



REBECCA GLENCROSS

OBJECT

Submission No: 195669

Organisation:	Key issues: <i>Social and economic, Land use, Visual, Traffic and Transport</i>
Location: <i>New South Wales 2820</i>	
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Attachment:	

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To the panel members of the Spicers Creek Windfarm IPCN,

As you are aware, I spoke at the panel meeting on Thursday 29/08/2024 and outlined my concerns there, due to time constraints I was not able to fully outline all concerns I have.

I also had the benefit of listening to the panel meeting on the verified YouTube recording and observed Squadron Energy representative Trish McDonald dispute my statement saying that the first time we were consulted regarding the Spicer's Creek Project was in 2020. This is untrue, we were contacted by then CWP Renewables representative, Kristin Old to discuss 'Wind Prospecting' and at that time Kristin had a telephone meeting with us in September 2020 in an attempt to get us to sign an exclusivity agreement with CWP. As the commission would be aware CWP transitioned into Squadron energy. We declined to sign the agreement based on inability to afford legal consultation on the exclusivity agreement at that time and also parts of the agreement we could identify did not support our biosecurity plans we have for both properties, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], both located on Saxa Rd at Gollan. At the same time we had also been approached by a solar company and a gold mining company regarding proposed usages of our land or neighbouring land, and we do not have any of these projects going ahead, so this was not indicative to us that there would be a windfarm project located in close proximity to our properties and I would like Trish's comment struck from the commission record.

As I raised at the meeting, support in the Gollan and Elong Elong Communities is contractually obligated, and I was made aware by community members that Squadron Energy representatives were approaching community members prior to the IPCN hearing insisting anyone with a signed neighbour or host agreement, to sign a support document as it is in their contract to do so. While Trish stated that these neighbour and host agreements are entered into voluntarily, without sound legal advice it is difficult for community members to understand their obligations under the agreements and have full understanding of the process of living through the proposal of a major project, I do not fully understand this myself. With industrial renewable projects being an emerging field of contract negotiation, there are few solicitors adequately practiced in this field who can be readily accessed in a timely and affordable manner for people living in rural and remote NSW.

I would also like to note that Trish claimed the agreements were 'industry standard', what concerns me about this is that the industry appears to be setting its own standard with little regard to recommendations and conditions proposed by the AEIC. Such as documents included on the AEIC website on 'Best Practice Community Engagement, Lane, T. and Hicks, J. 2014' discuss such things as 'appropriateness for community context...scale of project for local environment and needs'. Arguably local context in the Gollan and Elong Elong areas for more than 100 years has been intensive agriculture across various forms that it is conducted in within the farming enterprises who continue to operate in these communities. A shift to industrial energy is going to have obvious direct and indirect impacts on our ability to make an income in already challenging market and environmental conditions. We are not being supported in anyway to mitigate loss of income, and those who are not considered 'direct neighbours' of the Spicer's Creek project have no options to offset lost income through the blocking of roads with transport of oversized loads, increased traffic, increased fire risk and reduced capacity to mitigate fire risk, increased farm insurance costs and biosecurity impacts. Examples of



recent biosecurity threats is that our neighbours had a viral foot rot outbreak on their property. We undertook necessary measures at this time to prevent spread, this neighbour is also an associated host within the project, I have not seen any planning from Squadron Energy on how to collaborate with land holders on biosecurity matters. I do not believe stating that they may have mention this in the lengthy and confusing paperwork is adequate planning. Direct consultation and planning is required in a safe and affective manner to meet community expectations and needs.

Another of the AEIC important document on understanding rights as neighbours of a major windfarm project is in the section 'Neighbour Matters'. Very little of the recommendations outlined in this online document have been followed in the neighbour agreement we were presented with, especially in reference to the inclusion of caveats within the Spicer Creek Windfarm agreements. Upon legal advice on the caveat and many other aspects of the agreement, we were not able to sign the agreement due to the removal of rights and significant financial and legal implications this agreement would hold for us. In the words of Andrew Dyer, outgoing commissioner, 'it is a heavy agreement with a light payment'. The aspects of the agreement we did not agree with we outlined with our solicitor and terms of a new contract were issued to Squadron Energy, we have never seen a new agreement with modified terms, but have had multiple contacts from Squadron Energy inquiring on an agreeable amount, or an offer of \$20,000 if the caveat could be extended across both of our properties. I would like to mention that both properties are now owned outright and the value of these properties is crucial in our ongoing business planning and succession planning with our own children. We do not view this practice as fair, supportive or within the recommended industry practices set by the AEIC.

Further more, without the appointment of a permanent Australian Energy and Infrastructure Commissioner, all major energy projects should not be approved as there is no proof that any scrutiny that is held toward these projects can be properly supported or considered. I understand there is an interim commissioner, I have never had contact with this commissioner since his appointment even though my complaint with the AEIC was not resolved upon Andrew Dyer's retirement, and I was ensured that this complaint would be addressed due to its serious nature.

We were appreciative that all members of the panel visited our property and considered the impacts of visual amenity and sound amenity we would be faced with in our personal lives and on our farm business. We were also visited by members of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment during the EIS phase of the project. We found the planners dismissive when we raised the cumulative impacts of a large scale industrial windfarm such as Spicer's Creek Project. We were aware at that time there are new guidelines that have been developed to better support the impacts of projects such as the one we will be faced with. These guidelines redefine who is considered a direct neighbour, new definitions of visual and sound amenity, and new recommendations for developers on better mitigating the impacts of much larger turbines with increased numbers and density that was not seen in the original guidelines. It has been noted that in 2016, when the NSW Department of Planning and Environment 'Wind Energy Guidelines' were developed, the average height of a wind turbine blades in Australia was approximately 100 metres to 150 metres, with development consisting of 60 to 80 turbines or less. Our current nearest project is the Bodangora Windfarm, the turbines for this project that are visible are approximately 17km from our home and are sparce with about 35 turbines in that project with rotor diameter of 130 metres, we cannot see all turbines or blades in this project. I would consider the visual impact as low for the Bodangora Wind Farm. Under the current wind guidelines our property is deemed to have a 'moderate' impact of visual amenity. We will see all 117 Turbines in a refined area across our prominent eastern view, there are 3 turbines within 5 km from our home and 2 more turbines that sit just over 5km from our home, the boundary of our property is less than 2 km from the nearest turbine. Please remember as a farm business our business activities are primarily conducted in our paddocks, not our house. The tip height of these turbines is 256 metres, I do not consider this a 'moderate' impact. In the proposed guidelines that were set to be instated this year, the guidelines showed examples of visual impact, our impact would be considered extreme. I would like the IPCN panel members to take this into consideration when placing recommendations for this project. I am aware we are not the only residents with such an impact and I fear that the impacts on others are also not adequately supported.



Personal impacts of the wind farm, or 'social impacts' for us and others with similar outlooks, will be loss of sense of place. This is well documented in other major projects and considers how significant changes to the land scape, community composition and ongoing land use will affect our perception of our community, our connection to our land, and our mental health. There are many studies on this impact, and when you consider the biopsychosocial factors of our lives, we have only ever known rurality, we have deep cultural connections with our land, we understood in the local government laws for our area that this area was designated for intensive agriculture, in the 40 years my husband and I have existed the land scape has largely remained the same, as people involved in agriculture the changes in the land hold meaning and help us make sense of the seasons in a sociological way. Significant changes in sense of place leads to sense of disconnection from both environmental contexts, and also community contexts. A compounding factor when loss of sense of community occurs is the increase in isolation. As a mental health professional I know too well that isolation is a leading cause of increased depressive and anxious symptoms, and with these continuing over extended periods leads to an increased likelihood of mental health disorders and suicidality. This is something I do not want for my family or other significantly impacted members of the Gollan and Elong Elong communities.

There are possibly many other things that need addressing, but I hope the impacts I have outlined, the recognition we have had from government departments and Squadron Energy in relation to current, past and future legislation and guidelines, limited availability of adequate legal consultation to the community as a whole, and the poor practices Squadron Energy have applied in developing its agreements with ourselves and the broader community are taken into consideration when the IPCN panel members deliver their recommendations. My recommendation is that the project is not allowed to go ahead in its current form as it cannot be adequately measured under the current guidelines available to wind energy projects. I would like the project to be reconsidered under the new guidelines with recognition toward impacts on hosts and neighbours being considered in line with guidelines that are better informed to measure such large, impactful projects. Ideally I believe this project is not fitting in an intensive agricultural area and puts incomes and production of producers at risk that is not supported. I also believe that the community fabric has already been disrupted in the poor consultation process that has been applied by Squadron Energy, and largely the majority of the community surrounding the project has not been adequately consulted.

I thank you for taking the time to consider my submission and I hope that a well considered recommendation can be made.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Glencross
