

**Submission
No 151**

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

Name: Tony Menkens

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Attention: Portfolio Committee No.4 – Regional NSW

**Submission to the Inquiry into Impact of Renewable Energy
Zones on Rural and Regional Communities and Industries in
New South Wales**

From: Antony (Tony) Menkens

Positions: Beef Cattle Farmer west of Armidale

**Chairman of The Batting for Boorolong
Community Group**

Introduction

My name is Tony Menkens. With my wife and daughter we own and run a beef cattle operation 10 kilometres west of Armidale.

We are direct neighbours to the proposed Squadron Energy Boorolong Wind Project.

I have been chairman of the Batting for Boorolong Community Group for almost 3 years. It is a group consisting of over 160 members who live in and around the Boorolong area.

There are four wind projects proposed west of Armidale.

- Squadron Energy Boorolong
- Origin Energy Warrane/Northern Tableland
- EDF Yarrowyck
- EDF Balala

These combined projects propose to construct up to 300 wind turbines standing between 270-300 metres in total tip height. This is over an area approximately 40 kilometres long by 20 kilometres wide starting approximately 12 kilometres west of Armidale.

Batting for Boorolong Community Group (B4B)

The Batting for Boorolong Community Group was formed mid 2022.

The aim of this group was, and still is, to help shape the infrastructure being proposed in our region within the announced NEREZ to best suit all members of our community not just the renewable energy project land hosts.

B4B is a proactive broad based group consisting of farm and business owners, small lifestyle block owners, house block owners and people who rent and/or work in the district.

B4B have always tried to engage and communicate with the renewable energy project proponents in a constructive and positive way.

Squadron Energy held their first public meeting at a local landholder's woolshed in September 2022. The lead Squadron representative at that meeting stated that they would **not** engage with a community group. They stated they would only engage with the community via a "one on one" basis.

SQE has continued with their "divide and conquer" approach to our community ever since. They recently held a drop in session in June 2025 and the lead SQE representative admitted that they "**do not have have social license for the Boorolong Wind Project**".

In September 2023 B4B created a list of requirements for SQE that our community would want to see met before they support the project proposal.

(List of 13 requirements in Attachment A).

B4B spent many weeks creating the list of 13 community requirements. B4B consulted with the local indigenous group, wildlife experts and carers, aerial firefighting contractors, town planners, current neighbours of existing wind projects and a specialist renewable energy legal advisor.

Squadron Energy has been in possession of the Boorolong Community's 13 requirements for almost 2 years and have made little to no progress in addressing these requirements in any meaningful way.

As of July 2025 SQE has submitted a scoping report to DPHI having by their own admission no social license in the Boorolong community for their proposed wind project. The current project manager was asked how they planned on garnering community social license, her answer was, "**money**".

Key Points

- The NEREZ was established with **no community consultation** unlike other REZ's in NSW.
- The NEREZ is proposed to be **8 GW** of generated power which will require between **14 and 16 GW** of generational infrastructure.
- **16 GW** would require construction of approximately **2500 wind turbines and 10,000 hectares of solar** plus associated transmission infrastructure.
- There has been **no cumulative impact study of the NEREZ** by Energy Co, DPPI or the Armidale Regional Council.
- 12 kilometres west of Armidale, 4 wind projects are proposing to construct **300 wind turbines** directly neighbouring small lifestyle holdings and houses.
- Neighbouring dwellings and family homes on farms and small lifestyle holdings will be **within 2 kilometres of multiple 300 meter wind turbines.**
- **60 neighbouring homes** will be **within 4 kilometres of a Boorolong Wind Project turbine.** (Attachment B)
- A **300 metre turbine with 100 metre blades** will have a **fan area of 3 hectares or 7.5 acres.** Each turbine will have two flashing lights.
- Sydney currently has **one building over 300 metres in height. Centre Point Tower.** The NEREZ is proposing our community to host hundreds of them.
- No plan offered by Energy Co or renewable energy proponents for **fragile local koala population or habitat** other than “off sets” at a completely different location.
- A road route plan involving movement of oversized overmass (OSOM) vehicles through Armidale on a school bus route and will be within in metres of a **child care centre, aged care home and university colleges.**
- Energy Co and Renewable Energy proponents have shown **no intention of meeting community expectations.** Their only aim is to tick community consultation boxes, offer money and move on.
- There has been noted **bullying of vulnerable community members** by proponent representatives to sign neighbour agreements before a scoping report has been submitted or the granting of a SEARS.
- Renewable Energy proponents seem to have **no intention of garnering community social license by meeting community expectations other than offering money.**
- Only **3.5% of NSW land is considered to Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL)** which is considered the best of agricultural soils. Much of the New England has been mapped as BSAL.
- Aerial firefighting aircraft such helicopters and water bombers are **unable to operate within wind turbine project areas.**

Batting for Boorolong Key Recommendations

- 1** Immediately suspend all applications for planned Energy Co transmission and renewable energy projects in the NEREZ until a comprehensive independent cumulative impact study has been completed by a non aligned third party.
- 2** Reduce the NEREZ from 8 GW to 3 GW.
- 3** All community and individual neighbour consultations by Energy Co and renewable energy proponents to be recorded and monitored independently. Stated outcomes are to be met.
- 4** The reintroduction of the suggested wind turbine setbacks to neighbouring dwellings as outlined in the 2016 NSW Government Wind Bulletins. That is a 200 metre wind turbine has a 4 kilometre dwelling setback, a 300 metre turbine has a 6 kilometre dwelling setback if a neighbour agreement can not be reached.
- 5** Dwelling entitlements on rural land titles to be treated as a neighbouring dwelling for turbine setback determination and compensation payments.
- 6** Remove the use of trees and vegetation as sight mitigation of wind turbines for neighbouring dwellings in the DPHI Wind Project Guidelines.
- 7** No renewable energy projects or infrastructure to be allowed to be placed or constructed on Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL).
- 8** No renewable energy projects or infrastructure to be allowed in recognised koala habitat areas.
- 9** All Energy Co infrastructure to be constructed on renewable energy host land where possible.
- 10** Wind turbines must have a minimum 2 kilometre setback from a neighbours boundary to allow adequate aerial firefighting protection and aerial fertilising and spraying of the neighbouring property.