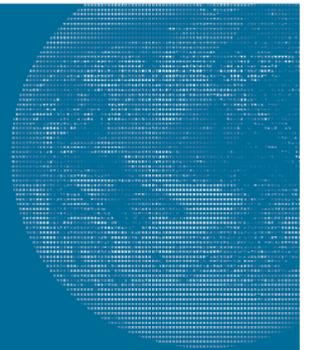




Australian Government
Climate Change Authority



The Climate Change Authority is an independent statutory body established to provide expert advice on climate change policy issues.

The Minister for the Environment and Energy, the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, has asked the Climate Change Authority to conduct a special review of the role of the National Wind Farm Commissioner.

At the time the National Wind Farm Commissioner was established, the Government said it would review the role in 2018. This review responds to that undertaking. The Terms of Reference for the National Wind Farm Commissioner are attached. The Authority is asked to consider to what extent the Commissioner is fulfilling its Terms of Reference, the ongoing need for the role, its scope and possible models for funding. The Authority's Terms of Reference for this special review can be found on the Authority's website. More information on the role of the Climate Change Authority is available at www.climatechangeauthority.gov.au. Information on the National Wind Farm Commissioner is available at www.nwfc.gov.au.

Submission Instructions

Submissions are invited until 13 April 2018.

Submitting via email

submissions@climatechangeauthority.gov.au

Submitting via post

Submissions
Climate Change Authority
GPO Box 787
ACT 2600

Contacts

Should you require further information about making a submission, please contact the Climate Change Authority on freecall 1800 475 869 or via email at enquiries@climatechangeauthority.gov.au.

Overview

Submissions on the National Wind Farm Commissioner review are invited, ideally using this template to assist with the Authority's analysis of submissions. However, organisations and individuals wishing to make submissions should not feel constrained by the questions below and should feel free to provide any comments they wish. The Authority is also happy to accept submissions in other forms, including letters or emails.

Contact Details

Name of Organisation: Hepburn Wind
Name of Contact, Role: Taryn Lane, Community Manager
Contact Phone Number:
Contact Email: taryn.lane@hepburnwind.com.au
Date: 5 April 2018

Confidentiality

All submissions except those made in confidence will be published on the Authority's website. For submissions made by individuals, all personal details other than your name and the state or territory in which you reside will be removed from your submission before it is published.

Do you want this submission to be treated as confidential? Yes **No**

1. Have you interacted with the National Wind Farm Commissioner on a complaint about a proposed or operating wind farm? If so, please tell us about the nature of the complaint.

In particular:

- I. Did the complaint relate to an existing or proposed wind farm, or was it a general complaint?**
- II. What was your role in the process - were you the complainant or was the complaint made against you or your company?**
- III. If the complaint was about a specific wind farm, in what state and local government region is it located?**

The Hepburn Community Wind Farm is owned by over 2000 members, the majority of whom are local to the region. With massive volunteer effort and nearly \$10m of community capital, the members of Hepburn Wind have shown that under the right conditions, regional communities will embrace the opportunities presented by wind farms. We have 67 neighbours within 2.5kms of the wind farm.

We had our first complaint in 2018, since 2012 and as it was perceived to be infrasound, once we had made sure we had checked all potential mechanical issues, we then referred the complainant to the NWFC, so that they could have an independent representative to discuss their complaint with. The complainant discussed their issues with the NWFC but did not go on to make a formal complaint. Having an objective representative to have discussions with the complainant was a positive experience for us, however we do note that the complainant may not feel the issue was resolved.

2. If you have interacted with the National Wind Farm Commissioner on a complaint about a proposed or operating wind farm, would you like to comment on how the complaint process was conducted?

In particular:

- I. Were you provided with information about the process for dealing with your complaint?**
- II. Were you made aware that participation in the process to deal with your complaint by other parties (like state government agencies or wind farm operators) is voluntary?**
- III. Were you asked to provide information to assist the Commissioner in dealing with your complaint? Did you do so?**

- IV. Was your complaint progressed in a timely way?**
- V. Did the Commissioner work with wind farm proponents or operators and other bodies (like state or local government agencies) on the complaint?**
- VI. Were you satisfied with the process undertaken to resolve the complaint?**
- VII. Were you satisfied with the outcome of the complaint?**

Not applicable.

3. The Terms of Reference for the National Wind Farm Commissioner say that the Commissioner will lead efforts to promote best practice, information availability and provide a central, trusted source for disseminating information. Do you have any comments on this aspect of the Commissioner's role?

We note the NWFC's proactive actions to endorsing the VRET Guide for Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing for Renewable Energy Developers as well as being an advisor to the independent Clean Energy Council research report Enhancing Social Outcomes in Wind Development. The NWFC has played a strong role in advocating for best practice and helping to guide wind developers to be the leaders amongst all renewables.

4. Do you think there is an ongoing need for the Commissioner? Do you see this changing in the future? If so, how?

Although the NWFC has had a strong mandate to deal with legacy complaints as well as encourage better practice and has undertaken these activities with success, the issue of need still remains. Developers, community groups, local councils and the EPA are not in the position to take full responsibility for complaints, many of which may be unresolvable. There needs to be an independent resource, both for complainants as well as for the other key stakeholders. The need has only increased as new technologies are coming online of the same scale as wind development.

5. Do you think the Commissioner's scope, which is currently focused on proposed and operational wind farms is sufficient? Or should it be expanded to other large scale renewable energy projects, such as solar and storage?

The Commissioner's scope should be expanded to all mid to large scale renewable energy projects, both current and emergent. Current planning systems are not up to date with the speed of development we are seeing with emergent technologies such as battery storage and solar thermal plants. All technologies will need to prove a social license to operate in their communities and as our energy system becomes more decentralised, there will be more and more communities that are impacted by the energy transition.

6. The Office of the National Wind Farm Commissioner is funded from the Commonwealth budget at a cost of approximately \$676,000 per year. Do you think the Commissioner's office should continue to be funded in this way or should other funding models (like cost recovery from industry) be considered?

We support this level of funding and the funding source to remain as is.

7. Do you have any other comments about the role of National Wind Farm Commissioner?

Given the fast pace of our energy transition, the role of an ombudsman is very necessary.