



Submission template

REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL WIND FARM COMMISSIONER

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: N/A

Name of Contact, Role: Ken Draffen, neighbour to Macarthur Windfarm

Contact Phone Number: [REDACTED]

Contact Email: [REDACTED]

Date: 19 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? 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?**

My interaction with the National Wind Farm Commissioner was in relation to a complaint relating to the Macarthur Windfarm in Western Victoria (Moyne Shire). I own a property in close proximity to this windfarm and experienced hearing issues soon after commissioning of the facility. I had been attempting to work with the owner/operator (AGL) to try and resolve the issue for a couple of years but AGL were uncooperative and demonstrated no real intention to seek a solution. I then tried discussing the matter with the Moyne Shire. However, the Moyne Shire, in particular the CEO, were even more dismissive.

As almost a last resort, I contacted the Windfarm Commissioner. The Commissioner visited me on my property and after collecting and considering the facts, suggested that my best way forward

was to meet with the turbine manufacturer, Vestas. The Commissioner then arranged a meeting in Melbourne with senior Vestas personnel who proved to be very receptive.

I then worked positively with Vestas (and the Commissioner) in an attempt to understand my issue with a view to resolving. Unfortunately the issue has proven too difficult to understand to any great extent. However, the commitment of Vestas and the Commissioner to try and resolve the issue has been greatly appreciated

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?**

see Section 1 above for some detail relating to this section.

The NWFC took the time to consider my particular circumstances, details of which I provided to him, before recommending a way forward.

I always understood that my participation was voluntary.

The NWFC always responded in a very timely manner.

I had exhausted attempts to work with the operator and various levels of government (particularly local council) to resolve my issue prior to contacting the office of the NWFC. After considering the situation, the NWFC suggested a way forward which I agreed seemed to be the most appropriate.

The process facilitated by the NWFC was the most rewarding of all approaches tried.

While my issue remains, the work of the NWFC and Vestas has gone some way to understanding the problem. If other entities like the operator, AGL, and the Moyne Shire had shown a similar positive attitude to understanding the problem, some real progress could have been made. Unfortunately the NWFC was not involved (had not been established) at the time of dealing with these entities.

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?

There is currently a great deal of misinformation being promoted in relation to windfarms.

The TOR for the NWFC seem to relate primarily to the complaints handling process. I am unsure if this particular term of reference also just relates to the complaints process or to windfarm information generally. If it only relates to the complaints handling process, then this has been very comprehensively achieved by the NWFC. However, if it relates to windfarms more broadly, and I believe it could, then I think there is more work to do.

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

I think there is a definite need for the Commissioner going forward. I believe that the state of the energy sector in Australia is a mess and borders on being a national disgrace. The NWFC has established himself such that he is in a good position to help get things back on track. See section 5 below for further discussion on this point.

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?

I think the NWFC's scope should be expanded. At the very least it should cover the coordination of windfarm establishment within the country in order to address the adhoc approach that currently exists. I will refrain from suggesting how this should specifically be structured as it depends on the roles of other entities. It should be an advisory, overseeing role as a minimum but it needs to be in conjunction with an entity with some authority if the current dire situation is to be addressed. The NWFC's role should cover solar and battery but could be expanded to cover the integration of all renewables into the national grid.

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?

For the current terms of reference the cost of the office of the NWFC could be largely passed back to the industry. However an expanded role along the lines I suggest above is largely a function designed to improve policy settings and associated administration for the energy sector and is therefore a government responsibility.

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

Happy to discuss further if requested

Attachment: National Wind Farm Commissioner Terms of Reference

The negotiated settlement of the Renewable Energy Target in mid-2015 is expected to lead to increased construction of wind turbines in the next five years.

The Senate Select Committee on Wind Turbines, held during 2015, identified many issues of concern relating to the standards, monitoring and operation of wind farms.

The Government responded positively to the recommendations of the Committee's Interim Report, including creation of the role of a National Wind Farm Commissioner.

The Commissioner will work collaboratively with all levels of government, scientists, industry and the community to resolve complaints from communities about proposed and operational wind farms.

The Commissioner will refer complaints about wind farms to relevant state authorities and help ensure that they are properly addressed.

The Commissioner will work with stakeholders to identify needs and priorities for monitoring wind farms.

The Commissioner will lead efforts to promote best practices, information availability, and provide a central, trusted source for dissemination of information.

The Commissioner, supported by the Australian Government Department of the Environment, will report to the Minister for the Environment and provide an Annual Report to the Australian Parliament on delivering against these Terms of Reference.

The work of the Commissioner will not duplicate or override the important statutory responsibilities of other jurisdictions, such as those relating to the planning and approval of wind farms.

The Commissioner is to draw on the work of the Independent Scientific Committee on Wind Turbines.

The role of the National Wind Farm Commissioner will be established for an initial period of three years and will be reviewed by the Australian Government.