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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

TRANSCRIPT IN CONFIDENCE

O/N H-953638

INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION

PUBLIC MEETING

RE: YASS VALLEY WIND FARM

PANEL: **ALAN COUTTS**
PROF ZADA LIPMAN
ADRIAN PILTON

ASSISTING PANEL: **JORGE VAN DEN BRANDE**

LOCATION: **YASS SOLDIERS CLUB**
86 MEEHAN STREET
YASS, NEW SOUTH WALES

DATE: **1.32 PM, MONDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2018**

MR A. COUTTS: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. If you would like to take your seats, we might get underway. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet. I would also like to pay my respects to their elders past and present and to the elders from other communities
5 who may be here today. Welcome to this public meeting on the Yass Valley Wind Farm MOD 1, state-significant development 6698 from – or Goldwind – sorry – Australia Proprietary Limited, the proponent, who was seeking to modify its development consent to increase the approved wind turbine tip height from 150 metres to 171 metres; reduce the maximum number of approved turbines from 79 to
10 75; increase the vegetation clearing from 68.3 hectares to 179.8 hectares; relocate the ancillary infrastructure, including additional temporary facilities and minor clarifications regarding the project design, including road upgrades.

My name is Alan Coutts. I'm chair of this Independent Planning Commission New South Wales panel, which has been appointed to determine this proposal. Joining me
15 are my fellow commissioners, Professor Zada Lipman and Adrian Pilton and Jorge Van Den Brande from the Commission Secretariat. Before I continue, I should state all appointed Commissioners must make an annual declaration of interest identifying potential conflicts with their appointed role. For the record, we are unaware of any
20 conflicts in relation to our determination of this proposed modification.

You can find additional information on the way we manage potential conflicts in our policy paper, which is available on the IPC website. In the interest of openness and transparency, today's meeting is being recorded and a full transcript will be produced
25 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 before we determine the development application. The Independent Planning Commission of New South Wales was established by the New South Wales government on 1 March 2018.

30 Its predecessor was the PAC or Planning Assessment Commission, as an independent statutory body operating separately to the department of Planning and Environment. The Commission plays an important role in strengthening transparency and independence in the decision-making processes for major
35 development and land-use planning for New South Wales. This meeting is one part of our decision-making process. We have also been briefed by the department, met with the proponent and we will carry out a site inspection tomorrow morning and I think we are being joined by representatives of a number of community groups on that site inspect.

40 After today's meeting, we may convene with relevant stakeholders if clarification or additional information is required. Transcripts of all meetings will be published on our website. Following today's meeting, we will endeavour to determine the modification application as soon as possible; however, there may be delays if we
45 find the need for additional information. Before we heard from our first registered

speaker, I would like to lay down some ground rules that we expect everyone taking part in today's meeting to follow.

5 Firstly, today's meeting is not a debate. Our panel will not take questions from the floor and no interjections are allowed. Our aim is to provide maximum opportunity for people to speak and be heard by the panel. As you would appreciate, I'm sure public speaking is an ordeal for many people. Though you may not agree with everything you hear today, each speaker has the right to be treated with respect and heard in silence. Today's focus is public consultation. Our panel is here to listen.
10 We may ask questions for clarification, but this is usually unnecessary.

It would be most beneficial if your presentation is focused on the issues of concern to you. It is important that everyone registered to speak receives a fair share of time. I will enforce timekeeping rules of your allocated times and I will mention those
15 allocated times when I introduce you as speaker. As chair I reserve the right to allow additional time for provision of further technical materials if we think that is necessary. A warning bell will sound one minute before the speaker's allotted time is up and again when time runs out. Please respect these time limits.

20 Though we will strive to stick to our schedule today, speakers sometimes don't show up or decide not to speak. If you know someone will not be attending, please advise Jorge. If you would like something onto the screen, also please give it to Jorge before your presentation. If you have a copy of your presentation, it would be appreciated if you would provide that copy to the Secretariat after you speak. Please
25 note any information given to us may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement governs our approach to your information. If you would like a copy of our privacy statement, you can obtain one from the Secretariat or from our website.

30 Audio recording of this meeting is not allowed, except for the official recording for transcription purposes. Notes made throughout the day on issues raised will be summarised on our determination report. Last thing I would ask you – if you've got a telephone or mobile phone, please put it on silent or turn it off. It's very distracting for people who are trying to speak. And I appreciate everyone's attendance this afternoon and we look forward to hearing the various speakers, and I would like to
35 call on Michael Chapman as our first speaker and, Michael, you have got 15 minutes.

MR M. CHAPMAN: Thank you - - -

40 MR COUTTS: That microphone takes a second or two to come on - - -

MR CHAPMAN: Okay.

MR COUTTS: - - - once you turn it on.

45 MR CHAPMAN: Thank you, chair and members, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Michael Chapman, for identification. I'm a solicitor, number 2567 of New South Wales. I represent Phillip Bennett and also known as Garryowen, at 378

5 Garryowen Road, Binalong. Their boundary is 3.5 kilometres from the Goldwind site. It's 1953 hectares, so it's significant – just over 2000. In my view and experience, the department's consultation process cannot be relied upon as accurate or fair. I believe it's distorted. Goldwind obtained agreement from 25 non-associated residences, which accepted the visual impacts.

10 The agreements have been obtained, in the most part, by payment. No figure is given for the total number of residents in the area described. As a result, the department's assessment focused on the eight remaining non-associated residences located within 3.5 – 3.4, and I make that mistake intentionally – 3.4 kilometres from a turbine, but the Bennett's property is 3.5 kilometres from the turbine and it's 2000 hectares. To use the additional 25 agreements as it reflects community support is, in my view, a false premise. So the department's assessment of the visual impact, in my view, could be considered flawed.

15 What it really does, using this approach, is to consider the individual views of people without regarding the quantum of area impacted. 85 per cent of this property is at a position where the turbines could be viewed prominently. The increase in height is not modest. Compare it with the capital wind farm which we view from Anderson VC lay-by on the side of the Hume Highway and Lake George. That's 100 metres; 20 this will be 170. And Mr Bennett has some montages which will be presented to you for comparison, but we – for the sake of time, we won't display those today.

25 There has been zero consultation with the owner of 2000 hectares, the Bennetts. They've never been consulted by Goldwind or the department. The – as I said, 80 to 85 of their land is affected. The first contact they had with the department was on October 16 caused by them sending a written objection. That's a regrettable omission. It appears to us that the approach taken by the department and Goldwind is to regard the opinion of people as I said more important than those who not only 30 would be affected but that whose biodiverse land would be affected.

35 Land clearing will increase significantly the number of trees destroyed in the impact area, most of which belong to local tree species and are endangered. Included in the areas to be cleared will be a substantial number of slow growth trees. Most of them are in excess of 100 years of age, some of them up to 200, it is estimated. Will these be adequately replaced by plantings? Remember the pay-off is that these – the economic life of these turbines is a lot less than 100 years. Garryowen Pastoral has over the last 15 years planted approximately 100,000, yes, 100,000 trees, mostly 40 endangered local species in corridors leading to a bird sanctuary monitored by Canberra University. The tree planting has contributed to rehabilitating the land, as well as clearing and cleaning the water flow to the Murrumbidgee. So when you do those sorts of things, you would think that you do have a personal investment in the environment and therefore you are sensitive.

45 The department appears to have based its assessment of the impact of the modified project regarding its impact on threatened species. The statement in the assessment is importantly:

...Goldwind has advised that it will not be able to construct the project as approved with existing vegetation clearing restriction.

5 So let's just think that through a little bit, please. The department's executive statement says that the proponent would not be able to construct the project approved with the existing vegetation clearing restriction but the clearing restriction is going to be increased from 85 to 276 hectares. Now, that's a 224 per cent increase in ripped out vegetation. So I think the underlying question that I would like everyone to ask themselves and, in particular, the Commission, would the project as currently
10 proposed have been approved if it had been presented in the form that was – so if you put the original format and this format together, would it have been approved originally? I don't think so. And yet we've been told that in the executive summary – I think it's – that the proponent would not have been able to make this viable with the existing restrictions. So, in other words, if this variation or modification is not
15 approved, it wouldn't go ahead. So it has been a two-step application.

That's the key question, in my view. The next questions are – that haven't been answered – what is the health issue regarding the increase in noise levels because no objective base measurement has been agreed upon? How will the breaches of the
20 noise level be monitored, and those breaches rectified? What is the enforcement process? What is the potential reduction in surrounding land values, which is a minimal one? Now, if I can comment on two points in Goldwind's response – 7.15:

25 *...there is no formal agreed environmental plan to minimise visual scarring of the prominent hillside from excavations, cut and fill and road access and infrastructure works –*

so there's no environmental plan of how to do it, what the clearing is, how to remediate it and what it's going to look like from a distance. It's vague. 7.16 – and
30 this is something that, in my experience, is very important:

...Goldwind acknowledges that a decommissioning management plan is required at the end of an economic cycle –

35 but it provides no mechanism: there is no bank guarantee; there is no security bond to fund removal, restoration and remediation of the sites. What if Goldwind, which I understand is owned in China, fails to do so or is wound up or is insolvent? Why does the department not address this? The department appears to overlook a major risk exposure to the New South Wales Government of their having to turn around,
40 decommission and clean up at taxpayers' expense. What's the life cycle of these turbines and what happens at the end? Why hasn't it been addressed? If this was a marina on Sydney Harbour or any other harbour of the state, there would be a remediation plan, there would be a bond and there would be checks to ensure that it was cleaned up and removed and restored at the end, but that's not so.

45 A water consumption plan – where will the storage tanks be located? There is a huge amount of water that's going to be brought in for construction, for maintenance, for

mixing concrete for roads. Will water storage tanks be removed after use?
Remember if you've got a water storage tank on a hill that's so high that it's there to capture wind for the turbines, therefore the water tanks are in exposed position. We all know and have seen water – empty water tanks blown off hillsides. So has that
5 been considered? What's the impact? There's – it has not been addressed in the conditions or – no proposed conditions. So I know I'm going over time, but if I can summarise, the department's consultation process, in my view, cannot be relied as accurate or fair. The increase in height is not modest.

10 The consultation process, in my view, was selective and it's more about the people that were omitted than what it included and how were they obtained. Was it – should one assess something when responses have been paid for? What is the impact on the biodiversity? I don't believe it's acceptable because it's a two hundred and – it's two
15 and a quarter hundred increase in the amount of biodiversity – the clearance on a prominent – on prominent hill sides. That is huge. And I think that if it had been rolled into the first application, it would not have got off the ground. There is no clear plan on how the building can be done on surrounding land at the top of a hill. We all know that you need very extensive geotechnical works when you build on top of a hill or a cliff. Thank you very much on behalf of Phil Bennett and Garryowen.

20 MR COUTTS: Thanks, Michael. Alan Cole from the Yass Landscape Guardians. 15 minutes.

MR A. COLE: Firstly, I would like to thank Alan and Zada and Adrian for visiting
25 Yass today, a beautiful spring day, very light winds. You don't have to worry about your hair getting messed up. And spring is our windy season. For the record, the Yass Landscape Guardians is not an anti-renewal organisation. Our organisation is not pro-coal. What we seek as an organisation is land use planning in New South Wales which protects the rights of rural people and the integrity of our landscape.
30 We seek national energy policies that allow fair and true market forces to operate and the removal of wind energy subsidies and their market distortion.

Now, let's talk about Coppabella specifically. Wind energy represents one of many
35 renewal energy alternatives which a rapidly being adopted in all Australian states and making a significant impact on the Australian landscape. Some features, including the reply to the Coppabella modification and the wind energy industry more generally, the vast majority of wind energy components – or proponents are overseas companies. The towers, blades, turbines are largely imported with limited Australian construction. Towers need significant footings, all-weather service roads, the
40 clearing of vegetation for power line easements, the clearing of vegetation for substation establishment.

The proponent has claimed that this project will create job opportunities. The reality
45 is most Australian-based employment opportunities occur during the construction, sourced by major construction firms based in Melbourne or other capital cities. Construction period might last two years and the ongoing maintenance of the facility would be probably managed for people out of regional cities – probably unlikely to –

the township of Yass is probably unlikely to get any real benefit out of employment. Project life is typically 20 to 25 years, and most of us in this room unfortunately won't be around when the decommissioning period comes up.

5 So this flags to me how critical it is to get the decision on the Goldwind modification right. It's the IPCs obligation to – by wise and precautionary decision-making for the benefit of our children and our grandchildren. Wind energy is intermittent with limited capacity during periods of very low and extreme winds. I note the
10 Coppabella modification does not include any energy storage. The wind industry has met significant resistant or backlash, both internationally and in Australia, and certainly – hope that's not the bell – in the district of Yass. Coppabella – let's just reflect briefly on the history of the Coppabella project. Prior to being Coppabella, this project was a component of Yass Valley Wind Farm.

15 In 2015, the New South Wales Government refused Epuron's Yass Valley Wind Farm on the whole project basis. They said it was not in the public interest. They raised three principal objections in their report. One was in relation to the connection of infrastructure and access across the grid which also includes the applicant's failure to undertake an appropriate level of impact assessment for all aspects of the proposal.
20 Second reason was around airports of Canberra and Albury. The third was about – and I read it in full – the development will result in unacceptable impacts on the biophysical environment as a result of inadequate avoidance of biodiversity, inadequate provisions for mitigation measures and a failure to adequately offset biodiversity impacts.

25 To my knowledge, the refusal of the Yass Valley Project was the first wind energy in New South Wales totally refused. Prior to this refusal, wind energy projects appear to be, to me, to be a tick and flick through the department of Planning and this emboldened the wind energy industry to push for bigger and bigger projects.
30 Unfortunately, in 2015, the then PAC threw the decision back on the government. The Minister mysteriously moved on and officers in the department suddenly changed. The outcome of that Yass Valley PAC insurrection was the reinstatement of the Coppabella precinct, a new minister for planning and we welcomed Mr Mike Young as the director of resources and energy assessments.

35 We should also reflect why the IPC is here in Yass for the first time today in relation to this project, and the reason for that is that the original – wasn't the original – the previous proponent of the Coppabella project, Epuron, did such a useless job of consultation that there wasn't enough objections prior to the end of consultation
40 period to trigger a PAC hearing, so we never had the PAC here before on this project. And while they were quite apologetic, they were within the rules. And I could talk all day about the failings of planning in New South Wales, but what I would like this committee to focus on is that this project has been on a knife edge of acceptability right from the onset and it was previously refused by the New South
45 Wales Government. All right. So we've got a new project. We've got a modification. Is it a new project or is it a modification?

Goldwind never requested a modification. I maintain that it's a whole new project. I maintain that it's a whole new project. And the reason for that is the project represents a 184 per cent increase in the destruction of a Commonwealth and State listed critically endangered ecological community, and that is the Yellow Box-
5 Blakely's Red Gum Woodlands and tomorrow you will see that on Whitefields Lane. I should also note that OEHL have stated they believe the proponent has understated the area of environmental destruction. It involves this project or modification – involves a 17 per cent increase in blade length and all the associated implications of that for both flora and fauna and for the adjoining stakeholders.

10 It results in a 14 per cent increase in overall height with the implications on our landscape and visual impact for the whole community. It involves a 36 per cent increase in what I call the "dead bird zone", so that's the impact where birds and bats will be struck by rotating blades. The modification, actually, when you do the
15 mathematics on it that I've done is equivalent to 32 new wind turbines of the original specification. So basically, I would argue that 32 new wind turbines is not a modification, it's a whole new project. The New South Wales Department of Planning has argued that modification still involves turbines, blades and therefore – and as a legal precedent that is – can be called a modification.

20 We object to that position; we don't believe that. Community resistance – community resistance to wind energy and the Coppabella modification is basically based on a whole lot of reasons: landscape damage, community division, environmental damage, wildfire risks, health and safety, annoyance – health and
25 wellbeing, annoyance, planning failure and wind energy's failed business efforts. I haven't got time to speak on all those subjects, but I understand other speakers today will. I just want to mention one thing that we spoke recently with Yass Valley Council about and I introduced to them the concept of the Chernobyl effect and what these projects do is create a Chernobyl effect in the local region whereby no
30 landowners or farmers will spend any money investing on their capital infrastructure or their properties because effectively they will never get a return on investment in terms of resale into the market.

I do want to talk quickly on safety and the precautionary principle. I think this will
35 be picked up later, but I think I need to remind the IPC of the precautionary principle in relation to the modification and workplace health and safety law in New South Wales. Just quickly, the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011 section 22 talks about safety and design and it says:

40 *Thee designer must ensure as far as reasonably practical that the planned substance or structure is designed to be without risk to the health and safety of persons –*

and it lists a whole lot of construction people, but then it goes on to say in section F –
45

who are at or in the vicinity of a workplace or who are exposed to the plan, substance or structure at that workplace or whose health or safety may be affected by the use or activity referred to above.

5 We feel that the modification of Coppabella increasing the height to 150 – to 175 metres will impact on noise, disturbance, infrasound – whilst unproven have not been totally dismissed – will have unacceptable effect on the local community and, really, your group should consider the Health and Safety Act of New South Wales. Landscape damage – I mentioned earlier what a beautiful spring day it is and the
10 winds are very light. In inland Australia – inland New South Wales, the reason why energy proponents go to the top of our iconic mountains, ridgelines and hilltops is to get more wind. You probably have known – noticed in Europe, western Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, a lot of these projects are along the coast.

15 On the coast, you get uniform, regular, steady wind day and night. Here to get any wind you have to go on top of our ridgeways. And basically, we are sacrificing our iconic landscape for companies like Goldwind to optimise their dollar return on investment. Environmental damage has already been spoken about but I will
20 continue. You need to clear land for tower sites, access roads, power line easements, substations and other infrastructure. Unfortunately, in this part of the world, we have a thing called the critically endangered Yellow Box Blakely's Red Gum Woodland and a whole host of associated threatened species.

Other wind projects with significant clearing of the same EEC – and that's an
25 ecologically endangered community – have already been approved, for example, Rye Park, Conroy's Gap. Numerous state and federal conservation projects encourage farmers to preserve this EEC in the same district as Goldwind proposes to destroy it, and we've already heard of another farmer planting thousands of trees. The Coppabella ranges is a key habitat of a number of threatened species and one is the
30 superb parrot. There's the diamond firetail finch and there's potentially a habitat of the swift parrot.

Blade stripe. The blade stripe of these increased blades will have even greater
35 impact on – threaten – on birds and bats and, most importantly, our raptors, which include the wedge-tailed eagle, the little eagle and the powerful owl. Other environmental damage includes erosion and potentially the tracks to service these constructions will be on ridgelines and the wind industry is – because it's not associated with Land New South Wales, there's no code of practice or regulation governing what you can and can't do on road construction to accommodate the wind
40 industry.

So the 184 per cent increase in the destruction of state and Commonwealth risk that
45 critical endangered Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum represents, I believe, an unacceptable community outcome, especially considering this estimate is potentially understated and does not acknowledge the cumulative impact the wind industry has already had on on other New South Wales projects. Lastly, I would just like to touch on bushfire.

MR COUTTS: One minute.

MR COLE: One minute. All right. Quickly speaking, I will just cut the chase. In 2014, the Bookham district was subject to a catastrophic bushfire that burnt from Jugiong to the outskirts of Yass. Aerial suppression was heavily used in this fire. In 1910, a catastrophic fire destroyed all the buildings on my property – not only my property; probably half the Bookham district. So the point I'm trying to make is catastrophic fires are common in this landscape and there has been a history since European settlement of them occurring again, and again, and again. Industrial energy facilities, in our fire-prone landscape, represent an unacceptable risk to both the immediate stakeholders in the area and the adjoining community and a risk that cannot be controlled by the proponent. Thank you.

MR COUTTS: Thanks, Alan. John McGrath. 15 minutes.

MR J. McGRATH: I'm like Alan and I would like to thank the panel for making the trip to Yass. I've prepared a PowerPoint presentation. I don't know that – unfortunately, it's going to be behind you. From dealing with things – anyway, I've got some – first of all, I'm just going to – I will get started. Is it right to go forwards?

MR COUTTS: Yes. Whenever you're ready.

MR McGRATH: Yes. Okay. I've just made up this – there's about 11 slides in this – 11 images in this presentation, but what I'm going to focus on is lack of transparency, lack of clarity from the proponent, because we've had dealings with – well, I was involved with Gullen Range before this, and I know what Goldwind are capable of. I'm going to focus on the transparency of the proponent, lack of decommissioning legislation in New South Wales and the increased risk of fire. My qualifications and background – I've lived in Yass all my life, raised on a property the Black Range Road – I still live on the Black Range Road.

I became an electrician; I started in '73; I still hold a New South Wales and a South Australian licence. I worked for TransGrid for fifteen and a half years from 1981 until 4.17 on 19 July 1996. I left for political reasons. I'm an elected Deputy Captain of the Bowring Fire Brigade. I've got 46 years experience in fighting local fires. Secretary of the Landscape Guardians group – I'm a member with Alan – and I'm a member of the Coppabella Community Consultation Committee. I was a previous member of the Yass Valley Wind Farm Community Consultation Committee.

And these are the things I'm focusing on: lack of transparency; decommissioning; information on underground high-voltage cables and; perceived delivery of generated power to the transmit line – the 99M – and I may make a note here that neither the department of Planning, nor TransGrid, knew the designation of the power line they were going to connect a multimillion dollar project to before I told them. So this is how much planning goes into this. Even though the proponents say

they were in consultation all the time with TransGrid, they couldn't give me the name 99M. Okay. Decommission.

5 There is no wind farm decommissioning legislation in this country. There's a recommendation that came out on 3 March this year that there are self-funded decommissioning expenses. I'm not willing to believe that. Sorry. I tried to find out from Tom Nielson, who is the project manager – the project manager for this farm – wind farm – what is the mechanical protection on 33,000 volt cable that's 750 mil under the ground. Okay. He can't tell me. Yet he states in the transcript to the IPC
10 that Goldwind have got 20 years of experience in the wind industry, one of the largest wind turbine manufacturers globally and have over 44 gigawatts of wind power – that's a thousand thousand watts – of wind power installed into 28,000 turbines worldwide.

15 Cannot tell me the mechanical protection on a cable. Sorry. Okay. The existing load of the 99M – and I thank Tom Nielson for forwarding this through to me – this little chart – you will see there the MVA loading – the existing loading. Goldwind – and I have spruiked this all the time – these wind farms cannot get the power into these – into the grid. Goldwind ought to be 20 – 280 megawatts into this fully
20 loaded line, and this has been going on for a long time. 29 October this year, Tom Nielson said to the IPC, “We're still negotiating with TransGrid to get the 99M upgrade.” 8 November this year – about 10 days later – he hits us with a little gem – TransGrid are going to build them a specifically built line. You don't organise a specifically-built line from Binalong to Yass, including a switch bay, in eight days.

25 It just doesn't happen. So what I'm saying is the proponent has not been passing on the information. Yet on there – on the newsletters, they say, “We keep everyone totally up to date with it at all times.” I've just thrown in that image of a power pole there – it could be what TransGrid will erect – a double-string line from Coppabella
30 back to Yass. All these things are subsidised and there's no argument. They come out of the RECs. A whole lot of this stuff is subsidised. Are we, the power-paying public, going to be paying for the extra power line to go in? I would say so because I was – we were told at our CCC on the 8th that the – Goulburn are going to be paying payments to TransGrid for that line. Okay. This – I don't know why that has taken
35 off with me. Sorry.

These are the blades for the White Rock Wind Farm. Okay. They're – the ones for Coppabella – if I've got my figures right, are going from 70 – 60 to 70 metre blade lengths, and that's from the SSD 6698. Sorry, I will go back. And that's – what I've
40 done there is a three trailer road train is 53.5 metres long. These blades are going to be 70 metres long. A road train is not allowed on the Hume Highway, yet they're going to take these things down the Hume Highway. I'm sorry. It doesn't add up to me.

45 Okay. There's another image from the Goldwind's – Goldwind image from White Rock. There's the tonnage for a 59 metre blade, okay, and I have got figures there of about 4000 tonnes of fibreglass and resin, which cannot be recycled, is going to be

put up on this hill. More than that. There's going to be a hell of a lot more than that go on these hills if this is allowed to go ahead. There were 500 oversized rock – again, off a Goldwind site – went through Walcha. There for the local roads – and there are other people going to talk about the local roads after me – are going to be adversely affected by at least that many oversized loads.

I will get onto fire here and I will correct my colleague, Alan. 8 January 2013 that Jugiong fire started. 1939 another big fire come through, when my mother was 10. The – as anyone knows, the Capital Wind Farm has started a fire, 17 January 2017. 20, 21 January 2018 I was at the Taralga fire which was also ignited in the footprint of the wind farm. Are we going to let this happen, because these things do start fires? The proponent will deny that. Okay. Look, I'm sorry, I have probably got through that a bit quick but, look, thank you very much and if there's any questions, I'm open to questions. Thank you.

MR COUTTS: Thanks, John.

MR McGRATH: No, thank you. Sorry. Get out of your road.

MR COUTTS: Okay. Charlie Prell from the Australian Wind Alliance for 15 minutes.

MR C. PRELL: Thank you and thanks, Commissioners, for your time. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you. I'm here representing the Australian Wind Alliance but I'm also representing myself as a farmer from Crookwell that lives under the Crookwell 2 Wind Farm which has virtually been completed – construction has virtually been completed. So background on the Australian Wind Alliance. We're a community based organisation and we have over 700 financial members and more than 11,000 followers on social media. The Wind Alliance encourages best practice community engagement and supports wind farms form the contribution they make to reducing Australia's carbon emissions and to the long term benefits they bring to regional Australia, to areas such as this.

I'm Charlie Prell. As I said, I'm a farmer from Crookwell, about an hour east of here. And as I speak to you, the Crookwell 2 Wind Farm is just about to be completed. It has actually been built through one of the driest winters we have ever lived in in Crookwell but it has been built successfully with minimal environmental disturbance and no environmental damage. So my farm and three adjoining farms are hosting those turbines. There's 28 turbines altogether, similar size to these ones, about 10 metres shorter in blade length. I know that the two people who work for me and their families can rest assured that their jobs are secure.

It doesn't matter how bad this current drought gets, they know that their jobs will be secure on my farm, and their families will have that surety as well. I also know that I can reduce my stocking numbers as needed, to zero if necessary, to allow my land to retain a good level of pasture cover and to not be degraded as this drought worsens, which all the forecasts are that it's going to. I also know that I can retain the

ecological and environmental health of my farm no matter how bad this drought gets as well. I live in the top of the Sydney catchment area on the foreshores of the Pejar Dam, which is a very important environmental and water supply dam just to the north of Goulburn.

5

Now, that is all due to the passive income that I will receive from hosting turbines. And I want to see as many farmers as possible be in the same situation that I'm in, where they don't have to worry about the impacts of the drought of overstocking their land, of degrading their land, and I'm absolutely passionate – and have been involved in this debate for more than 10 years now – about trying to roll out wind farms in the best way possible for regional communities. That's why I support well-designed wind farms and I believe this wind farm qualifies as a well-designed wind farm, especially in relation to this modification.

15 I will just speak quickly to some of the points we raised in our submission, which I'm sure you have read, but I just want to reinforce these numbers. This wind farm will contribute 25 to 30 million dollars to this region over the next 25 years. That's not insignificant. In fact, it's probably the biggest economic injection that this area has received in decades, possibly ever. The 75 turbines – in addition to that 25 to 30 million dollars, those 75 turbines, as recommended for approval, will generate something like \$1.5 million per year for hosts and neighbours of the wind farm. That is also not insignificant; so that's 25 years times \$1.5 million.

25 The community enhancement funding is in addition to that; 290-odd thousand dollars per year for 25 years, something like seven and a half million dollars again, and more with CPI increases. That is not insignificant. I believe that since Goulburn picked up this project from Epuron – and I have never been an apologist for some of the behaviour that Epuron have – has done over the years. But since Goulburn have picked up this project, most particularly since they have looked to make this project a viable wind farm, I believe they have been really open and fair and transparent, particularly with their neighbour agreements which go out to five kilometres from any turbine – any residence within five kilometres of a turbine has been offered a neighbour agreement.

35 There's no stipulation, there's no condition on those neighbour agreements and that's way over and above the requirements in the New South Wales planning guideline. All the 33kV cabling will be underground. I repeat that. All of the 33kV cabling will be underground so that's minimising the risk that John just spoke about, about fire. I would also like to just reiterate that three turbines have been removed to lessen just the visual impact on one particular residence to the south of the wind farm, which I'm sure you will see tomorrow. One turbine has been removed to allow the retention of about 50 hollow bearing trees in a seriously degraded landscape, which again you will see tomorrow.

45 And also, I would just like to point out that Goldwind have committed to developing a decommissioning plant. It actually may even be a reconditioning plant. In Europe now, where there has been wind turbines in heavily settled and populated areas –

densely populated areas, turbines are not being decommissioned. They're actually being recommissioned and that – the European experience will be replicated in Australia. I live next door to the Crookwell 1 Wind Farm. That licence expires next year and the company that owns that wind farm are looking at the options of either decommissioning it, which means it will be returned to the pre-wind farm state, or recommissioning it and putting modern turbines on that land.

I just want to reiterate also the point about water. Crookwell 2 Wind Farm was constructed in about 18 months. It's nearly finished now. It started about May last year in one of the driest winters, autumns and previous summer that we have ever had. Water was an issue – it was a problem but it was resolved and the construction that the company did on that wind farm with their operational management plans, with their environmental management plans, with all of their biosecurity requirements which, to me as a farmer, are really, really important, are covered off under the agreements that I have with the company that I'm in partnership with and I'm sure that the landholders here who are in partnership with Goldwind have the same sort of coverage.

So thank you very much for your time. I just want to also recommend to you to keep in mind the New South Wales Government's renewal energy strategic plan when you're looking at this project. One of the things that I hear most from host farmers in relation to wind turbines, this one included, is the interminable delay in progressing these projects through the planning system. Some of that is not due to the planning system; some of that has been due to the political situation in this country over the last 10 years or more, but the delay, I believe, can be minimised by good behaviour from wind farm companies such as Goldwind, such as Global Power Generation, who I'm in partnership with, but also competent planning legislation, which I believe now is in place, and also independent commissioners such as yourselves who can oversee all of the issues that I've raised. So thank you very much for your time.

MR COUTTS: Thanks, Charlie. James Francis Field, 15 minutes.

MR FIELD: Thank you very much for allowing me to speak here today. For those that do not know me, I started Yass Earth Movers 50-odd years ago. It is still a very successful business. Has done earth moving work all around Yass and the surrounding districts, including the Coppabella area. We know what will happen to the Coppabella hills. The Coppabella hills, which are very visible from the Hume Highway and the Binalong area, are going to change from beautiful, grassy, rolling hills to an ugly VMS with massive erosion. If this development goes ahead, there will be a lot of disturbance that will take place – will cause a lot of problems. Irreplaceable erosion that will get increasingly worse, never better.

Imagine the view from the well-travelled highway and from the Binalong area and all the people that have to live with this view from their houses and properties. Would you like to have to put up with that? There are also noise problems and health issues created by these turbines. All the wind turbines you see on TV are on almost level ground but no disturbance and not a tree in sight. People who know or don't have

brains think that they are beautiful. This site we are discussing here today is the complete opposite. The hills are very, very steep, close to mountain size. This unbelievable disturbance will totally change the area, certainly not for the better.

5 Access to the site will be difficult. The blades and towers are very long, longer proposed with the modification, and do not end in the middle. We, Yass Earth Movers, have had a lot of experience with wide loads, not with long loads. We know the difficulties that will arise getting these long loads to site. The turn-off into Whitefields Lane will require a lot of modification to the entrance and to the road
10 itself for these loads to have access. To get from Whitefields Lane onto site will be very difficult. To get the towers and blades off the highway onto the top of the hills and along to where they will be placed will be almost impossible. The access will have to be always straight and level.

15 Of course, the hills are not in line or the same height, and if I could get John to show you some photos of the hills, the photos are not as good as I wanted them because I have a new phone and could not zoom in as I didn't have my grandkids with me. If you can have a look into those, you will see what I mean. That is an aerial or a satellite photo of the top of the hills. And as you can see, they are very, very unlevel.
20 And I will try to explain to you what I mean. The access will have to be almost straight and level because hills are not in line or the same height. Massive amounts of material will have to be moved to get this almost straight and level track. The top of the hills are not in line and have big depressions in between. The sides of the hills are very steep and rocky. If the tops of the hills are cut off and the depression
25 between the hills filled, the fill will have to be very deep and will therefore erode very easily.

The sites for the wind towers will have to be level and level access will be required to get the materials and towers themselves, including blades, concrete trucks, cranes,
30 etcetera, across the whole site from one of the – one end of the hills to the other. Imagine the massive change to the landscape and the impact it will have on the productivity of the area by creating huge areas and more run-off. It is going to be almost impossible to get a suitable track to achieve access for the large types of vehicles that will be required to get the material and construct the wind towers.
35 Hundreds of vehicles will be required to get the material on site, plus the very large number of vehicles that are already needed to adjoin construction.

If a cut is put along the sides of the hills, it will – straight enough near the towers and blades along the track – to the length of the blades because of the length of the length
40 of the tower. That is the hills in the distance and you can see they're up and down and not in line, so how in the hell are they going to get these massive towers and blades, put a track along the top without creating massive – and I mean massive – disturbance. It – and it will wash away. Massive disturbance will occur either way. If you could show that other one, please. See, there's another one, which is a better
45 one, that the hills are not in line, so where are they going to put a track? Are they going to go around the side of the hills? I don't think so. And if they knock the top off the hills, they'll be there for the next 12 months making a track in there.

And – anyway, the traffic along the new tracks will leave furrows which will concentrate the rainwater run-off, and there’s photo of Whitefield Lane in the left there, and, you know, it’s going to be difficult to get along. I don’t know whether I said this, but I’ll just repeat it if you don’t mind. Massive disturbance will occur
5 either way, with massive bare, loose areas that will erode away and become unproductive. Areas that will be disturbed will not be able to have topsoil respread back on them because there will be none to do that which will prevent grasses from growing and the batters will be so steep, nothing will grow on them. Imagine the areas that will be made bare, starting with the cut batters, flat areas and the fill
10 batters.

Traffic travelling along the new tracks will leave furrows which – I’ve said that – will concentrate the rain run-off. If any rain, but especially in heavier rain, there will be 100 per cent run-off, which will concentrate to the lowest part and start to erode.
15 Will never stop. The water will increase in speed into the wash-out, washing the dirt off the side of the hills away. This will silt up dams and creeks, ruining water supplies, livestock and wildlife. If the wind turbines generated electricity all the time, they would be okay maybe. They only generate electricity when suitable wind blows. And I’ll repeat that. They only generate electricity when suitable wind
20 blows. No wind or very strong wind means nothing is generated. This is the case approximately 80 per cent of the time when they’re not even generating. Why do we need them at all?

Millions of dollars in subsidies are given to these overseas companies to construct these inefficient and ugly towers. Are they really worth the health issues and the absolute destruction of these hills forever? The change to the look of this iconic area is unimaginable. What would Banjo Paterson think? He lived in this area. I’ve worked all my life to build up some assets. Anyone with property close to the wind turbines will have the value of their property decreased. A property near me has
30 been on the market for two years and the real estate agent has taken it over due to a lack of interest because wind turbines are going next door. I will be 83 next February and these wind turbines are by far the worst thing to happen in my lifetime and I think it’s – that the majority of everybody has that view, as well. And bushfires were brought up previously. I’ve been a member of the RFS all of my life and I’ve
35 been thank you.

MR COUTTS: Thanks, James. Okay. Noeleen Hazell. 10 minutes.

MS N. HAZELL: Well, good afternoon. And thank you for coming today to listen
40 and I hope understand the genuine despair this project is causing to so many impacted neighbours. I’m Noeleen Hazell and I’ve lived on the property “Kia Ora”, Bookham, for the 58 of the 60 years we have owned this property. Now, I – neither I nor any member of our family have signed a neighbourhood agreement I would like to add. I’m not a confident public speaker, however, I am a landowner, wife, mother
45 and grandmother and at this – as this project affects the lives of three generations, I have no other option.

2 This devastating situation has been thrust upon us not only our family but all
3 impacted landowners. We have been left completely unprotected. There is
4 absolutely no one, not a committee, a panel, not one person other than the National
5 Wind Farm Commissioner to collate our situation and insist the department resolve
6 the complaint by insisting that the complaint is resolved and supporting us, the
7 impacted landowner. These open-ended approvals traumatising – sorry – sorry about
8 that – these open-ended approvals traumatising the non-associated neighbours and
9 defacing our rural landscape has to stop. This project, the Coppabella project – this
10 has always been a marginal project. As the department of Planning have outlined the
11 history of the Yass Valley wind farm to you earlier, may I take the liberty to give a
12 brief history of this project, including the discrimination shown to our family.

13 Epuron purchased the development from Origin in 2009. No consultation. The DPE
14 recommended the entire Yass Valley wind farm be refused on 5.1.15. And to quote
15 the last line of the conclusions and recommendations in that refusal:

16 *...the department considers the applicant has failed to meet the objects and*
17 *principles of the Act and the principles of ecologically sustainable*
18 *development, so given the above, the proposal is not in the public interest and*
19 *should be refused –*
20

21 so we were then – we were unaware that Epuron re-referred the entire project during
22 2015, with minimal change and without consultation. The DPE then set a precedent
23 and divided the project without consultation on 5.2.16 recommending to the PAC to
24 only approve 79 turbines on the western portion as that would not result in any
25 significant visual impacts on the local community and we would be able to comply
26 with the applicable noise criteria and the risk of residual health effects would be
27 negligible. The discrimination is unbelievable.

28 But without any public meetings, the PAC approved this recommendation, including
29 Coppabella south precinct, the Whitefield Road and the fragile soils of the Whitefield
30 area and allowed the destruction of hollow-bearing trees. How was this project ever
31 approved? But the Auditor-General did issue an apparent breach of code of conduct
32 in January '17 perhaps for the decisions made in '16. Goldwind then purchased the
33 entire project in February '17, immediately applied for a variation to conditions
34 attached to approval with approval action to – for the construction, operation and
35 eventual decommissioning of a wind farm of up to 126 turbines. Obviously, this
36 allows for the balance of the 51 turbines to be constructed on the Marilba pre-set
37 already owned by Goldwind as they purchased the entire project. Goldwind then
38 made application for their significant modification and therefore that is the
39 importance of the Whitefield Road and, in particular, turbines 73 and '4 as the link
40 back to the Marilba pre-set.

41 With the increase in height of the turbines from 150 to 171, the visual impact has
42 now increased to 2.3 metres from two metres, so it is interesting that the proponents
43 offer neighbourhood agreements to the Bookham village residents five kilometres
44 from the site whereas if your residence is 2.4 kilometres from the nearest turbine,
45

you need to get over it. When huge industrial turbines are constructed on ridges as steep as the Coppabellas, they would be visible 20 kilometres from the site. The project now consists of variables which change when the construction team arrive on the site. It is too late then. This project still has many unresolved issues, for
5 example, internal roads, exact turbine positions. And the increase in land clearing is unacceptable. There are assessments still pending. If a project needs to sponsor community organisations and bribe neighbours to receive local support, I think the project must lack authenticity.

10 Epuron, who had never visited either of our residences, visited us in 2012 with a map to tell us that they would be constructing the access road through our property – “Kia Ora” – as the Whitefield Road was not suitable. So since the project was first proposed, the OEH have been requested to assess the site many times. However,
15 both the DPE and, of course, the proponents, totally seem to ignore these assessments. Following the modification application, the OEH visited the site on 18 January this year and, again, assessed the Whitefield area as the highest ecological area of the whole site and to avoid any disturbance to roadside vegetation. The intent of the site visit was to clarify vegetation mapping discrepancies that the OEH
20 identified during their review of the Coppabella modification application. They found several areas were incorrectly mapped in the environmental assessment, including areas that were mapped as exotic that were native.

As the blades of the Coppabella turbine have increased to 70 metres, the impact of vehicles such as a four-trailer rigid road train travelling not only on the Whitefield
25 Road but on the fragile grey granite boggy soil of the Coppabella hills would cause irreversible damage. This project has consumed our lives since the devastating item in the front of the Yass Tribune dated 5 February '16 and the invalid approval by PAC on 30 March '16. And, since then, we have been in constant contact with the National Wind Farm Commissioner, Mr Andrew Dyer. Following a site visit late in
30 '17, Mr Dyer phoned us and said he could not understand why the Whitefield Road and not the Berremangra Road would be the access road. And if the panel – your panel today – had the opportunity to view both the Whitefield and the Berremangra Roads, it would be clear there really is no comparison. Our request remains, as in '16, and is supported by the National Wind Farm Commissioner.

35 We request that the Coppabella south pre-set be refused. This would eliminate the use of the Whitefield Road completely and the five turbines in the Yass Valley Council and two turbines in the Hilltops Council, including turbines 73 and '4. These are the turbines linking the project back onto the Goldwind-owned Marilba
40 pre-set. To go on to decommissioning, there must be a moratorium on the construction of all wind turbines approved and/or proposed until there is legislation acknowledging the host landowner is legally bound to dismantle all the turbines on his or her property within 12 months of decommissioning. The Goldwind and the department of Planning guidelines regarding decommissioning are open-ended and
45 do not give the non-associated neighbours any assurance. It is vitally important to have such assurance as in this project, there are 11 hosts, with only three hosts living on their properties.

In the transcript, it was noted that the decommissioning was – seemed to be a concern of this project more than other projects and this is because we love where we live and we expect our properties to remain in our families for years to come. We don't want them to be – our grandchildren to be looking at these turbines forever.

5 Legislation must also apply to pre-set ownership. When a project has been refused, the ownership of that precinct must be revoked within 12 months, with no further referrals. There's a project – first project around in the Yass area was the Conroy's Gap and it was approved in 2005.

10 And it is approved but there is – nothing happened. And the neighbours nearby, you know, are left in a state of not being able to commit to do many things because you never know if it's going to be activated. At a time when the entire state is in drought, I think it is appalling that landowners have no other option than to go to the Environment Court at their own expense simply to protect their own lifestyle and

15 land values. And, finally, to even contemplate defacing the unique landscape of the Coppabella hills would be a breach of code of conduct.

The environmental carnage resulting from wind turbine construction is disgraceful. To allow the destruction of 285 hollow-bearing trees when a farmer would be fined

20 heavily for removing one tree is discriminatory. For the government to allow such destruction to produce four per cent of the world's energy and to construct one turbine uses more energy than it will ever produce, I just think we need – if this is allowed to proceed, we need to discard the environmental handbook. Thank you very much for coming and for listening.

25 MR COUTTS: Thanks, Noeleen. Geoff Frost, 10 minutes.

MR FROST: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Mr Chairman, my name's Geoff Frost. I'm a local councillor with Yass Valley Council.

30 MR COUTTS: Might use the mic, Geoff.

MR FROST: Right.

35 MR COUTTS: People can't hear.

MR FROST: Thank you, Mr Chairman. My name's Geoff Frost. I'm a local councillor with the Yass Valley Council, and I sit on the CCC for Coppabella on behalf of council, but I have not sought the mayor's agreement to speak on behalf of

40 council today, and the views that I give are – I'm speaking on my own behalf and they're my views. Having said that, I have to say I fully support Yass Valley Council's position on wind farms in the area, and if I might just explain to you exactly what that is or provide you, perhaps, with a copy, this is last – three copies there. This is the – a draft policy that has being put out and is currently under – out

45 for exhibition. It's the last of three resolutions council has made over the last six months regarding wind farms. They all contain a key phrase and a key paragraph, which is there in item 4B, and it says that:

While supportive of a renewable energy in general, council opposes in principle further large-scale wind turbines sites in Yass Valley.

5 And so we're in principle opposed to having more wind turbines in Yass Valley, and I perhaps can use a little bit of time just to explain why that might be and why I support that policy. Council – this council lives right next to a very large regional centre, which is growing very fast, and that is the ACT. Something like four or five hundred thousand people, and we live right next to it. The planning challenges for Yass Valley Council are considerable. We – and we've met those. We have revised
10 our LEP. We have developed a specific Yass settlement strategy designed exactly to cater for that, and I might just give you the executive summary, if that's okay. What this does is it defines where we want development to go as we go through from the ACT. Big focus is on Murrumbateman and in Yass, but all the villages get a – are to retain their existing – retain their existing character and be built on as we're going.

15 In conjunction with that, we've recently been able to obtain from the department of Planning a change to our LEP to allow the land for houses to be built on lots of now about 40 hectares. In other words, it was 80 hectares. Now been run down to the 40 hectares. The reason for that was to allow people to build on smaller blocks and,
20 therefore, reduce the amount of land that is wasted, if you like, providing lifestyle blocks. And lifestyle blocks are the future for where this area is running. The strategy theme, as you'll find in there, is that – is to focus on all the development and minimising potential conflict between adjacent land uses, and that's one of the questions behind the – and this is obviously counter to having wind farms there
25 because this is probably the most divisive thing, and I think Mr Field has already explained in his 85 years and certainly in my 65 years here, this is the most divisive thing I've seen in any rural community.

I see families that I know have been friends for generations now not speaking to one
30 another. We see people upset because money is taken from the wind farms, and I don't necessarily blame the wind farms proponents for offering money, but it just seems a bribe, and it sits like a burr in the community and annoys people. It is – it's created an ugly scene. In contrast to my emotions – you know, and that's a rather emotional argument. It's very real, but it's emotional. I guess my support for this
35 strategy comes from my 10 or 15 years – about 15 years, actually, as a researcher for the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, and being a lead researcher on regional economics.

40 And I will there – I've only got one of this, I'm afraid. It's my last copy, but I'll let you have it. It is a book that was written that encapsulated much of that research. It's called *The Evolution of Australian Towns*, published by the bureau, and what that does is it looked at the last 100 years. It looked at the last 100 years of
45 development of settlement patterns in rural Australian, and you'll be aware that there are two big things. One's been a shift to the cities; the other has been agglomeration of people into larger and large centres. And what that did was put into words, put into a document, what most of us already know, and what we already know is that

those – that agglomeration and that pulling together and that pressure on small communities is due to changes on transport and communication.

5 So in 1911, when we first started looking at this, the situation was that if you built an industry, then the workers lived adjacent to it and literally adjacent to it because they had to walk to work or perhaps a pony. Nowadays, there's less and less of that. Nowadays, people live in one place and they work in another. The reason they live in particular areas is no longer because they get a job there; it is because they like the amenity of the area. And that's what we found, is that the amenity of the area is
10 now the driver behind our development patterns. And the three things relating to Coppabella come from this. The first is that the long term and the employment from Coppabella – and – the short term and the long term Coppabella is unlikely to assist the areas around it. So it's unlikely that there'll be much happening in Bookham or even Jugiong.

15 There may be a little of the development stuff in – while the construction may be a little bit of benefit to Yass, but long term, it's likely that Canberra and Goulburn, who are already established – Goulburn in particular has already established itself as having the skills to be able to supply – Goulburn will benefit. Canberra will
20 probably benefit because these are places where people like to live. Secondly, the reduced amenity of the area due to these – the wind turbines, industrial turbines sitting on top of the hills is likely to reduce the – will reduce the – and whether that's visual or whether people are concerned about health or whether it's noise or any other negative connotation of wind farms – and it doesn't even have to be true; it's
25 only got to be perceived – means that the capacity of Yass and Yass Valley to attract people to the area, and particularly to the area where the wind farms are, is much reduced.

30 And so we will not have the sort of development we otherwise would have. And in the longer term, if we simply tick and have wind farms and we have the incremental growth of wind farms from our northern borders – and there are three wind farms – this is – the three wind farms on northern borders of our shire – if this happens, then people will not buy right throughout the show because they will be uncertain as to
35 whether, in five years, 10 years, 15 years, there will be another wind farm and, for that matter, another solar facility in there and so the impact is not just on the people that are next door.

The impact is not just on – it is for the whole Shire and it undermines our whole strategy of how we actually do the planning and you guys are planners and you're
40 good ones, I'm sure, but you will understand that you're making one decision, a very momentous decision but we, as Yass Valley and our Council, will have to live with that decision and adapt to it as we go ahead. And turbines, I guess, is another point that really irks me and irks a lot of people. Turbines are not just driven by wind. The real driver is an ideology and that ideology is very strong in Sydney; it's very
45 strong in Canberra but there is not a single wind turbine in either place and, in fact, Canberra does not allow them. So they have their ideology.

They enjoy the idea of being seen to be green but they don't want the cost, the cost that are, you know, the cost to the Hazels or the Bingleys or the Bennetts or the – they have to bear, even though they are not the ones driving the ideology. It's not the people that book them that are NIMBYs. It's the people who want these things but
5 don't want to pay and don't want to pay by having any – the lack of amenity in their area. Can I just make a couple more points. Could I ask, when you go tomorrow and you've looked here, would you please take a diversion when you get to Goulburn and go to Crookwell, out towards Crookwell, and you will go past Crookwell 2, which is almost complete, and I think was already alluded to.

10 If you go there you will see the size of turbines that you're likely to see. If you go a little bit further you go to – there's an area there for the viewing of Crookwell 1. Now, Crookwell 1 was described in an earlier time as – well, I guess a more naïve council allowed Crookwell 1. If you look at the turbines – and you can see them
15 much better in real life than you can by a photo – but if you look at those turbines you will see that they're not very – Crookwell 1 is not very obtrusive. Crookwell 2 dominates the landscape and I think you need to think about that when you think about whether or not you allow the change here.

20 MR COUTTS: I will have to wind you up, Geoff.

MR FROST: Okay. Thank you.

25 MR COUTTS: Thank you.

MR FROST: Okay. The decision, I guess, is now in your hands, and – but I ask that you consider the rest of us who have to come stay and we have to make planning decisions around this decision for years and decades to come.

30 MR COUTTS: Thanks, Geoff. Andrew Field from the Yass Earth Movers, 10 minutes.

MR FIELD: Good afternoon. Turn it on. Good afternoon. Thank you.

35 MR COUTTS: It will - - -

MR FIELD: Yes. We're going now. Good afternoon. Thank you for holding this meeting this afternoon. I'm Andrew Field, managing director of Yass Earth Movers. I've been working in the earth moving industry and been a contractor taking over and helping for my father for the last 22 years. I've got a Diploma in Conservation Earth
40 Works. I know the area quite well, and as a project, if able to proceed, will be an environmental disaster in this – if it is approved. I do agree on renewables if they put it in the right spot, and they're sustainable to the environment and work as a long-term investment to the taxpayer. Wind farms are not a long-term investment.
45 Twenty years is not a long time. I used to think it was when I was younger, but not now. The amount of destruction the – and infrastructure that has to be put into place for such a short-term project – I think we're not looking any further than our nose.

Coppabella Ranges is not suited for such a large scale infrastructure, nor has it been used for any other use, other than grazing, because of the topography won't allow it. Land use. This is used by the soil conservation services and is used to determine land capability. Anything over 18 degrees slope should never be cleared or
5 developed on. Coppabella Ranges is way over this. This is why, thus far, nothing has been allowed to be built on Coppabella Ranges. Never has a wind farm been built on such steep terrain, nor should one ever be built on such terrain. If it proceeds, nothing other than an environmental disaster will prevail. It will be easily seen and behold the mess from the Hume Highway as you drive past and for miles
10 away.

The visual impact – it's just been told they're trying to increase it from 150 metres to the 171 metres. This is too much. 150 metres is too much. As they just said, Crookwell 2 – I don't know how high they are, but it's dominating the landscape.
15 You can't screen this, so trees don't grow that tall. If any curtilage is offered, that will take the lifetime of the project to grow, and then it's going to be too late because they'll be decommissioning or leaving them there to rot. With the increases of the blade length, there will be an unquantifiable visual impact that can't be measured until it is too late. All or – non and in – non-involved residents should have an
20 independent photo montage done for them prior to construction, if approved. If approved, photos taken before and after can be used lawfully to challenge such a thing.

Noise. With the larger blades obviously is going to become more noise. All studies
25 have been done that I know of on 1.5 megawatt towers, not on five megawatt towers that we're looking at now. How can this be passed when we don't know what we are dealing with until it is too late? There's no way to measure it. With all the findings, with the report from the WHO – I don't know if you're aware of that. It's in the folder I just gave you – and what has been happening in South Gippsland, Victoria,
30 which I've also given you a copy, we've asked for – we're asking for a legal nightmare to be undone. It's going to be like Pandora's box. The lawyers – we've got one here today that's even spoken on behalf of one of the non-involved residents. It's just going to get messy. As Geoff brought up earlier, the whole community is in disruption. It's – yeah. I've never seen anything like it. It's hard work.
35

Current wind towers should be turned off at night to let people have a good night's sleep. If they're not, there should be a 35 decibel sound restriction put on them in times of operation. Setbacks need to become law, not a guideline. We all know there's problems. I've got a property out near Rye Park and we've got a wind farm
40 trying to get approved out there – or it has been approved, I should say. The Department of Planning have been asking what's going on and who lives within the four-kilometre radius of this wind farm. Why are they asking that? Because they know we're going to be affected. I've already been asked whether I want curtilage and whether I want double-glazed windows, but I don't need that and I don't want
45 that. I want to live in peace.

So, really, we should be looking at that for these poor people here as well today, and also for future projects. If we know there's a problem, why the hell are we allowing it to go ahead and proceed and be – cause more problems for later on. The clearing, I hear, is – they're trying to up it again. Original approval was 83 hectares down from 226 on 30 March to get this past for the part 4 consent. Now we're asking again for nearly 180 hectares. Why is this being considered? If this was on the original approval, this thing wouldn't have been approved or in the original consent. That's why it was taken down, so please take that into consideration.

10 With the road, Whitefields Lane should not be allowed to be cleared or used for access. For normal RMS road construction, the lane width is 3.5 metres wide and up to a nine-tonne load limit on each axel. This project's going to require a crane that uses – or is 27 tonnes per axel. That's three times over what RMS allow for on their roads. The blades with the increased length – truck's going to be about 75 metres
15 long, truck and trailer combo. That's going to get you four times longer than a normal truck and trailer combo on a normal highway, and we're going to try them up into the Coppabellas. I'm so pleased to hear that you're going there tomorrow to have a look; it'll open up your eyes.

20 The roads that will need to be built to get the infrastructure that's needed to get to the required positions on site will be massive. It will be like trying to build the Hume Highway over the Coppabella Ranges. Not something that should ever be approved, no matter what reason for trying to do such a thing. The risk to the environment and human life should be enough to question you why do we need this. If approved, all
25 infrastructure should be sealed or concreted to stop the risk of washing and environmental disaster. Also to prevent the risk to the human life. You might think why the hell are we going to – how are we going to have problems. If a truck was to slip or have a runaway incident on a site on those slopes in that area, the outcome would be fatal. Once a heavy laden truck slips on a slope, and it is not on a sealed or
30 concrete surface, you will not stop it. What is one human life worth for the risk of such a project?

So just to reiterate, the visual impact of the increased blade height, I don't agree. I think it's too much. You will be able to see it from miles away. The noise, it's
35 unknown. Got the report there from WHO, so you can go through that and have a read if you like. The setbacks should be from non-involved residents, and I think that should go out to at least eight kilometres, for non-involved. That's my take on it. The clearing Whitefields Lane should not be used. If they can't build this without going up Whitefields Lane, they shouldn't build it. The environment – it's – you're
40 asking for a natural disaster and a scar on the landscape that will never heal. Even after this project has been decommissioned, you'll be able to see the cut and fills. You won't see the rolling hills anymore, they're going to be flat. You can't get such infrastructure up there without doing so. And I also ask the roads to be sealed or concreted, to prevent the washing – to prevent the environmental disaster, and
45 whoever does the risk assessment on this job, I wouldn't put my name to it, put it that way. Thank you for your time, appreciate it.

MR COUTTS: Thanks, Andrew. Barbara Folkard? Eight minutes.

MS B. FOLKARD: Thank you for this opportunity – oh, sorry. Yes. Is that all right?

5

MR COUTTS: Is it on?

MS FOLKARD: That better?

10 MR COUTTS: It will come on.

MS FOLKARD: There's nothing worse than sitting back there and not hearing what's going on up at the front. Thank you for this opportunity here today and to introduce myself, I am a retired nurse and pastoral carer from the hospital team
15 which has caused me to be listening to people from mainly in that role there – people who are crook or who are in hospital in Canberra – and they – a pastoral carer sort of sits and listens and you hear a lot. And I've heard a number of – a good number of – second-hand reports, I know, but they were feeling – very feeling about them. My specific concern is the issue with – following that of the very bad effect of turbines
20 on people's health. It seems to be that there is always a percentage of the surrounding – what have I done wrong?

MR: Keep going. Nothing. You're right. Keep going.

25 MS FOLKARD: Good – of the surrounding population who are very badly impacted, with symptoms and problems being headaches, dizziness, high blood pressure, nausea, earache, tinnitus, stress, irritability, depression – where am I up to – fatigue, loss of sleep, anxiety, socio-behavioural and hormonal changes, muscle spasms, stomach aches. Following on from these are heart attacks, strokes,
30 Alzheimer's and other dementia, sleep apnoea, possible birth defects, especially in animals, an actuality with horrible deformities on the ground in lambs and calves, huge reductions in lambing percentages from around 80 to 85 per cent down to 7 and 8 per cent have been reported to me, rendering a farming enterprise uneconomic. How devastating.

35

I have several times brought this issue up at CCCs with Goldwind and New South Wales Planning representatives. On Thursday last week at the CCC at Binalong, Tom Neilson told us that Goldwind is complying with standards for New South Wales being a top level of 35 decibels. I must point out that that has nothing to do
40 with the problems of vibroacoustic disease, the diagnosis now given to the string of symptoms caused for some people living or working in the vicinity of wind turbines. The measure that relates to that situation is hertz, not decibels. It's apparently quite different and I think it means the measurement of the vibration level. Where am I?

45 These symptoms certainly do cause nuisance to local people as well as distressing visual impact, but it is more than just a nuisance. Infrasound vibrations have been identified as vibrating through the ground and wherever there is a house in line with

that, they vibrate up through the building and are felt as a very peculiar sensation which one feels compelled to move away from. However, the best place for people to go is perhaps 20 or 30 kilometres away where they can go to a motel or another home. That, of course, becomes a horrendous financial outlay over time and a lot of families do not have access to spare funds for that sort of outlay.

Some families do leave their homes for two, three or even four day spell and they would have to return to tend their farm and stop which they do as quickly as they can and then they clear out again to their bolthole to recover. Can you imagine the upheaval, especially if you've got children? The symptoms abate when they are away from the affected farmhouse or any house. The wind turbines have had a huge disastrous impact on many districts where the indemnity so triumphantly continues to plan for more and more of them to go up.

Back to the medical issues, I must request that the industry, currently Goldwind, involved with us here on the Coppabella site and elsewhere take a moral stand and defer their ongoing plans till they or the government have investigations done along the lines of Professor Mariana Alves-Pereira She's represented on the internet and I can provide a video. The point is that it has been shown that these vibrations cause thickening of tissues in the body, especially such as arteries and other blood vessels, such as around the heart and brain, so it would seem to verify the heart problems that people have been experiencing and the other nasties.

We should remember there was a blanket of ignorance put over drugs in the past, such as the morning sickness pill that resulted in birth deformities – that's going a fair way back; the final result of bad health effects from smoking, now recognised as causing so many illnesses and early deaths; mesothelioma, now identified from proximity to asbestos, and so on. Again, I must state that we need more investigation into the outcomes for innocent people who have to live near wind turbines. Most likely, some of these problems will not show up for many people till further down the track. But there is the possibility that down the track, there will be massive legal actions over these issues. I underline the fact that some of the families who are suffering and have had to leave their homes permanently were willing hosts to turbines who have had their lives ruined as a consequence of ongoing serious health problems.

Sensitisation is an ongoing problem, even when people move away a good distance. That comes from air conditioning or large fridges and so on in the supermarkets, etcetera. What happens – apparently, you go boldly in to go and do your shopping and before long, you've just got to clear out – I suppose you leave the trolley half full – because those symptoms come up. Please defer plans to continue erecting turbines till the health issues are better looked into. We do not yet know what extra problems the extra sizes of turbines and blades will cause. Another issue I have is why is the Berremangra Road or others not considered rather than the Whitefields Road, which has the loveliest old trees which should be protected, not dozed away. Thank you.

MR COUTTS: Thank you. Bruce Hazell.

MR B. HAZELL: Thank you, panel, for the opportunity to speak today. I didn't realise it was coming up so quickly. My name is Bruce Hazell, and I've lived on the property Kia Ora for 60 years, both residence C60 and especially residence C06 are adversely impacted by the project. Residence C06 was the only residence within two kilometres of turbines of the approved plan, now 2.8, and 400 metres from the Whitefields Road, and I have not succumbed to bribery. The destruction of the Whitefields Road would be irreparable and on the east and adjoining property and on the west of this property – this property was purchased in – during 2015 when the Department of Planning had recommended the entire project for refusal.

The Office of the Environment and Heritage have continually assessed this road and the entire Whitefields area of one of very high-quality vegetation with an intact grassy understory and canopy with a high density of tree hollows. We have never been consulted during this development. However, the department insists that Whitefields Road is the only access, although the proponents of this have listed two alternate roads, the Bouyeo Road north of the Coppabella and the Berremangra Road. The obvious access road up there is a three-lane clearway entry to the highway. It is sealed and is not – there's not one tree to be removed. The department representation did not visit the site on 1 May.

At our Landscape Guardian invitation, everyone was dismayed when the director of resources and energy assessments was quite emphatic that any project vehicles seen on the Berremangra Road would be stopped and prosecuted. Succession planting – it is unacceptable when an 81 year old farmer of modest means who have been on the property for 60 years, succession planning of which involves three generations, is affected by such projects as industrial wind farms devalue the land. Succession planting should be a time of pleasant reflections and family discussions and bonding; however, this has become of great concern and stress and land values, especially then as subdivided lifestyle blocks, could be devalued by 30 to 60 per cent.

We are now – we feel are now trapping our son, his wife and our grandsons. When we were informed that the entire project was refused in 2015, in preparation for the successive planting, the property adjacent Kia Ora and joining the western side of the Whitefields Road was purchased, therefore further trapping the new – the next two generations. Dividing the community is the greatest thing that brings tears to my eyes at times. Bookham has always been a very close community – the same as the Mullion, Mullion was something special, as is Bookham.

Helped by the Soldier Settlement Scheme – there were three Soldier Settlement Schemes in Bookham, and that has been the greatest thing for Bookham and surrounding areas. Everyone working together and enjoying each other's company, and the Bookham Hall – you know, built a long time ago – was all built by voluntary labour. The cricket club and tennis club have been all refurbished by voluntary labour. There's – here in the last 60 years, there's not one organisation one member of our three generations has not been involved with, either as a member or as executive position at some time. The Bookham Agricultural Bureau may cease – the only bureau active in Australia – because of a terrible conflict of interest brought

about by a it's all money and the proponents sponsoring community events.
Thank you.

MR COUTTS: Thanks. Thanks, Bruce. Richard Hyles. Five minutes.

5

MR HYLES: Hello. I would like to thank you all as well for coming here today.
My name is Richard Hyles. I'm a fifth-generation sheep and wool farmer and not a
public speaker. I feel I need to speak out in regard to the modification Goldwind
have put forward relating to the Coppabella Wind Farm. My family own historic
10 which held the original Berremangra Post Office and we own Westbourne which has
great significance – historical significance in our area. So gave up parcels of land
from Westbourne to return soldiers from World War II.

15 These men and families worked very hard on these properties to make a living and
some of the original families still live on these properties and are here today trying to
protect their property's value that their fathers and grandfathers have fought for in
World War II. They're worried about the devaluing of the land. Westbourne is C13
on the map, so we're within the three ks of the windfarm while Cannalong, C20, is
20 described as a "non-associated residence". But they're going to – 200 people
working up on the Coppabellas, I'm sure that it will be very associated, as they're
right on the Berremangra Road.

In mid last year, Goldwind were visiting affected landholders, offering them
neighbour agreements. I felt we were pressured a little bit to sign up, so everyone
25 signed up because we were told that they were commencing the project in November
2017. So people signed these agreements, thinking that it was going ahead – that
there's nothing to lose by signing up and I could not believe how soon after this
happened that I received, in the mail, that Goldwind had applied for a modification to
increase the turbine height, as we know, to 171 metres and increasing the hectares.
30 In reading a report from the State-Significant Development Modification
Assessment, which was written October 2018, it refers to:

*Residents being okay with the wind farm because they have signed an overhead
agreement.*

35

But, as I stated, these were signed before Goldwind applied for the modification and
I've been handed a petition here today which has got over 100 signatures against the
proposed development. Goldwind has offered to screen affected houses, but my
problem is I'm out working in the land and the shed and the yards and that's – I do
40 feel that we will be badly affected. Only three of the 11 hosts live on the wind farm
and the rest are absentee landholders, and I have been quoted to me by two of the
hosts that they just want – basically, want the roads.

45 There's a lot of anger towards people hosting these turbines, which is very sad for a
rural community. It has always been a rural country way to help your neighbours but
these turbines have caused huge division. I noticed and I was very disappointed to
see that no hosts were speaking today so we could hear their side of the story. I feel

that building the turbines on the Coppabella will not save the planet or reduce power bills. It's going to cause unreparable erosion and turn the Coppabellas into a potential industrial wasteland. Goldwind don't even have a Power Purchase Agreement, which is surprising the other night when I heard that that – and then they
5 said there was a large solar farm approved near Wagga, so now the power will come into Yass, they think.

There's a large eagle population in the Coppabellas, and with the bigger blades, the eagle population will disappear from up there. Whilst eagles aren't always a
10 farmer's best friend, they do serve a significant role in controlling vermin, such as rabbits and small foxes and we all know the damage rabbits can cause if they get out of control up there. Other residents are concerned about the pollution into the Coppabella Creek, which is essential for our stock water and is also home to a large
15 population of gudgeon fish. I'm concerned for myself and others around the infrasound issues being raised at other wind farms and around Victoria. I want my family to always come home and continue farming and serving this area without being forced away due to infrasound. I was under the impression that all the traffic was to go through Whitefields Road but now I understand that a lot will be coming
20 past our two houses on the Berremangra Road, which worries me for safety. And the Berremangra Road wasn't built for that sort of traffic.

One big issue that I'm witnessing firsthand is the declining mental health of people in this area who are affected. People are very concerned about the development. There's so much publicity about rural mental health and suicide and I think everyone
25 needs to have a – be very mindful of this. My wife, Steph, has created a special space for wellbeing for women in our restored Shearers Huts. Women are coming to take time out from their busy lives and some to heal from past traumas. Steph also runs workshops. We're worried about the noise and the visual aspect and so the impact of her business.

30 I would like to thank the IPC for having a site inspection tomorrow. I feel it's so important for you to see. And you will understand the irreparable impact on the environment this development will cause. I have no doubt that our land value will be decreased. A quote the other day – I'm sorry; I'm going overtime. I heard from the
35 Bylong Valley coal mine development – and this reminds me so much of what's happening here – KEPCO came in; they divided; they conquered and gagged an area and made it an unpleasant place to live, and that's exactly how I feel we're heading. So thank you.

40 MR COUTTS: Thanks, Richard.

MR HYLES: I did want to read out the petition but I understand I've run out of time.

45 MR COUTTS: Yes. If you just pass it to Jorge. Thanks, Richard.

MR HYLES: Thank you.

MR COUTTS: Tom Nielsen from Coppabella Wind Farm Proprietary Limited.
Five Minutes.

MR T. NIELSEN: Thank you, Commissioners. Can you hear me?

5

MR COUTTS: Yes.

MR NIELSEN: I acknowledge that this is a forum for the community to give
feedback on the modification application and, as such, will keep this speech short. I
would just like to take this opportunity to highlight the history of the project through
the planning process, summarise why the modification application was necessary and
give a brief overview of the community consultation and engagement activities
undertaken since Goldwind Australia purchased the project. So the Yass Valley
wind farm project was initially submitted for application in 2008 by the developer
Epuron with a proposal to build up to 200 wind turbines across three precincts, being
the Marilba Hills, Coppabella Hills and Carrolls Ridge areas. The initial tip height
considered was up to 150 metres, which represented the most efficient wind turbine
technology available at that time.

Over a lengthy seven and a half year process, the project was repeatedly reassessed
and minimised, including the refusal, as mentioned, by Alan, Noeleen and Bruce
until in 2016, the Department of Planning recommended approval for the Coppabella
Hills precinct only. The Planning Assessment Commission then reviewed the
recommendation and gave final approval for 79 wind turbines on the Coppabella
Hills. Goldwind Australia subsequently purchased the project in 2017 and based on
the outcome of a detailed engineering design, it was identified that the original
vegetation limit was not sufficient to allow the approved access roads to be built. In
addition to this, the advances in technology that have greatly driven down the costs
of energy from wind farms over the past decade meant that the turbine tip height
originally put forward in 2008 greatly restricted the project from being competitive
in today's electricity market.

As such, a modification application was required. This application was based on a
realistic construction footprint that appropriately considers the earthworks required to
build the project on the hill terrain. The majority of this footprint must be
progressively rehabilitated throughout the construction period and the total
vegetation impact will also be offset on neighbouring properties by the state's
Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. The environment impact of the updated design have
been extensively assessed and minimised wherever possible. A specific wind turbine
was also chosen, the Goldwind 140, and a tip height extension of 21 metres has been
proposed to allow this wind turbine to be utilised on the site.

As part of the modification process, Goldwind Australia made a number of additional
commitments on behalf of the project. These included the removal of four approved
wind turbines in order to increase the minimum distances to neighbours and to
reduce impacts on hollow-bearing trees, a commitment to a supplementary
community investment model to be developed in consultation with the local

community to invest a further \$100,000 per year into the local area over the life of the project. This is in addition to the 2500 per turbine per year already committed under the community enhancement fund. A commitment was made, as well, to a decommissioning and rehabilitation plan that includes funding arrangements to cover the decommissioning costs. This is to be reviewed and updated every five years. Also a commitment to reduce impacts on the only approved main access route, being Whitefields Road, such that only four hollow-bearing trees will be removed in this operating corridor.

10 On with the – just a bit about our community engagement. So on purchasing the project in 2017, Goldwind Australia identified the need for much greater consultation with the local community and embarked on a community engagement strategy similar to what we have very successfully implemented at the White Rock Wind Farm in the New England region of New South Wales. This involved over 50 face-to-face meetings with neighbours to the project, the hiring of a local community relations officer to manage our local interface with the community, implement – the establishing of a local information centre in Binalong which since March when it opened has had over 200 visitors, implementation of a neighbour engagement strategy that with no neighbouring residences within two kilometres of the wind turbines allowed the project to offer neighbour agreements out to five kilometres, which has been covered a little bit already, with 30 agreements signed to date, the establishment of a sponsorship budget that has since committed 37 separate sponsorship funds to local events and community organisations, equating to an injection of more than 100,000 into the local area.

25 This model will continue through construction until the start of operations when the community enhancement funds will be available. The project was also renamed Coppabella Wind Farm to better reflect the approved project's geographic area and our local focus. So, in summary, the wind farm as modified will provide significant economic benefits to the area both during the construction phase when up to 200 workers will be working on the site, as well as into operations where approximately 15 full-time employees will operate the wind farm and more than 270,000 will be available annually for the local community via the two community funds.

35 The project will contribute to lowering the greenhouse gas emissions for electricity generation in Australia and will supply renewable energy into the National Electricity Market equivalent to the needs of 120,000 New South Wales homes every year. We support the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment's conclusion that the project achieves a reasonable balance between maximising the efficiency of the wind resource development and minimising the potential impacts on the local environment and community.

MR COUTTS: Thanks, Tom. Matthew Bingley. Five minutes.

45 MR M. BINGLEY: Okay. Is it going? Hello?

MR COUTTS: It will come - - -

MR BINGLEY: Hello?

MR COUTTS: Have you turned it on?

5 MR BINGLEY: Hello?

MR COUTTS: Yes.

10 MR BINGLEY: Okay. Hi. I'm Matt Bingley, local resident, and I'm extremely concerned and against the new modifications to the Coppabella Wind Farm. Firstly, I'd like to address my protest to the way money has been thrown about in the community by Goldwind in the form of sponsorships, gifts to schools and farms, etcetera, during their application of the project, but particularly before submissions were closed on the modifications. I would liken this to a trial in the courthouse
15 where one side of the argument is offering gifts to the jury before the decisions is made. That's absurd, right? And I can't help to think this Goldwind Chinese interfering in an Australian decision.

20 Even so, the submissions against the modification were substantial. Goldwind then took months and answered these submissions in a very long, drawn-out, carefully thought-out way. Must be nice to have money and time to quash the little guys and make submissions against them look insignificant. An example of this is relating to land values in the area. The new, extremely increased turbine height and blade length will affect the land values with a much larger visual effect on the current
25 neighbouring landowners' properties and many more kilometres of land that will now be visually impacted from the increased size. Of course, most of the hosts are getting their money and do not live there, so it won't bother them.

30 The Yass area is number 1 in Australia for people looking for rural properties, according to Yass Real Estate agent, Edwina Brown, in an article by Pauline Morrissey, dated 20 July 2018. The area around the Coppabellas and its prime location, having Hume Highway access, allowing an hour to Canberra, three to Sydney, and now a thriving petite village, Jugiong, is a place where people want to live. These modifications will put an end to that. Goldwind, in answer to this in
35 submission, has used a Valuer General study from 2009. Hello? It's 2018, nearly 2019. How can this be accepted by the New South Wales Department of Planning? Particularly, what should be this population growth area? Where's the 2018 report on the land division – subdivision in this area?

40 It's very close to home for me as my parents, who are both over 80, have their house directly facing the project with no prospect of screen with the new blade height unless they go total blackout. It's a subdivided 40-acre block which is to be sold for their retirement home, which value will be destroyed. Who would fight droughts, fires, fluctuating stock prices for years for this happen? And the Goldwind turbine
45 company or anyone else should certainly not make this happen. I live and work around the Coppabellas. Who knows what the increased size of these power turbines will have on the health and wellbeing in the community. Surely sound, acoustic and

5 infra are to be more with the size. The unique way that sound travels in a mountainous area means it could end up all over the place. The increased visual presence will and already had put a huge drain on some of the local farmers, thinking and having to look at this spinning industrial area instead of the calming peace of the superb Coppabellas.

10 It's that serious. I believe it will end in tragedy and implore you, if the destruction of area to continue, mental health counsellors must be deployed to the area for years to come. The increase in size will no doubt also have a greater effect on the beautiful eagles and other birds that I often see on my day-to-day activities. They will be missed by me, but probably not the blades. The compound of all of this – the new modification, which is to clear 179.8 hectares of vegetation, areas including parts of the nature sensitive Whitefields Road – this is totally unacceptable.

15 The land destruction will be clearly visible and not a minimal disturbance as previously described, changing the ecosystem and contributing to long-term scarring for generations to come. It is so different to the original plans, the only way to view it is as a new project and not as a modification. For it – if put initially, no one would have approved it. Thank you. Please consider my presentation against these
20 modifications. I see no minimisation in this project, only huge escalation. It's often the case, unfortunately, that someone else's dream is someone else's nightmare.

MR COUTTS: Thanks, Matthew. Rosemary Miller.

25 MS R. MILLER: Hello? Now - - -

MR COUTTS: You push it up. It takes a second or two to come up.

30 MS MILLER: Good afternoon, chair, fellow commissioners and everyone else here. I'm Rosemary Miller from Rye Park, and I thank you for allowing me to speak at this meeting. I'm in favour of green renewable energy, but only if it's reliable, economical and environmentally friendly and in for the long haul, namely, hydro. Unfortunately, I believe wind power to be none of these. All I can see with wind farms – I'm speaking about wind farms in general as well as Coppabella. All I can
35 see with wind farms are negatives. Needless destruction of bushland, soil erosion, noise and health issues – proven, road safety, alienation between families and friends within communities, increased bushfire risk, huge taxpayer-funded subsidies, high household and business power bills.

40 All this for an inconsistent, unreliable source of energy which, at this stage, cannot even be stored in batteries and only has a life of 25 years if you're lucky. I am still looking for a positive, but as far as I can see, the only ones to benefit from wind farms are the overseas proponent companies, who will be taking bucketloads of money out of the country. So, really, what is the point of wind farms? Another point
45 is that I have noticed an ever-increasing number of solar panels being installed on residential and commercial buildings, and while electricity prices are high, I'm sure this trend will continue. Another great concern I have is the clearing of hundreds of

acres of – hectares of pristine old forest, native grasslands and rare Indigenous wildflowers. It's with other wind farms, too.

5 Once this environment is gone, it'll be gone forever, and that's criminal. I'm sure I wouldn't want to be responsible for this. We have lost enough precious bushland to urban development as it is. Places such as these are the habitat of birds and wildlife, some of which are on the endangered list and provide food, shelter and nesting places, especially the hollows of older trees. In particular, this in particular relates to the superb parrot, which migrates to this area every spring to breed in tree hollows and feed on the blossoms of the eucalypt trees. Such destruction of bushland rather flies in the face of the Queen's green canopy program, don't you think? However, it is not only the loss of habitat, but the bird kill, including superb parrots, protected wedge-tailed eagles and bats struck by turning blades.

15 Add to that erosion that will certainly occur, considering the steepness and the frail soils of the hillsides at the site and access road areas. Another of my concerns is the lack of legislation. As far as I can understand, reading the literature regarding the planning and construction of a wind farm, the government only issues recommendations and guidelines to a proponent company to follow. That's ridiculous. Some recommendation and guidelines should come in the form of legislation to ensure the proponent company conforms. This especially should apply to the decommissioning. I have read that if the proponent company does not decommission a non-productive wind tower within 12 months, the onus is placed on the host to do so.

25 I'm concerned that if the supposed bond which, incidentally, appears not be guaranteed, is non-existent, the host may not be able to afford to disassemble the towers or even, in a worst case scenario, choose not to pull them down. This situation could quite well apply to the case where a host does not reside on the host property. There are quite a few examples of this. I doubt if anyone in their right mind would want to see rusting, derelict wind towers along already denuded hills, not to mention the loss of property value and tourism appeal. Overall, I feel these – there are far too many grey areas with these developments and much fudging of facts. We objectors have a right to know every detail in accurate, consistent and clear terms, every step of the way. After all, we are the ones who are going to be most affected. Thank you.

MR COUTTS: Thanks, Rosemary. Greg Medway.

40 MR G. MEDWAY: Am I on?

MR COUTTS: Yes.

45 MR MEDWAY: To the Commission, Alan, Zada and Adrian, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. I'm here to speak about community involvement with the Coppabella Wind Farm. I've been involved with the Harden Kite Festival and it's an annual event which, this year, attracted over 8000 people on one day. It's a

sort of a record for us in this region. The event is organised by a small volunteer team with some local individuals and organisations involved. This year, we've had double the amount of visitors and the previous year it also doubled again. Coppabella Wind Farm got involved in 2016.

5

What I like about Coppabella – they don't just get involved with cash; they get involved with human beings and the lady in charge is – sorry – Alison, Alison Deal, and on the day was involved with the Girl Guides, involved on the ground all day, as well as being a major sponsor. I've never seen that before with a major sponsor where they were there on the ground. They looked to me to be real people and they really cared. For us, to be able to get a few sponsors has been so difficult – so difficult to get a few sponsors here in the country. They've been wonderful and all I can say is we are so gracious and thankful for Coppabella with their support. Thank you.

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MR COUTTS: Our last speaker, Robin Cooper.

MS R. COOPER: Hello. Thank you very much, Commissioners, for the opportunity to speak. As you know, my name is Robin Cooper and I am here partially because of personal interest and partially because I have interests in another renewable energy project and may I say, in that farm the land values so far don't seem to be highly affected. I think through my research – because I think that it's really important to do research and the first part refers to what Goodwin have done which I think is quite commendable. I think they have voluntarily removed three turbines from the project to minimise visual impact on neighbouring properties which I hear have been of great concern and this will increase the distance from a turbine to 2.8 kilometres.

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Goodwin are removing another turbine from the project to preserve more than 50 hollow-bearing trees, which is also another concern, and they are increasing blade length not hub height. This will allow them to take advantage of the latest turbine technology available which equates to less noise. The comprehensive neighbour agreement have been offered to people who live in a five-kilometre zone of the project and these are initiatives that could be supported by planning authorities. Goodwin will contribute substantially to the community enhancement fund which, I think, also is really important and the one further thing I would like to say – I actually haven't heard reference to impact on the environment in other similar projects. This includes overseas. In those projects, is there irresponsible erosion; is there mass tree removal; is there proof that wind turbines regularly affect health. I think these things need to be investigated. Thank you very much.

MR COUTTS: Thank you, Robin. Robin was our last speaker, so I do appreciate everyone's coming here this afternoon and taking time out of your busy schedules, and particularly for those that have spoken today, we do value your comments and we will certainly take them on board in our deliberation. So thank you very much.

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RECORDING CONCLUDED

[3.47 pm]