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**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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O/N H-1076107

**INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION**

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**RE: WHITE ROCK WIND FARM MOD 6**

**PANEL:**                      **PETER COCHRANE (CHAIR)**  
**WENDY LEWIN**  
**ADRIAN PILTON**

**PANEL ASSISTING:**        **KANE WINWOOD**  
**CALLUM FIRTH**  
**KYM STATHAM**

**SPEAKERS:**                **ADRIAN MADDOCKS**  
**MICHAEL McNAMARA**  
**ALLAN FLETCHER**

**LOCATION:**                    **GLEN INNES TOWN HALL,**  
**265 GREY STREET, GLEN INNES**

**DATE:**                        **9.29 AM, FRIDAY, 11 OCTOBER 2019**

MR P. COCHRANE: Good morning. We might – ah, we might make a start. Ah, before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet. I'd also like to pay my respects to their elders past and present, and to the elders from the other communities who may be here today. Welcome to the meeting  
5 today. Um, White Rock Wind Farm Proprietary Limited, the applicant, is seeking to modify its existing project approval, um, which includes changing the dimensions of the wind turbines, changing the layout of the approved turbines and ancillary infrastructure, reducing the number of turbines from 49 to 48, increasing the overall project area and increasing the vegetation limits. My name is Peter Cochrane. I'm  
10 the chair of this Independent Planning Commission panel. Joining me are my fellow commissioners Adrian Pilton and Wendy Lewin. Also in attendance is Callum Firth and Kym Stratham and Kane Winwood from the Commission Secretariat.

Before I continue I should state all appointed commissioners must make an annual  
15 declaration of interest identifying potential conflicts with their appointed role. For the record, we are unaware of any conflicts in relation to our determination of the proposed application. You can find additional information on the way we manage potential conflicts in our policy paper which is available on the Commission website. In the interest of openness and transparency, today's meeting is being recorded, and a  
20 full transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website. This public meeting gives us the opportunity to hear your views on the assessment report prepared by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment before we determine the application.

25 The Commission is an independent consent authority for State Significant Development applications and provides an additional level of scrutiny where there are more than 25 public objections, reportable political donations and/or objections by the relevant local council. The Commission is not involved in the Department's assessment of this project, the preparation of their report or any findings within it.  
30 This meeting is one part of our decision process. We received the Department's referral for this application on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2019. Since the application was lodged and assessed by the Department, more detailed vegetation surveys have been undertaken for the application as a result of more detailed planning for the underground cabling for stage 2.

35 Impacts on an additional 7.22 hectares of major vegetation have been identified, and a reduction of impact on New South Wales threatened ecological communities of 0.68 of a hectare. The applicant's letter advising the Commission of the need to increase vegetation impacts and seeking an increased clearing limit and offset  
40 requirements was received and posted on the Commission's website on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September. The results of these most recent vegetation surveys were conveyed to the Commission in a letter on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, and this was posted on the Commission's website on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October. We have been briefed by the Department who have met with the applicant and Inverell and Glen Innes Councils.  
45 Transcripts of these meetings will be available on our website.

After today's meeting, we may convene with relevant stakeholders if clarification or additional information is required on matters raised. Records of all meetings will be included in our determination report, which will be published on the Commission website. The site inspection took place yesterday at the project site. The applicant  
5 and the commissioners attended the site inspection. A summary of the questions we asked and the answers that were given at the site inspection will be available on the Commission's website as well. We have reviewed the written submissions received by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, which are published on the Department's website. We will also accept written comments in relation to the  
10 project until 5 pm on 18<sup>th</sup> of October this year. Anyone can send written comments to the Commission before that time. And you can do that by email or by post; details you can get from the Secretariat staff.

Following today's meeting, we will endeavour to determine the application as soon  
15 as possible. However, there may be delays if we find need for additional information. Before we hear from our first registered speaker, I need to say today's meeting is not a debate. We will not take questions from the floor. Our aim is to provide the maximum opportunity for people to speak and be heard by the Commission. Though you may not agree with everything you hear today, each  
20 speaker has the right to be treated with respect and heard in silence. Our focus is public consultation. We're here to listen, not to make comment. We may ask questions or seek clarification, but we've found this is not usually necessary.

Any information given to us may be made public. Our privacy statement governs  
25 our approach to your information. If you would like a copy of the privacy statement, you can obtain one from the Secretariat and from our website. Finally, I'll ask that everyone present turn their mobile phones to silent. And I'll call the first speaker. Now, we only have one registered speaker, but we do have time. If anyone else is interested in speaking, please let us know, and you can have the, ah, floor for, ah, up  
30 to five minutes. So our first speaker is Adrian Maddocks.

MR A. MADDOCKS: Okay. Um, thank you for allowing me to speak. Um, I  
would like to give a brief overview of the project on MOD 6, given that a detailed  
35 meeting transcript and project presentation can be found on the IPC website. To recap, White Rock Wind Farm was originally consented in 2012 for 119 wind turbines. It was located 18 kilometres west of Glen Innes. Stage 1 of the project, consisting of the first 70 wind turbines, was constructed from 2016 to 2018, and is now fully operational, as you can see. Modification application 6 seeks to construct the remainder of the project – up to 48 wind turbines – using the latest wind turbine  
40 technology and restructuring the layout to place turbines in more appropriate locations.

White Rock Wind Farm would like to install wind turbines up to 200 metres in  
45 height, using the larger generators to maximise the amount of electricity which can be produced. MOD 6 has assessed the impacts resulting from such changes, which form the basis of the application in January 2018, the response to submissions in September 2018 and subsequent supplementary information. MOD 6 seeks to

relocate turbines away from neighbours; realign infrastructure, such as access tracks and cables; and upgrade the substation to take the additional power to be generated. A new overhead power line, ah, already approved in modification 4, will connect the wind farm, ah, to the three – to the 330 kV transmission line 14 kilometres to the west of the project.

Although it appears that the impact on vegetation clearance has increased significantly – from 28 to 100 hectares – it should be noted that this jump is due to changes in ecological assessment methodology and the use of detailed engineering design to determine those impacts. MOD 6 has taken a conservative approach to determining, ah, ecological impacts, and it is hoped the vegetation clearing could be reduced during the final stage, ah, design prior to the start of construction. As pointed out by the Chair, White Rock Wind Farm would like to acknowledge that we have recently determined that additional vegetation clearing will be required to install the stage 2 underground cabling within the existing stage 1 footprint. Unfortunately, this cabling will not fit completely within the already disturbed areas.

After minimising impacts and avoiding additional clearing where at all possible, ah, it's acknowledged that an additional 7.22 hectares of native vegetation will be impacted. Again, this is a conservative figure, and impacts will be reduced where possible, ah, prior to the start of construction. Cabling-disturbed areas can quickly be rehabilitated. And cabling can be orientated to avoid clearing of trees, ah, using open areas where at all possible.

White Rock Wind Farm will ensure that all ecological impacts for stage two are offset appropriately. The project has already committed to biodiversity offsets for stage one and stage two of property to the west of the Wind Farm. If additional offsets are required for stage two, these will either be secured on the same property or through other appropriate methods. White Rock Wind Farm has engaged fully with the local community both in the immediate vicinity of the wind farm and the broader community and local townships.

White Rock Wind Farm has an ongoing annual community fund which last year gave out 179,000 to community projects located within 50 kilometres of the wind farm. Stage two would add an up to – an additional 120,000 to the fund, increasing the number and scale of projects which could be supported. White Rock Wind Farm has also recognised the impact to the project, both stage one and stage two, on nearby neighbours and has offered neighbour agreements to non-involved residences within three kilometres of a wind turbine. And most of these have been taken up, ah, or are still under discretion.

The construction of stage two will also provide an economic boost to the local areas as was evidenced with stage one. During construction up to 200 workers will be employed to build the wind farm, providing local employment and injecting capital into the local townships. Local businesses will also provide much needed services in support of the project, whether it be motels, cafés, clothing stores, engineering firms or bus companies. There will be an additional five full-time jobs to add to the 12

already employed for the 25-year life of the project. In conclusion, MOD 6 seeks to recon-, restructure stage two of White Rock Wind Farm to utilise the latest turbine technology whilst minimising impacts.

5 Stage one of White Rock Windfarm has been accepted by the vast majority of people whilst local and broader communities have benefited from the economic stimulus during construction, the ongoing community fund and long term employment opportunity. Stage two will further increase these community benefits in perpetuity biodiversity offsets will ensure the stage two ecological impacts are appropriately  
10 accounted for. We hope the IPC upholds the Department's decision and approved modification six as presented, thank you.

MR COCHRANE: Thank you, Adrian. Now, does anyone else here wish to speak? And could you identify yourself and when you come up? Yes, please.

15 MR M. McNAMARA: Ah, my name's Michael McNamara, I'm a local resident and Chairperson of the Glen Innes and District Community Centre. I have to declare a potential conflict in that we have been the recipient of one of the community contributions from the wind farm in the past, or several, and are very appreciative of  
20 it. And it's to that end, I've only just recently found out about today and the amendment. I've been sick as a dog, so - - -

MR COCHRANE: All right.

25 MR McNAMARA: - - - we'll just keep trying. And I'll put in a written submission before Thursday next week. It's - to me it's, um, quite evident that the community does support renewable energy options. We've just been con-, conducting over the last six weeks, a community survey, an online community survey and written survey about, ah, using community owned renewable energy projects in the Glen Innes  
30 Severn Council area to help people reduce their electricity bills. And we see that we administer the EAPA, ah, scheme of support for people encountering difficulties with their electricity bills.

35 And at the same time as that scheme has become tighter and more hard to get access to, and support, ah, the demand for that support is increasing across the community. And that's the, um, experience right across Australia. Electricity bills are recorded in research as one of the two top stressors in - on Australian families. And anything we can do in terms of alternatives to bring down those costs, I think, is something we should do. The survey shows, ah, with over - just about 100 responses, which is  
40 over one per cent of the Council's area, ah, it roughly matches the Census demographic data in terms of male/female, in terms of Glen Innes villages and rural areas, in terms of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people.

45 And, so we think it's pretty reasonable, um, we'll be taking it to Council to look for support. And we'll be looking to White Rock for further support as well. Um, and it's that level of support for community that - that I'd like to address. And I don't have any quantum or anything. But I think at the moment, it's \$180,000 a year to

the community. From a very, very large project that's over its life going to have significant income. And recently two researchers from Sydney University came up here and spoke to a range of stakeholders in the community.

5 And one of the concerns that was expressed to them was that the benefits from the development of the wind farms was, um, restricted, in many ways. Um, I don't know how that – how restricted that is, but they particularly mentioned the landowners on whose, ah, land the, ah, turbines are constructed, who benefit directly. And that, um, they felt that there wasn't sufficient, ah, flow-on effects of benefits  
10 from – to the rest of the community. And so I'd – I'd like to suggest that, ah, some greater quantum of community, ah, contribution, whether in money or kind, ah, from White Rock, over the life of the – the project, ah, would be great.

I think in terms of supporting this community to develop a community owned  
15 renewable energy project that would then, with not having to make the commercial profits, would be able to put benefits back into the community. And Hepburn Wind Farm, for example, the first such project in Australia, ah, contributes about \$30,000 a year from its efforts, ah, each, ah, each year, back into the community. Another suggestion that I've seen in the research I've been doing is where one community too  
20 small to run its own project had a wind farm development going on nearby actually bought into one of the turbines. And whether, whether some contribution of the output could subsidise electricity bills locally, ah, or something or some extra contribution to top up the EAPA scheme, ah, that sort of thing, I think, would be great. Thank you.

25 MR COCHRANE: Thank you. Thank you, Michael. Ah, any other submission to speak? No? Okay. Going once, going twice.

MR A. FLETCHER: .....

30 MR COCHRANE: Yep, sure, please.

MR FLETCHER: Sorry, I was – I didn't say I'd respond to this, but - - -

35 MR COCHRANE: What's your - - -

MR FLETCHER: - - - Allan Fletcher.

MR COCHRANE: Allan?

40 MR FLETCHER: Yeah.

MR COCHRANE: Please - - -

45 MR FLETCHER: Thank you.

MR COCHRANE: - - - if you can address your comments to us, thank you.

MR FLETCHER: Look, thanks for the time in doing this. Mine is a little bit left field of – of stage two of – of the wind farm. My question is, um, there's a landowner that is in stage two. I – I personally, um, you know, I was part of – of the Glen Innes Wind Farm, which was one of the first wind farms that, um, was going to be erected in this area. Um, when – when our windfarm was going ahead, we had the typical protest that goes on. Now, that's fine. But when, in stage two, a landowner that protested against us now wants a wind farm on his place and we get knocked back, but he wants it. And I don't think that's fair in – in whatever direction you take, if that's a fair, that we get knocked out at this stage and he protests, but is it fair that he can have a wind farm on his place?

And that's, um, that's my protest against stage two. If it's not good for one, it's no-good for anyone. And I've – I've probably got more to say. But, look, I'll leave it at that. And I just wanted to, when wind farms are being thought of; sure, they've got to go through the procedures, and all ours did. And we were the first to cop all the flack in this district. And – and then nothing happens. We – we fall by the wayside and the other ones can go ahead. And I don't think that's very fair, thank you.

MR COCHRANE: Thank – thank you, Allan.

20

MR FLETCHER: Thank you.

MR COCHRANE: This is definitely your last chance to speak. All right. Well, thank you, thank you all for coming. Ah, and I'll close the meeting at 9.46. Thank you.

25

**MATTER ADJOURNED at 9.47 am INDEFINITELY**