



## SUBMISSION TO SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION INTEGRITY ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY.

### INTRODUCTION

On behalf of our local community group, Friends of Chalumbin (FoC), it has been brought to our attention that your Senate committee is conducting an inquiry into “information integrity on climate change and energy.” Furthermore, we are in receipt of a newsletter from Renew Economy dated July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025, written by a Rachel Williamson (“**Senate Launches Inquiry into Who is Funding Fake Astroturf Anti-Renewables Groups**”) specifically mentioning our campaign over the years 2021-2024 to prevent the Wooroora Station Wind Farm (WSWF) (formerly the Chalumbin Wind Farm) from proceeding.

I quote: “...while in Queensland the Stop Chalumbin Wind Farm claimed the scalp of the Wooroora Station proposal by **claiming** risks to the nearby world heritage rainforests.” (my emphasis). The implication of Ms. Williamson’s reference to our grass roots campaign was to impute that we had been subverted by some kind of “money trails” from “shadowy networks” from “shadowy multinationals, and hidden domestic interests.” Just where is this Ms. Williamson getting her information from?

If the purpose of your Senate inquiry is to really seek **information integrity** in relation to claims made about climate change and energy, then these claims aired in Renew Economy would be a prime place to look!

### BACKGROUND

The fight to save the Chalumbin area from an industrial wind development saw residents around Ravenshoe form a group – Friends of Chalumbin – to prosecute our cause. This was truly a grass roots organization, with absolutely no “vested interests...waging a global war of disinformation against the clean energy transition.” The proponent for this industrial wind farm was Ark Energy (a subsidiary of Korea Zinc) – does this also not count as “foreign interference?” Our group was entirely self-funded and local.

I include one of the feature pages we funded in our local newspaper, The Express, presenting our arguments as to why this wind farm was situated in the wrong place (Appendix A); being adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA). The Renew Economy article in question somehow imputes that issues raised by our group were potentially false or misleading: “...by **claiming** risks to the nearby world heritage rainforests.” (emphasis mine)

Just to set the record straight, here are some National authorities who supported our position:-

1. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, and Environment and Water (DCCEEW) issued a comprehensive Recommendation Report to Minister Plibersek (<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/77331.pdf>) on this proposal. The full report is over 200 pages (LEX 78311) but the reference above gives the shortened version which was published in the public domain. As further validation of our campaign against the WSWF I include page 5 of the DCCEEW’s Recommendation Report (Appendix B).

2. The Wet Tropics Management Authority issued a position statement which was included in the DCCEEW's final Recommendation Report as Attachment 1. I include pages 1,2 of their statement (Appendix C-1,2).
3. The Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Far North Branch (WPSQFNB) prepared a 79-page document outlining the disastrous impact the WSWF would have had on the local ecosystem. The WPSQFNB was highly critical of the Public Environment Report (PER) procedure undertaken to assess the worthiness or otherwise of the WSWF proposal under existing Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC) 1999 guidelines. Their report was dated 17<sup>th</sup> Dec., 2022 and sent to all relevant parties involved with the WSWF. I include their introductory remarks in Appendix D.

So, if the Senate Select Committee is genuine in tracking down instances of false "information integrity" with relation to climate and energy issues – it should be looking into the outrageously false insinuations made by such journals as Renew Economy.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There is a genuine concern in rural areas about the hastiness in the rush to install wind farm projects up and down the Great Dividing Range of Queensland. The potential impacts on local communities have all been documented, no less than, by the Federal Government's own Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) in the Community Engagement Review of December 2023 by Andrew Dyer. (<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/community-engagement-review-report-minister-climate-change-energy.pdf>) In passing I quote Mr. Dyer's Theme 2 comments: "Reduce and eliminate unnecessary community engagement by **selecting the best project sites, and avoiding poor and inappropriate sites.**" (my emphasis - Pg. 5). Clearly the community thought the site for the WSWF was entirely inappropriate as witnessed by the number of responses to the PER issued by Ark Energy. Of the 783 submissions tendered, 772 were opposed (98%)! This was an overwhelming community response – no "astroturfing" here!

Further developments on the "community consultation" criteria for potential future energy projects have been brought to the public's attention by the current Queensland State LNP government. The Deputy Premier, Jarrod Bleijie MP, has passed legislation stating that " ...all wind farm applications in Queensland are subject to impact assessment. This means **mandatory community consultation and third-party appeal rights.**" (My emphasis) I enclose Mr. Bleijie's letter of 12 March, 2025 as Appendix E.

These new conditions were implemented on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2025 when the Moonlight Range Wind Farm was rejected. Again, we had extensive community opposition (<https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/102617>) with a clear majority of 473 out of 550 submissions (85%) wanting the government to review. Was this another case of "astroturfing" or just a legitimate and democratic opposition to an unwanted industrial intrusion into the local landscape? The full ministerial decision can be accessed here: ([https://www.planning.qld.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/100757/decision-notice.pdf](https://www.planning.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/100757/decision-notice.pdf))

I hope that this Senate Committee can be genuinely unbiased when it goes hunting for "astroturfing" in local community's opposition to industrializing their landscapes with high impact wind farms.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Over the period of the last parliament Minister Plibersek released two significant documents relating to biodiversity and its potentially fatal trajectory with industrial wind projects.

The Threatened Species Action Plan (TSAP) was issued on 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 (<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/threatened-species-action-plan-2022-2032.pdf>), this listed 14 priority mainland places in Australia for extreme protection. The "Eastern Forests of Far North Queensland" were listed first at **A**; the very area under threat from aggressive wind farm proposals. Is it any wonder local communities are up in arms about these projects? These objections have nothing to do with "misinformation and disinformation" being disseminated by "international think tanks," "bots and trolls", or "shadowy networks."

A second document Nature Positive Plan (NPP) was released on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 (<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/nature-positive-plan.pdf>) wherein there was stressed the “...need to better protect Australia’s environment and prevent further extinction of native plants and animals.” (pg.1 Executive Summary). It is just this need to better protect our environment that local community opposition has arisen against the proliferation of wind farm proposals along the Great Dividing Range – this is a grass roots movement that all Australians should be proud of. There are no foreign demons in this heartfelt desire to preserve what is precious in the Australian landscape.

## CONCLUSIONS

We sincerely hope that your Senate Select Committee is not pre-judging grass roots community opposition campaigns to industrial wind farms as universally harbouring malign influences. We have referenced our own Friends of Chalumbin group’s opposition to the WSWF (formerly Chalumbin Wind Farm) as a case in point. We were proud to represent our local Tablelands community in opposition to Ark Energy’s proposal; a wind farm plan that was in the wrong place. Testimony from the Federal Government’s own DCCEEW and other relevant bodies attested to the universal significance of the area we were fighting to preserve – and so it turned out to be the case.

This whole “misinformation & disinformation” style argument is being weaponized by vested renewables industry interests to try and discredit legitimate concerns by local communities in their formidable confrontation with deep pocketed foreign and international (mainly) corporations’ intent of wrecking areas of Australia without concern for local considerations.


We thank the current Queensland State Government for putting local communities and local councils back in some sort of position to legitimately challenge the excessive steamrolling of local communities that is being attempted by these aggressive wind farm developers. We believe this to be the most democratic approach to this avalanche of renewables roll outs being fostered, without genuine and sufficient consultation, on local communities.

Thank you

Gary Burgess

(on behalf of Friends of Chalumbin)


APPENDIX A – 'EXPRESS' NEWSPAPER, JUNE 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2023




# KEEP CHALUMBIN WILD

## RESPONDING TO ARK ENERGY (KOREA ZINC) RE: PROPOSED CHALUMBIN WIND FARM NOT MENTIONED IN THE PRESS RELEASE (JUNE 14TH)


- Capacity Factor of Australian wind turbines is approx. 30 - 35% - no way will we see 600MW delivered!
- The audacity to claim construction disturbance of mostly remnant vegetation classified as "least concern" - the proposed project area is in a high altitude, high biodiverse existing ecosystem adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.
- Soil disturbance is not only during the wet season of January to March. Once soil is exposed erosion is a continual and ongoing process - ALL YEAR! Wind, as well as water, is an eroding agent.
- Safeguarding our Wet Tropics World Heritage Area requires more than a 600m distance. All animals, both terrestrial and aerial are highly mobile - they do not recognize arbitrary borders. Kilometres from world heritage ecosystems would be required, not metres!
- Offsets policy under existing EPBC Act guidelines is totally bogus. Wind farm developers should not be able to claim as an offset an existing, functioning ecosystem because they did not destroy it. This is totally bizarre!
- All the research in the world won't bring back the Magnificent Brood Frog once their habitat is gone.
- What can a Community Benefit Program of \$500,000 really mean if the environment is trashed and the hills are festooned with 250m high wind turbines. The visual amenity and bush landscape of the community is totally annihilated! Look at the Kaban Wind Farm's night time visual light pollution!
- No mention of end of life clean up - according to the Senate Estimates of Tuesday, May 23rd responsibility, unless covered by contract, falls on the landowner, not the developer - how did this all come about?
- No mention of bisphenol A (BPA) in the resins of the wind turbine blades or how toxic they can potentially be. No mention of landfill as ultimate destination of these blades.
- No mention of Korea Zinc using proposed Chalumbin electricity to produce so called 'green' hydrogen for export to South Korea (Australian, May 16th, 2023, pg. 12). Just how much does Korea Zinc pocket of the \$2 billion Australian subsidy under the Hydrogen Headstart program? How much do Australian taxpayers pay in subsidies to this whole proposal?
- In short - **THIS IS THE WRONG LOCATION FOR A WIND FARM.**




This is Chalumbin today.



Mt. Emerald today... Chalumbin tomorrow?



Kaban Wind Farm... night light pollution!



### EXPRESS YOUR CONCERNS

Email/Write to Minister Tanya Plibersek  
(Reference: EPBC 2021/8983)  
Minister.Plibersek@dcceew.gov.au  
c.c. Bob.Katter.MP@aph.gov.au  
senator.waters@aph.gov.au  
senator.rennick@aph.gov.au  
senator.roberts@aph.gov.au  
hill@parliament.qld.gov.au

Contact: friendsofchalumbin@gmail.com

JUNE 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - Express

## APPENDIX B – DCCEEW RECOMMENDATION REPORT

LEX 78311

Document 1  
OFFICIAL

# Recommendation

1. That the proposed action, to develop a wind farm within the Tablelands Regional Council Local Government Area approximately 15 km southwest of Ravenshoe in Far North Queensland, including up to 42 wind turbine generators and associated infrastructure, be refused.

## Summary of recommended findings for each controlling provision

Controlling provision	Summary of reasons for recommendation	Recommendation
World Heritage properties (section 12 and 15A)	<p>The department considers that the impacts of the proposed action on the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage property (WTQWHP) are unacceptable because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed action will have a residual significant impact on criterion (vii) of the WTQWHP through degradation, modification and obscuring of a sweeping forest vista, and this significant residual impact cannot be offset;</li> <li>• The proposed action is likely to have a residual significant impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of criterion (viii) due to the impacts on species associated with criterion (viii) including marsupial habitat loss and mortality of Spectacled Flying-foxes from turbine collision;</li> <li>• The proposed action is likely to have a residual significant impact on criterion (ix) of the WTQWHP due to the loss, degradation and notable alteration or modification to habitat of Wet Tropics endemic species and the loss of wet sclerophyll forest associated with the WTQWHP and potential mortality of bats from turbine collision;</li> <li>• The proposed action has the potential to result in a residual significant impact to the Outstanding Universal Value of criterion (x) as it is likely to reduce the diversity or modify the composition of animal species in part of the WTQWHP;</li> <li>• The potential residual significant impacts to criteria (vii)-(x) are likely to have an impact on the integrity of the WTQWHP, such that the action may impact the wholeness and intactness of the WTQWHP through the loss of one or more elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value;</li> <li>• The department considers that impacts on the WTQWHP of the proposed action cannot be adequately avoided, mitigated, or compensated for.</li> </ul>	Refuse
National Heritage places (section 15B and 15C)	<p>The department considers that the impacts of the proposed action on the Wet Tropics of Queensland National Heritage place (WTQNHP) are unacceptable because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposed action will have a residual significant impact on National Heritage place Official Values A, B, C, D and E which align with the World Heritage criterions (vii), (viii), (ix), and (x); and</li> <li>• The potential residual significant impacts of the proposed action on the WTQNHP are unlikely to be able to be compensated for with a suitable offset.</li> </ul>	Refuse
Listed threatened species and communities (section 18 and 18A)	<p>The department considers that the impacts of the proposed action on the Vulnerable listed Magnificent Brood Frog (<i>Pseudophryne covacevichae</i>) are unacceptable because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The species' habitat that will be impacted represents important habitat, critical to the survival of the species, with 11 of the approximately 70 known sites where the species is found proposed to be impacted (16%);</li> </ul>	Refuse

## APPENDIX C-1 – WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY POSITION STATEMENT

LEX 78311

Document 2

### Attachment 1. Wet Tropics Management Authority position statement: Wind farm development adjacent to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area

#### Wet Tropics Management Authority position statement:

##### Wind farm development adjacent to the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Authority) recognises that lowering emissions is one of the most critical actions to reduce climate change impacts on the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (the Area).

The Authority's Board of Directors (the Board) strongly supports appropriately planned and located renewable energy, including a significant scaling up of renewable energy generation across Queensland.

While the Board strongly supports renewable energy projects, we believe that this should not occur where it will increase the risk of threats to the Area and its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

For large-scale renewable energy developments in proximity of the Area, the Authority's position is:

- In order to protect OUV, proponents should demonstrate that clearing, fragmentation and operation of the large-scale renewable energy developments will not:
  - o exacerbate fire risk in the Area, which is already at an increased risk as a result of climate change
  - o exacerbate weed and pest animal spread and contribute to ecosystem change within the Area
  - o impact on species listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and other species of conservation significance (including all taxa that are endemic, or are of an ancient lineage, or are globally significant or ecologically rare) that utilise habitat within the project area and move between the project area and the Area (e.g. feeding, dispersal, genetic exchange etc). This includes limiting impacts on wet sclerophyll and adjacent communities.
- As the World Heritage listing for the Wet Tropics recognises that it possesses outstanding scenic features, natural beauty and magnificent sweeping landscapes<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/486/>

## APPENDIX C-2 – WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY POSITION STATEMENT

LEX 78311

Document 2

(as well as its other significant natural features). Any development adjacent to the Area must only occur following detailed landscape and visual impact studies undertaken from viewpoints outside and looking towards the Area, as well as from key vantage points within the Area looking towards the proposed development area. These studies should comprehensively inform the potential impacts on World Heritage-listed scenic amenity. Proponents must also commit to actions to minimise impacts on scenic amenity through wind turbine siting and selection of suitable materials, colour and design.

The Board agrees with concerns expressed by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on the need to properly consider, and avoid, biodiversity impacts in planning for climate change mitigation actions:

‘...that previous policies have largely tackled biodiversity loss and climate change independently of each other, and that addressing the synergies between mitigating biodiversity loss and climate change, while considering their social impacts, offers the opportunity to maximize benefits and meet global development goals.’

Tackling Biodiversity & Climate Crises Together and their Combined Social Impacts Workshop Report (10 June 2021)<sup>2</sup>.

The Board is appropriately concerned about the cumulative scale of proposed developments, as it would involve significant clearing across a large and relatively intact landscape adjoining the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area. Large-scale development is likely to have significant impacts on high-value biodiversity and ecosystems that contribute to healthy and thriving livelihoods in the broader Wet Tropics region.

There has been a lack of proper regional planning in the current approach to renewable energy. The Board encourages the Queensland Government, in partnership with the renewable energy industry to undertake better strategic planning and assessment of localities for new projects, including considering the cumulative impact of projects. The Nature Conservancy approach developed in the USA (‘Site Renewables Right’) provides a good example of a comprehensive planning and assessment process. It is important that Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples are fully engaged in the suggested planning processes and that proponents are required to obtain free prior and informed consent from Traditional Custodians.

The Authority will continue to provide views to the Queensland Government to inform their assessment processes, and encourages the Queensland Government to review State Code 23: Wind farm development, which is assessed by the State under the State Assessment and Referral Agency process. This review should include performance indicators that encourage proponents to assess thoroughly and carefully to avoid impacts on significant environmental and cultural values, including World Heritage and National Heritage values. Furthermore, the Board is concerned that the current boundary of the Northern Renewable Energy Zone (NREZ) does not consider finer-scale analyses of ecologically sensitive areas that are not suitable for potential large-scale development—the Board encourages the Queensland Government to reconsider the extent of the NREZ and identify

## APPENDIX D – WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY FNQ RESPONSE TO PER

2

### Introduction to WPSQFNB response:

The Wildlife Preservation Society, Far North Queensland Branch (WPSQFNB) has here attempted an analysis of many sections of the Draft PER given time constraints. Though generally supportive of renewable energy, WPSQFNB strongly opposes building wind farms in rugged remote natural ecosystems. The areas in which they are being constructed are usually amongst a narrow belt of restricted ecosystems, and they are often some of the last intact natural vegetation in our landscape. The proposed Chalumbin windfarm is one of the worst of such proposals. WPSQFNB demands to know why we are clearing intact, high biodiversity forest for renewables? In our efforts to achieve climate change mitigation we are blindly destroying the very environment that we treasure so much.

The Chalumbin Windfarm Draft Public Environment Report (Chalumbin PER) is in total 1758 pages long. Numerous consultants were engaged to contribute to the submission and design. This amount of detail is most certainly necessary and yet is still inadequate given the

large number of environmental issues which have been ignored or poorly addressed (such as species of State significance and cumulative impacts to Regional Ecosystems and Nationally and State listed species). However, because of the enormous size of the report and huge number of issues involved, the public response time of 5 weeks is totally inadequate. How can a member of the public or a volunteer organization possibly read, let alone adequately respond to a 1758 page-long report in their spare time in the evenings? A development of this magnitude requires a far longer response time - 4-5 months might be more feasible. Note that just over three weeks extension was provided shortly before the deadline, but this is still inadequate.

Due to the above extremely limited capacity for detailed responses to this colossal PER, a lack of (or limited) responses should not be used by the Federal Government as an indication of lack of opposition to, or lack of feedback on, the development. Every short letter submitted should be considered very seriously since this may be as much as an individual or organisation is able to contribute given the considerable challenges posed by the submission process.

Figures 1-4 below are some images which puts this massive development into context.

APPENDIX E – HON JARROD BLEIJIE STATEMENT



The Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning  
Minister for Industrial Relations

Our ref: MC25/1042

Your ref: 4105-24

12 MAR 2025

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The Clerk of the Parliament  
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ABN 65 959 415 158

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your email regarding petition 4105-24 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 20 February 2025 seeking a moratorium on renewable energy developments.

During the 2024 State election, the Crisafulli Government committed to *amend laws to ensure renewable energy projects are impact assessable with approval processes consistent with other land uses like mining and agriculture.*

I am pleased to advise that the first part of this election commitment has been delivered. Effective 3 February 2025, all wind farm applications in Queensland are subject to Impact assessment. This means mandatory community consultation and third party appeal rights. This new process is specifically designed to facilitate public involvement and ensure transparency. It enables individuals and communities to submit their views, which must then be considered as part of the decision-making process. This was something that Labor did not do for 10 years.

Community  
Safeguard

In addition to this, updates have also been made to *State code 23: Wind farm developments* and the associated planning guideline to include new assessment benchmarks relating to community impacts and decommissioning of wind farms. Community engagement for a proposed wind farm is now expected to start prior to lodging an application with SARA. For further details you can access the Planning guideline at: [https://www.planning.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0024/98106/planning-guideline-state-code-23-wind-farm-development.pdf](https://www.planning.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0024/98106/planning-guideline-state-code-23-wind-farm-development.pdf).

The next phase of implementing the State Government's commitment to renewable energy reforms will focus on other renewable energy technologies such as large-scale solar farm developments. Work on these reforms is currently underway and I am committed to seeing them come to fruition promptly and effectively.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising this matter and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

JARROD BLEIJIE MP  
DEPUTY PREMIER