



## **TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING**

RE: SPICERS CREEK WIND FARM (SSD-41134610)

### **APPLICANT MEETING**

PANEL: PROF NEAL MENZIES AM (CHAIR)  
MR MICHAEL WRIGHT  
MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD

OFFICE OF THE IPC: KENDALL CLYDSDALE  
TAHLIA HUTCHINSON

APPLICANT REPRESENTATIVES: TRISH MCDONALD  
KRISTY OLD  
KATE THOMSON  
KIRSTY DAVIES

LOCATION: ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE

DATE: 2:30PM – 3:30PM  
WEDNESDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2024

## <THE MEETING COMMENCED

**PROF MENZIES:** Okay. So I'm Neal Menzies. I'm the chair of this particular panel. What I've got to do is to start with a formal statement and so I'm going to read that out and then the rest of the meeting will be somewhat less formal. The formal statement includes an introduction to the other Commissioners and you can see Michael on screen. Suellen hasn't joined us yet and so she may join us at any moment. So just a heads up on there may be another Commissioner joining shortly.

Okay, so let me kick off with my formal statement. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from the land of the Turrbal and Jagera people here in the Brisbane River Valley and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all of the country from which we're meeting virtually today and pay my respects to elders past and present.

Welcome to the meeting today to discuss Spicers Creek Wind Farm, SSD-41134610, currently before the Commission for determination. Spicers Creek Wind Farm Pty Ltd, project entity owned by the Squadron Energy Group companies proposes to develop a 700 megawatt wind farm located approximately 25 km northwest of Gulgong.

**MS MCDONALD:** Gulgong.

**PROF MENZIES:** One of the Squadron guys.

**MS MCDONALD:** Gulgong.

**PROF MENZIES:** Gulgong. Thank you. Within the Dubbo Regional and Warrumbungle Shire local government areas. The project site is in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone. The proposed project involves the development of up to 117 turbines with a maximum tip height of 256 metres, a 400 megawatt battery energy storage system, connection to the proposed Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone transmission line and other ancillary infrastructure.

My name is Neal Menzies. I'm the chair of this Commission panel and I'm joined by my fellow Commissioners, Michael Wright and Suellen, when Suellen does join us, Suellen Fitzgerald. We are also joined by Kendall Clydsdale and Tahlia Hutchinson from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.

In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website. The meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information on which the Commission will base its determination.

It's important for the Commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify

issues wherever it is considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and are not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing, which we will then put up on our website.

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I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the first time and for all members to ensure that they do not speak over the top of each other to ensure accuracy of the transcript.

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Okay, so now we can begin and as I say, I'd prefer us to have a fairly informal discussion, so we will feel free to, as it were, interrupt and ask questions along the way and you should feel free to put anything to us, ask questions of us, which we may or may not be able to answer. Primarily we're here to seek information from you.

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Okay, let me find the agenda that we've got prepared for the meeting just to make sure that we track according to that agenda. So if I can hand over to Squadron Energy team for your introductions.

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**MS TRISH MCDONALD:** Thank you, Neal. We actually have a presentation, which follows the agenda that was provided and there is a slide in there where we have Applicant introductions.

25

**PROF MENZIES:** Okay, yes. Let's do it that way.

**MS MCDONALD:** Okay, thank you. I'll ask Kate to share screen and we will get started.

30

**MS THOMSON:** Really slow.

**MS MCDONALD:** Thank you. Next slide, please, Kate. So just briefly, Squadron also acknowledges the lands of the traditional custodians on whose land that we live and work, including the land that we're joining from for the meeting today. We pay respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to their elders, past, present and emerging.

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This is just the agenda in line with what was provided, so we'll work through that today. Applicant introductions. Joining us today from Squadron is myself, Trish McDonald. I'm the senior project manager for Spicers Creek Wind Farm. We have Kristy Old, senior project developer for the project, Kate Thomson, project officer, and joining us also from Umwelt Environmental and Social Consultants is Kirsty Davies. Kirsty is the project manager for Spicers Creek Wind Farm and also the manager of planning and assessments, Umwelt.

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Our team, Spicers Creek Wind Farm Pty Ltd, is the proponent for the SSD application, owned by Squadron Energy, which is part of the Tattarang group of companies. Tattarang is an Australian private investment group, which is owned by Andrew and Nicola Forrest.

5 The Spicers Creek Wind Farm team has worked closely with Umwelt as our lead environmental and social consultant, along with a number of other technical specialists, which are noted on the slide here, to prepare the state significant development application.

10 Just briefly about Squadron Energy, Squadron is a 100% Australian owned renewable energy company. We develop, operate and own renewable energy assets in Australia. We have 1.1 gigawatts of renewable energy in operation and 900 megawatts of projects under construction. Our portfolio stretches across the eastern seaboard of Australia, as shown on the slide there. Next slide, please, Kate.

15 Just looking a bit closer at New South Wales, Squadron Energy has three operating wind farms, one wind farm under construction being the Uungula Wind Farm, east of Wellington, and a number of projects are in development, both within and outside of the renewable energy zones in New South Wales. Spicers Creek Wind Farm, which Kate is just showing the location there, is actually the most advanced wind farm in our development portfolio.

20 The next item on the agenda is an overview of the application. Project evolution and timeline. So through an iterative design process over a number of years, the wind farm has been purposefully designed to incorporate community and stakeholder feedback and the findings of our environmental and social studies.

25 The team has undertaken extensive engagement with landowners, the broader community and other stakeholders throughout the planning and assessment process. We've adopted an iterative approach to the design since the inception of the project in 2019 and we've taken on board the feedback and adapted the project accordingly.

30 The project location was selected due to the reliable wind resource, low density of rural and residential housing, the proximity to major roads and the proposed transmission infrastructure and the fact that it was a largely cleared landscape. So throughout the project design, we have adopted the avoid, minimise, mitigate offset design hierarchy and have included the principles of minimising vegetation clearing and land disturbance, protecting riparian zones, using previously disturbed land, protecting cultural heritage and agricultural values, minimising direct and indirect impacts and adopting a flexible approach to design through an iterative process. Next slide.

40 The project design evolution has included material impact minimisation steps to take into account the feedback received throughout the process and since the submission of the EIS, a number of changes to the project have been made, including a refinement of the project site, being the development footprint and development corridor, to further avoid biodiversity impacts, additional commitments in relation to construction work or accommodation and employment and additional mitigation measures.

5 So the development footprint for the project is the area where the work will actually take place and since submission of the EIS, that area has been reduced to 1,471 hectares, which is a reduction of about 49 hectares. As with most wind farm designs, there is a buffer area around the development footprint, creating a corridor of around 100 metres and that's to provide flexibility for locating the turbines and infrastructure during the detailed design and construction process. And our development corridor has been reduced by about 714 hectares since the EIS submission. There's some graphics depicting those numbers there as well. Next slide, thank you.

10 So just in terms of our development timeline, back in 2018, desktop assessments identified the site as a good potential site for a wind farm development and in August of 2019, we started engagement with the potential hosts out on the site. In 2020, we commenced onsite wind monitoring and continued our discussions with landowners and then in May of 2021, we went public with the project.

20 It was publicly announced and we had community consultation, including drop in sessions and we also commenced our physical investigations on the site in the Spring of 21 for biodiversity and commenced additional studies in relation to transport routes, visual analysis and conducted our preliminary and civil electrical design to inform the EIS process.

25 Throughout 2022, our environmental and social impact assessment continued as did our ongoing community engagement in the area and that all culminated in a period between July and August of 2023 with a public exhibition of the environmental and social impact assessment and we also held community consultation and drop in sessions on the findings of the studies.

30 In December 2023, following provision of the submissions on the EIS in September, in December of 23, we lodged the submissions report to address the community and government feedback on the EIS. And that brings us forward to today. In July of 2024, DPHI completed their assessment and on 30 July, referred the project to the IPC for determination along with the recommended conditions of consent.

35 Just briefly, the project, as you noted, Neal, is located approximately 25 km northwest of Gulgong and 35 km northeast of Wellington. It is within the Dubbo Regional and Warrumbungle Shire local government areas. So that's Warrumbungle there, we have 11 turbines within the Warrumbungle Shire LGA and over on the other side, 106 turbines located within the Dubbo Regional LGA. It's also, as you noted, within the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone.

45 A brief overview of the project, up to 117 wind turbines, battery storage, temporary construction facilities, local road network upgrades, internal roads and tracks, electrical infrastructure and buildings to operate the wind farm. This is a project layout, which is a graphical representation of the elements we're seeking approval for. Just point out along the top, the project is bordered at the north by the Golden Highway, bordered at the western edge by Saxa Road and the south,

Gollan Road.

5 A little bit more detail about the project overview just briefly, 30 year project life,  
117 turbines with a tip height of up to 256 metres. Generating capacity of  
700 megawatts, battery storage of 400 megawatts. It includes ancillary  
infrastructure, temporary construction of facilities. In terms of site access, we have  
two main entry locations for oversize, over mass vehicles and also heavy and light  
vehicles. Those access points are at Sweeneys Lane, accessed directly off the  
10 Golden Highway and also Tallawonga Road, accessed from the Golden Highway,  
followed by Saxa Road. We also have a secondary access point on Gollan Road in  
the south for heavy and light vehicles only.

15 Construction workforce peak of around 590 full-time equivalent positions,  
averaging at around 323 for the duration of the construction. During operations,  
around 12 full-time equivalent positions, operational hours of 24 hours a day,  
seven days a week. The project has a capital investment value of approximately  
\$2 billion.

20 Project benefits, it's very important to Squadron Energy that we ensure that the  
communities in which we operate also has some benefits of the projects being  
there. So the project will contribute significant capital investment within the CWO  
region. It will provide benefits to local services throughout the life of the project.

25 It will provide benefits to the local community through the implementation of the  
proposed community benefits sharing program, which includes planning  
agreements with the two local Councils. Generation of jobs during the  
construction and operational phases, delivery of additional income to host  
landowners and neighbouring landowners and as part of the access fees that we are  
30 required to pay to EnergyCo to access the CWO REZ infrastructure, part of those  
funds will be provided to a community benefit and employment programs.

35 One of the items that we are working on with Dubbo Regional Council is to  
deliver water security to the region through a public private partnership, involving  
the building of a new advanced wastewater treatment facility at Dubbo Sewerage  
Treatment Plant. That will also provide construction water for the project.

**MR MICHAEL WRIGHT:** Excuse me, Neal, could I just ask a question about  
that?

40 **MS MCDONALD:** Sure.

**MR WRIGHT:** Is that part of the planning agreement or is that a separate  
arrangement between SQE and Dubbo Regional Council?

45 **MS MCDONALD:** It's totally separate, Michael. So that is in addition to the  
planning agreement that we have already in place and executed with Dubbo  
Regional Council.

**MR WRIGHT:** Okay, I see. Thank you.

**MS MCDONALD:** Happy to provide some further details on that water project if anyone is interested. I'll now hand over to Kirsty to go through the assessment key issues.

**MS KIRSTY DAVIES:** Thank you, Trish. So obviously we've completed a comprehensive environmental impact statement and other assessment materials to support the project in accordance with the SEARs. We will touch on the key issues identified by the Department, sorry, being biodiversity, visual and traffic.

But just to start, nice to note that the Department has said that the assessment of the wind farm of this size and this location has been comparatively straightforward to other wind farm projects, given the project has been sited and designed to minimise potential impacts. So just further reiterating what Trish has previously said in relation to the project design elements. Next slide, Kate.

So in terms of biodiversity, it is considered that significant effort has been made to minimise biodiversity impacts as far as practical through the project design and this has been supported by the Department's assessment report. So this has been achieved by locating infrastructure within areas of non-native vegetation, which comprises about 80% of the project site. Adopting buffers for important habitat features and avoiding threatened species' habitats.

Despite this, the project will still result in residual direct impacts to native vegetation communities and threatened species habitats within the development footprint, primarily related to vegetation clearing works for infrastructure establishment. The Department has also noted though that the credit liability for the project equates to only roughly 30% of the number of credits required per turbine, when compared to other wind farm projects. Next slide.

So the project would generate a credit liability of 7,798 ecosystem credits and up to 1,677 species credits. Squadron is developing a biodiversity offset strategy to ensure that the credit liability of the project can be acquitted in accordance with the requirements of the biodiversity offset scheme and the bilateral agreement prior to the commencement of construction.

So there are a number of options under the biodiversity offset scheme that are currently under investigation and they include the establishment of biodiversity stewardship sites, retirement of credits sourced by the New South Wales Credit Supply Taskforce and the sourcing and purchasing of credits available in the market should the credits not be achieved through the other two mechanisms.

Next slide. Squadron is also committed to the design and implementation of a comprehensive management strategy to minimise the unavoidable biodiversity impacts of the project. So this includes additional measures above and beyond current policy to ameliorate the impacts of the project.

Squadron will deliver a comprehensive biodiversity management plan to minimise the impacts of the project, which includes salvage of biodiversity features, pre-clearance and tree felling procedures, non-inhibiting fauna fencing, traffic control, water management, weed management, fencing and access control, bushfire management, erosion and sediment control and workforce education and training.

In addition, Squadron is also implementing a bird and bat adaptive management plan or a BBAMP, which is an integral part in managing impacts of bird and bat species and a key mitigation measure to address the impacts associated with turbine strike. Next slide.

In terms of visual, the visual impacts were a key issue for stakeholders, including the size and scale of the wind farm, views from residences and cumulative impacts. So prior to the submission of the EIS, the number of turbines was reduced from 138 to 117 to reduce the visual impacts to neighbouring properties. The visual and landscape impact assessment was carried out in accordance with the guidelines or what we like to call the visual bulletin. The visual bulletin identified zones to examine the visual impacts of wind farms on dwellings or key public view points.

So as the turbines for the project are proposed to have a maximum tip height of 256 metres, there are two assessment zones that we're looking at. The first one, which we call within the black line or zone 1, is up to 3.4 kilometres from each turbine and zone 2, or within the blue line, is from 3.4 to 5 kilometres from each turbine. So within zone 1, which is up to 3.4 kilometres, there are three non-associated dwellings. And within zone 2, being 3.4 to 5 kilometres, there are 18 non-associated dwellings.

So the landscape and visual impact assessment has assessed the potential visual impacts of the project on each of those dwellings. So we are focused primarily on moderate and above in terms of the impact. So within zone 1, there is only two moderate and within zone 2, only three moderate non-associated residences that will be impacted. Next slide.

So mitigation measures have been recommended for the non-associated dwellings with a potential moderate visual impact rating. So these measures are expected to significantly reduce the level of visual impact once established. So further site assessments in consultation with the owners of these dwellings regarding mitigation measures will be carried as part of the implementation of the project. Planning is satisfied that the project would not result in significant visual impacts on surrounding non-associated receivers and the project is suitable for the site, would meet the visual performance objectives in the visual bulletin and would not materially alter the landscape. Next slide.

Traffic and transport. So the main increase in project related traffic would occur during the 40 month construction period, which has a peak of approximately six months within that 40 month period. So for most of the construction period, the



5 maximum daily traffic generation would be 236 live vehicle trips and up to 248 heavy vehicle trips per day and that is inclusive of 10 OSOM vehicle trips and 80 bus trips as well. So even during peak construction activities, all affected public roads would maintain satisfactory levels of support and adequately absorb construction generated traffic. Operational traffic would be minimal. As Trish has stated, there is approximately 12 full-time equivalent employees long term.

10 OSOM traffic movements would be overnight or in non-peak times. Current traffic volumes near the project site are not high and all roads have significant additional capacity. Regardless, it is acknowledged that local road users will notice increased traffic the construction phase. Next slide.

15 Squadron proposes to undertake road and intersection upgrades to facilitate construction vehicle access to site, including the Golden Highway and Sweeneys Lane intersection, Saxa Road and Tallawonga Road intersection, Gollan Road and Ben Hoden Road intersection, Tallawonga Road, Ben Hoden Road and Sweeneys Lane. The local community did identify the completion of road upgrades as a key benefit of the project.

20 A traffic management will manage vehicle movements and ensure that road safety and roadwork operations are maintained. In addition, Squadron has committed to a number of mitigation and management measures, including the engagement of a licensed and experienced transport contractor, with experience in transporting similar wind farm component loads, provision of bus services for construction staff, road infrastructure upgrades and a drivers code of conduct.

25 The transport assessment has concluded that the proposed road network upgrades and implementation of proposed construction traffic management measures, the project would not create any significant adverse impacts with respect to transport issues such as traffic operations, road capacity on the surrounding road network, site access and road safety.

30 **PROF MENZIERS:** Kirsty, just before you move on, I've got a couple of questions of clarification on the road stuff.

35 **MS DAVIES:** Absolutely.

40 **PROF MENZIERS:** So a lot of the upgrades of intersections, I assume that they're in order to get the length of blade through those intersections?

45 **MS DAVIES:** Correct, fundamentally, and Trish, please feel free to jump in. So obviously from port to REZ, there will be a number of minor adjustments which are being undertaken by the government directly. But the main intersections and the intersections within the project site will be to allow those OSOM vehicles to have access.

**PROF MENZIERS:** Yes. And I note from the proposal, the blade length's 100 metres, are they going to be single piece blades?

**MS MCDONALD:** They will be single piece blades. So Neal, we have actually assessed up to 100 metres, but the turbine technology that we'll be using, which is the GE 6 megawatt turbine, the blade length is actually 82.5 metres.

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**PROF MENZIENS:** Okay, yes. Yes, I've done other wind farms and it's the greatest challenge, isn't it, to take something that's that long on public roads that weren't built for such long pieces of infrastructure. Look, a second question and you'll probably get to material sourcing later, but are you sourcing gravel off site? So is there a concern here about trucks loaded with gravel that are going to be along poorer quality roads in the shires?

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**MS DAVIES:** So we will absolutely touch on material sourcing. There are a number of quarries proximate to the project site, which will be targeted in the first instance. Now, the traffic assessment absolutely considers those in terms of its traffic movements and generally speaking they will use the same traffic routes as we've assessed and anything internally, obviously subject to upgrades as well. So fundamentally, I don't believe that there is an issue in terms of road quality or the sourcing of material and getting that to site.

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**PROF MENZIENS:** Okay. I note that Suellen's joined us. Welcome, Suellen.

**MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD:** Thanks, Neal. Apologies for delay. My previous went right over, but here I am.

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**PROF MENZIENS:** That's okay. So we're part of the way through the presentation from Squadron but we're doing it in a fairly low key manner. So I've just pulled Kirsty up to ask her about road upgrades and length of turbine blades, et cetera. So as we're going forward, Suellen, also feel free to jump in. Michael and I have already set the precedent, so we'll keep going that way.

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**MS FITZGERALD:** Thank you.

**MR WRIGHT:** And while we're paused there, sorry, could I just go back, if you don't mind, Kirsty, go back to visual impact and those unassociated dwellings, which are moderately impacted and the proposal to mitigate those impacts. Is it the case that there are neighbour agreements in place or will be put in place with those moderately impacted dwellings?

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**MS DAVIES:** Trish, you're probably more appropriate to speak to those ones.

**MS MCDONALD:** Sure. So we actually have 29 neighbour agreements in place for neighbouring landowners. The dwellings that are noted in the table there are all of the ones that are non-associated, meaning that we, to this point, have been unable to achieve a neighbour agreement. That said, we are certainly willing to continue the negotiation and come to an agreement if the landowner so wishes.

45

**MR WRIGHT:** So in terms of agreeing on a mitigation arrangement, be it a

vegetation screening or whatever other solutions might be put forward, is it – I mean I suppose under one scenario, that agreement mightn't be reached, is that correct?

5 **MS MCDONALD:** I'm sorry, I just missed that last bit, Michael.

**MR WRIGHT:** Yes. Sorry, Kirsty. In theory, it may be the case that agreements can't be brokered with some of these moderately impacted non-associated dwelling owners.

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**MS MCDONALD:** Yes, that's correct. But that said, there is a condition in the recommended conditions which requires us, at the landowners' request, to implement mitigation measures, including visual screening, as you noted.

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**MR WRIGHT:** Okay, thank you.

**PROF MENZIES:** Just while we're on this one and for my interest more than anything else, the reduction in turbines from 138 to 117, what was it about those turbines that caused you to decide not to progress with them? Were they closer to non-associated dwellings? What was it that made you decide not to put them in?

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**MS MCDONALD:** It was a number of factors. One of those was in response to neighbour engagement. So when we had a layout, part of the iterative design process is to go out to stakeholders and show them the proposed layout, have some visual representations of what the wind farm may look like from their dwelling and in a number of cases, some of the neighbours indicated that it was not acceptable to them to have that number of turbines in their viewshed. And as a result, we then had to go back to our host landowners, convey that information and advise that we would be removing those turbines.

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Also, iteratively throughout the process, we got more information about the constructability of the site, some of the civil constraints, understanding better about the biodiversity impacts. So there was a number of factors that led us to reduce the number of turbines to get what we believed was an approvable layout to take forward into the EIS assessment phase.

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**PROF MENZIES:** Thanks, Trish. That's very helpful. It's just that putting it on this particular slide, I thought it was all about visual impacts but you've clarified there it was also viability of the site and biodiversity, which I'd assumed when I first saw that change in numbers. Okay.

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**MR WRIGHT:** Sorry, I have one other question while we're on this slide, Neal.

**PROF MENZIES:** Yes, we're doing well.

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**MR WRIGHT:** In terms of public viewpoints, what was the outcome of that assessment?

**MS DAVIES:** We haven't got it on this particular slide but it's obviously in the assessment material. So there were a number of viewpoints that were assessed and primarily they were considered to have a relatively low or negligible impacts or quite limited. So obviously for road users, it's going to be for a very short period of time when they're using major access routes. So it's all documented though in the assessment materials there as well.

**MR WRIGHT:** Yes, so no need for any mitigations, effectively?

**MS DAVIES:** Effectively, no.

**MS KRISTY OLD:** If I may, it's Kristy Old, senior project developer, just to clarify as well, where we did remove turbines, sometimes they were for neighbours who are now associated, so it was part of the negotiation of the neighbour agreement. And there were some occasions where they weren't open to a neighbour agreement but we removed a turbine or two because we believed they wouldn't be approved without that neighbour agreement.

**PROF MENZIES:** Yes, okay. I think we're happy for you to proceed, Kirsty.

**MS DAVIES:** Excellent. We'll get Kate to go down. I think we're into the other matters now. So we'll touch quite lightly on the remaining issues but obviously if you have any questions and there is many volumes of assessment material, which I'm sure you're also working through as well.

So noise and vibration. So most construction activities are located some distance from non-associated dwellings and are unlikely to result in significant noise impacts. Noise from road upgrade works and construction traffic, which occur closer to non-associated dwellings, may require the implementation of noise management measures at some residences for a short period of time. Operational noise levels from turbines and ancillary infrastructure will achieve noise criteria at all non-associated dwellings.

Heritage. There are 10 Aboriginal artefact sites within the development corridor, which will require a combination of avoidance and/or salvage to protect heritage values. That will be undertaken in line with a heritage management plan, noting that most of those were of low significance within a local context. There are no items of state or local historic heritage significance recorded, however where heritage items occur within the development corridor, they will also be managed in accordance with a heritage management plan.

**PROF MENZIES:** Okay, a question on this one just on the noise. I'm assuming that there's some sequencing across the site of your development program such that if you're in a dwelling that's going to be impacted, you'll be impacted for a few months while they're constructing in your vicinity and then it'll be over for you, you won't be impacted for 40 months, the entire build time.

**MS DAVIES:** Correct.

**PROF MENZIES:** Yes.

5 **MS DAVIES:** Yes, so I think – and Kristy and Trish can probably talk to this in more detail, but I believe it’s north to south, is it, construction primarily?

10 **MS MCDONALD:** Yes, we’re still working through that but it is a large site and we won’t be in all areas all at once. It could even be that we have multiple construction crews in different areas of the site. But certainly it’s not 100% of the time, 40 months noise for everybody.

**PROF MENZIES:** Yes.

15 **MS MCDONALD:** It has been modelled like that, so it is quite a conservative model.

**PROF MENZIES:** Okay.

20 **MS DAVIES:** Correct, it is very conservative in terms of the modelling and as noted there, it’s for short periods of time. So no one resident should be impacted for the duration of that construction period.

25 **MS FITZGERALD:** Neal, while we’re on the subject of noise, you say that there might be noise management measures for some residents at a short period of time, what are those noise management measures likely to be?

30 **MS DAVIES:** It can include timing, so what periods of the day that you actually undertake that construction, trying to minimise, so not doing multiple activities at any one time, to ensure you’re within the criteria. There could be some shielding and some other things as well, but the likelihood of that happening is quite low.

35 Obviously there’s also some flexibility built into the project design, so there are some multiple options, which is why we say there may be because it will depend on where those site compounds are actually built. Some have a higher propensity to potentially have some minor impact compared to some others. Again, it talks to the nature of the conservatism of that assessment.

**MS FITZGERALD:** Thank you.

40 **MS DAVIES:** Excellent. Next slide or any more questions on that? No, okay.

45 **MR WRIGHT:** Sorry, could I just ask a question about Aboriginal heritage? Did you have any difficulties in actually identifying who was authorised to speak for the country? And second part of the question is as you move to avoid or salvage Aboriginal heritage items, is there a protocol in place to have those representative Aboriginal people on site at the critical points during that construction period when those impacts occur?

5 **MS DAVIES:** Yes, so essentially we undertook the consultation in accordance with the guidelines. So there's a very clearly articulated process in terms of the registered Aboriginal parties that are included. So there can be some issues in terms of particular groups not agreeing with others. Now, that wasn't something we necessarily came across in this instance.

10 Now, Julie Dibden undertook the archaeological assessment, so I don't want to speak on behalf of her but we didn't necessarily come across that in this instance. So all of the registered RAPs worked relatively well together. They were on a schedule obviously for surveys and other things, which is quite normal in these processes.

15 In terms of the salvage, that will obviously include RAPs involved in that process as well and the process for that will be further articulated in the preparation of the heritage management plan that we'll be prepared should the project be approved.

**MR WRIGHT:** Yes, thank you very much.

20 **MS DAVIES:** Not a problem.

25 **MS MCDONALD:** And just reiterating Kirsty's point there, there were 14 registered Aboriginal parties for the project and they all worked extremely well together, including with the heritage consultants. We had no issues in terms of identifying who needed to speak. It was very conciliatory and cooperative.

**MR WRIGHT:** Great.

30 **MS DAVIES:** Excellent. Okay. Land use compatibility. So the project site is considered to be an ideal combination of land within the Central-West Orana REZ, suitable for a wind farm project. It has a high quality resource. Overall it does have positive sentiment within the local community regarding renewable energy, including interest from landowners being involved in the wind farm.

35 Access to major project transport networks, including the Golden Highway to the north of the project site, compatible land use zoning, environmental constraints that can be managed with appropriate mitigation and management and landscape suitable for minimising the risk of substantial soil erosion during earthworks. So obviously the majority of the site is used for agricultural purposes at this point. Most of the hosts are signed up – most or all, Trish?

40 **MS MCDONALD:** All.

45 **MS DAVIES:** All hosts are signed up and plan to primarily continue the existing land uses as the wind farm operates. Water and soil, so there is no impact on local or broader catchment flood regimes. Surface water quality impacts are most likely to occur during the construction and decommissioning phases. Impacts will be managed through erosion and sediment controls and material storage and handling requirements.

Waterway crossings will be designed to minimise impacts on stream stability and fish passage in line with relevant guidelines and in consultation with DPI Fisheries. Any questions on those before we move on?

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**MR WRIGHT:** No.

**MS DAVIES:** Excellent. Next slide.

10

**PROF MENZIES:** Suellen's going to ask a question.

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**MS FITZGERALD:** I do. I do, Kirsty. Just on the question of ongoing grazing, I gather from the material and your comment just then that it's very much in the hands of the host landowners whether they continue. You said that the majority intend to at this time to continue with grazing on their sites. Is it built into the contracts that you have the landowners or like can that change at any time or is there anything certain about that?

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**MS DAVIES:** Trish, do you want to talk to the agreements?

**MS MCDONALD:** I might let Kristy take that question. Kristy was instrumental in working with the hosts and neighbours to get all our agreements in place, but over to you, Kristy.

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**MS FITZGERALD:** Thank you.

30

**MS OLD:** Yes, no, happy to do so. So there's no obligation to the landowners within the contract as to what they must do with their land. We lease turbine locations and have easements for the road and electricity, so we must have access there, obviously, but they can continue to farm their farm as they have. They can lease it to someone else if they wish. There's no obligations. They mustn't do anything that will impact the wind – to our wind turbines, as in build a high multistorey building, but yes, they're free to continue farming as they wish.

35

**MS FITZGERALD:** Okay. So it's up to them, they may, they may not. There might be substantial ongoing agriculture on the site or there might not in fact, yes.

40

**MS OLD:** They've mostly expressed wishes to continue doing what they're doing.

**MS FITZGERALD:** Thank you.

45

**MR WRIGHT:** Can I ask a related question – kind of related question to Suellen's. I note, reading through the documentation, that the intention of the proponent is to take back to original condition sites used for construction. So if it was pasture previously, it would be re-established as pasture. Has there been any discussion with landowners about reestablishing it as something else? For example, reestablishing it as woodland for the owner to benefit from carbon

credits or biodiversity credits, those sorts of discussions?

**MS OLD:** That would be up to the landowner.

5 **MR WRIGHT:** Absolutely. I'm just wondering – curious if there's been any discussions along those lines because the intention appears to be just to bring it back to what it was previously.

10 **MS OLD:** Yes, unless otherwise agreed with the landowner. So no, there's not been any discussion along those veins. I guess potentially there could be discussion later on when the time comes. But the obligation to us is to bring it back to the state it was in.

15 **MR WRIGHT:** Condition it was in, yes.

**MS OLD:** Yes.

20 **MS DAVIES:** Excellent. Next slide. Social. So a full social impact assessment was completed as part of the EIS. So the social impacts that were considered to be significant were concerns about the incoming construction workforce causing strain on local services and changes to the composition of the community, concerns about public safety due to increased traffic and visual amenity concerns related to project infrastructure and its effect on sense of place.

25 The benefits raised by the community were payments to landholders, improvements to local road infrastructure and provision of a reliable and affordable source of renewable energy. So Squadron has incorporated several mitigation and enhancement approaches to address social impacts through the implementation of a benefit sharing program, which Trish did speak to previously.

30 That includes neighbour agreements, of which there are 29 currently, a community sponsorship program, planning agreements with local Councils, an accommodation and employment strategy, a community co-investment program and telecommunications upgrades. Any questions to any of that?

35 **MR WRIGHT:** No.

40 **MS DAVIES:** No, excellent. Next slide. Economics. The project will involve around 2 billion in investment and have the capacity to supply sufficient clean energy to power around 397,000 homes per annum, which represents around 12% of all New South Wales homes currently. The project would contribute to 840 full-time equivalent construction jobs and 47 full-time equivalent operational jobs, including both direct and indirect. New participation opportunities for businesses and workers located in the region, which have a good match of skills and resources.

45 Around 46.9 million in new spending into the regional economy over the construction phase due to construction workers relocating to the region. This



includes around 235 FTE jobs, direct and indirect, in the service sector in the three surrounding LGAs over this time. A net economic stimulus of around 410 million over the 30 year life, relating to operational wage stimulus, landowner and neighbour agreement payments, planning agreements and net land tax revenue.

5 Any questions to economics?

**MS FITZGERALD:** I've got one, Neal. Just with the 840 construction jobs generated, do you have a quota or a target for how much of those would be local jobs?

10

**MS DAVIES:** We have actually, through consultation with the Department, reduced that expectation, purely because of demand. So we're looking at approximately 20% at the moment. Now, obviously they could be more local, that would be ideal, but for the purposes of assessment, we have reduced that to have a conservative assessment outcome that has a – if you have more out of area moving in, it will have a higher impact, in particularly a social perspective. So that's what the assessments are based on. Excellent, next slide.

15

Materials sourcing. We've probably touched on both of these in some part already. So water, as Trish has said, Squadron Energy has entered into a public private partnership with Dubbo Council for an advanced wastewater treatment plant at the Dubbo Sewerage Treatment Plant. So it will treat approximately 700 megalitres per annum and with suitable quality to be used in public spaces. It is estimated that project completion date is Q3 2025.

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25

So Squadron has committed 3.6 million to fund that treatment plant, which is the entire project budget. Squadron will have access to 1,500 megalitres of recycled water, with a maximum 250 megalitres per annum, which is suitable for construction purposes and would meet the construction needs as currently planned.

30

In terms of the quarry materials, aggregates will be required for the construction of the project, primarily for the use in concrete road base and hard stand areas. There are a number of quarries in the local area, including Dubbo and Wellington. There's also two Council quarries very proximate to the project, which is the Tallawonga pit and the Storey pit, which would also be looked at to be accessed for the project. So sourcing of quarry materials is standard in the detailed construction process and is something that is currently being worked through with Squadron at the moment.

35

**MR WRIGHT:** Can I just ask a question about those quarries? Are you aware whether they have sufficient capacity under their current approvals or would they be required potentially to seek additional approval to provide additional supply for this project?

40

**MS DAVIES:** So no one quarry would necessarily probably be able to fit it in their current profile with existing clients, so it would need to be sourced potentially from a number of quarries. But there is capacity in approved limits within the region that would be able to facilitate the construction of this project.

45

**MR WRIGHT:** Okay, within approved limits, yes.

**MS DAVIES:** Correct.

5

**MR WRIGHT:** Thank you.

**PROF MENZIES:** Your water approach, I hadn't picked that up in the documentation but that's a really elegant approach to dealing with this one and leaves the Council with an enduring benefit, so that's nice. I did wonder whether you've engaged in a dialogue with the Councils about the quarries. And I'm asking this from the context of previous experience where when we got to talking with Councils, it was a really vexed issue for them.

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15

**MS DAVIES:** Trish?

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**MS MCDONALD:** We have had preliminary discussions with Dubbo Regional Council in relation to quarry material. As part of the contracting process and the detailed design phase for construction, we will be reaching out to gain a greater understanding of the resources that are in place. Yes, but at this point we haven't had detailed discussions, I guess, in terms of exact numbers.

25

**PROF MENZIES:** That's fine, Trish. I'm just getting a sense of where you are with those discussions. Obviously there's a sequence of things to do and getting approval to proceed comes before detailed discussions about where you're going to source material from, so I have no problems with that, but just trying to understand where you are with each of these various discussions you need to have.

30

**MS MCDONALD:** Thank you.

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**MS FITZGERALD:** Neal, following on from that point, my reading of the docs suggests that you might be using some of the blasting material on site. I think you're talking about crushing plants a well too. So is that also part of the mix, subsequent to –

**MS DAVIES:** Correct.

**MS FITZGERALD:** – geotech confirmation.

40

**MS DAVIES:** Yes, so your cut and fill will be used but there obviously – that isn't usable for some purposes where you will require specific construction materials sourced from quarries, but absolutely it's in the mix is your cut and fill from your construction activities.

45

**PROF MENZIES:** Okay. I note that we're at time but we're going to keep going with you if you don't mind.

**MS DAVIES:** We're near the end, so we're not too far away, conveniently, the

conclusion. The project is considered consistent with the principles of ESD and the objectives of the New South Wales Electricity Strategy and Infrastructure Roadmap.

5 So the project would provide long-term strategic benefits to the state of New South Wales, including renewable energy supply to assist with fulfilling the current obligations under both state and Commonwealth renewable energy targets. Providing for cleaner, reliable electricity generation, assisting with meeting current load demand while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the impacts of  
10 climate change. Providing regional investment in the New South Wales renewable energy sector and making a positive contribution towards achieving the target of at least 3 gigawatts of renewable energy generation from the Central-West Orana REZ.

15 We've just made a quote there from the Department as well in their conclusion, that it does consider the project would not result in any significant impacts on the local community or the environment, is located in a suitable site for a wind farm development and any residual impacts can be managed through the implementation of recommended conditions. Next slide, which I think is the  
20 recommended conditions. Trish.

**MS MCDONALD:** Thanks, Kirsty. Next slide, thank you. So look, there's not a lot to comment on here. Generally, Squadron are very comfortable with the proposed draft conditions of consent. There is probably one condition that we  
25 would just like to draw your attention to and that is condition B1, which provides for visual impact mitigation measures for any residents within 5 kilometres of a turbine.

30 So in line with Moir's landscape and visual impact assessment, we've committed to mitigation measures for residences within 5 kilometres, where there is a moderate visual impact. As outlined in the previous slides, there are 21 non-associated dwellings within 5 kilometres and only five of those have a moderate visual impact assessment. The rest are either low or negligible.

35 So we would request that the Commission give consideration to ensuring that this condition reflects the level of assessed impact in relation to mitigation measures upon request. That said, we do understand that this is also a standard consent condition.

40 **PROF MENZIERS:** Yes, it is a standard consent condition and Trish, just to make sure that we've fully understood your ask, you're saying that residences that have a low impact could still ask you for visual screening and in the view of Squadron, that seems unnecessary. That's in crude terms?

45 **MS MCDONALD:** That's correct, Neal. Yes.

**PROF MENZIERS:** Yes. Got it.

5 **MS MCDONALD:** Okay. Thank you. Next slide. Thanks, Kate. And we just have a couple of other things of note. A minor update to appendix 2, schedule of lands, is required. So since submission, we've had a Crown road closure that has been completed and there's been a new land parcel created. So there will be a requirement to add that additional land parcel to the schedule of lands in appendix 2.

10 And also a correction to DPHI's assessment report, which they are aware of. Residence code GH008 is actually an associated dwelling and that was stated in s 3.2.3 of the submissions report. It is actually incorrectly noted in figure 4 and table 10 of the assessment report as being non-associated.

**PROF MENZIES:** Okay.

15 **MS MCDONALD:** That's actually all we have.

**PROF MENZIES:** That's been a very useful presentation and our discussion around it. Fellow Commissioners, Michael, any other questions?

20 **MR WRIGHT:** No, thank you, Neal. That was great. Thank you very much.

**PROF MENZIES:** And Suellen, anything from you?

25 **MS FITZGERALD:** No, Neal, not from me. And given that I jumped on late, I won't keep you any longer. But I will be interested when we're at site to have a look at access routes, ensuring only designated access routes are to be used for the project and how other routes will be restricted. But I think that's a good topic for site visit.

30 **PROF MENZIES:** Yes, we're really looking forward to the site visit. We find it extremely useful to get the context. Documentation is fine and we can get on Google Earth, et cetera, but it's only when you stand in the paddock that you really get a feel for what's going to happen.

35 **MS MCDONALD:** Absolutely.

40 **PROF MENZIES:** And Suellen have I worked together on these and yes, those field conversations are profoundly useful. So we'd ask that you staff it up with the people who can answer the questions for us because it can be really frustrating if we're standing out there and we're told, "Told, look, we don't know. We'll get back to you on it." So please, take it seriously, as we will. It's a real opportunity for us to reach a full understanding of what's going on.

45 **MS MCDONALD:** Understood. Thank you.

**PROF MENZIES:** Okay. Look, thank you very much for the open discussion. This is the way we'd like to continue. Your answers to our questions are really very useful indeed. So today has helped us, we expect that the site visit will really

put to bed anything that we're struggling to understand and so we're looking forward to that in a week and a half's time, something like that, two weeks' time.

5 **MR KENDALL CLYDSDALE:** Just one note, Chair, if you don't mind. Excuse me, Trish, if you could send through a copy of your presentation you've put up on the screen today, that would be much appreciated.

10 **MS MCDONALD:** Absolutely. It is quite large, so unlikely to be able to be done via email. Is there a link that we could provide for you or some other mechanism?

**MR CLYDSDALE:** That's fine, if you use SharePoint or Dropbox or a similar process, no problems at all.

15 **MS OLD:** We can do that for you, Trish. We can do one of our SharePoints and send it through.

**MS MCDONALD:** No problem. Sounds great.

20 **PROF MENZIES:** Excellent. Thank you all very much.

**MS FITZGERALD:** Thank you.

**MS MCDONALD:** Thanks for your time, everybody.

25 **>THE MEETING CONCLUDED**