



TO: The Hon Josh Frydenberg MP
Minister for the Environment and Energy
M1:17, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Friday, 12 May 2017

RE: 2016 Annual Report from the National Wind Farm Commissioner

Dear Minister Frydenberg

The Australian Wind Alliance is Australia's leading community-based organisation promoting clean, renewable wind energy to boost regional economies and to cut Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite some early reservations about the role of National Wind Farm Commissioner we have been pleased to work closely with Mr Dyer, sharing information about the community situation on different projects and discussing improvements in practice. We have found him to be methodical and constructive and we applaud the results he has achieved to date.

We welcome the publication of the 2016 annual report from the National Wind Farm Commissioner and commend the Commissioner for his well constructed, independent report. We note the Commissioner's statement that he has received just 90 complaints since November 2015 (13 months to December 2016). This equates to less than 1 complaint per wind farm in Australia. The 31 complaints that have not been progressed by the complainant should be treated as vexatious. This leaves a total of just 59 complaints of a genuine nature. Of these 59 complaints, 36 have been successfully resolved. There are only 23 outstanding complaints currently being investigated by the Commissioner.

There is strong evidence to suggest that the majority of these complaints are focused on just four wind farms in Australia. These complaints are predominantly about the manner in which the wind farms have been developed, not about the turbines. This view reinforces our experience in the communities we have been working with, demonstrating that wind farms are popular when they are planned and developed in close consultation with the communities that host them.

We also note that there is no documentation in the report to determine whether multiple complaints have been received from any individuals. This would be useful information to be included in the next annual report from the Commissioner.

Nearly twenty years of wind farm operation in Australia show that the substantial benefits to regional communities, businesses and farmers where wind farms are located far outweigh any complaints. This investment in regional Australia by private companies should be enthusiastically welcomed by



your Government. It is providing a unique opportunity to re-invigorate the economic base of these regional communities, something that your Government has been supporting for many years.

The report makes many recommendations that the Government should consider carefully as you compile your response. We make the following comments on the recommendations from the Commissioner:

- 1.2; *that wind energy developers should be fair and reasonable, and open and transparent in all their negotiations with potential host landholders.* Often small regional communities and individual landholders are not experienced in negotiating with large developers.

AWA strongly endorses this recommendation.

- 2.2; *that wind energy developers, particularly early stage developers, should communicate closely and transparently with all landowners in the area they are investigating for a proposed wind farm development.*

AWA strongly endorses this recommendation.

- 3.2; the comments from the Commissioner relating to community engagement reinforce the observations made in recommendation 2.2.

AWA recognises that this issue is beyond the jurisdiction of the Federal Government and we will continue to encourage state governments to work with developers in these areas.

- 5.2; while the intent of the Commissioner's recommendation that State Governments should standardise their setting of wind farm environmental standards and the oversight of compliance to these standards is sensible, in practice this would be onerous. The important criteria is that the standards and required oversight are workable and clearly understood by residents.

- 6.2; the Commissioner's recommendation contained in 6.2.1, that a list of approved experts be compiled for pre-construction assessments is endorsed, as is the recommendation that different experts be used for compliance..

AWA recommends that your Department work with the Wind Directorate of the Clean Energy Council to implement the recommendation 6.2.1, to develop a list of approved experts for wind farm assessments.

- 7.2; AWA supports the Commissioner's recommendation that Complaint Handling Procedures within the Wind Industry be brought up to a minimum standard and that these procedures be stipulated in planning permits.

AWA recommends that your Department works with the Wind Directorate of the Clean Energy Council, and through the appropriate COAG forum to implement this recommendation.

- 8.2; the Commissioner's recommendations in relation to site selection are beyond the scope of his terms of reference. These matters should be addressed by State and Local Government planning laws. In many cases they already have been.

- 9.0; Health Matters. The Commissioner's comments in this section are very well considered and should be read very carefully. All 4 of his recommendations in relation to health matters are strongly endorsed by AWA.



The Australian Wind Alliance would welcome the opportunity to discuss this report with you and are available to meet at your convenience.

Kind regards

Andrew Bray
National Coordinator
Australian Wind Alliance

ph: 0434 769 463

www: <http://www.windalliance.org.au>

Facebook: [AustralianWindAlliance](#)

twitter: [@AusWindAll](#)