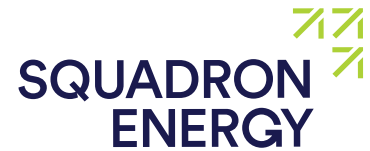


19 June 2025



Portfolio Committee No. 4 Regional NSW
NSW Legislative Council
via email: PortfolioCommittee4@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Committee members

Response to Questions on Notice and Supplementary Questions – Inquiry into impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales (the Inquiry)

On behalf of Squadron Energy, thank you for the opportunity to provide responses to the Questions on Notice and Supplementary Questions from the Inquiry. We welcome the Committee's work on this important issue and appreciate the opportunity to contribute our experience and insights.

Squadron Energy has a significant presence in the Central-West region with several key projects in development and construction. These include:

- Spicers Creek Wind Farm within the Central-West Orana (CWO) REZ, located west of Gulgong;
- Uungula Wind Farm near Wellington, currently under construction;
- An operational asset at Crudine Ridge, south of Mudgee;
- A planned firming project in Dubbo.

We are committed to creating a long-term economic legacy in the communities where we operate. Our value proposition is to partner early, solve problems and leave the regions stronger. In the Central West Orana this includes:

- A \$3.6 million public private partnership with Dubbo Regional Council to fund a new advanced wastewater treatment facility, supporting long-term regional water security.
- A significant \$30 million upgrade to Twelve Mile Road, improving regional road safety as part of early works for Uungula Wind Farm.
- An \$85 million voluntary commitment to community investment over the life of Spicers Creek Wind Farm, in addition to funding commitments to the Council and community investment distributed by the NSW Government using our REZ access fees.
- Local presence and employment, with two regional offices in Dubbo and Wellington employing 13 local staff.
- Training and ongoing operational jobs for locals, including First Nations people, recently working with the NSW Government to train 10 local First Nations candidates for roles on renewable projects
- A forthcoming business uplift program, supporting local suppliers and contractors to participate in the energy transition.
- A locally based worker accommodation village on the urban fringe of Dubbo, to ensure the economic benefit stays local. REMPLAN data suggests that this initiative will bring \$250m of value to the local economy per annum.
- The refurbishment of the 'Bellhaven' facility, a former nursing home in Wellington, which will accommodate workers from the Uungula Wind Farm project, which is being delivered by 100% local First Nations contractors, ensuring the benefit from the project extends beyond those engaged directly on the wind farm.

Squadron Energy was invited to provide additional information, which we have set out below.

Decommissioning commitments

Each Squadron Energy project includes decommissioning commitments as part of its project approvals. These are locked into landowner agreements and published Environmental Impact Statements. We are also contributing to an industry working group that is developing an action framework for government and industry to ensure host landowners have certainty on wind farm decommissioning, including to establish security arrangements and set aside funds solely for decommissioning activities, ensuring it's fully funded. The terms of the decommissioning arrangements negotiated with landowners are confidential.

Public liability insurance and impacts on neighbours

Squadron Energy's projects operate in rural settings alongside farms and other land uses.

During all phases of our projects, we maintain a range of insurance policies that respond to physical loss or damage, including where the cause originates off-site (e.g. an accidental fire on neighbouring land that damages the wind farm). In the ordinary course of events, Squadron Energy would seek to recover any loss under our own insurance, not our neighbours. On this issue, the Insurance Council of Australia, in its *Farm Insurance and Energy Infrastructure Report*¹ says:

"Current information indicates that insurers generally do not have specific concerns related to a property hosting transmission lines or neighbouring energy infrastructure. At the time of writing, the Insurance Council is not aware of any instances where Insurance Council members have been unable to provide insurance or have increased premiums as a result of a farm (or a neighbouring property) hosting energy infrastructure."

Landowner agreements - Spicers Creek and Uungula wind farms

All landowner and neighbour agreements are voluntary. We encourage host landowners and neighbours to seek independent legal advice - funded by Squadron Energy - as part of our commitment to informed consent and stakeholder protection.

Community investment

As part of our significant commitment to shared benefits, Squadron Energy launched Australia's first, large-scale, community co-investment initiative at the Sapphire Wind Farm near Inverell in northern NSW. Sapphire Wind Farm is one of the largest operational wind farms in New South Wales and has helped the ACT Government meet its target of 100% renewables in 2020 by providing a long-term power purchase agreement. The Fund enabled residents to invest in a utility-scale energy project, with approximately \$1.8 million invested since 2017 for a 10-year term.

In 2024 we offered a similar initiative in the Central-West Orana region, but the first-round investment did not reach the minimum participation threshold. We are now working closely with the local community to refine the benefits we deliver.

Consultation and community feedback mechanisms

We undertake consultation through:

- Community information sessions, with periodic drop ins, supported by dedicated community relations advisers during construction
- Virtual open days

¹ https://insurancecouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Updated-ICA_Briefing_Farm-Insurance-and-Energy-Infrastructure_May-2024.pdf

- A formal feedback register to ensure issues are addressed
- Regular newsletters and public meetings
- A project website with direct contact channels for community members to provide feedback.

We work closely with our landowners and neighbours from the outset to minimise disruption to farming operations. This includes conducting detailed agricultural impact assessments, adapting turbine layouts and adjusting designs based on environmental and land use findings. Our design process ensures we avoid productive agriculture, supported by the host landowner. Turbines have been relocated to avoid sensitive habitats and enhance erosion control measures, while biodiversity offset strategies prioritise the regeneration of degraded or marginal land.

Fire mitigation

Our wind farms are engineered to withstand extreme weather. Mitigation measures include:

- reinforced turbine foundations
- lightning protection systems and real-time condition monitoring
- firebreaks and on-site fire response equipment
- joint training exercises and coordination with the Rural Fire Service, including site-specific emergency response plans.

Squadron Energy is deeply committed to working with landholders, communities and all levels of government to ensure our renewable energy projects deliver enduring benefits to local communities across regional New South Wales.

We trust this information assists the Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Newlan

EGM Corporate Relations and Community

For and behalf of Squadron Energy Services Pty Ltd