per year
25 for a facility that actually undermines the low-cost energy that they seek. The wholesale price of electricity before the renewable energy subsidised supply started to cause coal-fired generators to become economic, that price in today's money was \$50 per megawatt-hour. Last year, the subsidies brought the wholesale price in New South Wales to \$145 per megawatt-hour. In other words, we've seen
30 a threefold increase in the wholesale market to the great disbenefit of the community as a whole.

The ABS data shows general prices this year are double those of the year 2000, while electricity price are three-and-half times those levels which are supporting
35 the data we can see from the wholesale market. That upside, upward trade trajectory will continue. Though renewables are said to be cheaper than coal and gas and nuclear, this is only the case if costs of firming of the intermittent renewables are excluded. And if we exclude those costs that are now set to rise considerably, the costs of providing the increased transmission. Firming costs are
40 incurred because the proposed facilities are unreliable. High cost renewable energy must be balanced. This is the cost the community will incur in many times in excess of those of the project itself.

We can see the amount of coal in Australia is far less than those in the highly
45 competitive Chinese and other economies. If the case for subsidised renewable is based on CO₂ emissions, it's very weak, as Australia's just got 1% and it's declining in the world total. And the US administration has overturned its renewable subsidies, calling more gas and coal, therefore negating the case for

emissions savings.

5 So, in conclusion, the lack of evidence of harmful effects of CO₂ emissions, the absence of international support without which Australian measures are ineffectual, and the taxpayer/consumer costs imposed mean the Valley of the Winds proposal is clearly against the public interest, and the Commission should reject it.

10 Thank you very much.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Alan. Our next speaker is Noel Gilbert. Noel is in the room, I believe.

15 **MR NOEL GILBERT:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. I'm with our local Coolah Rescue Squad and I wish to talk about the lack of any preparation in the assessment for emergency services in our region.

MR PEARSON: A few people aren't picking up what you're saying.

20 **MR GILBERT:** Okay.

MR PEARSON: Yes, just if you can just project a bit, thank you.

25 **MR GILBERT:** So, looking at the assessment and the approvals and the planning for emergency services within our region, it's seriously lacking. The roles of emergency services in our town are threefold. They're generally in rescue, RCR, which is Road Crash Rescue, and we have the Rural Fire Service and Fire Rescue New South Wales.

30 These agencies all have different roles. We do our best to interact with each other so there is not a shortfall and everything else. The assessment talks about fire suppression and aviation, and strategies for management of that, but not about each role of emergency services, nor has there been any engagement with our local emergency services as to what our expanded role may be in the future when we're confronted with an industrialised zone.

35 We're going from a rural zone to an industrial zone. Where do we go from here? It's not just about bushfire suppression. There is a lack of an emergency plan and public scrutiny. We need to engage with the planning people on a plan for how we can handle the future.

40 It's an industrial zone of the scale likened to the Hunter Valley. It's huge; 48,000 tons of material are to be extracted, increased traffic, workers from potentially two workers camps, increased population. Is the only impact on emergency going to be fire? No.

45 We are general land rescue and RCR first responders. We're faced with heightened industrial activity and road traffic with little change to infrastructure. I

think we seriously need to engage on this to develop a strategy that works towards building the necessary infrastructure for a dedicated professional team to service our district into the future. And too, 12 months ago I would have said a million dollars wouldn't help our lack of active members. Today, I say, give us that million dollars and more to develop the proper infrastructure in our region.

Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MS FITZGERALD: Thanks, Noel. If I could ask. You mentioned a number of different organisations that are doing emergency work in the district and needing coordination. Which of those agencies would be, in your view, the natural coordinator for the kind of actions you've been talking about? Is it Rural Fire, Fire and Rescue New South Wales – which agency?

MR GILBERT: Yes. There's the Volunteer Rescue Association of New South Wales.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes.

MR GILBERT: And their Commissioner. There's Fire Rescue New South Wales. There's the Rural Fire Service, and their respective Commissioners and they would all fall under the mantle of State Emergency Services.

MS FITZGERALD: Right.

MR GILBERT: We also have the SES in our region. But the SES agencies most close to ACEN in Tambar Springs and –

MS FITZGERALD: Thanks. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Noel. No, I'm sorry, we don't get questions from the floor. You'll get your opportunity to put your views later. So, thank you very much, Noel.

I ask the Applicant, not now but when later on, you can perhaps talk about some of the emergency planning that you would be required to do. And also there is a potential avenue through the Voluntary Planning Agreement funds for investment in things like the kind of services you provide that, you know, subject to Council being on board with that.

But I do understand the issues you're making, and the lack of active members is a real concern for these sorts of organisations. So, great points and, Megan, if you could later on talk about some of the emergency planning that you would be required to do.

We next have Rosemary Reynolds, please.

Yes, sorry, just a general thing is we can't just have questions from the floor, that's not how we operate. But you'll obviously get your opportunity at some point to put your views. Thank you.

5

MS ROSEMARY REYNOLDS: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thanks very much, Rosemary.

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MS REYNOLDS: Well, I am Rosemary, but they all call me Rose around here, so.

MR PEARSON: Rose, okay, if you don't mind me being –

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MS REYNOLDS: I live in the area sandwiched between the Tilt and the ACEN projects. The Department's Assessment Report states that, "This project has reduced from 175 turbines to 131 turbines. The Department considers that this has ticked the box on cumulative impact. The EIS provided information on two whole clusters – Mundroola and Eastern – that had been removed in consideration of cumulative impact." This is not true.

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There were never going to be 175 turbines in this project, unless ACEN were allowed to compulsorily acquire the land. The phantom Mundroola cluster detailed in the EIS never existed. Many in this so-called cluster are existing land hosts for the Tilt Project. The remaining are fierce objectors. At least one of which has managed to reduce the Tilt Project by eight turbines, given the proximity to their boundary.

25

The phantom Eastern cluster has at least 13 turbines depicted for our property. There was never any chance of this. Why would we destroy the use of our airstrip, destroy our beautiful timber-hilled tops, render the largest water source in the district unusable by helicopters during a fire, and make our homes unliveable for us, and the many wedge-tailed eagles that live in the area?

30

The remaining turbines depicted in the East cluster are consistent objectors to the project. Just look at the speakers list and the people in the room. Could it be that ACEN invented these clusters to remove them, to appear to have addressed cumulative impact?

35

The Department has been advised on numerous occasions by email that these two clusters were imagined by ACEN. Would you like us to provide statutory declarations from the landholders in these areas as proof they have never been consulted with ACEN with the plan to host turbines?

40

Roughly 20 years ago when Windlab was circling the landowners in the district, many in the district accepted the offer of a bus ride and overnight accommodation to view the Lake George turbines. Following this excursion, two groups of landowners emerged – those that thought hosting turbines was a great idea, and

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those that thought it was a disastrous idea.

The ones who thought it sounded like easy money are the current hosts for ACEN and Tilt. Now we hear that many in the land host group are not-so-happy campers. Those who thought wind turbines sounded disastrous have worked out that Windlab and the like were not the sort of people you'd want to do business with.

You can see from the slides that we live in a cumulative impact area marked out by both Tilt and ACEN. The developer's maps describe this area as that "cumulative impacted both visually and audibly by both projects". With the micro-siting of the turbines by both Tilt and ACEN, how many additional homes will fall into this cumulative impact area?

I note that the whole town of Coolah has fallen into this cumulative impact area. Note that we've got four homes and at no stage have ACEN or the Department acknowledged the fourth home. The home is not imagined; it was built in the 1950s and is occupied by my son.

There will be cumulative impacts to the local roads and the Golden Highway. Many of us are forced to seek medical treatment away from Coolah, given the fact we've only got one doctor and at times we don't have any. Any specialist medical treatment requires a trip to Dubbo, Central Coast, Sydney and beyond.

More than once in recent years, I've been forced to sit by the side of the Golden Highway for hours, due to a crash blocking both directions. It's not great sitting on the side of the road for hours on end in the middle of summer. But apparently there are no cumulative impacts expected. The CWO REZ has 40 plus projects inside or immediately adjacent to it. Warrumbungle Shire has 10 generation projects plus the transmission line project.

The New South Wales Government has announced plans to extend the line to Tooraweenah and Burrendong to facilitate even more generation facilities. The New South Wales Government has yet to complete a strategic level that is whole-of-government cumulative impact assessment (CIA) for the CWO REZ.

This project should not be approved.

MR PEARSON: Thank you very much, Rosa. I've got Kathryn Reynolds next. Thank you, Jason. Kathryn –

MS KATHRYN REYNOLDS: I just would like the slides attached to our speech. There are a couple of slides, I've got two speeches to do. Can you afford me four minutes on the first one and then I've got one to do, and there are slides for both. And with Rose's, you didn't actually rotate the slides through. I want them rotated continuously, please.

MR STUART MORGAN: Just tell me when to change.

MS REYNOLDS: No, no. I want – there are only a number of slides there. We’ll put them up and just keep flowing them through. Because you didn’t [unintelligible 00:41:37].

5 **MR MORGAN:** Okay. If you could just tell me to change slides.

MS REYNOLDS: No, no. Okay. I will lose all my time if I tell you to change slides.

10 **MR PEARSON:** That’s okay, I can give you a bit of extra time.

MS REYNOLDS: Just keep doing it.

MR PEARSON: We’ll work it through.

15

MR MORGAN: Yes.

MR PEARSON: Yes. All right. Thanks, Kathryn.

20 **MS REYNOLDS:** I’m speaking on behalf of David and Miriam Mackander who were unable to be here today, given prior family commitments and a short notice period. On the maps displayed, David and Miriam are house number [redacted] according to ACEN. Sorry.

25 These are David and Miriam’s words. “We are really worried long term about the impacts to our environment and ultimately who is going to hold the hosts accountable to remove the turbines so they are not impacting on us after their life. We have grave concerns that information is being withheld from neighbours – we call it ‘secret squirrel’ business. We are annoyed at the secret squirrel business.
30 We realise this is what the developers want. Division. So, little information is shared. For example, no one even told us about the planned EnergyCo transmission and substation and the planned proximity to our home.

35 We gave ACEN permission for sound monitoring at our home, only if we were given a copy of the report. No report has been received. In all recent contact with ACEN, we have asked for sound monitoring reports; nothing received. We are worried about the noise and the impact of noise on our quality of life.

40 We have been given a neighbour agreement to sign, yet no results of the noise monitoring they had adjacent to the clothesline for three months. According to the neighbour agreement, we have four turbines within two to three kilometres, eight turbines in three to four kilometres, nine turbines in four to five kilometres. We note there are at least 10 turbines that could be micro-sited into different areas closer to our home. Of these 10 turbines, at least five in the area outside of five
45 kilometres could come into the four to five kilometre band.

There has been no photo montage completed by ACEN and our residence. None has been offered. Why, when we do our LPA accreditation is it asking if we are in

the vicinity of wind turbines or solar panels? Is this because of the contamination of the eroding blades?

5 Our roads are bad enough already without additional traffic. Orana Road to Collier Road is our only access to Black Stump Way. How are we going to stop people using these roads? Cameras won't stop contractors taking shortcuts on local roads instead of designated routes.

10 What provision are they making if there's a bushfire nearby? As a result of the Sir Ivan fire, we lost 70% of the place. During that event, we had aerial fire support with helicopters and Hercules. Many helicopters at our place, they fuelled from our dam and the Turee Dam. They won't be able to fly anywhere near our home, we will be a "no-fly zone". If we are evacuated due to fire because there's no aerial firefighting, what happens to our home, livestock and business?

15 We are concerned we won't be able to get affordable insurance, even if fire insurance is ever going to be offered. For example, flood insurance is not available in flood country. When will fire insurance not be available to communities surrounded by wind turbines?

20 We've seen local evidence of potential buyers walk away from properties that neighbour wind turbines and their infrastructure. We have seen evidence that buyers walk away from properties planning to host turbines.

25 We have no idea where the quarry, substation and batteries will be located. Are they on neighbouring land to us?

30 We've been offered a measly sum for a neighbour payment that would not be paid until turbines were commissioned. We would like to know when does the developer, ACEN, receive subsidies from the government. Is it when approvals have been acquired, or on commencement of construction of the wind farm, or is it paid in increments throughout the construction or on completion and commissioning of the planned wind farm?

35 Is it possible that the project would be sold to some other entity, and what happens to any agreements? The money offered to us is an insult when we are looking at the long term impacts. Note there has been no offer of compensation for disruption to our lives and business during construction. An example of ACEN's poor communication is texting us at 11:16 on Wednesday 2 April to let us know the Independent Planning Commission was being held on 10 April – that was
40 44 minutes prior to the close of speakers registration.

45 If the Department puts consent conditions in to protect us, who polices these? Is it up to us to report breaches of consent conditions, who to? Why do we have to deal with the coast problem – the wind blows in the Blue Mountains and out in the harbour. Wind and solar is just a band-aid and we cannot see the whole thing working. And I note that the Commission did not visit site 278."

End of Miriam Mackander. Beginning of Kathryn Reynolds.

5 **MR PEARSON:** If you can just pause for one second, Kathryn. So, Kendall, the Department should respond on the compliance enforcement issue when they talk this afternoon. Because that is a responsibility for the Department of Planning and we'll make sure that they understand that later on today.

Were there any questions for Kathryn in relation to that first presentation?

10 **MS FITZGERALD:** No.

MS SARAH DINNING: No, thank you.

15 **MR PEARSON:** So, if you proceed with the second. Thank you.

MS REYNOLDS: My name is Kathryn Reynolds. I live in the area sandwiched between the Tilt and ACEN developments; that's the yellow bit there. We are growers of cereal and oil seed crops and we produce beef cattle. Our crops regularly win awards. Our environment and soil type is such that we can produce 20 crops no matter the season. We use modern varieties and modern equipment.

We have cropping paddocks adjacent to the ACEN turbines on our western boundary. In keeping with best practice farming, we rotate the crops we sow to reduce disease and weed resistance. At present, our rotation includes canola and 25 wheat and we're currently looking to include pulses such as fava beans and/or chickpeas into our rotation.

Our cropping decisions are made in conjunction with our agronomists and based around sustainability. There have been numerous times over the last few years 30 we've required aerial applications of our crops to address pest threats. Mice in sorghum, slugs in wheat, Russian wheat aphid in wheat, and fungicide for canola.

Timeliness is vital, and aerial applications are dependent on weather and aircraft availability. Once a decision is made that an aerial application is warranted, the 35 day and the time of the application is unknown. It is not uncommon to be advised on the day when the aerial application will take place. Aerial applications consider wind direction, wind strength and inversion, or drift that could impact neighbouring land. This is particularly the case where there are different crops nearby.

40 The Milan, Italy based co-author of the To70 report, has three years' experience in the civil aviation sector. His skills include airfield design and traffic forecasts. No mention of the impact of wind turbines and wake turbulence on aerial applications to crops.

45 The Victorian based author of the To70 report lists his experience in town planning and airport planning. Please detail his experience on the impact of wind turbines and wake turbulence on aerial application to crops.

5 The authors of the To70 report quite likely have zero understanding of aerial agricultural applications and the need for timeliness while balancing the weather conditions and aircraft ability. For example, do either of them understand that aerial applications are used rather than ground applications to avoid damage to a mature crop?

10 To access European markets, we are required to be accredited with Sustainable Grain Australia. The Sustainable Grain Assessment asks if there are any significant structures built on the property in the past year. If the answer is yes, then an environmental impact assessment and/or building permit must be produced. Significant structures would include transmission towers, BESS, substations, switching stations, turbines, accommodation camps, industrial solar.

15 When will the presence of these structures exclude farmers from the European market? When will we be excluded from grain and oil seed markets, given the contamination from leading edge erosion of turbine blades?

20 Are the ACEN turbine blades BPA free? Can the New South Wales Government guarantee that these industrial developments on our boundary will not prevent us from accessing our markets? Is the government prepared to make it a condition of consent the turbines must be certified BPA free by ACEN?

25 Quoting American Clean Power Association fact sheets is insufficient, given the obvious conflict of interest with the membership base of the American Clean Power. The membership base are wind, solar, transmission and storage developers. What is the wear guarantee on the front edge of the blade? There are 393 blades in this project. How much of this wear material will end up in the environment. Why is the New South Wales Government not applying the precautionary principle?

30 Decision makers should adopt precautionary measures where scientific evidence about environmental or human health hazard is uncertain and the stakes are high. Can the New South Wales Government give us a guarantee that our crops, pastures and water sources will not be contaminated from forever chemicals used in the BESS, transmission, turbines and switching stations?

40 When will land with these structures be restricted from sustainable grain and farming because of contamination? What research is being done on the drying effect of wind turbines? What research has been done on the impact of wind turbines on downwind meteorology and rainfall? What research is being done on the impact of wind turbines on aerial agriculture? Why has the New South Wales Government not utilised the genuine expertise and experience of Australian aerial ag operators?

45 Aerial Application Association of Australia have been around since 1958, and their operations include crop spraying, fertilising, sowing, locust and mouse plague control, and firebombing. AAAA work close with state and federal agencies on a range of policy issues yet not contacted by DPHI.

Why does the Meat Livestock Association want to know if we're hosting wind turbines, transmission and solar? Is this because they are adopting the precautionary measure, but the New South Wales Government is not?

5

The enormous cumulative impact of wind turbines on our business and those around us has not been addressed. The government's own Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines have not been followed. The Department has not presented a whole-of-government evaluation of issues in its Assessment Report. There are many unresolved issues from the community and New South Wales government agencies.

10

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Kathryn. Thank you, Kathryn, very much. Andrew Reynolds.

15

MR ANDREW REYNOLDS: Is my slideshow up there? So, I've got a couple of erroneous claims I wanted to talk about that the Department have made.

Next slide. It's a picture of our airstrip. It's over a kilometre long, it's a great strip, it's cleared. Another kilometre behind that, 100 metres either side has been graded. It's downhill, it's got 200,000 litres of water storage at the top of the strip. There's basically no other strips this side of Kurrajong Park of that capacity. It's registered on the RFS pre-incident database. You can see all the turbines there in pink for demonstration.

20

25

Next slide thanks. What happens when you add bushfire smoke? You can't see the turbines. It'll be too dangerous for planes to fly anywhere near this. So, our airstrip will be unlikely to be used again for firefighting purposes in the future.

30

Next slide thanks. So, here's ACEN's answer to this and the Department. This is an erroneous claim that I'm pointing out. The bunny-ear position, as you can see, lights are on, and they're stationary obviously. So, the first problem is, they think firefighting aircraft are going to fly between the blades. You've got to be kidding me.

35

Next problem. Next slide thanks. Smoke everywhere. So, no pilot is going to fly anywhere near this – not even a Red Bull pilot – they're amazing but they're not stupid. So, this claim is straight out erroneous. And in reality, the risk assessment on the day for aerial operators is to stay right away – don't fly anywhere near it. And stay away from the airstrips. So, it doesn't matter what position the blades are in, it's irrelevant, the pilots aren't going to fly anywhere near this.

40

Next slide thanks. This is just a quick snapshot of the Sir Ivan fire. I could talk all day about this. But the red dots there are proposed turbines of ACEN, and in purple is 2017, this the sort of strips the big tankers were doing. Big tankers – you know, the Hercules, they carry a lot of water, it's a five K turnaround and line-up for them. They're amazing, they're really getting just above the tree height so they could get low enough to hit the fire front, and certainly well below proposed

45

turbine height.

5 So, this has enormous implications. We're not going to have this support anymore. For all of us surrounding these developments, you know, if you're in the development, you've signed up too, I don't know what you do, but for all of us around, we're going to be caught up in all of this. Lives, property, livestock is all going to be at risk. Will we get insurance? Probably not, when the insurance companies wake up to this.

10 Next slide thanks. Next erroneous claim has been made on page 3, I've listed the pages on this. So, they are saying, "The Department is satisfied that the project would not fundamentally change the broader landscape characteristics of the area." Does the picture say 1,000 words? So, not only did they say this out loud, they actually put it in writing.

15 Next slide. Just more context. This is from the Oceania website; these are the modern turbines. They're enormous, okay. It doesn't need any more explanation – this is a massive change to the landscape.

20 Next slide. It's the Coolah district. The pink boundary goes all the way around both projects. As you can see, I'm just going to point out, the distance between the turbines, between the projects is much closer than the distance between the turbines within the project.

25 As far as the community's concerned, it's one giant project, one developer, 10 developers, this – we're going to be in the middle of all this. So, obviously this is a momentous change to the character of the Coolah district.

30 Next, thanks. So, in conclusion, these are just two of the erroneous claims, but they just relate to many adverse impacts not addressed properly by DPFI or developers. Multiple mega projects in the Coolah district will have cascading and cumulative impacts that have not been assessed.

35 There's been no comprehensive cumulative impact assessment being done by DPFI for the CWO REZ or our district. And my view, and many others, no more projects, including this ACEN project, should be approved until this has been completed.

40 Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Any – You know that smoky slide you had. Would aerial activity occur even without turbines in those conditions? It looks a pretty hostile environment.

45 **MR REYNOLDS:** What we're talking about here is a fire situation where we need to be able to get planes, helicopters –

MR PEARSON: Yes, yes, no, I understand.

MR REYNOLDS: – to attack the front. So, if there's really bad conditions and we're aiming to do aerial agricultural, well, we're probably going to wait for the fog to lift, obviously. So, you've got a choice.

5

MR PEARSON: But they would still fly in those incredibly smoky conditions without turbines?

MR REYNOLDS: They did last time.

10

MR PEARSON: No, I do understand that. But, you know, there's some risk kind of factor involved, I assume, in –

MR REYNOLDS: Yes, but they didn't have 250-metre height turbines with 300 and something blades just in this ACEN development lane. I mean, they're just not going to go there. That's going to be the reality, you know.

15

MR PEARSON: Thank you. So, just for both – no, thank you very much, Andrew. Just for the Department and the Applicant, we'll just ask the Department and the Applicant to respond to the issues that were raised by Kathryn Reynolds in relation to aerial cropping activity, and also the issues raised by Andrew in relation to firefighting issues and this notion that the mere existence of those turbines, whether they're shut down or not, is problematic for bushfire fighting. So, we'll put those on the record for the Department and the Applicant for later in the meeting.

20

25

Our next speaker is Megan Sullivan, please. That's okay, no problem. You'll be great. Thank you.

30

MS MEGAN SULLIVAN: In the IPC meeting with Council, you have stated that your role is to implement the State Government's policy in terms of renewable energy. It is stated on the IPC website that you are to invite cooperation and strengthen public trust in the planning system.

35

Is this secondary to your role in implementing the government's renewable energy policy? What is the priority for the Commission? Is the overriding priority to follow the directions of Minister Sharp, that being to implement the government's renewable energy policy? The direction from Minister Sharp is that agencies involved in the assessment and decision-making process within the planning system need to prioritise the government's emissions reduction targets (ERT). Are we simply collateral damage – some might say roadkill – in order to the New South Wales Government to achieve the unachievable targets and to do so at all costs?

40

45

Vital strategic cumulative impact assessment (CIA) information is missing. This is contrary to the DPHI's own CIA Guidelines. We submit that without such a strategic CIA information, i.e. whole-of-government assessment for the CWO REZ, the decision-making process regarding CIA is fundamentally deficient.

5 We note that in your discussions with the Department, it was stated that the fire safety study and emergency plan should not be made publicly available. The Department is saying that we are not to know what will happen in the event of a bushfire. Are we not to know what will happen in the event of a bushfire because we will simply be told to evacuate, as we cannot receive any aerial support during a bushfire?

10 The community is very concerned about bushfires after their experience in 2017. We deserve to know everything in this secret plan. How long will it be before fire insurance is not an option for anyone in this community? The ACEN representative that met with the IPC clearly demonstrated she was unaware of the local bushfire management resources. It was mentioned in objections during the exhibition period and the Department has been repeatedly advised by neighbours to the project.

20 The Bushfire Emergency Plan currently looks this. ACEN propose a single 50,000-litre water tank. Hmm. Likely, volunteer firefighters will refuse to enter any land where there are turbines, transmissions, BESS or substations. Pilots of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft will decline the invitation to fly into the area, given the collision risks.

25 And no effort by the developer to protect what the Department sees as a vital project to help New South Wales meet its ERTs. Does this seem odd? Putting transmission batteries and wind turbines into a bushfire zone and then ensuring that no bushfire can be managed.

30 There are lots of talks by ACEN about neighbour agreements. Did you know that neighbour agreements are provided in paper format, never by electronic means. Is this so it is more difficult to send to your solicitor for advice? I wonder exactly how many people who have signed neighbour agreements have run this past their solicitors first. The common advice from solicitors is, "Don't sign it. You are forfeiting your rights."

35 ACEN have been offering neighbours a maximum of 12 to 16,000 per year once turbines are commissioned. Does this sound like a good deal? To have their peaceful, quiet home destroyed by turbine noise, their views disturbed by industrial-scale turbines and transmission lines, and their assets devalued. Houses sold in the last 12 months in Coolah indicate there has been a drop of 9 to 12% in value. Buyers are walking away from land neighbouring wind turbines. Buyers are walking away from land with plans to host turbines. When will banks not lend to landowners impacted by turbines? When will banks foreclose on land that has become unsaleable?

45 The ACEN representative incorrectly stated numbers during the meeting with IPC, flippantly referring to the tiny number of objectors that live close by. The Department stated that 55 of the turbines lived within 15 kilometres of the project, 87 neighbours have still not signed a neighbour agreement, and with good reason.

Only 26 people have signed a neighbour agreement, even though ACEN continuously harass unsigned nearby neighbours. This whole project will only benefit 20 land hosts and the Filipino owners of the project.

5 Lastly, I would like to acknowledge agriculture as a backbone of Australia, and I pay my respects to our past, present and future generations of farmers who are providing food and fibre for our great nation.

Thank you.

10

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Thank you, Megan, and I think your public speaker skills are pretty good. So, nothing to –

MS SULLIVAN: I have been told to sound less angry, but I had to get through it.

15

MR PEARSON: Well, not sure if that worked but – Just in relation to the policy environment that we're operating in, and I did say this in our introduction. We obviously have to have regard to the government's policies, so in relation to renewable energy. But our job is to assess the merits of the project and whether they're acceptable with the conditions and other mitigations that could be imposed on the project.

20

So, while there is a policy, it doesn't by any means mean that we just get the rubber stamp out when a renewable energy project comes forward. That's why we're having this public meeting; to hear concerns and see whether the project can be made to work or not, so I just wanted to be clear on that point. Thank you.

25

Our next speaker is Emma Bowman. And Emma's got 10 minutes allocated.

30

MS EMMA BOWMAN: Yes, I think so. That works. Good morning, everybody. I am a fifth generation farmer from Dunedoo and I am deeply concerned for the agricultural industry and rural and regional New South Wales and Australia with regard to the rapid transition to renewable energy.

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The people most affected by the transition are those who have fed and clothed the population for generations. Here, proponents and DPPI project assessors deem the impacts to surrounding landowners and communities as minor, insignificant or negligible, is an insult to our way of life and the things we value most.

40

Not only will our landscape be forever altered, the majority of these projects also pose an enormous threat to our industry and businesses, our personal safety and that of our livestock, wildlife and environment.

45

Oh sorry, I missed the slide in between. Yes. Next slide please. The Central-West Orana REZ was formally declared in November 2021 to the eventual bewilderment and devastation of a large number of landowners and community members. Most had no idea it had even happened until EnergyCo thrust themselves upon our district.

5 What has followed since then has been nothing short of traumatic. The declaration of the REZ's was the first breach of legislation in regard to the rapid transition to renewable energy. Not a great start, considering it was one of the first steps taken publicly after years of negotiations behind closed doors.

10 The Act clearly states that, "The Minister may make a declaration only if the Minister has considered the views of the local community in the Renewable Energy Zone." We did never have a say about our homes and district becoming the renewable energy power plant of the future.

15 Next slide. Social licence to operate has been defined as "an ongoing acceptance of a project by the community and other important stakeholders." During the exhibition period of the Valley of the Winds, EIS and the Department, sorry, received 105 submissions from the public, 94 of which were objections.

20 An ACEN representative stated only last week that, "The remaining amount of community opposition to the project is quite standard for a project of this size." The same staff member also said they thought 40% of those who made submissions were local. The Commissioners must note that 58 of 94 of the objectors to the project live within 50 kilometres of the site. Out here, that is local and that is in fact over 60%.

25 Next slide. The Department of Primary Industries' Agriculture Industry Snapshot for Planning, August 2020, states, "The Central-West's slopes and plains has the advantage of large areas of unfragmented land that allow the achievement of economies of scale for broad-acre agriculture, including irrigation. This, coupled with suitable soils and water supply, infrastructure as well as access to markets in Dubbo, Orange, Sydney and Newcastle make the sub-region one of the most successful and profitable in New South Wales." It also says, "Future use land planning must recognise the importance of agriculture to society and the economy, and that land and resources on which agriculture depend need to be protected and managed to enable continued use of the land for agriculture."

35 Next slide. The snapshot also declares that "The Central-West slopes and plains sub-region supports high-value agriculture now and will be important to sustain production of more specialised agricultural and horticultural enterprises into the future." What has changed in the four years since the New South Wales DPI released this publication? New legislation?

40 Is it wise to allow such a vast amount of land to be taken out of full agricultural production? We cannot simply create more farmland on which to produce food and fibre.

45 Next slide. The health of our livestock is paramount. The Livestock Production Assurance Accreditation now requires the declaration of livestock grazing under renewable energy infrastructure and forces the producer to conduct a risk assessment to mitigate any potential contamination.

5 While the LPA does not currently prohibit or restrict the installation of renewable energy infrastructure on land used for livestock production, imagine the consequences of contamination being found in Australian meat products or fibre, and the widespread ramifications that would have on the agricultural industry.

10 Have there been adequate studies conducted to ensure there are no adverse impacts to the health and productivity of livestock attributable to renewable energy infrastructure?

15 Next slide. In February 2017, the Sir Ivan bushfire burnt over 50,000 hectares of mostly farmland, a length of approximately 50 kilometres in the Dunedoo, Coolah and Cassilis districts within three days. Whilst there is no clear acknowledgement regarding firefighting limitations to date from the RFS bureaucrats, it is obvious to those of us who have been involved in previous firefighting efforts that areas with renewable energy infrastructure will be avoided by planes and helicopters for operator safety. And ground crew access will be limited during bushfires that could well be a life-and-death situation, not only for livestock and wildlife, but for local residents.

20 Next slide. How will we adequately protect ourselves, our homes, our livestock, our environment and our wildlife? And who will be held responsible for any losses incurred if protection measures are restricted by such infrastructure?

25 Next slide. The devastation and destruction left behind after catastrophic events such as the 1979 bushfire which burn around Dunedoo and Birriwa and claimed one human life, and Sir Ivan, is cleaned up by landowners and community members. The majority of whom are objecting to projects like Valley of the Winds.

30 Will we see government bureaucrats and renewable energy developer staff cleaning up after the next disaster, given the failure of the planning process inadequately accessing this risk?

35 Next slide. The majority of road upgrades between the Port of Newcastle and the project site will be carried out as part of EnergyCo's Port to REZ project and used by a large number of renewable energy projects concurrently. Given the large increase in heavy vehicle movements, how will DPHI and IPCN ensure that there are not negative impacts felt by local road users, given there has not been a whole-of-REZ cumulative impact study completed with regard to transport and traffic?

40 Will we get our produce to the port to meet markets, or will farmers be forced to wear the cost of lost income? With more traffic comes more accidents. How will the safety of existing road users be ensured? How will our voluntary emergency services cope with an increase in incidents?

45 We have been told that OSOM vehicles will be transported overnight to reduce the impact on road users. On Tuesday the 8th of April 2025, a wind turbine blade

went through the Main Street of Dunedoo at 9:30 a.m. Are the only road users who will have their impacts reduced residing close to the East Coast?

5 At the AFR’s Infrastructure Summit in November 2024, Port of Newcastle CEO, Craig Carmody, reportedly stated that, “There will be 9,500 wind turbines and 30,500 components for the CWO REZ brought in through the port in the next seven years.” He said, “We already do 86% of all the wind turbines into New South Wales. You can only move six trucks a night. If you extrapolate that out, it will take us 11 years to move the wind turbines that we’re supposed to do in seven years.” And that is for the CWO REZ, but who’s counting, right?

10 Next slide please. The region is serviced by a network of local roads that vary in condition, surface type and use. They primarily serve local residents, farmers and travellers. The traffic levels around Coolah can generally be categorised as light compared to more heavily populated areas.

15 How will our roads, local road users, and businesses cope with the nearly 200% increase in traffic volume from this project alone? Let alone the cumulative impact from all of the projects in the region.

20 Next slide. We have all, and will again, hand-fed livestock through droughts, but there is no way to go on without water. ACEN is proposing to access water from a varied range of sources. There must be restrictions put in place to ensure there is no impact to the stock and domestic water supply as a result of the Valley of the Winds Project.

25 Will water monitoring be implemented, and supply restricted if construction coincides with a period of low rainfall? Who will be held legally responsible if any local groundwater aquifer suffers from compaction due to over-extraction, permanently reducing the capacity of the aquifer to store water?

30 DPHI has stated in the Assessment Report that they and the New South Wales DCCEEW Water Group is satisfied that the project’s water use is unlikely to have any significant impact on water supply and demand in the region. “Unlikely” is not comforting to those of us who rely on water to keep their livestock alive.

35 What would be significant – thousands of livestock perishing due to the failure of an essential underground aquifer? How can these claims be made prior to the completion of the REZ-wide cumulative impact studies? Who will be held legally responsible if this disaster eventuates?

40 Next slide. Cumulative impacts result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. Not only are there cumulative impacts for each renewable energy project, but there is also the cumulative impact of each project having individual impacts, compounded by another project – all projects in the area having the same impact.

45 The Renewable Energy Transition Update, November 2024, states that, “The New

South Wales Government has committed to undertaking cumulative impact studies for the Central-West Orana, New England, and South-West REZ's." Shouldn't these studies have been completed prior to any construction works that will cause negative impacts to the local communities commencing?

5

Last slide. I have come to question the intent of the establishment of the New South Wales Independent Planning Commission, given the following. Firstly, not one large-scale renewable energy infrastructure project has been refused since its inception. Secondly, Minister for Climate Change and Energy requested that the IPCN – sorry, to the IPCN – that agencies involved in the assessment and decision-making process within the planning system have regard for the legislated emissions reduction targets. And lastly, a Panel Chair stating, "The IPCN's role is to implement the State Government policy in terms of renewable energy."

10

15

I believe that the Independent Planning Commission making a determination on the Valley of the Winds Project, in the absence of the findings from the CWO REZ whole-of government cumulative impact assessment is, firstly, a breach of the government's own guidelines. And secondly, unjust, irresponsible and unlawful, given the scope and magnitude of the potential negative impacts on the local community and broader region.

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Is this really in the public interest?

25

MS FITZGERALD: Emma, just going back to earlier in your talk, your presentation, you mentioned a declaration by the LPA.

MS BOWMAN: Yes.

30

MS FITZGERALD: For my information, could you just give me the reference to that?

35

MS BOWMAN: So, the LPA, to be accredited we must fill out an accreditation – like, we have to go through an accreditation. One of the questions in that accreditation is now, and it's in one of my slides, the picture of it, but it's something along the lines of, "Do your livestock have access to renewable energy infrastructure?"

MS FITZGERALD: Thank you. So, that's the LPA?

40

MS BOWMAN: Yes, correct.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes, great, thank you, Emma.

45

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MS REYNOLDS: The Livestock Producers Assurance Program is run by the Meat and Livestock Association.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay.

MS BOWMAN: And we have to be accredited to be able to sell livestock.

5 **MS FITZGERALD:** Okay. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Sorry, I think, Sarah, you might have a question, or no?

10 **MS SARAH DINNING:** I was just going to ask if perhaps – no, not a question for you, but for the Department. If we could just have confirmation about the work that’s been done on water supply in regard to –

15 **MR PEARSON:** Yes, sure, that is something we should get them to do. Emma, are your concerns about the agricultural impact of renewable energy equally two between wind and solar projects, or are you more concerned about solar projects? How do you stand on that – what are your views on that?

20 **MS BOWMAN:** I have huge concerns about all renewable energy projects, large scale, especially – So, land use conflicts, all of the concerns that are being brought up, I think are valid for all renewable energy developments, large-scale renewable energy developments.

25 Look, I think the differences between wind and solar are obviously varied about what the impacts are, but yes, I have concerns.

MR PEARSON: Okay, no, thank you, I just wanted to clarify that.

MS BOWMAN: Thank you.

30 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you very much. Virginia – I’m going to pronounce your surname – I’m not going to pronounce it all, okay, so –

MS VIRGINIA KNYVETT: Knyvett.

35 **MR PEARSON:** Yes, good, thank you.

MS KNYVETT: Can I have a – I have a montage, the montages. Okay.

40 **MR PEARSON:** I should say also that any slides that we see today will be available on the website. So, yes, so they will be freely accessible to people to review at their leisure. Over to you, Virginia.

MS KNYVETT: I’m speaking on behalf of David, my husband, and my family. We deliberately built a house 40 years ago because of the aspect.

45 **MR PEARSON:** We’ve got plenty of time.

MS KNYVETT: We are at [redacted], we’re on the [redacted]. We have – these

montages that we requested, and they're clearly not showing the real picture. This is my garden and all you can see is the Girragulang cluster to our east. There's probably 30 plus, I don't know, I've lost count because everything keeps changing.

5

And then I have – that's to our east – and then a house – then the next montage is probably – see how vague it is. We requested a better one of this from the side of the road that you can see the realistic sizes. And we got a drone, and we measured from the base, the floor of the valley to the top. I know these turbines are on the next hill, but it's very similar, and there's 140 metres from there to there. When you put 140, you put another 110 metres, it is just – it's so massive, this project.

10

This valley is well travelled by holidaymakers because it's aesthetic, I don't know if that means anything to you, the beauty of our valleys.

15

MR PEARSON: Take your time.

MS KNYVETT: Okay. Okay. These turbines will jeopardise a lot of aerial services such as the aerial bombing, as has been mentioned. The aerial sheets for – sorry, the animals, this is carried out by the government body of the RES, which seems hypocritical when they are wanting these renewables, yet did we not have a foot-and-mouth threat not long ago, if not still? So, I don't understand that.

20

We have aerial farm procedures, so weed control, pasture establishment, fertilising. These will all be jeopardised if these turbines go ahead on these ridges.

25

We have witnessed in 2017 Sir Ivan fire which went around our house and burnt a third of our property. And it was imperative that we had the aerial bombing. And yes, they did fly in the smoke, but there were no turbines.

30

MR PEARSON: Mm-hmm.

MS KNYVETT: The Department of Aviation, which I have been in touch with, they said they informed us that pilots will not go within a certain distance to an obstacle, and the obstacle is the turbine. And you can see that the turbines are massive at this size.

35

The government's intentions are to be build strong communities, make them cohesive, but this would definitely do the opposite. It has already taken effect and the project, meaning Valley of the Winds, hasn't even commenced. I am sure that this project, the size it has become, wasn't what the present hosts signed up for.

40

There have been changes already in company ownership, in managers, which shows inconsistency. Not a positive sign. Therefore, a lot of misinformation and a lot not disclosed. Hence, I don't know how many turbines there are anymore. I backed off. My husband had cancer twice at the beginning of this, because of the stress, and we backed off, and now it starts again.

45

My husband and I urge that you please not allow this project to go ahead. Thank you.

5 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you. Thank you very much, Virginia. Any questions for Virginia? No. Thank you. So, Greg Piper.

MR GREG PIPER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr Chairman. I'm going to be one of those rare beasts who dare to speak in favour of such projects.

10 I am currently a member of a family who's been in this district for – since the 1850s actually, currently on my farm there are four generations that are being supported by it. My parents who are in their 90s, Lindy and myself, my son and his three children. In our families over the history have always played an active role in our community to make sure it is a great place to live, work and play.

15 I'm an involved landholder with the Valley of the Winds Wind Farm and I'm also a member of the Liverpool Range Community Consultative Committee. And I've been the past Chair of the Coolah District Development Group.

20 The prime reason I support this project and others is primarily because we need to address climate change. Then when the wind developers started first coming around Coolah some 15 years or more ago, I was quite excited that Coolah could become a possible part of the solution to the crisis we have, rather than just being part of the cause.

25 My experience with wind farms over the past years has been varied. I've cycled amongst them in Europe, in France, Hungary, in Austria. I've seen them in Turkey, and I've visited many wind farms around this state and into South Australia.

30 On a recent trip to South Australia where we went through a number of the wind turbine areas, we'd stop off and talk to the local people at the coffee shops, the pubs and clubs where we stayed. And to my surprise, every person I spoke to, bar one, said it's been great for the community. Now, that mightn't be a scientific evaluation, I know it's not. But I was quite surprised, then somewhat relieved, that the fact that everyone I spoke to in those communities spoke in favour of them. I wonder how many people here have taken the time to visit these places that have them and talk to the people who are there.

40 I could talk for ages regarding the causes of climate change and what is happening to our planet, and that is my prime motivation for my beliefs. Having studied climatology at university some 50 years ago, my major assignment at that time was causes climate change. And here we are 50 years later still struggling with the whole concept. We seem to have lost the urgency of what we need to do about our rising earth temperatures.

45 We know what causes it. We know what the answers are to solve our climate change problems. But for some reason, we refuse to acknowledge them and to

make the necessary changes we need to make. We've now reached to the point where we have, we've got to 1.5 degrees increasing temperature and we're heading rapidly to 2. Now, I don't know how many people understand what is happening globally, but it's an important thing we need to address.

5

I'll just speak briefly on the benefits I see to the community or the wind farms. It'll bring quite a bit of money to landholders and to the community, something like \$4 million a year. We have a VPA or a community enhancement fund which will bring in around \$820,000 to this community every year. That is a pipe dream for most communities to have that sort of additional money coming into their community. It'll give us economic resilience to cope with things like drought, heatwaves, bushfires, and all those things that are associated with climate change.

10

Having been totally burnt out by the Sir Ivan fire of a few years back and we lost 1,700 animals in that time, so my concluding comments are fairly simple. It's not good having a wonderful place to live in if the Earth we are in is becoming uncontrolled by the climate changes that are happening to us with fires, droughts and heatwave conditions.

15

It is a problem for us to address as a society and as a community. We cannot just look at what is going to happen in the next few years. It's about our children, our grandchildren and the future of planet Earth. We ignore it and continue to delay taking action at our own peril.

20

25 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you.

MR PIPER: Thank you for your time.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Greg. I don't think we've got any specific questions. It is important that there are different views that we hear them. I thank people are largely respecting Greg's presentation today. You may not agree with it, I'm sure a lot of you don't. But, you know, it's valuable for the IPC to hear a range of views. So, thank you very much.

30

35 **MR PIPER:** Could I just comment on one of the fire risk issues.

MR PEARSON: Just really briefly –

MR PIPER: Sure.

40

MR PEARSON: Because we need to get back on track time-wise.

MR PIPER: Fire has been a big issue that people are bringing up here. Having experienced the Sir Ivan one, one of the benefits I see from the wind development is it'll give us road access to areas that we can get to fight fires very quickly.

45

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: [Unintelligible 01:32:18].

MR PIPER: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Okay, thanks everyone. Thank you very much, Greg. So, okay, so Julie Lewis, please.

5

MS JULIE LEWIS: Thank you. My name's Julie Lewis, I'm a new member of the Coolah community, having been only here for three-and-a-half years. I'm appalled and horrified about what they're planning to do to this area. There's no cumulative impact, not just for the immediate community but for the whole area, no apparent cumulative impact assessment has been completed.

10

The CWO REZ is getting more complex almost daily with extensions of transmission lines to Tooraweenah and Burrendong to facilitate even more projects. There will obviously be multiple projects across the area over a longer timeframe. Where is the cumulative impact assessment for the CWO REZ?

15

Impacts on emergency services, which I know has been done before. We truly have a dedicated and wonderful team of emergency workers in Coolah. They're all very understaffed and stretched to the absolute limit. We have one doctor. One. And he's not here all the time because he needs a break. We have two ambulances and a very dedicated team of volunteers that man our emergency services.

20

We have a very small hospital that is staffed by some of the most amazing people I have ever met. As a community, we care about our medical staff and emergency workers. We cannot stretch them any further.

25

With this many workers that they are proposing coming to town, where does this leave many of our elderly people in the area that need our medical services? In fact, where does it leave our medical services? The nearest medical service outside of Coolah, or medical services outside of Coolah, at least an hour-and-a-half's drive. This makes seeking medical service for some out of the area impossible.

30

We also need to look at other social services in the area. We have two hotels and one sporting club. Generally, people like to go out on a Friday and Saturday night and relax and unwind for their days off. Where are they going to go? I am sure that one Friday or Saturday night there's going to be a mix of both farmers and wind factory workers in town, which could lead to trouble.

35

After all, everyone has an opinion. Remember there are only three places to go. You may tell us that the workforce will not be allowed in town in tradie clothes and this should help problems. You can forget that. Coolah has a population in town of 700 people. This is not counting people who live out of town. Everyone here knows everyone else. People will immediately know if you are from Coolah or not. This leads to the very important issue of crime, general behaviour, traffic pollution, noise pollution. We have no police officer in Coolah at all, none.

40

What are the developers going to do about this? Also, what is being done about the removal of human waste, medical waste, and general waste from these sites? We

5 have nowhere to facilitate this in our community. One of the things I particularly love about living in Coolah is the quietness. You can go out into your yard of an evening and hear nothing. Nothing. Do you know how beautiful that is? Do you know how lovely and peaceful this is? No noise, no background noise, nothing. Please don't take this away from us.

10 I can only imagine the noise that will be coming from road construction, road noises, traffic movements, people noise, and noise in general. As I've stated, I love the quietness of this town, and I am truly very concerned about this aspect.

15 What is being done to address this issue while these wind factories are under construction? After this, we are going to be left with noisy wind turbines. After all, they are proposing hundreds of the largest turbines in the country to be built here.

20 Visual impacts of the community are going to be vast. We have this beautiful farmland, rolling hills, Coolah Tops National Park, amazing night skies that are real tourist attractions in these areas. These continually flashing lights of the hundreds of proposed wind park turbines are not part of our plan. We do not want them here. The visual impacts will be appalling in this area.

25 Reportedly, Coolah house prices have dropped between 11.7% last year. Some reports a 16% drop in sales. Where does this leave the residents of Coolah? Who have lived here all their lives, and now seemingly have nothing to leave to their children because their land is worthless.

30 One more point before I finish. About housing. I know of about three families who have been evicted from their homes and can't find anywhere to live because people are making way for wind factory workers. Also, while I'm on ACEN and in a more personal manner, I'd like to share with you some of our experience with the staff from ACEN. Firstly, they're supposed consultation shopfront is never open. Secondly, I find them rude, aggressive and overbearing.

35 We had our café black-banned from ACEN because we don't agree with wind farms, and we told them we didn't agree with wind farms. I don't think anyone from Coolah will miss ACEN if they never come back.

MR PEARSON: Yes, thank you, Julie. And just a reminder not to get personal, if possible. Yes, thank you. Peter Lewis.

40 **MR PETER LEWIS:** Yes, that'll be okay. Everyone can hear? Yes, all good, okay. Right-io. The wind farms. Not everybody loves them. That can't be helped. ACEN have a camp plan for Allambie Road and Moorefield Road, on the south side of town. So, from there, how do the workers that are based there get to work? Are they driving their own cars around the town or are they getting a bus to the worksite? Which one, I don't know, hopefully they get buses or else you're going to have a lot of traffic coming through town in the mornings and everything like that.

5 Where will they all be fed? Are they having a food section in this camp where they can feed all these 400 people? Because I don't think there's a place in town that we could do it. Because you've got breakfast, lunch, dinner. We've got two places that do takeaway food, and they're service stations, and a takeaway bakery. We used to have a café but it's not here anymore.

10 Where will they all be fed? Yes. If we don't – we've got two pubs, they can't get enough staff. They go through cooks like you wouldn't believe. You've got two servos, they do the takeaways, a club with the Chinese restaurant and a bakery for sangas and pies. That's it for us. And you're talking 400 people for ACEN and about 700 or 800 for Tilt. That's a lot of people who need feeding. And none of us can handle it here. We've got an IGA shop and a butcher, but I don't think they're going to supply 1,000 meals.

15 Other services in town. One doctor, we've all been told about him. But it's a long way to go to get a doctor, and to see a doctor, I know I have to make an appointment about three weeks in advance. So, if anyone hurts themselves on site, I'm not sure what's going to happen.

20 I've worked on sites where we had a doctor on site because the local community didn't like the idea that we were here. I've seen it happen. And we had our own takeaway food on site, we had everything on site. Okay. So, we've got one chemist, and they do a great job, they're locally owned. But whether they'll keep up with the supply, I'm not sure.

25 The butcher. Same thing, we've got one of them, and I don't know that he's going to supply enough meat for you. So, it's got to come from somewhere else. The grocery store, the same, the IGA, I can't see you buying everything there either. Bunnings hardware, I'm not sure they have wind turbines there. Maybe they'll get some in, I'm not sure. You're not going to be able to supply all this from town, and that's where the local money coming into community, it's going out of the community.

30 There's no tobacconist in town, so a lot of people are going to go out of town to get their cheap cigarettes. The hospital. Yes. It's a great little hospital. But it can only do so much. There's no doctor up there either, so it's a matter of call the helicopter and take you somewhere else.

35 There's no police in town, we've been through that. And be it what it may, these workers, they're going to be young fellas and they're going to drive like young fellas. They're going to drink and party like young fellas. So, hopefully we won't get too many car crashes on the way home.

40 Litter. It sounds like a little thing, why be concerned about litter. Well, I've got a little place out near Moorefield Road, and I reckon I see a lot of litter out there now. Once this camp gets going, people will throw cigarette butts out their water, maybe start a fire or two, you know, throw the old coffee cup out there. And it will happen. Who's going to clean it up? Is ACEN going to put people out there every

day to clean up the rubbish? I'm not going to get through all this, am I. Okay, so people will litter and hopefully someone's going to be out there to clean it up.

5 I've worked on sites. I've worked on big sites, small sites. As far as local employment goes, there's not going to be much, because we don't have the expertise in town here to build/put turbines together. And all the subbies are coming from out of town and out of district, and they will bring their own men. They won't hire locals, because locals are an unknown quantity. Who can tie steel in this – who can tie steel? Does anybody know what I'm talking about even? Yes,
10 reo, there's about 1,000 ton of that in each of these bases. And then the concrete, 2,500 ton of it. And that's only in a small one.

So, all this stuff has to come through town. What is it – 200,000 loads of gravel. For this one project. My time's up. So, yes, it's a lot. And then you've got the
15 concrete trucks. They will carry about six cubes each, 1,000 cubes, what's that, 170 loads of concrete, all going through town or out of town.

So, yes, I'm sorry I didn't get to talk about everything. But yes, Moorefield Road, the western end, is that the dirt road section? Yes. How long's that going to last
20 once it starts to rain, you've got these massive trucks going over it? Not going to last real long. And even the bottom half of Moorefield Road, it's not going to survive either. So, good luck.

And to the Commission, thanks for turning up. I'm surprised you could find the
25 place. Good that it's out in the middle of nowhere; we love it. Great views everywhere. Turbines everywhere soon. No good. Okay. Good luck.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Peter. So, when the Applicant responds later in the session, I'll ask them to talk about the workers camps specifically, because my
30 understanding is they're largely trying to make that self-sufficient in terms of the way it operates. But I'll ask them to talk about that.

AUDIENCE: They've still got to bring the stuff into the workers' camp.

MR PEARSON: Yes, no, look, I'm just flagging that it's an issue that's been
35 raised and we'll ask for a response on it.

AUDIENCE: [Unintelligible 01:46:11].

MR PEARSON: Well, that's not the specific issue I was addressing there, but,
40 you know, Peter's raised some legitimate concerns, and I will ask the Applicant to respond to them. And also the concrete trucks, they will have concrete batching plants on site proposed, so that's – it is a balancing act, I guess, between trying to support the town in terms of giving it some jobs and investment versus trying to
45 minimise the impacts on town through things like a workers' camp so that it's not taking accommodation away.

But these are some things that the Applicant will talk to later. And thank you very

much, Peter for that specific relevance discussion about the workers' camp.

So, there's a lot of Peter's. The next speaker was going to be Peter Quera but he's sick today, is my understanding, so he's not available. And then the next speaker is Pete Rothwell. So, three Peter's in a row.

MR PETE ROTHWELL: Thank you. Pretty good, I think. G'day everyone, my name is Pete Rothwell and I'm here today in my capacity as the Director of VRA Rescue New South Wales. Firstly, I'd like to thank the Chair and panel members for coming to this beautiful region today to hear from all stakeholders and individuals regarding the Valley of the Winds development.

It was great to hear from Noel Gilbert from the Coolah squad today. The work the squad does in and around Coolah is nothing short of amazing and has literally made life-saving contributions to the greater community.

VRA Rescue is the primary agency responsible for rescue in six locations throughout the REZ. These locations include Dubbo, Narromine, Mudgee, Gulgong, Mendooran and Coolah. There are two other centres for rescue, which are carried out by the SES. I'd like to make something crystal clear. The men and women of these squads are the primary people responsible for rescue response in these locations, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. When triple zero is called and rescue is required, whether it be road crash, industrial, search and rescue or flood rescue, these volunteers respond.

Some areas like Dubbo have Fire and Rescue, and yet the volunteers at the VRA form the responsible agency for rescue. Some other agencies provide rescue in other locations across the state. Some of these include Fire and Rescue New South Wales and the SES. The men and women in both these agencies do an incredible job in their communities and should be praised for the work they do.

It is interesting to look at the funding for these other two great agencies. Fire and Rescue New South Wales, an average has somewhere in the vicinity of \$140,000 per member to deliver their vital role. The SES has around \$30,000 in funding available per member to carry out the same role.

Would you like to hazard a guess what VRA Rescue has per member to deliver the same level of service? 20? 10? 4,000 per member. VRA Rescue is a non-government organisation. As such, we do not receive funding through normal channels. Funding for emergency services primarily comes through the emergency services levy. Around 12% of this funding comes from local government. Unfortunately, there is little chance of the VRA receiving extra funding, even though local councils are set to receive many millions per year through VPAs.

Being an NGO also limits our ability to be part of governmental planning around these developments. The project will add some 200 extra vehicle movements per day to the area. To put that into perspective, the Golden Highway west of Merriwa, has some 16,00 vehicle movements per day. This is where cumulative

impacts must be considered.

5 There are seven other projects plus the transmission project within 20 kilometres of this project. The transmission project alone is set to increase daily traffic by some 2,000 movements daily. If the other seven projects had a similar increase in vehicle movements to this project, we are quickly approaching an extra 3,500 vehicle movements per day. That's the equivalent of a 220% increase of traffic currently travelling on our major highway.

10 Let alone taking into consideration the other 30 or 40 projects supposedly in the pipeline. Sadly, this will mean more accidents and a higher workload for our volunteers. The change in land use throughout the region will add further challenges to our organisation. The industrialisation of the region will put further strain on our members and organisation through a climate of specialised training including vertical rescue. There is just no way around the fact that these
15 developments will add to the workload of all emergency services in the region.

20 The men and women of the VRA are truly incredible. Being in this space means that you are a 100% guaranteed to deal with severe trauma and death. They do this to care for their communities and rarely get the acknowledgement they should. It is totally unacceptable that our amazing volunteers should simply be expected to cope with this with the resources currently available to them.

25 Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you very much. Thank you, Pete. Ruth White is the next speaker. And I think Ruth is speaking on behalf of Uarbry village. Is that correct?

30 **MS RUTH WHITE:** That is correct.

MR PEARSON: Yes. Thank you.

35 **MS WHITE:** Why, I hope so. Okay. I'm sorry I'm not used to public speaking either, but I'll do the best I can. Our slide's up, that's good. Now, I'm here to represent the residents of Uarbry, it's a small village that was almost wiped out in the Sir Ivan fires in 2017.

40 We ourselves lost everything we owned. We struggled on, only to be faced with an industrial wind project on our doorstep and the threat of an access road directly through the village. Paragraph 179 of the Assessment Report states that, "There were 39 public viewpoint locations within VIZ3 identified and assessed, including multiple roads in Coolah, Leadville and Uarbry." However, there was a distinct lack of assessments for Uarbry.

45 Next slide please. According to the 2016 Visual Guidelines under which the project was allocated by SEARs, a representative view of rural villages should be taken. However, no representative photo montage from the village itself was provided.

Next slide please. Even though the visual consultants in the Response to Submission document state that they had completed a photo montage for Uarbry.

5 Next slide please. Note that the village will see two different clusters; the Leadville cluster to the northwest, and Girragulang cluster to the north.

10 Next slide please. An assessment photo prior to montages was supplied in the Environmental Impact Study. It was taken from the western entry of the village towards the Girragulang cluster, which would be more visible from the eastern entry to the village and not towards the more dominant Leadville cluster in this location. Whilst technically following the guidelines, they have taken it towards the closest turbine, as stated in the example in the guidelines.

15 Yet from this location, the most dominant turbines and therefore the worst-case scenario would actually be turbines from the Leadville cluster. The closest photo montage provided was taken approximately two to three kilometres from the village.

20 Next slide please. And next slide please. In this second photo montage, you'll notice that the village isn't even included in the photo. How are these photos representative of views from the village?

25 In December 2023, Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance wrote to the Department, reminding them of the lack of a properly representative photo montage for Uarbry village. However, none have been provided. As a consequence, residents of Uarbry still have only an estimate of an expected visual impact.

30 Next slide please. We request that before approval of this project, a photo montage from the western entry of the village towards the Leadville cluster, and a photo montage of the eastern entry of the village towards the Girragulang cluster be prepared and assessed for the visual impact to the residents of the village, and taken into account by the Commissioners.

35 Next slide please. The Applicant planned an access road to the Girragulang cluster directly through the village, joining Moorefield Road East a little north of the village. This road access was specific removed by the Applicant as the residents of Uarbry wholly rejected the access road.

40 However, the residents are concerned that workers on the Girragulang cluster may take a shortcut and still use Moorefield Road East which would include driving through the village to enter or exit the project. As we currently average, at most, four to five cars driving through the village per day, at most, this would negatively affect our quality of life.

45 We note that B32 in the recommended Conditions of Consent restricts vehicle movements to the approved roads during construction, operation, upgrading and decommissioning. We request a locked gate policy be employed by the Applicant

so no traffic is permitted to use Moorefield Road East except in case of emergency. This would effectively make Uarbry village a no-go zone. We do not agree that a camera monitoring situation, if offered, is acceptable mitigation.

5 Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Ruth. Just a quick question, Ruth, just on the – just a quick question, if I may, on the, you said no traffic, to use Moorefield Road East. What did you see as a solution to that – you were talking about a locked gate
10 policy? Maybe you should stand at the microphone, if you don't mind. No, that's okay.

MS WHITE: Okay. As I said, they're not supposed to use roads.

15 **MR PEARSON:** Yes, I understand that, yes.

MS WHITE: Certain roads. Okay.

MR PEARSON: Yes.
20

MS WHITE: Now, we've had the access road through our village taken off their plan.

MR PEARSON: Correct, yes. I understand the point, you know, what you're trying to achieve. What do you see as a way of achieving that? I mean, there are things we might have in mind, but do you have a – you were talking about a
25 locked gate. What did you mean – was that just a generic term or do you actually want a gate?

30 **MS WHITE:** No, I don't think we actually want a gate. They just want that put out of bounds for workers.

MR PEARSON: Yes, okay, I understand that point. Okay. And so that's something will ask the Applicant to respond to later. And also the points Ruth
35 made about visual photo montages for the village, we'll ask the Applicant to respond to that later. So, unless there's other questions?

MS FITZGERALD: No.

40 **MS DINNING:** No, thank you.

MR PEARSON: Good. Thank you, Ruth, thank you very much. Okay, so I've got Marshall Baillieu, and I think Marshall has got 10 minutes because he's going to speak on behalf of himself and then separately on behalf of Wiltara Farms Pty Ltd.
45 Is that what you're proposing?

MR MARSHALL BAILLIEU: Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MR BAILLIEU: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Marshall Baillieu, I'm the owner of Tongy Station and I'm also the sole director of Wiltara Farms, which is the operator of Tongy Station. My family has owned Tongy Station for over 100 years. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today and I hope you've reviewed my detailed objection and further submissions. A lot of effort has gone into assuring my submissions are accurate, verifiable and honest.

But I want to correct the record, to begin with. Tongy Station comprises 42 lots. I own 11 dwellings, all located between the black and blue lines. Nine of these – 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, 283 and 285 are included in the assessment. Two dwellings have not been assessed for impacts. All dwellings will see between 51 and 75 proposed turbines. The proposed Girragulang cluster of turbines is only 600–700 metres from my western boundary.

Approximately 30% of my property, that is 4,110 acres, will fall between the 3.35-kilometre black line. This is massive overshadowing. It will significantly impact my operations due to the excessive noise levels above acceptable limits, shadow flicker, visual impact, and obstruction to agricultural aerial operations. No existing workplace would tolerate the development with these introduced impacts. Nor should I.

I have no doubt that I'll be forced to reduce my agricultural enterprise if this project proceeds. The Valley of the Winds Project is massive, we've heard about that today – 131 turbines, now 250 metres tall. That's the equivalent to a 75-floor residential property. It's nearly as high as Sydney Centrepoint Tower.

The impacts of this project are unprecedented but are narrowly dealt with. The inadequacies of the impact assessment are well flagged. In all the reports provided through the Department for the project, there is no unbiased, independent review of the key impacts.

Few industry experts are prepared to conduct peer reviews for fear of jeopardising future work with renewable developers and government. So, relying solely on experts retained by the developers is flawed. It undermines due process and clouds transparency. And that's transparency to the community and to the taxpayers' detriment. Landowners commissioning their own independent studies is very expensive, but that's what we have to do. Commissioners, we want independent studies to bring full transparency to all the issues. And I'll talk about this further in a moment.

And so I ask if that's not going to happen, what is the pathway to advance transparency on the key impacts? Is that simply relying on the courts? I ask, Commissioners, will this wind farm project reduce energy prices for end users? Is this project in the taxpayers' interest? Is this project in our community's interest? Is this project in the interest of non-associated landowners? How is this project in the public interest?

5 You've heard more – I'll speak more about the cumulative impacts in the Coolah area. They're enormous. And so I ask, how can the IPC assess Valley of the Winds without the New South Wales Government completing its promised cumulative impact assessment, including neighbouring projects? The IPC cannot rely solely on the Department's view in the Assessment Report.

10 Specifically, there's been no accommodation by ACEN of any of my primary concerns, as I previously stated in writing to the Department. Let me touch on these. The first one is one I'm going to refer to as West House. The assessment correctly references my intention to re-establish a prior house known to me as West House, which was previously destroyed by fire, as is my legal right to do so. I have provided evidence of its prior existence, confirmed my intention to rebuild, and all these predates the Valley of the Winds Project.

15 Despite this, ACEN's proposal places turbines within two kilometres of West House, well within the black line, with no mitigants for this legitimate house re-establishment. West House is not a phantom dwelling. I communicated my intention to rebuild to ACEN in 2029 when I first became to the project and on their first and only visit to my property. I've also written to the Department, providing evidence of its prior existence. How can the Department say in its Assessment Report, they can find no evidence? I provided it all to them. Will the IPC instruct ACEN to remove the Girragulang turbine layout? That would then comply with the relevant guidelines.

20 The second is noise. The independent review of the – sorry, I commissioned an independent review of the EIS by an accredited noise industry expert, who concluded the turbine noises at my houses are expected to be materially higher than presented in the EIS, exceeding acceptable thresholds. Let me explain. This is due to the misuse of the ground absorption factor in the EIS. The Department have a copy of my peer review that I commissioned.

25 The NERIS proposed turbines are on a ridge approximately 100 metres higher than my houses. And when you add onto that, 250 metres on top, turbine noise is more likely to have a direct hit on my houses. But the EIS use a ground absorption factor of 0.5 and that's relative for ground level noise emitters, not 250-metre-high emitters on top of a 100-metre-high ridge. Industry standards recommend a ground absorption factor of 0.0 in such circumstances.

30 Will the IPC ask the Department to commission an independent noise assessment using ground absorption factor of 0.0 to define decibel contour lines from the proposed Girragulang turbine locations? And I might add, this is relevant to a number of other landowners in other clusters.

35 Third, the Tongy Airstrip. The proposed Girragulang turbines are too close to the existing Tongy Airstrip, which has been in operation since the late 1920s. I regularly use it for agricultural work such as spraying, fertilising, seeding. I use it for travel as well. It's a valuable asset in bushfires. It's also registered on the

Royal Flying Doctor database as an available strip. And it has been used in the past for crashes on the Golden Highway to evacuate people in need.

5 This airstrip is regularly used by others as well. The Assessment Report clearly states that, “There will be risks to air safety due to proximity of the proposed turbines.” Restricted use of the airstrip will directly impact my agricultural practices, particularly cropping.

10 The assessment’s recommendation for mitigation of the impact is pilot discretion, which to me, can only imply restricted use – hardly an acceptable impact for an airstrip that’s been in continuous operations for nearly 100 years. Will the IPC seek ACEN to remove proposed turbines to ensure the continued and unencumbered safe operation of the Tongy Airstrip?

15 Then on visual impact. The cumulative visual impact on my houses are immense, with up to 71 turbines extinguishing the value of my western aspect. My peer review which I commissioned concluded a high visual impact, contrary to the moderate impact stated in the EIS.

20 The Department says it’s also assessed the project with the approach prescribed in the Wind Energy Visual Technical Supplement 2024. But there is no additional information within the Assessment Report that relate the application of the 2024 Supplement to the requirements of the Visual Bulletin of 2016 guidelines. This results in a black box assessment. Where there is no understanding of all the
25 inputs, or the relevance of the outputs to the 2016 guidelines.

We need to see all photo montages and grid overlay in the Assessment Report for the 2024 Supplement. With grid overlay to establish magnitude of visual impacts. We request an explanation of how a magnitude requirement for the 2024
30 Supplement has been applied to the Visual Bulletin 2016 performance objectives.

Above all, given the magnitude of the visual impact and lack of effective mitigants, will the IPC seek a redesign of the Girragulang turbines to reduce the visual impact on my property and preserve the high value of our scenic outlook? I
35 look forward to hearing answers to my questions. I remain available to answer any further enquiries. And above all, Commissioners, I invite you to come out to Tongy and spend more than the 23 minutes that the Department spent on the 3rd of May 2023 to understand the impacts on my property and also understand the impacts on the operations on my property.

40 Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Just in relation to the peer reviews, the noise and the visual, were they part of your submission or were they provided separately to the
45 Department? What’s the status of those?

MR BAILLIEU: I have communicated with the Department. I have sent them the peer review on noise; they have a copy of that.

MR PEARSON: All right.

5 **MR BAILLIEU:** I gladly send it onto you. And then in my objection and my submissions since my objection, I have also laid out the views of the report that I commissioned on a peer review of the visual.

10 **MR PEARSON:** Yes, you mentioned both those things. I think it would be useful if you were to provide them, as perhaps as part of a submission to the IPC.

15 **MR BAILLIEU:** Yes. I think that I would like to understand a little bit more from you how exactly I do that. As there are some – Because Commissioner, this goes to my point of independence. There is sensitivity on these experts to provide a peer review because they believe there’s recriminations from them to them from future work.

20 **MR PEARSON:** That’s a matter for you. I mean, our interest is just to, you know, understand the issue that you’ve presented today and if you’re comfortable sharing them with us, sure, but it’s entirely your call.

MR BAILLIEU: Okay, thank you, I’ll share them with you.

25 **MS FITZGERALD:** I’m just saying that Kendall and the IPC staff can take those submissions.

30 **MR PEARSON:** Yes, and all notes today, if you’re comfortable providing them to staff, we can make sure that they then get uploaded and considered. They’ll be considered because we’re making notes today and taking regard off what you’re saying. But if you want to follow-up and provide your notes to us, that’s also – Kendall and Sam are your go-to people there. Thank you. Thank you very much.

35 Okay. We have two more speakers before we’re going to have a break for lunch. We’ve got Sally Edwards. Yes, of course. Sally’s got 10 minutes, and then after Sally, we’ve got Annette Piper, is Annette here? Yes, cool. So, we’ll do those two and then have a break. Thank you.

40 **MS SALLY EDWARDS:** Good afternoon, Chairperson and the Panel Commissioners. I appreciate the opportunity to present to you my concerns about the key issues identified in the Department’s assessment of the Valley of the Winds Project.

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

My husband and I didn’t grow up in Coolah. We both grew up near Gloucester on the mid-north coast. From there, we moved to Tennant Creek in the Northern

5 Territory. Upon moving home to New South Wales, we moved to the Dungowan Valley, Echo Hills Station for a farm position. We worked for this farming business for a number of years on Echo Hills before transferring to their property at Garoo near Nundle. We left Nundle and moved to the Quirindi and Pine Ridge area on the Liverpool Plains. Again, for work choices and in agricultural related positions.

10 After the birth of our first baby, we wanted to move back into a live-in farming position and this is what brought us to Coolah. Our life story is not what I want to share. What I want to highlight to the Panel and to the public, is this. Not one of these rural areas that have been stepping stones for our careers and our life's journey in both agriculture and regional Australia, are either safe or protected.

15 Every single one of these areas is now facing a change to their landscapes, a significant interruption to and reduction of farmland and production, and introduction to significant electricity generation and associated transmission infrastructure, and all are impacted by the rapid and poorly planned transition to renewables.

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

25 Gloucester is home to the Stratford solar and pumped hydro CSSI project. Tennant Creek, home to potentially the world's largest solar project, the Sun Cable Australia-Asia Power Link. Dungowan, overrun by the New England REZ Transmission Project. Nundle, potentially losing sub-alpine forest and farmland in the destruction of the hanging rock ridgetops. For the controversial and now legally questionable Hills of Gold Wind Project.

30 Quirindi, the site of a proposed solar project capable of powering over 2,000 homes. Coolah, surrounded to nearly 270 degrees by turbines belonging to both the Liverpool Range Wind Project and the Valley of the Winds Wind Project.

35 How many regional Australians share a similar story? How many rural communities and landscapes are safe from this industrial development? Why don't they have a choice? What is happening to agriculture and to the industries that support the agricultural service towns? Will they be elusively drawn to a promise of a new economy, to then experience what we know as boom-and-bust outcomes?

40 Why don't these anecdotal stories cause alarm, that may be the summing of cumulative impacts is not in the consideration or therefore the interest of the future of rural and regional Australia as most would wish to see?

45 The very reason we are even meeting here today in this hall is due to one region's and our community's concern and active objection. I understand this is part of the

government's process, but I feel quite certain that this process is more about helping the New South Wales Government avoid any potential glaring delivery mistakes and in refining the project, than actually hearing and considering substantial community concerns. Concerns around risk, around loss, around cumulative impacts, around sensibility, and whether this project and this Renewable Energy Zone is actually fit for purpose.

We, funnily enough, never got a say in the process when that was decided. For some, and if the marketing is correct for the community, this project and the transition offers substantial economic opportunity. It gives hope of invigorated local economies, a flow of government grant money that dangerously lacks the people and skills to actually deliver and build the funded projects.

It puts forward a potential drought or future proofing mechanism for participating farms. And on the flip side, the reluctant consideration to sell out by those who don't wish to live close to these types of projects and the disruption and destruction they bring.

Over decades, rural communities have unfortunately become dependent on and are thirsty for handout government funding. And by government design too, begging by persistent grant applications to try and maintain infrastructure and provide needed services in small rural towns, where our voice is repeatedly unheard.

This dependence has certainly led to many seeing the REZ community employment and benefit fund as the silver-plated saviour for our regions. I fear that in reality, in rural Australia, we are just frogs being brought to the boil. And in the next five to 20 years as this is constructed, we will reach boiling point. And with that, the heavy realisation that rural Australia has been sold out. Step by deliberate step over many years.

I would like to address a number of key concerns that I have from reading the Department's assessment of the project. The submissions to the Valley of the Winds Project demonstrate 88% objections and 5% in support.

Whole-of-government assessment of cumulative impacts. Could the IPC and the Department please review the government's assessment made on cumulative impacts? It appears the proponent has attempted to meet the necessary requirements imposed on them in their planning. But to me, what is glaringly still missing is the whole-of-government detailed assessment of cumulative impacts for the CWO REZ, such as biodiversity loss, bushfire risk, water security and risk, socio-economic, roads and transport, telecommunications, among others.

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

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

5 Project cumulative impacts. My particular concerns around project cumulative impacts, particularly with the Liverpool Range Wind Farm, are visual, operational noise and vibration, and long term residual contamination of air, water and soils. Could a condition of consent be considered to establish baseline data for air, water and soil health, and existing contamination levels? This would help protect the
10 communities and landowners in the event of a contamination issue in the future.

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

I think it is fair to say that even the best modelling forecasts are nothing compared
20 to actual data. While a cumulative visual assessment has been carried out by the proponent. I note the omission of cumulative visual assessment for the Coolah township. Similar to Figure 4 in the Assessment Report, to assess visual assessment clusters of both major projects relative to the town. Figure 4 demonstrates that the township is just outside the northern residential boundary for
25 consideration by the proponent. Given the proximity of both major projects, I believe it would be irresponsible to not carefully assess the visual, noise and vibration from the town's perspective.

Throughout the EIS and government assessment process, I have communicated
30 with both the proponent and the New South Wales Government requesting visual and noise vibration assessment for the Coolah township, and I can provide this to the Panel if requested.

VPA. The timing of the VPA. Is it fair or equitable that this project be assessed
35 prior to a VPA being negotiated and agreed to by the Warrumbungle Shire Council? There has been no community consultation around the VPA terms and agreement, and I ask the IPC if it is required that this takes place before approval, or at least be best practice, to allow the community and their local elected representatives to consider and agree to the VPA terms.
40

I know without a doubt that the IAP2 framework for public participation would demonstrate that there should be sufficient community involvement in such an important part as the VPA of an SSD project.

45 Community impacts. From the Assessment Report, it reads that all socio-economic impacts will be mitigated by one of two things: the preparation of an accommodation and employment strategy for the project in consultation with Council, and by entering into a VPA with Council prior to commencing

construction.

5 I ask the IPC to consider that neither of these conditions mitigate the social impacts already occurring in loss of community cohesiveness, establish community division, loss of community character, and impacts to community health and wellbeing, nor mitigate them in the future.

10 Can the Panel consider that these issues faced by the community are decreasing the functionality and capacity of the backbone of rural towns, the people. Community division and community health and wellbeing are issues that need to be addressed and considered appropriately. Socio-economic issues were the number two key issue raised in the public submissions, second only to landscape and visual.

15 **MR PEARSON:** Sally, could you just wind up, please.

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

25 I urge the IPC to review these assessment concerns and seek to have them scrutinised and addressed. And I do sincerely thank you for your time.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Questions? No. All good, thank you. So, Annette Piper, please.

30 **MS ANNETTE PIPER:** I am a non-associated landowner, with the nearest turbine 3.91 kilometres from my home. Item B7 in the recommended Conditions of Consent state that the hours of construction activities specified in condition B5 may be varied with the prior written approval of the Planning Secretary.

35 Given the extensive estimated 42-month construction period, we request that the approval of any variation have a maximum of 12 events per 12-month period, to minimise the additional impact to non-associated residences and the wider community.

40 Condition B10 outlines the vibration limits. However, this condition has no reporting criteria to the Department and no criteria of who will undertake the measurements. To reassure the community, we request that the Conditions of Consent include: (1) the Applicant to advise the Department of the methods and equipment used to measure vibration, the qualified professional who will
45 undertake the measurements, and evidence of equipment being regularly tested for accuracy; (2) the vibration reports be provided to the Department each month for oversight; (3) that the raw data be publicly available in real time; (4) that penalties will apply for exceedances.

5 We would like clarification on condition B18 as to what is acceptable levels of dust, fumes and blast emissions. What measurements can be applied and what steps can be taken by nearby residents if they are concerned about this, and what steps does the Applicant need to take in this situation. We want this clarification expressed through the Conditions of Consent to protect residents and the community.

10 In general, we request items including but not limited to: monitored lighting, shadow flicker, noise, vibration, and environmental matters that (1) all raw monitoring data be available to the public online in real time, and (2) if data loggers become unserviceable, all work is to stop until loggers are repaired, and these be included in the Conditions of Consent.

15 A number of the recommendations by the Department refer to a complaints procedure or register, for example, B13, B38, C1 and C15. There may be numerous instances where a complaint could be made covering a wide range of construction or operational activities. We request a clear complaint procedure be created and that as a part of the Conditions of Consent, a regular report of the
20 complaints and their resolution be available for public viewing and supplied to the Department for oversight.

25 We request that the Conditions of Consent include, that in the case of multiple complaints on similar topics in a six-month timeframe, that this triggers an automatic investigation by the Department to prevent a systemic failure of the procedure.

30 Likewise, conditions C10 and C11 refer to incident notification. We request that the recommended conditions be amended to state that incident logs and reports as supplied to the Department, outlined in Appendix 8, also be made available to the public.

35 Condition B61 outlines the decommissioning requirements after conclusion of operations. The aim of decommissioning is to remove all infrastructure so the land can once again be used for agricultural purposes. As such, we request changes to the recommendations in Table 3 – Rehabilitation objectives. We request that the aboveground wind turbine infrastructure excluding wind turbine pads, to be decommissioned and removed unless the Planning Secretary agrees otherwise, to be amended simply to be decommissioned and removed.
40

There is no reason for the wind turbine infrastructure to be left in situ if the operations of the facility have ceased. Any potential for the turbines to remain in place if the development is no longer operating will be an ongoing negative impact to the community, extending past the life of the project.
45

Also in this table, it states, “Wind turbines to be covered with soil and/or rock and revegetated.” We request this be changed to be covered with a minimum of one metre of topsoil and revegetated. As farmers, we are aware that not all – sorry,

5 that all soil is not the same. Soil taken from a depth and/or rock will take decades
to show reasonable growth. Changing this to a topsoil of a 1,000-millimetre depth
will ensure the vast size of the turbine pads will at least reduce herbage for
livestock, even though they will never grow a tree again. Whilst recommended
condition consent C9 requires the Applicant to provide final layout plans. The
community is concerned about the safety of the structures and infrastructure and
the lack of physical oversight that appears to be required prior to the project
becoming operational. We request an additional condition of consent be applied
10 that include site inspections from either Department engineers, if available, or if
not, by Shire engineers to sign off on the project before operations commence.

15 Condition C14 refers to the independent environmental audits. We would like to
request that as a condition of consent, these independent environmental audits be
made available to the public within one month of completion, and to include the
raw data. This will keep the community informed and encourage the Applicant to
comply with the environmental conditions.

20 There are many other items I could detail, but given my five-minute limit, I will
also be making a written submission. Thank you.

25 **MR PEARSON:** So, look, we'll ask the Department to respond today to some of
those suggestions you've made in regard to conditions. If you wanted to provide
your notes to us, that would be useful. And happy to receive – thank you – any
submission –

30 **MS PIPER:** Probably later.

35 **MR PEARSON:** – you'd like to make. Yes. Great. Thank you. Any other
questions?

40 **MS FITZGERALD:** No.

45 **MR PEARSON:** No? Thanks, Annette. So, look, that concludes the morning
session. We're going to have a – we'll resume at 1:10 p.m., so around about a 40-
minute/35-minute break. And see you all punctually at 1:10. Thank you very
much, everyone.

<LUNCH BREAK

40 **MR PEARSON:** Okay, thank you. Welcome everybody to the second session of
the Independent Planning Commission's consideration of the Valley of the Winds
project this afternoon. We have a number of speakers registered for this afternoon,
some by phone, some are in the audience. And in our last session, we're going to
ask the Department of Planning and also the Applicant to respond to some of the
45 issues that have been raised today.

So I'm going to start with Malcolm Rouse, who is with us today. Malcolm, if you
could come and use the mic, please.

MR MALCOLM ROUSE: Good afternoon Commissioners, ladies and gentlemen. Someone once told me never work with children or animals, and never be the first speaker after lunch. So if you feel the need for a little nap, that's fine.
5 That's excepting the three people on my right.

Now, it's on the public record that I've always been a supporter of renewables. The Central-West Orana REZ could have been a great asset to our community. Instead, it's a dog's breakfast. Those that oppose the REZ, they're not just a few
10 rednecks. They're not just a few rat bag fringe dwellers. It is a serious concern for the people I speak to. Invariably, when I'm speaking with my mates, invariably, the conversation comes around to the REZ. And it's difficult to find someone who I speak to who is in support of it in its current format.

15 So why? Why is it so unpopular? Why hasn't Macquarie Street been able to secure a social licence? Now, no doubt the reasons that I have are the same as what people have been saying all day. I don't have any revelations. But it's important that we keep on about the reasons why this project is not good for our district.

20 Just a few brief points that I have, and they've all been said before; it's too big. Every time I read the newspaper, it's bigger, the cumulative impacts. Number two, it's divisive. It seems to be that farmers that were mates now aren't on speaking terms, and it's sad. The hosts are happy. I wish I was a host, but I'm not. And it's going to get worse. The other point that I think needs to be mentioned, again, is
25 we're sick of being told how great this is for us.

How's my time going? All right, look, that's all I've got to say. Marshall said he can see 71 turbines. We're at 93 from our kitchen window.

30 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you, Malcolm. We now have someone on the phone, Gemma Pride. Can you hear us, Gemma?

MS GEMMA PRIDE: Yes, I can.

35 **MR PEARSON:** Great, we can hear you loud and clear, so please address the panel.

40 **MS PRIDE:** Okay, good afternoon. Look, I just want to give you a brief – well, it's our story, and it's basically to do with the property values declining for non-associated properties. We have a property in or near Mudgee, and we have two wind farms that are proposed at this stage near us. And just before Christmas, we had our property on the market, and we sold. And we were very pleased about that. And then two days before settlement, the buyer became aware of the
45 proposed wind farms, and they pulled out of the sale. And we felt we had to release them from the contract, because they threatened us with all sorts of legal action. So we were devastated, and we'd been told all along by the proponents that these developments would not affect the value of our property.

5 Now, this is – I’ve got evidence, and I’m happy to provide it to the Committee, where this is an actual sale of a property that has fallen through because of two proposed developments that are just still with the Department. We have no idea whether they’re going ahead, or whether they’re not going ahead. So I want the Committee to know that this is really happening, and we are collateral damage.

10 I’ve been informed of another property in Coolah that had a recent situation. They actually didn’t get to the exchange part, because while the buyer was in town, spending a little bit of time before he put a deposit down on the property, and this is actually an elderly couple, they don’t want to come forward to the Committee because they don’t want it to affect the sale of their property, potentially. But these stories are happening again and again. This couple lost the sale because the potential buyer found out about the wind farm.

15 So I think for non-associated properties, this is going to continue to happen. And we’ve just put our property on the market again, where hopefully someone will come along that actually wants to live next to a wind farm, that sees it as a – that it will add value to the property. At the moment, we can’t see that. We don’t know anyone that wants to live next to a wind farm. And as I’ve said, we now have
20 evidence that this is happening.

25 We feel that as non-associated properties, we need to have some sort of property value guarantee scheme in place for any property, perhaps within eight kilometres of a proposed wind turbine, and that landowners are compensated for any decline in the value of their property. I mean, we don’t know where we’re going to end up now. We are talking a possible class action, because there’ll be more and more of us affected. And we just can’t see any way out at this stage.

30 So I just want you to be aware of – you’ve heard from other people, the effect it’s having on our communities, but longer term, it’s going to have very real effects on us people that are living nearby these things. It certainly isn’t adding value to our properties. And we’ve been told all along that there’s no real evidence that properties decrease in value. Well, I’m telling you, they do. I have evidence, and I’m happy to provide it from our lawyers.

35 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you very much, Gemma. Any questions for Gemma?
Thanks, Gemma.

40 **MS PRIDE:** Okay, thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you for that perspective. Rick Campbell, who’s in the building.

45 **MR RICK CAMPBELL:** Okay, are we right?

MR PEARSON: Good to go.

MR CAMPBELL: Thank you. My name is Rick Campbell and I’m a farmer from

5 Gulgong. My presentation today is about hypocrisy, fires and fairness. Now, if someone suggested building a nuclear power plant in a known bad earthquake zone, it would be dismissed as being insane. Yet here we are considering the building of renewable energy projects and associated power lines, which are acknowledged to cause fires, in a known bad bushfire zone.

10 In assessing the suitability of the CWO REZ for renewable energy projects, the AEMO determined that this zone has a bushfire rating of E. This rating is the worst available on a scale from A to E. How catastrophic can bushfires caused by power lines be? In the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires of 2009, there were 11 major fires, with six of those fires caused by power lines. There were 173 deaths, with 159 of those deaths attributed to the power line fires.

15 That's not good, but it gets worse. If the predictions of climate change are correct, then the extreme weather events that precipitated the Victorian fires will become much more common. This means that the ability to control these fires will be of paramount importance. But water can't be used on lithium battery fires. It is too dangerous for fire crews to access fires within a solar farm, and the presence of wind turbines and power lines restricts the use of aerial water bombing for fire control.

20 So what is more insane? Building nuclear power plants in earthquake zones, or building renewable energy projects in the CWO REZ?

25 Now to fairness. Can anyone tell me why coastal residents are entitled to a 20 kilometre setback from wind turbines, but country residents are expected to accept a setback of only two kilometres? Is it because people in the CWO REZ are considered to be a minority group, whose rights and votes can be ignored?

30 Let's call this what it is. This is blatant discrimination. And this from a government who should be stamping out discrimination, rather than funding its implementation. The argument will be that since offshore wind is under Commonwealth jurisdiction, and onshore wind is under state jurisdiction, different standards can be applied. But without Commonwealth funding, e.g. the Commonwealth Capacity Investment Scheme, none of these projects would proceed. This is akin to the Commonwealth saying that they oppose the death penalty, but they are prepared to provide the funding to build the gallows.

35 40 Bottom line: if the panel approves this project, then you will be putting country people's lives and property at risk. You would also be condoning discrimination against them. In the future, you should be prepared that you may be called upon to justify this decision before a coronial inquiry. Thank you.

45 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you. Questions for Rick?

MR CAMPBELL: Any questions?

MR PEARSON: I think we're good. But thank you for the presentation, Rick,

appreciate it.

MR CAMPBELL: Okay, fine, thank you.

5 **MR PEARSON:** Ivan Kennedy on the phone. Ivan, can you hear us?

MR IVAN KENNEDY: Yes, I can Richard, thanks very much.

10 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you. We're just making you a bit louder, but yeah, please speak.

15 **MR KENNEDY:** Okay, my submission is driven by strong concerns for the Valley of Winds Wind Farm, by my professional knowledge and sense of care for the social and environmental wellbeing of the Central-West Orana region. I grew up in similar farming country in WA in the 1940s, and I have the greatest respect for the productivity of our risk-taking farmers, with a deep love for the bush all across Australia.

20 Seventy years later, I have been professionally trained, at taxpayer expense, including taxes paid by farmers. My professional expertise is in agricultural and environmental risk management. Since retiring from teaching, I focus my team on climate science research, estimating maximum power from wind turbines, even maximum power in tropical cyclones, by drawing attention to the meteorological effects up to 50 kilometres downstream of wind farms, known as WAKE effects, W-A-K-E.

25 Downwind, the velocity of winds is reduced to half at turbine hub height, increasing WAKE air pressure because of the retarded airflow, and causing significant convective turbulence. Not visible in air, these convective results may even initiate thunderstorms many kilometres away. We need to do research on that.

30 We also predicted from our analysis of WAKE evapotranspiration, that this must dry out the landscape caused by swirling heat release when strong straight winds are made turbulent. This potentially reduces regional farming productivity, and increases bushfire risk many kilometres distant. Remember, farmers pay large levies on their produce to fund research for agriculture. Surely in this case, research is needed to mitigate these possible wind farm effects.

35 The likelihood of ignition from spotting embers and intensity of heat generation was shown by University of Sydney bushfire CRC research to be increased several times if moisture is reduced to half in foliage from eucalypts. I strongly recommend that wind farms should only be located at sites far distance from such WAKE risks. Farmers have enough risk with climate and finances.

40
45 My submission to two senate inquiries on wind farms and energy regulation have both been accepted and even granted parliamentary privilege, protecting my right to speak out. My submission to the New South Wales Minister for Energy, Penny

5 Sharp, received a polite reply just this week from Mr Chris Ritchie, an Executive Director for Energy Resources and Energy, acknowledging my concerns. It's a nice letter. Although his Department declines to do the relatively inexpensive research on WAKEs needed to estimate the magnitude of risk, he states, "It is highly likely that any localised impacts," that is on farmers, "would be offset by the need to mitigate climate change and transition to renewable energy."

10 As a professional climate science seeking truth, I find this statement extremely odd logic. This is a weak hypothesis about the future that lacks certainty, except in politics, it seems. I conclude scientifically that wind farms will make no beneficial difference to climate other than negative in the lifetime of everyone here today. What about the risks posed to farming communities now? I draw attention to intense wildfires on Maui, Hawaii, and at [unintelligible 03:32:11], a suburb of Athens, where hundreds of people died. In my full report, I will indicate how this may well have been a WAKE effect that meant firefighters went to prison. Unjustly, in my opinion.

20 As a professional still publishing climate science asking questions, I judge there is no prospect of the effect of global mitigation by wind farms in our lifetime. Even if there is a reduction of CO₂ in the atmosphere, by no means certain scientifically, any beneficial to climate effect will be delayed 50 to 75 years into the future. This is a scientific viewpoint, not politics. By contrast, farmers in this Orana region of rural Australia could be suffering the negative consequences I predict just a few years from now.

25 Thank you, Mr Chairman.

30 **MR PEARSON:** All right. Thank you very much, Ivan. I don't think we have any questions for you, but thank you for your contribution. We're now going to hear from Vaughn Pettet, who is in the room.

35 **MR VAUGHN PETTET:** Yep, how's that? All good? Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to the Commission. It is greatly appreciated. My name is Vaughn Pettet. I'm a fourth generation resident of the valley, of six generations in the valley now. So I feel I've got a bit of buy-in on this.

40 Many of my points have been covered already today, and much better than what I was capable of doing. However, the emergency response side, I do have some experience in. A former member of the VRA and the RFS, upon leaving Coolah, I went into the Hunter Valley. I worked in safety in both mining and construction, several mines in the Hunter Valley and the NorthConnex project.

45 Now, all of our emergency response and disaster response plans, while they have their initial response within the company, the flow on effect and reliability on the other organisations, the established organisations, is very definitely established in those procedures. And while we're in the Hunter Valley, we have a reasonable population down there to be able to fill those positions and have them available.

NorthConnex in Sydney, we had a huge potential there. Out here, we are struggling for everyday response to disaster and emergency.

5 We'll be loaded up again with a full-scale industrial program here that will require several levels of planning and management of emergencies. The local organisations, as Noel and, sorry, our other representative from the VRA have spoken, are voluntary. Same with the SES. We have a retained fire unit in town. Now, they will require extra training and equipment, because they will be the fallback, the backstop of the organisation. I do believe that the project will have an
10 emergency response plan, and I will almost guarantee that at the end of that plan, it'll fall back to the local emergency services to fill the gap.

15 So that is unfortunately about my best point that I've got, because everyone else covered everything so well. The only thing being that when you consider this project, and the project going forward, please be aware that this is only one stage of the industrialisation of this area. Once there's one project established here, it'll set a precedence for the following projects and the projects after that, and they will use the argument that the infrastructure is already there. Once it's established, we won't be able to stop the rollout of industrialisation through this area. It's as
20 simple as that.

We've seen it in the Hunter Valley. We've seen it in the Coal Basin up at Narrabri in Gunnedah. Same thing. Once the first one gets established and the infrastructure is there for it to run, the follow-on effect is quite dramatic. So please consider the
25 future projects, not just this one as a standalone. Thank you, that's all I've got.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Thanks, Vaughn. And that's an issue that's been raised a few times, and that the Applicant is going to make a response to later. So thank you. Michael Hill.
30

MR MICHAEL HILL: Yeah, my name's Michael Hill. I object to the Valley Winds Industrial Development on rural land for a number of reasons, two of which I'll speak to today. Firstly, the project basis. The EIS makes a number of claims regarding CO₂ emissions associated with the project, yet this claim seems to rely
35 only on generic third-party studies that are not specific to this project.

40 However, given that reduced CO₂ emissions form a primary justification of the project, the proponent must fully and transparently account for all site-specific CO₂ emissions associated with the project. This, at a minimum, should include a site-specific accounting of the embodied energy and carbon footprint from all consultants and scoping works, construction, materials, fabrication, transport, site works and construction, transmission, and other associated infrastructure, maintenance, operation, decommissioning, and backup battery and/or gas plants. If
45 this has not been done and made available for peer review and submitted to the approving authority, any claim regarding the CO₂ emissions benefit of this project cannot be considered to have valid justification, and in that case, the project should not be approved.

Secondly, ethics, equity, and administration of justice. I've written and spoken with a number of politicians regarding my concern that the current process for the mass rollout of renewable energy infrastructure in New South Wales is not ethical. The principle of environmental equity states that the harms and costs of a project should be carried by the extent reasonably possible by those demanding and consuming the end product. This is not happening with the wind industry in New South Wales. Regional areas are consequently the victim of disproportionate harms. I could find no mention of the principle of environmental equity in the EIS.

The wind industry is operating in a legislative and political environment that is unfairly weighted in its favour. The proponent has spent years preparing, scoping the project and preparing the EIS, yet the community was only given a few weeks to respond. Local planning has been removed by the state significant infrastructure pathway. How is that democratic or just?

Taxpayer subsidies are going to corporate for-profit entities, and news stories showing pictures of politicians opening wind projects are common. How can the fundamental purpose of government to administer justice be carried out if the government is favouring one party at the expense of another?

In conclusion, Sir John Salmond in his 1902 book, *Jurisprudence*, notes that a primary purpose of government at a fundamental level is to administer justice, thus ensuring, quote, "The maintenance of the just rights of the community and its members. To act equitably and maintain its legitimacy, government must not, under any circumstances, act as an agent that enables one party to gain financially or otherwise at the expense of another party that suffers a resulting loss."

It has been clearly presented to the Department of Planning that this project would cause a number of significant harms, nuisance and financial loss to a number of local landholders, and that they would suffer this loss because of a development that would benefit the proponent financially.

Furthermore, it has been clearly presented to the Department of Planning that the cumulative harmful impacts from the numerous existing and proposed wind projects is very significant; thousands of objections lodged on the New South Wales Planning Portal for wind projects in New South Wales. Therefore, unless full and just compensation is provided by the proponent to all those who would suffer harms, nuisance and loss, this project, if approved, would achieve unjust and inequitable outcomes.

I therefore contend that this Commission, as an appointed administrator of justice, is bound by ethical and equity considerations to not approve this project. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Any questions for Michael? Thank you, that was very clear. Thanks, Michael.

Okay, phone. Okay, we actually have Aidan Morrison in the building. We were

expecting him on the phone, but even better. We're just changing some batteries in the microphone. So we'll just be one second. Thanks, Chris.

MR AIDAN MORRISON: Can you hear me?

5

MR PEARSON: Yeah, very well.

MR MORRISON: Excellent. Thank you very much. My name is Aidan Morrison. I'm from the Centre for Independent Studies. I'm not from Coolah. It's my first time to come here. I'm not a local. In fact, my normal day job would be in an office in Macquarie Street. So I feel like a total imposer and outsider coming here, were it not for the fact that I've been gratefully hosted by some local residents here.

10

I had the privilege of flying into the well-discussed Tongy airstrip. We saw an eagle flying right by us at about turbine height in the middle of the Girragulang cluster. It looks like beautiful farming country. It is certainly eagle country, and it's about to become wind turbine country. And it was great to meet a lot of locals at the pub, or at the sports bar last night, where I gave a longer version of what I'd like to share in succinct form right now.

15

20

A big topic has been the adverse impacts on the community, and what might be summarised by some in I think a slightly ugly term, the social licence for renewable energy. I would like to speak to the question of the economic licence for this development. My core contention is that it's been forged.

25

There are three main points that I wish to make, and I'll try to support them with some evidence very, very briefly. The first is that it has been an absolutely core and fundamental contention in the public policy that this Planning Commission has been charged with trying to advance, that renewable energy will push power prices down. It is now incontrovertible that power prices in New South Wales and the rest of Australia are rising, and it is directly linked to the construction infrastructure that this particular project will most directly benefit from.

30

Thirdly, a very important point is that the idea that renewable energy wouldn't be able to push prices down, was based on what is either an absolutely catastrophic mistake in understanding the nature of the evidence by the Minister who advanced this policy, or a deliberate and persistent, basically misleading and trying to misconstrue the evidence. I'll try to support each of those three very briefly.

35

40

Firstly, under 4.5 of the assessment document, this Committee is required, it's a mandatory matter for consideration, to consider the social, environmental, social and economic impacts of the development. The public interest is also a mandatory consideration.

45

Now, the core piece of legislation is the *Electricity Infrastructure Act* of 2020, and I think there is a crucial quote here from the proponent, Matt Keane, then Minister for Energy, in his second reading speech. And there's many quotes throughout, but

the key one I'll mention is that "Our state is in a unique position to take advantage of those energy resources, to give our local businesses and industries the competitive advantage that comes from having low-cost energy."

5 That and dozens of other quotes will make it absolutely clear this was a premise, a
promise, if you will, of what this policy agenda was about, to help reduce
electricity price in Australia, and New South Wales particularly. And you can see
that confirmed in the Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap, the Electricity Strategy,
10 the Transmission Infrastructure Strategy, all of the accompanying New South
Wales documents that preceded that. That was a core premise.

What's happening instead to power prices? Well, as recently released by the
Australian Energy Regulator in their '25-'26 draft determination of the default
15 market offer, which is a safety net cap on electricity prices, New South Wales
electricity prices rose the highest of any other states that were considered in that
document; 8 to 9% year-on-year increases, which is higher than South Australia
and Queensland at the time. And it says on page 19 that the determined New South
Wales roadmap cost increases and forecast increases in transmission costs are also
20 driving increases. It was allocated in that document \$493.18 million for this
financial year for those roadmap costs, which is the purpose for establishing these
renewable energy zones, which are obviously not yet built.

If it already costs something like double what HumeLink will cost before we build
25 the transmission, how much more will it cost later? And of course, this particular
project has now got those transmission lines being built right into the core of the
two southern clusters at that public cost.

But finally, Matt Keane is mistaken. He has said that he has relied, and this is in
Senate Estimates [unintelligible 03:47:35], it said that "As the former Energy
30 Minister of New South Wales, we looked at what the cost of replacing the existing
system in a New South Wales context was against other counterfactuals, and that's
what we relied upon AEMO for." And yet it was confirmed by the CEO weeks
before at another Senate committee, the Select Committee for Energy Planning
and Regulation in Australia on the 23rd of October, the CEO of AEMO was asked,
35 "But you're saying that you cannot guarantee that the current government policy
settings which you model will deliver lower prices." And Daniel Westman, CEO,
replied, "I can't guarantee that, no."

40 The core foundation of Matt Keane's premise has been knocked out from under
him, and it is worse. And I won't have the time to detail all of this. But it's
actually Matt Keane that has said that he thinks that the ISP compares renewable
energy generation to an alternative generation, and allows it to consider an
alternative current government policies, when in fact, the counterfactual does not
45 do that. It only considers the attempt to meet all the same objectives of
government policies, including a mandate to hit all the renewable energy targets
without building new transmission.

So Matt Keane is categorically and catastrophically mistaken about the core

premise, which led to the false promise that these proposals and these projects would push down electricity prices. So I'd urge you to consider that when considering the economic interest.

5 **MR PEARSON:** Great. Thank you, Aidan. Yeah, I think so. Just, I mean, my only question is, are you, are they your views or the Centre for Independent Studies, or both? I'm just trying to be clear, whether you're speaking on their behalf.

10 **MR MORRISON:** Yes, I'm coming here from the Centre for Independent Studies, yes.

MR PEARSON: Okay, yes, thank you. Okay. A five minute break to do some set up things? Yep. We're just going to take a five minute break, I'm sorry, just to deal with a couple of logistical issues.

<BREAK

20 **MR PEARSON:** Okay, thanks everyone, we're coming back together please. If we can just ssh a little bit, thank you. We have our next speaker, Margaret Conn. Margaret's here. Thanks, Margaret.

MS MARGARET CONN: How's that work? Is that right?

25 **MR PEARSON:** Sounding pretty good.

MS CONN: Good afternoon, Commissioners, everybody. I'm not from Coolah. I've travelled from the Mid-Western regional area to be with you today. As you know, I haven't travelled far at all, because the project site sits at the southern tip of the Warrumbungles area, right next to the Mid-Western area. It's probably further from Coolah to Coonabarabran, the seat of the Warrumbungles area, than it is to Mudgee, the seat of the Mid-Western area. Takes less time, I'm told, to get from Coolah to Mudgee than to either Coonabarabran or Dubbo.

35 I also know from my own personal experience that if you have a problem in Coolah and you go to the police station and you speak into the telephone, because there's no police there, you get put through to the Mudgee police station. So this project is actually one of 25 projects in the CWO REZ in close proximity to and impacting upon the Mid-Western area, and that's without including the transmission lines.

40 The SEARs required that the proponent carry out detailed consultation with Mid-Western Council. Mid-Western Council submitted precise comments in response to the EIS. Further, as an SSD, and this has been highlighted, cumulative impact assessment guidelines for state significant projects apply, and they're directly relevant to the project, to the Mid-Western area and the Warrumbungle area, as regions, and to the CWO REZ at the strategic level.

Now, the matters specifically raised by Mid-Western Council have been incorrectly and incompletely summarised in the Department's recommendations for approval. The proposed recommendations and the terms of consent have failed to consider, and they're mandatory considerations, a number of the matters submitted by Mid-Western Council.

Section 5(2) of the recommendations purports to be a summary of Council's submissions. Table 6 purports to summarise Mid-Western concerns as threefold; workforce accommodation, waste management, decommissioning. Well we can discard decommissioning, because Mid-Western's submission made no mention of decommissioning.

Water resources was a primary concern. Now, you've heard Emma Bowman talk a little bit about water resources. Mid-Western Council's concerns have not been considered or addressed, and I'd just like to quote partly from their submission:

"Council advises it does not have the capacity to support water from the local water treatment plant. Potable water will be required to be sourced from alternate sources, and cannot be sourced from local water carters accessing Council's potable supply. At this point in time, ACEN should not be relying on Mid-Western Regional Council sources, directly or through third parties, for construction activities, as the capacity to supply construction water does not exist.

Mid-Western has publicly stated that the open slather undefined drilling of bores proposed by a myriad of projects in the region, including Valley of the Winds and the present recommendations, has the potential to result in significant, unknown and presently unassessable water table and groundwater impacts.

In relation to workforce accommodation, Council's primary request was that it," Council, "be part of the approval process for the accommodation plan. But the accommodation plan ignores the request, it ignores Mid-Western Regional Council, and requires only consultation with the Warrumbungle LGA. Although the camp is based in the Warrumbungle LGA, there will still be foreseeable accommodation and transport issues from Mudgee in the Mid-Western area. There will also be impacts from the workforce on Mid-Western Region health, welfare, storage and general community services.

These impacts are interrelated with the accommodation plan and the services available at the camp." And I think it was Peter Lewis earlier who acknowledged that the services that are available in the accommodation camp impact directly on the communities.

Now, all of this is compounded by the clear failure of the recommendations to deal appropriately with the cumulative impact assessment required by the departmental guidelines. Mid-Western Council has, at its own expense, commissioned a publicly available impact assessment, and I don't know if the Commissioners have read this, in relation to the SSDs of the CWO REZ, which included Valley of the Winds. That document forms part of its submission to the Legislative Council.

And it's a travesty that the government is ignoring the enormous and destructive cumulative impacts which are being forced on our communities, but hasn't completed the CIA, which its own guidelines require.

5 Now, Commissioner Pearson raised a question before in relation to familiarity with EnergyCo's assessment of cumulative impacts. Well, with respect, the obligation isn't on EnergyCo in relation to this matter. The obligation, as a result of the guidelines, is on the Planning Department. I'd submit that to avoid litigation, the assessment report needs to be withdrawn, pending the Department
10 completing for the IPC, as it's required to do in accordance with the MOU between the two bodies, a whole of government assessment for the CWO REZ.

As somebody else also suggested before, it actually should be that no more projects within the REZ should be approved until the whole of the REZ impact
15 assessment is completed. And once that's happened, the assessment report for the project would need to be updated, and any subsequent recommendations following the CIA report must also address the specific concerns of the Mid-Western Regional Council.

20 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you, Margaret. Amber Pedersen on the phone is our next speaker. Amber?

MS AMBER PEDERSEN: Yes.

25 **MR PEARSON:** Great. We've got you, we're just turning you down a little. You're very loud, but please proceed.

MS PEDERSEN: I'm speaking to the visual impacts on my [unintelligible
04:00:43]. Slide 2. The Department states that they used the 2024 visual technical
30 supplement to assess visual magnitude, despite the EP&A Act CEAs requirements, and the technical arrangements confirming the 2016 Visual Assessment Bulletin is the legally required assessment standard. The 2024 supplement wasn't available during exhibition of the project, denying public input. As such, the assessment must be redone using the 2016 Bulletin to meet the legal obligations and ensure
35 transparency.

Slide 3. No visual screening is offered beyond five kilometres for this project, which is completely inadequate. Evidence from Sullivan et al 2012 study cited in
40 the 2016 Bulletin found that 120 metre high turbines, that is half the height of the proposed 250 metre high turbines, triggered a classification of maximum visual impact at a distance of 6.4 kilometres away. The Bulletin Table 2 also states the blue and black line are not determinative of acceptability. Instead, they provide a basis for the assessment to be undertaken. In fact, Table 6 confirms that visual
45 impacts can reach over 32 kilometres away.

Residents forced to live in modern day power stations, REZs, deserve fair mitigation for cumulative visual impact out to at least a minimum of 12 kilometres.

Slides 4 to 6. The Department’s Assessment Report claims the project won’t significantly change the broader landscape characteristics. This is misleading and it ignores real cumulative impacts. EnergyCo’s own EIS contradicts the Department’s assessment, admitting that the project will introduce energy and electricity infrastructure into a largely undeveloped rural landscape, resulting in cumulative landscape character impact.

Coolah will be surrounded by 316 turbines across two wind farms within five kilometres. Being in a REZ does not excuse these impacts, especially when the REZ boundary was drawn without consultation. Landowners deserve fair visual screening out to a minimum 12 kilometres.

Slide 7. We propose six key changes to condition B1: Visual Impact Mitigation. Extend the request period to five years post-construction. Expand eligibility from five to 12 kilometres. Add visual mitigation options like earth mounding and structures like sheds and water tanks. Aim to remove visibility, not just reduce it. Require installation of established trees so residents aren’t waiting 20 years for visual relief. Require dwelling specific bushfire risk assessment reports or proposed vegetation screening at the developer’s cost.

Slide 8. A visual impact compensation program must be required by a condition of consent to fairly compensate residents out to 12 kilometres where visual screening is not feasible due to bushfire risk asset protection zones, topography or impact on valued views from a residence.

Slide 9. It is disingenuous for ACEN and the Department to say lighting is not needed for 250 metre high turbines, and only address it after the EIS when public comments are closed. Flashing lighting in previously dark sky areas will significantly disrupt residents’ enjoyment and stargazing. EnergyCo’s own EIS assessment acknowledges the cumulative visual impact on the lighting in Uarbry and Tongy Hills. Further public exhibition of lighting information, including photo montages and details of how many lights and where on the turbines they will be placed is essential to ensuring a fair assessment and community input.

Slide 10. We request an additional condition of consent to the installation and operation of aircraft detection lighting system in line with CASA’s ignored 2022 advice. Quote, “To minimise lighting impacts on local residents, CASA would also recommend the installation of radar activated hazard lights,” end quote. This system activates lights only when aircraft detect new turbines, protecting aviation safety while preventing unnecessary cumulative night light pollution on surrounding residents and native species.

Slide 11, last slide. We request a condition of consent to ensure no neighbour agreement can require residents to waive their rights to object or take legal action from non-compliance or nuisance impacts now or in the future. Residents must be free to seek redress if impacts worsen over time, without being silenced by legal contracts tied to mitigation measures. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Amber. I'm not sure if you're still there. Where are you located, Amber, just so we know?

5 **MS PEDERSEN:** I'm a representative from Burrendong SOS, which is around the Yarrabin area.

MR PEARSON: Sorry, where?

10 **AUDIENCE:** Mid-Western.

MR PEARSON: Okay, Mid-Western. Thank you. Thank you for that. Okay, Terry Conn.

15 **MR TERRY CONN:** Yes. Now, I'm also from the Mid-Western area. I've read the recommendations, evaluation and proposed terms of development consent. On the IPC website, I've also read, in relation to the Commission's role in the planning system, two letters which are directly in point in the application, namely the Minister for Climate Change and Energy to the Minister for Planning, 20th of
20 May '24, and the Minister for Planning to this Commission on the 2nd of June '24. The Minister for Climate Change and Energy brought attention to the *Climate Change Net Zero Act 2023*, passed on the 30th of November '23, and to the New South Wales emission reduction target.

25 I oppose any consent to this project. My reasons are many, but I wish to comment on just one; to comply with the limit of time. Documents evidence that there has been no consideration of whether the project satisfies the objectives of the National Electricity Law in this approval process. The *National Electricity New South Wales Act 1997* states at section 4 that the National Electricity New South
30 Wales Law and Regulations bind the Crown, not only in the right of New South Wales, the Crown in all its other capacities. All electricity infrastructure development in New South Wales is subject to the NEL. That's the other legislation that's been quoted to you here today. I'll repeat that. All electricity infrastructure development in New South Wales is subject to the NEL, regardless
35 of policy.

It is one thing for the IPC to be made aware of the government's present climate change policy. It is another thing entirely to fail to consider the NEL as a relevant consideration, which needs to be satisfied by a proponent seeking approval for an
40 electricity infrastructure project. Until '23, the objective of the NEL legislation was – the objective of this law is to promote efficient investment in and efficient operation and use of electricity services for the long term interests of consumers of electricity. With respect to: price, quality, safety, reliability and security of supply of electricity, and (b), the reliability, safety and security of the national electricity
45 system.

On the 23rd of September 2023, it had a new additional objective added; N(c) the achievement of targets set by a participating jurisdiction for reducing Australia's

greenhouse gas emissions or that are likely to contribute to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

5 This addition of paragraph c in '23 is stark acknowledgement by governments and the NEM that prior to this amendment, the objective of the NEL had no room for emission reductions as an objective in themselves. The second reading speech on the introduction of the amendment made it very clear, however, that emission reduction concerns did not outweigh the long term interests of electricity consumers. Note I say electricity consumers, and not the public interest.

10 In relation to the matters listed at (a) and (b), I'm just going to quote a bit from that reading speech: "As with the existing components of the National Energy Objectives that include price, quality, safety, reliability and security of supply, the emission reduction component will sit within the existing economic efficiency framework that underpins the current National Energy Objectives. Under this framework, decision makers under the National Energy Laws will be obliged to consider the emissions reduction component alongside the other components in making their decisions.

20 In this way, the emissions reduction component is not intended to sit above or be prioritised over any other component within the objectives. This will ensure that the National Energy Objectives continue to promote the long term interests of consumers through efficient investment operation and use of energy service."

25 Now, that was the opinion, and that was the reading speech only in 2023. The NEL isn't dead, it's alive and well. Each of the individually required items in section 7 of the NEL must be satisfied, and the newly inserted achievement and climate agendas, targets is only one of them. Note well the law says in the opening sentence, "long term interests of consumers." It says "Price, quality, safety, reliability and security of supply of electricity in the long term interests of consumers."

30 There is an indirect acknowledgement in the EIS of the relevance in this wind farm of the NEL requirements at page 55 onwards. The EIS claims at page 57 that compliance will occur with the national energy rules relating to generation performance, which therefore ensures that the project will meet requirements for safe, reliable and secure connection to the electricity system.

40 The proponent claims incorrectly that this satisfies the National Electricity Law. The law does not say safe, reliable and secure connection to the electricity system.

45 Part 6(2) of the Department's recommendations deal with the relevance of the project within the framework of energy infrastructure. It refers exclusively to the energy transition to renewables and reduction of emissions. In essence, the proponent and the Department of Planning has ignored the NEL in the interest of climate change policy. Accordingly, this process is flawed. I request that the project not be approved, but that it be referred back to the Department of Planning to deal with consideration of the mandatory matter of consideration of compliance

with the state's National Electricity Law.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Terry. Next two speakers are on the phone. We've got Ramila Chanisheff. Ramila, are you with us?

5

MS RAMILA CHANISHEFF: Yes, I am. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. We're just turning the volume up slightly, but ready to go, please.

10

MS CHANISHEFF: Thank you very much for this opportunity. I am representing the Uyghur community. Your listeners and yourself, Richard, would probably be aware of the millions of Uyghurs that have been rounded up by the Chinese communist regime into the concentration camps. I am coming from the angle of the human cost of making these wind turbines, even before they hit the Australian shores.

15

Now, what's happened is the millions of people who have been taken into the concentration camps have been streamlined into labour camps, using them as slave labour, making the components of the wind turbines, whether it is the cobalt, the other minerals or other components of the wind turbines, or the full component of it when you bring it into Australia that is made by China. We know that most of these products that come from China are highly likely they use Uyghur forced labour, and also human labour, so whether it is also the Chinese residents as well, citizens.

20

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Now, we in Australia have this *Modern Slavery Act*, which came into effect of course on 1 January 2019, which requires larger companies and other entities in Australia to report on how they prevent products and modern slavery risks in their operations and supply chains. When we Uyghurs have got our family members and millions of the ethnic Uyghur Turkic people of northwest China disappearing into the gulags of these forced labour, and yet Australia has a *Modern Slavery Act* in place, but it is not enacted. It is not enforced. When we have a Modern Slavery Commissioner of New South Wales, and a Modern Slavery Federal Commissioner, Chris Evans holding these positions, and yet entities and industries are relying on this cheap labour that is coming at human cost into our shores.

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Now, I am not a resident of the location that everyone is. I have heard the many horrible stories of what the effects, environmental, economic and the residential will be facing when these wind turbines come into the region. I am hoping that you will also consider the human cost at making the components of these wind turbines. When we have a *Modern Slavery Act* in place in Australia, and yet we are not abiding by the Act and we are not enacting it, I think this is something that the government and the local government needs to look into.

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So please consider this before you even think about bringing land, these wind turbines, and destroying not only the region, the residential livelihoods, but also the human cost of it. Thank you.

5 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you, Ramila. And Ramila speaks at quite a number of our Commissions of Inquiry, and perhaps this could be an issue the Applicant could respond to as to what measures they would take to ensure that materials are not sourced from forced labour. Did you want to raise anything?

MS FITZGERALD: No, no.

10 **MR PEARSON:** No, okay. Thank you, Ramila. Les Huson on the phone.

MR LES HUSON: Yes, hello.

MR PEARSON: Hi, Les.

15 **MR HUSON:** Hello?

MR PEARSON: Yep, we can hear you, Les.

20 **MR HUSON:** Good. The first thing I suppose is, have you received my PowerPoint presentation, and do you have it available?

MR PEARSON: Yes, it's in front of us and we can flick through it as you talk.

25 **MR HUSON:** Excellent. Thank you. Right. Can I start? Now, at the outset, we've got the assessment report that's been provided. And if you look at paragraph 21 of the assessment report, it describes that the energy policy framework that was used in preparing that assessment report is basically the old one, not the one that's current from November 2024.

30 So I suppose my question of the Commission is, is the Commission's hands tied to assess and set conditions only in respect of the old policy and the energy framework, or those of November 2024?

35 **MR PEARSON:** We'll come back to that at the end. If you just want to keep working through, please, your presentation.

40 **MR HUSON:** Yes, no problem. Second bullet point of my first page is, it's been common malpractice to refer to noise limits as something db(A), without qualifying the descriptor, such as LAeq or Lmax or Lmin or L10 or whatever. And if you look at the recommended condition, B14, the first paragraph to the layperson could be read as the 35 dB that's in that first sentence may be interpreted incorrectly as being an LA90, when in actual fact, the target is in terms of LAeq(10 minutes).

45 So, just referring to the clarification that the November '24 framework now produces, it has an extracted paragraph for a typical condition. And my suggestion is that a minor modification to B14 in the recommended is to have LAeq(10 minutes) after the 35 dB(A) in the first sentence to be inserted.

Now, depending on whether the Commission is allowed to use the new framework or not, my recommendation to clarify and improve the consistency of such conditions is not to refer to the Wind Energy Noise Assessment Bulletin of 2016, but to change that to be the Technical Supplement for Noise Assessment of November 2024 in place.

The Bulletin of 2016 refers to the South Australian 2009 guide, but the South Australian guide was updated in 2021. And there could be confusion in referring to the 2016 Bulletin that refers to in general SA 20 – sorry, 2009, because that 2009 guide was updated in 2021, before the assessment was made. So, there’s possible confusion over which SA guide to refer to. And that could be clarified if we just refer to the use of the technical supplement for noise assessment from November 2024.

If we can go to the next page, please. The assessment report noted that “ACEN has committed to verify compliance with the Noise Bulletin criteria following detailed design and selection of final wind turbine model.” Now, the draft conditions would benefit from a requirement to prepare a noise prediction for the final layout, certainly, in accordance with the requirements detailed in the Department’s Technical Supplement for Noise Assessment. It’s not recommended that the condition only requires that just a model is prepared, but that model prediction has to be assessed by the Department. Next page, please.

Operational noise monitoring. It’s been found that wind turbines that have been installed recently in Victoria have had sound power levels that are some 7 dB higher than what the manufacturer originally specified in their model to gain approval. So it would be good to have a condition that tests some of the earlier commissioned wind turbines in the wind farm before it gets out of hand, if it’s found that those turbines are egregiously too loud.

If we can go on to the next page, please. Yes, the Technical Supplement requires that the conditions of consent will also require Applicants to prepare a specific compliance assessment. When doing an assessment, AS4959 actually ensures that when measurements are taken in terms of LA90, that they’re corrected to produce the LAeq, which is part of the conditions of consent in B14. And that is outlined in the Australian Standard 4959, and that’s on the next page of my submission. So, thank you for your attention.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Les. I will ask the Department of Planning to respond to the guideline issue, but my understanding is due to the time at which this application was lodged, the old guidelines apply, not the 2024 guideline. But I’ll seek clarification of that from the Department when they address the Commission after the break. So, thank you very much, Les.

MR HUSON: Okay, thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. The final public speaker is Grant Piper. And Grant’s

got 10 minutes, and my understanding is, Grant, you want to speak on behalf of a group of people, including yourself.

5 **MR GRANT PIPER:** Yes, I'm representing myself as a landowner affected, and also the Central West Resist Group, and the Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance Group. So, I'll start with aviation. They've got the slides here. Yep, just leave that one. So, we live on [redacted]. The Girragulang cluster starts at the first ridge west of us, three and a half K away. We also have a powerline easement that has been
10 compulsorily acquired on another property. I fly out of Tongy airstrip – is that going through? Yep. Again, about three and a half K from the planned turbines.

The local aviation aspect of this project has been a bit of a farce. There's been lots of to and froing. The actual highest risk situations of poor weather and low
15 visibility conditions common in this area due to the easterly winds lifting coastal moisture over the Great Dividing Range has been ignored, and so not investigated or mitigated.

Meanwhile, the benign best case situations of fine weather have been laboured over. The hazard of 131 tall turbines on hills surrounding the valley when
20 obscured by smoke or low cloud is an obvious aviation hazard that any layman can understand. When arriving or departing from these airstrips, not just in the circuit area, in poor weather or visibility, the turbines will be an obstacle requiring deliberate action to avoid. If an aircraft is forced to descend to remain clear of cloud, the turbines will be a hazard. And I'm referring to VFR aircraft here or
25 visual flying, not instrument aircraft or RPTs going over the top. Any pilots unfamiliar with the area trying to divert into Coolah in bad weather will be particularly in danger, as the Coolah airstrip's in a valley, and it'll be surrounded by tall turbines on top of ridgelines.

30 Turee airstrip's been mentioned. It's specifically set up for aerial firefighting, and the owners have repeatedly informed ACEN and DPIE of that, and both airstrips used for aerial lag. And I noted in the discussions, the briefings from the Department and ACEN to the Commissioners prior to this, that they were very
35 limited in providing actual information about the aviation side of it. They seemed to dodge that subject and weren't very informative compared to the – given the exhaustive discussions and communication we've had with DPIE over the subject over the last few years.

40 Next slide. In addition, just personally, I practice and coach low-level aerobatics and in the vicinity of Tongy. I'm authorised to conduct aerobatics to ground level, not that I do often, but any unexpected turbulence could be disastrous, understandably. And as Dr Kennedy stated earlier, no genuine studies have been done of turbulence of turbines of this size, downwind, or the superposition of
45 turbulence from several turbines combining.

The proximity of turbines negatively impacts the quiet enjoyment of my property and surrounds, and that's my property and my home, not just the house, it's the whole property.

5 Next slide. Now, can you see the tanker there? Yeah. ACEN and their consultants' aviation projects, as well as 270, may have met the letter of the statutory requirements, but failed to actually acknowledge or consider or mitigate the real risk. This appears typical to any factor that is critically damning of the project. It gets ignored, it's unacknowledged, and is thus unmitigated.

10 This head-in-the-sand approach is unprofessional and unacceptable for achieving aviation safety. Despite DPIE directing ACEN to consult with us directly in 2022 on advice from CASA, they have never done so, getting their consultants to do desktop reviews instead. We request that IPC or DPIE again direct ACEN to talk to us in person about the real aviation hazards prior to approval, and prior to drafting of the aviation management plan, not after.

15 Next slide – firefighting. Condition B54 refers to firefighting and some storage of water on site. This is insufficient, as aerial firefighting will be severely limited within and near the project. The RFS volunteers, such as me, who oppose the project, will be compelled to go into the project area and fight the fire from the ground without air support.

20 Next slide. The addition of 300 plus ignition sources of bushfire within the area is asking for trouble. Turbine fires are not uncommon. Blade throw of up to a kilometre increases complexity of dealing with the turbine fire.

25 Next slide. BESS and lithium fires are another unacceptable hazard added to our already fire-prone region. During the fire season, we keep RFS tankers and private firefighting vehicles loaded, at the ready, and proponents should be required to do the same. It is unfair to rely on local RFS volunteers and services as these are minimal.

30 Next slide. Both Dunedoo and Coolah have no permanent fire and rescue personnel stationed here. There's no full-time uniformed firemen in town. It is 100% volunteer. The town brigades are now manned voluntarily, like the RFS itself, and similarly, there was once three policemen and their families in Coolah, and at present, there's none.

40 Additional conditions of consent should include no turbine operations in high fire danger conditions, and that an equipped and trained fire crew is maintained in each project area at all times during the fire season. And I've got this video, we can play the video there now, thanks. So this is a Boeing 737 large tanker dropping on a neighbour's property, Marshalls' property, looking from our hill, March 2024. And it's a Boeing 737, and working off the fuselage length, you can work out that he's dropping from below 200 feet, and you can also see the very poor visibility.

45 But he wouldn't be going in there if he thought there was 250 metre turbines. So he's below 200 feet, the turbines are 850 feet on ridgelines. So again, you don't need an expert or the RFS or somebody else to tell you that it's not going to affect firefighting. I mean, it is, the layman can see that with your own eyes.

5 The aerial firefighting case study always referenced by proponents is the Waterloo Wind Project fire some years ago in South Australia. This project was small, it was 43 130 metre turbines distributed linearly along a north south ridge. The fire burnt 50 hectares of grassland. The fire was started by the local fire captain, and the response was unrealistically impeccable.

10 Next slide. The Wind Project had staff on site, small aerial tankers were used, and the fire was out in three or four hours. This case study is not representative and should not be referenced anymore by proponents to support their projects.

15 Contrast this to the Valley of the Winds and Liverpool Range, with a random pattern of 200 metre plus turbines on high ground obscured by smoke with heavy turbulence – next slide – like we had in the 2017 Sir Ivan fire that burnt 55,000 hectares, even with unobstructed large tanker assistance. We had DC-10s, C-130s and helicopters and crop dusters fighting this fire. The fire burnt the southern half of the Valley of the Winds area, project area, the Leadville Girragulang clusters, and not the Mount Hope area I don't believe.

20 The serious business, this is serious – next slide – this is serious business, and the parking of turbines in the bunny ears position is irrelevant for large tankers. It's just another irrelevancy that they trot out along with the Waterloo Wind Farm. And we want to know what is in the emergency plans that we are not allowed to see, and why.

25 Next slide. Bisphenol A assessment report page 61, contamination, and page 71 of the environmental planning instrument, no consideration of contamination is caused by the project, or specifically blade erosion, is mentioned in the recommendation report or the conditions of consent.

30 Next slide. There is no acknowledgement of blade erosion and the consequent spreading of BPA from the epoxy over the land and water, contamination of the food chain or exposure to microplastics. PFAS and asbestos are belaboured over by the press with long-running inquiries, court actions and compensation schemes at huge cost.

35 Next slide. And here we have a future unsolvable contamination problem in the making, and it is all ignored. Barring cancelling the project altogether, a condition of consent must be effective and transparent ongoing land and water contamination monitoring. Next slide. At present there is no requirement in the conditions of consent. We certainly will be taking baseline measurements of our soil and water to use later if needed. Next slide. And as covered earlier, yes, part of our accreditation under livestock produce assurance is that we've got to state whether our stock and fodder is affected by, or close to wind and solar.

40 Next slide. Rehabilitation conditions, B61. Concrete pads are left with 2,000 tons of concrete in each; no tree will grow. The condition of consent should be that the turbines be mounted on pier-type footings rather than mass gravity footings. Next

slide. Much less concrete is required and a much smaller footprint required after the turbine removal. Next slide. There's various options of pier-type footings which I haven't seen any proponent list yet. Next slide. Keep going, next one. Yes, three to one ratio of concrete roughly.

5

Next slide. Mapping the country as a whole, there's 41,000 plus turbines across Australia. We've listed about a 1,000 in the Central-West Orana REZ, and if you take into account all the embedded energy which one of the previous speakers spoke about and building all this stuff, it's actually counterproductive to the stated aim, with immense local destruction of farmland and habitat thrown in, which is completely contrary to saving the planet. Next slide. And that's a cumulative impact; we've seen that before. Next slide. And this is Queensland. Keep going, next slide, keep going. This is happening all up and down the Great Dividing Range. Keep going.

10

15

So I counter that if you think that's saving the planet, I don't think it is, you can't disbelieve your eyes. Keep going. And it's all due to the total inefficiency of wind turbines to produce power at a capacity factor of 30%. That means it's two days a week, it might power 500,000 homes when everything's absolutely perfect, and the other five days a week you're running the generators. So I'll have to stop there, but any questions, thank you.

20

25

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Anything? Grant, I'll ask the Applicant when they talk to, respond to the footings issue as to whether there is something you can do other than the standard concrete footings, whether pier footings are a feasible option or not. And we've heard from many speakers about the aviation risks, so that's certainly something that the IPC will look into further, so I appreciate your presentation. Thank you very much, thanks man.

30

So the time is now 2:35. We just need to take a short break, because our next speaker, well, our next speaker's in the room, but we also have the Department of Planning. Let's just take a short 10-minute break, if that's okay, and then we'll hear from the Applicant and we'll hear from the Department. They will be asked to respond to some of the things you've said today. There won't be everything, and you probably won't say, hey, great, now I support the project, but I think you know that. But let's give them an opportunity to respond to some of the things you've heard that you've said today, and then I'll tell you where we go after that.

35

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So if we come back by, yeah, in 10 minutes' time, please.

<BREAK

45

MR PEARSON: Thank you everyone. So welcome back to the meeting, and just in time we have Megan from the Applicant, Megan Richardson. So she now has a 10-minute session just to respond to some of the things that people have raised today. And so I'll hand over to Megan. After Megan we'll have the Department of Planning on the phone to pick up some issues.

MS MEGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah, could you move it across a little bit that way, that would be wonderful. Thank you. Thank you Commissioner, good afternoon. Thank you to everyone who's participated today in what's a very important process. I understand it's not easy standing up here, so I do appreciate that.

5

In terms of the topics you've thrown to me throughout the day, I'll just respond to those now. So starting with emergency planning and response. As part of our conditions of approval, we're committed to preparing an emergency response plan. We'll consult with all the relevant agencies including RFS, local police, SES, etc, and are happy to consult with the VRA on this plan as well.

10

In terms of aerial cropping and firefighting, that's obviously been quite an important topic that's been raised today. Impacts on aerial cropping and firefighting were considered in the additional aviation assessments. They considered the risks for planes landing and taking off at Turee and Tongy airstrips in detail. That was done by our consultants at Aviation Projects, and the Department's advisor at 270. We understand that there is a need for further consultation with the operators, and we welcome the condition to develop an aviation management plan in close consultation.

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The more specific technical concerns around aerial firefighting within the wind farm, I'll take on notice and respond in a bit more detail in writing.

25

The workers' camp, the temporary workforce accommodation camp I should say, will be self-sufficient for waste, food, healthcare, etc. And we've taken on board Warrumbungle Shire Council's feedback with respect to their limitations in the area.

30

Concrete batching and quarries; all deliveries will be via three primary site accesses. One to the Girragulang cluster, one to Leadville and one to the Mount Hope cluster. We will batch all concrete on site and we will have on site quarries as well.

35

Traffic through Uarbry; safety is incredibly important to us. Responsible for – sorry, we are responsible for ensuring all contractors stick to the approved schedule of roads. We will be accountable for any breaches, and will ensure our contractor will stick to the roads. This is one of the conditions of our consent as well, not to use that road through Uarbry on Moorefield Road East.

40

Uarbry photo montage, the visual assessment was undertaken in line with the 2016 Bulletin. The photo montage, which is from the Golden Highway, formed one of our public viewpoint montages, and I can confirm it was taken about one kilometre east of the village.

45

Modern slavery; ACEN Australia is very committed to addressing modern slavery risks across its operation and supply chains. We have signed the Clean Energy Council's Pledge Against Modern Slavery, which commits us to working with the

industry. In addition, we have embedded modern slavery compliance in our tendering and contracting processes, and we have senior management assess our supply chain practices.

5 Turbine foundations; I'm of the understanding that none of the leading turbine suppliers are offering this kind of product in the Australian market. The industry is always considering alternatives when they become available to the market, and it may be something for the future.

10 I think that was the run through of the key questions, unless you had anything else.

MR PEARSON: Yeah, look – no, this isn't a Q&A, sorry. There were many things that came up today. I think that's addressed a number. Taking on board the issue of firefighting in bushfires and interaction with turbines has been an issue that's been raised by a number of speakers today, and also for cropping activity. So I think we certainly as a Commission will look further at that. But any further advice that you can provide on that will be factored into our consideration as well. So thank you, Megan.

20 I'm going to ask the Department, who is online, I believe, to now add to what you said, and perhaps address some other issues. So thank you. And you can take your seat, unless the Commissioners have any questions? No. So thank you. Okay. So Department of Planning, Nicole Brewer. Nicole, are you with us?

25 **MS NICOLE BREWER:** Good afternoon, Commissioners.

MR PEARSON: Sorry, we're just adjusting the volume. If you can keep speaking, Nicole.

30 **MS BREWER:** Thanks. Testing that that's okay?

MR PEARSON: Yeah, that's a lot better. Thank you. So, Nicole, if you can respond to some of the things that have been raised at today's public meeting, that would be appreciated.

35 **MS BREWER:** Thank you, Chair. So I understand some of the issues raised, perhaps the first one related to the compliance of – how compliance with conditions is enforced post-consent. That was raised, I think, earlier in the day. So if a project is approved, the conditions of consent set the framework for those limits and obligations on the Applicant, and they intend to help achieve that certainty and consistency between projects. And they also adopt an outcome-focused approach.

40
45 So the conditions themselves are then enforced by the Department's compliance branch. So there is a team of people who are responsible for compliance against state-significant developments. And they conduct site inspections, that's particularly during construction for these types of projects. The conditions also require a program of environmental audits that are conducted by an independent

environmental auditor against the conditions of consent, and that then they're publicly reported.

5 So wind farms are also regulated by the Environment Protection Authority, and that's through an Environment Protection Licence, which is managed by the EPA, which would also have a schedule of reporting. So the kind of non-compliances that were raised by community members would be identified either through those site visits, or in the independent audits, or that reporting that's associated with that framework. But members of the community can also raise complaints directly to
10 the compliance team for investigation.

There were also some questions around how the Department considered the potential impact on the use of airstrips for aerial cropping and aerial bush firefighting activities. The Department did consider that potential impact on the
15 use of those airstrips to be used for any type of aircraft. So the Department's assessment considered two private airstrips; the Tongy aerodrome and the Turee aerodrome.

And that was also a key issue that was raised in submissions. So at the
20 Department's request, ACEN provided additional information regarding that safety. And that assessment concluded that there was sufficient distance between the aerodromes and the nearest turbine for the aircraft to remain clear of the turbines when they were manoeuvring after take-off, or while preparing to land under the CASA regulations.

25 The independent aviation expert that the Department engaged to review that assessment also concluded that ACEN's assessment sufficiently addressed the potential risks. Mitigation measures associated with wind turbulence, which is a common factor I think that pilots need to consider in any flying operations and manoeuvres, and the wind turbines as obstacles to these two aerodromes and
30 operations, could be sufficiently managed through the processes that were identified in ACEN's assessment.

35 So ACEN would also be required to prepare a bushfire management plan and emergency response plan to manage those fire risks. And the relevant authorities, so that's CASA, Air Services and NSW RFS, reviewed the conditions and raised no concerns.

40 So there were also some other questions around where the project's water would be sourced. I understand that the amount of water required for the project is around 1,000 megalitres for construction of the wind farm, plus some additional requirements for the crushing operations at quarries. ACEN's proposed to obtain water for construction and operation from a number of sources. And that includes farm dams, under agreement with relevant landholders, groundwater purchased
45 from associated or adjacent landowners, or council. And also by purchasing and transporting the water to site by tanker, and treated wastewater.

So we understand that ACEN's been in discussions with local landowners and

5 have indicated that there's an availability of about three quarters – sorry, about 700 megalitres per annum that could be made available during construction subject to those relevant approvals. And so the condition that the Department has recommended around that, is that ACEN needs to ensure that it has sufficient water for the stages of development, and if necessary, then it needs to adjust the scale of development. So if it's not able to source an amount of water that can accommodate construction of the project, it would then need to scale back the construction of the project, so that the water requirements can be met.

10 There were some other quite detailed recommendations around conditions, and the Department's open to considering recommendations from the Commissioners on conditions, subject to a consideration of their enforceability and workability. What I would say though is that the approach to conditions is generally outcome-based, which is an approach taken for most of the impacts described in the recommended
15 conditions of consent. And what I mean by that is that the Department sets the outcome that we want the Applicant to achieve. So that might be the blasting criteria or the air impacts or noise, and then it's ultimately up to the Applicant to meet those conditions. And the Department's conditions are not always specific to how that happens, or detail the mechanism by which that happens. Only that
20 ultimately the Applicant has to meet that end point.

25 There are a number of recommendations about access to information, and I note that the conditions already include provision of the monitoring and the independent audits to be made available. There was some discussion around the decommissioning requirement. They also talk to the outcomes that we want to achieve. So while the conditions don't specify the depth of the soil, it does state – and that was in particular to comments made around how deep the soil would need to be over foundations, the conditions do talk to it needing to be covered, and that the area is revegetated. So the ultimate outcome I guess the community was
30 seeking, that they are able to be revegetated, is the intent of the condition already.

35 There was some clarification about the application of the guidelines. So the Department did assess the project against the 2016 Wind Energy Guidelines, including the Visual Assessment Bulletin, which forms part of that guideline. And as we mentioned in the assessment report, the new guideline doesn't apply to the assessment of the project.

40 What the 2016 Bulletin does do is it leaves it open to how that significance of the impact is considered. And that's the assessment that the Department has done in the tables of the assessment report. So it's considered the magnitude, and it's considered the multiple turbine outcomes that are required under the 2016 Bulletin.

45 There was some mention about the difference between the guidelines with regard to noise, and I note that the recommended conditions do already reference the Wind Energy Noise Bulletin 2016, and specifically state "or its latest version." So they already cover the new requirements for measuring noise of an operational wind farm.

5 **MR PEARSON:** Thank you, Nicole. That covers a range of things that were addressed today. It may not be to everyone's satisfaction. As I said before, the situation we're at now is to ask the Applicant, who have done, and the Department to respond to issues raised, which they have done. You may not be satisfied with their responses, and the ball really now drops into the Independent Planning Commission's court, in terms of our consideration of the application, and ultimately making a determination on the application.

10 So that does actually bring us to the end of this public meeting. I do want to thank everyone for participating, and to my fellow commissioners, Sarah Dinning and Suellen Fitzgerald, very much appreciated your input.

15 A reminder, it's not too late to make a submission. You can simply click on the make a submission button on our website and send it through, or you can do that via email or post. Deadline is 5 p.m. next Thursday, the 17th of April. And in the interest of openness and transparency, we will make a full transcript of this public meeting available on our website in the next few days.

20 When we determine the project, we will publish our Statement of Reasons, as well as the actual decision itself, obviously. And we will outline how we have taken into consideration your views, the community's views, in our consideration of the application.

25 Finally, a quick thank you to staff for attendance today, without whom we could not actually conduct this process. So thank you all very much. Yep, round of applause.

30 And thanks, everyone, for robustly sharing your views. And there have been some contrary views, and it's important for us to understand the range of views in the community, but I think we understand your issues very clearly. And thank you to people for watching. From all of us, enjoy the rest of your day and thank you very much for participating. Thank you.

35 **>THE MEETING CONCLUDED**