

**Submission  
No 15**

**INQUIRY INTO IMPACT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY  
ZONES (REZ) ON RURAL AND REGIONAL  
COMMUNITIES AND INDUSTRIES IN NEW SOUTH  
WALES**

**Name:** Mr Robert Richardson AO

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To the Chair and members of the Legislative Council Inquiry into the Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales

As a farmer near Yass, I'm increasingly alarmed by the current proliferation of wind, solar and high voltage transmission lines through Yass Valley farmlands - far removed from the three designated renewable energy zones. There are now four large wind projects operating or planned to be built within a few km of Yass, AND a large solar array is planned to be built very close to the Yass urban boundary. (While a similar solar project near Goulburn exists, it was required to be separated from the urban zone, but Yass Valley Council has no power over this.)

I have just found out that a fifth wind project is now proposed to be built on a property bounding my property. Like at least three other Yass Valley wind projects, I believe this one also involves Andrew Forrest's Squadron Energy company. As far as I can determine, Forrest's economic motivation with his many wind energy projects is to generate renewable energy credits as offsets for his mining projects.

I ask that your inquiry considers the enormous long-term adverse consequences of all these projects proliferating far outside the designated NSW Renewable Energy Zones - as they affect traditional rural lives in southwest NSW farmlands and national park areas.

Firstly, there is the historic danger of wildfires. I have personal experience of fighting the disastrous fire of 2004 that burnt into Canberra suburbs, and also burnt out farms south of Bookham that are now to host the enormous 99 wind towers, 240 metres high, to be built by Squadron Energy. It's my clear understanding that firefighting policies will preclude any work in the vicinity of such wind energy towers AND all the vast array of high voltage power-lines that are now to be built connecting them, as well as the new 500,000 volt Humelink line that Transgrid is building to connect Snowy-2 with Sydney and Melbourne - that also passes very close to Yass.

Secondly, the undocumented social consequences of these renewable energy projects are now proving to be of serious concern. Typically, productive farming communities in the Yass Valley have evolved over many generations, with neighbouring families often attending rural schools together, and forming joint sporting bodies and many other communal volunteer activities. We now see increasing community anger and disputation relating to the funding contracts for wind projects and power lines - where neighbouring property values are adversely affected by enriched renewable energy-hosting property families.

Moreover, I believe the farm insurance costs relating to neighbouring renewable energy installations has not been fully appreciated. Surely the risk of accidental fire caused by farming activity near to high-value renewable energy projects will inevitably be reflected in higher farm insurance premiums.

My final broad concern relates to the building issues and short productive lives of wind and solar energy installations: only 15-25 years before they must be replaced - by yet again fully imported components.

I estimate that each of Squadron Energy's very large wind turbines near Bookham requires foundations around 20 meters in diameter and 3-4 meters deep, involving close to 600 cubic metres or 1500 tonnes of concrete, as well as some 60 tonnes of reinforcing steel rebar. Thus that one project's 99 turbines will require nearly 15,000 tonnes of concrete and almost 6,000

tonnes of steel rebar. (As well, I calculate that 185,000 tonnes of CO2 will be released in making that project's concrete.)

A further major longer-term concern is that there is NO economic way to recycle wind and solar generators; dismantling the high towers will be prohibitively expensive for the property owners, and it's impossible to remove their enormous concrete and steel wind tower foundations. (I strongly suspect that responsibility for derelict wind towers will be left to the property owners, further adversely affecting everyone within sight of the towers.)

Lastly, the environmental destruction of native forests and vulnerable wildlife, especially by the roadbuilding and adjacent tree-clearing required to transport all the heavy and cumbersome renewable energy materials, is only just becoming apparent.

Overall therefore, I respectfully submit that your Inquiry should carefully consider the serious impacts that current NSW Government policies relating to approval of so many renewable energy projects and their connecting power lines are having on highly productive farming areas and communities throughout the Yass Valley. In particular, I request that you place higher priority on placing such projects in designated RENEWABLE ENERGY CONSTRUCTION ZONES!

Sincerely,

Robert Richardson AO