

## Charlie Prell's speaking notes to the IPC hearing into the Crookwell 3 Wind Farm in Crookwell on 06 June 2019.

### Introduction

I am a 62 year old farmer who lives under the turbines of the Crookwell 2 wind farm. I have lived here all of my life and have always been a very active member of the Crookwell community. I served as a councillor on the inaugural Upper Lachlan Shire Council. I'm a founding member and the Secretary of a local trust fund which has raised and invested over \$300,000 on behalf of this community. I have played for and coached the local rugby club for over twenty years and have participated in all manner of local activities and initiatives. During my time on the local council I became a strong and public advocate for the benefit that wind turbines could bring to this region. This was despite a very vocal and sometimes quite toxic and personal campaign against the turbines. I have continued this advocacy for wind turbines and am doing so again today. I also want to declare that I have worked part-time for the Australian Wind Alliance for 4½ years.

My farm is one of three that are under the 28 GE turbines of the Crookwell 2 Wind farm. My house is about 500 metres from 2 of the turbines, and about 800 metres from the Goulburn-Crookwell road. (You are very welcome to attend my house to experience the reality of these turbines as you do your site visit this afternoon). I constantly hear the turbines as they generate energy, sometimes from inside my house. But I also hear every car, truck and motorbike (especially the motorbikes!!) that travel along the Goulburn-Crookwell road. I also hear the sound of the sheep and cattle on my farm, I hear the birds in the garden around my house (who were all supposed to be killed by the turbines!) and I also hear something else. This is a much quieter sound, but it is potentially the most damaging amongst this cacophony. It is the nearly silent creep of climate change. Like it or not, climate change is coming. If we want to farm this land into the future, we are going to need non-weather dependent off-farm income of some sort to underpin our farming operations. Wind turbines are an excellent option for this future proofing income, because they are totally compatible with agriculture. So are solar panels, if they are designed and constructed correctly. My wife and I have chosen wind turbines to support and sustain our family farm.

### My Story

My story is relevant to your decision in relation to the Crookwell 3 wind farm, because I believe that the DPE assessment has not sufficiently addressed the benefits the wind farm creates, both to this community and to the state of NSW. My story is a good example of how these benefits flow into the whole community.

About 15 years ago my family and I lived through the Millennium Drought. That drought hit this region particularly hard. We had to sell 800 acres of land that my family had owned for over 100 years to pay for the cost of the drought. My wife and I both suffered serious mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and worse from the constant, unrelenting stress of the drought, which lasted for 6 or more years. We were raising our two children in this harsh environment.

During this drought, we had no wind turbines on our land and therefore we had no off-farm income to assist our farming finances. My wife is a nurse and was working full-time at the local hospital and I was caring for our children while she was working. We were not alone. This pressure and stress was being suffered across the whole community.

As we are speaking today, we are about 2 years into the current drought. No-one knows how long this drought will last or how severe it will be, but the long range weather forecasts are very dire.

There's a better than even chance of an El Nino developing this coming spring and summer, which means hot, dry weather for this region.

But this drought is different for me and my family. I am now receiving income from the lease agreement I have with Global Power Generation (the proponent of the Crookwell 3 wind farm). This income is not dependent on the weather. I now have 2 people working for me full time whose jobs are secure. I have told these 2 people that it doesn't matter how long we go without rain, or how hot it gets, their jobs are guaranteed. In the meantime, my wife and I are both recovering from the mental health crisis that was a consequence of the last drought. There is some way to go, but we are both stable and our mental health is improving. My point here is that the benefits of wind farms do not just flow to the hosts of wind turbines. They flow on into the wider community. So not only is my family's mental health stable, the 2 people who work for me, and their families, are in a much better place.

I challenge you to find the words mental health, drought, anxiety or depression anywhere in the DPE's assessment report about the Crookwell 3 wind farm! They are not there, but they should be! For every sentence on the positive benefits of the wind farm, which are few and far between, there are pages and pages of words on the supposed negative impacts of the turbines.

Wind turbines such as those proposed for the Crookwell 3 wind farm can change the lives of so many more farmers in this region. With the added benefit of neighbour agreements, such as those being offered by GPG around both the Crookwell 2 and 3 wind farms, the benefits I have outlined are accessible to even more people. These benefits are much more than just financial, they are potentially improving the environment, the mental health and the economic sustainability of the whole region.

There is no-one who has championed the cause of "benefit sharing" more than me in this community and most probably across regional Australia. I'm not a "selfish bastard", as some in this room have called me. I have the best interests of the entire community at heart, and this includes supporting farmers in this region who want to access the resources above the ground as well as the resources below the ground to run sustainable farms. This is a much more important, and complex, issue than whether a few people want to have their view disrupted by a few wind turbines. It goes to the heart of what sort of vision we have for the future of this region.

I urge you to consider the wider implications of the recommended refusal of the Crookwell 3 wind farm from DPE. If you follow their narrow view of the world and their blinkered vision for the future, you are not only affecting the few around the wind farm, you are compromising the future of this area to become a truly sustainable and vibrant community. In my opinion, you should overturn their recommendation for refusal and approve the Development Application as it was originally submitted.

Charlie Prell

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