

Wednesday 16 December 2009



Legislative Council
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 5

INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

The Chair of the NSW Parliament's General Purpose Standing Committee No 5, Mr Ian Cohen MLC, today tabled the Committee's report on rural wind farms.

"The report recognises the importance of wind farm development in NSW. As a readily available and commercially deployable energy generation technology wind farms have an important role in Australia's 2020 Renewable Energy Target. Wind farms are a central component in Australia's developing clean energy infrastructure and portfolio, essential to addressing the challenges of anthropogenic climate change and energy security. However, during the Committee's investigations, significant community angst and concern about the planning process, project design and monitoring of rural wind farms became apparent."

Mr Cohen said, 'The recommendations of the Committee reflect a partial way forward to address a more general community discontent with the environmental planning and assessment framework in NSW and in particular, processes under Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*.'

Mr Cohen said, 'Wind power is a proven technology that can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in NSW. However, the development of wind farms needs to better balance the needs of *all* stakeholders. Local communities feel disenfranchised and uncertain about what they can expect from a wind farm development in their area. Local communities have expressed a particular concern that the current community consultation process for wind farms is not adequate'.

Recommendations to address the issues raised during the Inquiry include implementing a minimum setback of two kilometres (unless otherwise negotiated with neighbours), providing improved certainty for wind farm decommissioning, increasing the period that Environmental Assessments are on public exhibition to 90 days, improving noise modelling and improving the consultation and complaint handling process.

'The report notes that *NSW Planning and Assessment Guidelines for Wind Farms* are being developed and if the Committee's recommendations are taken into consideration those Guidelines may greatly improve the current situation', Mr Cohen added.

Mr Cohen said, 'The Committee believes that the recommendations in the report will result in the development of wind power in NSW in a more responsible manner.'

Ian Cohen MLC
Chair

For further information, contact the Chair of the Committee, the **Hon Ian Cohen MLC** on **0409 989 466**.
For copies of the report see the committee's website at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc5

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