



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.

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?**

No.

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?**

N/A

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 believe that this aspect of the commissioner's role has proven to be of high value for broad sense stakeholders in our region. There has been an increase in the level of communication, trust, and understanding between windfarm development proponents and community, which has created the environment for better benefit sharing outcomes for communities and a social license to operate for developers. In helping both groups develop a better level of understanding we have seen the emergence of wind farm proponents as leaders of best practice in renewable energy, and our communities more engaged. The Wind Farm Commissioner's support for the VRET and guidelines for Community Benefit Sharing was a valuable contribution to the creation of this understanding.

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

Specifically for Wind Farm's we believe there is an ongoing need for a commissioner due to the increase in generation capacity at various stages of development since the inception of the commissioner's role.

This increase in turbines in our region over the next 3-7 years has the ability to cause tensions between stakeholders in areas such as but not limited to:-

- Visual amenity
- Wind farm identification for the efficient handling of issues between parties

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?

Due to the rapid development of other renewable generation and storage technologies and projects in our region, the commissioner's role should be expanded to encompass all large scale renewable energy projects such as large scale solar generation facilities, large scale storage, hydrogen, waste to energy, thermal, and hydro where community and environmental stakeholder impacts regarding the development and implementation of such need to be monitored

Having the commissioner's scope shift to an overarching purview that encompasses the other large scale renewable energy generation technologies is key to the co-ordination and oversight of the many possible issues in this burgeoning area.

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 are open to the consideration of other models of financing this role but see no issues with the current structure.

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

We value the NWFC as trusted resource in the Central Highlands Region of Victoria, and who fulfils the terms of reference well. Large Scale renewable energy generation development is at an inflection point in our region with both current and new modalities of generation being developed and deployed. We see the expansion of the terms of reference of NWFC to include these other forms of generation important to assist proponents, communities, and regulators in creating positive outcomes for all stakeholders.

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.