



Senvion Australia submission: Review of the National Wind Farm Commissioner

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Confidentiality

Senvion is happy for this submission to be made public.

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About Senvion Australia

Senvion has been delivering wind energy solutions in Australia since 2002. We now have over 900 megawatts of wind capacity either installed or under construction across 14 projects in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

Senvion Australia is a 100% owned subsidiary of Hamburg-based Senvion SE, a wind turbine manufacturer with close to 17 gigawatts of wind energy installed globally.

Detailed response

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?

The Commissioner has now released two annual reports. These reports provide an independent and transparent overview of the issues being raised by communities that are hosting operating or proposed wind farms. These reports also provide information about the number of complaints that have been raised, as well as information about the number that have been resolved.

The annual reports provide a very useful insight into the types of issues that are being raised by community members, which can then be used to inform community engagement activities. The annual reports also provide a publicly available insight into the level of unresolved concern about wind energy in Australia.

Through the Clean Energy Council, the National Wind Farm Commissioner has proactively engaged with the wind industry to identify and promote best practice, particularly with relation to community engagement and complaints handling.

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

The most recent Annual Report reported that the Office received 54 complaints in 2017, and that 42 of these were closed within that period.

The fact that the Office is continuing to receive complaints, and that the operation of the Office is supporting the resolution of these complaints highlights that there remains an ongoing need for the Commissioner.

The Commissioner's role to identify and promote best practice will continue to be useful, particularly with the anticipated increase in wind farm construction over the coming years.

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?

The Complaints Handling process of the Office of the National Wind Farm Commissioner is guided by a number of core principles including that:

- the Office is independent; and
- the Office will always act impartially.

The current funding model ensures that the broader community can trust that these core principles of independence and impartiality will be upheld.

This does not mean that the wind industry doesn't also need to invest in implementing proper complaints handling processes associated with individual projects. It is incumbent on all wind energy companies to have appropriate systems and processes in place that allows for the appropriate management of community concerns.

However, the Office of the National Wind Farm Commissioner provides a valuable option for complainants to seek an external review which is consistent with best-practice complaints handling procedures.

Conclusion

The National Wind Farm Commissioner plays an important role of independently facilitating and referring complaints about planned or operating wind farms, increasing transparency about wind farm activity in Australia, and identifying and promoting best practices in relation to wind farm development and operation.

Senvion Australia supports:

- the ongoing operation of the Office of the National Wind Farm Commissioner;
- continued funding of the Office of the National Wind Farm Commissioner from the Commonwealth budget.