



## Mick Gentleman MLA

MINISTER FOR PLANNING  
MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES  
MINISTER FOR WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
MINISTER FOR AGEING

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MEMBER FOR BRINDABELLA

Mr Tom Duncan  
Clerk  
Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory  
Civic Square, London Circuit  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Duncan

Thank you for your letter to Mr Simon Corbell MLA, Minister for the Environment, of 16 September 2014 about Petition No. 16-14 lodged by Ms Lawder MLA on behalf of 86 Australian Capital Territory residents and 556 New South Wales residents. In Minister Corbell's absence on official business, I am responding on his behalf.

I understand the petition relates to the ACT Large-scale Wind Auction, presently underway. The closing date for the submission of proposals in the Auction was 3 September 2014. Those proposals deemed eligible and suitable for full assessment are subject to a value for money evaluation. This evaluation is comprised of an assessment of proponent responses to four evaluation criteria, together with the feed-in tariff price nominated by proponents for their respective proposals.

The four evaluation criteria and their respective score weightings are as follows:

1. Risks to timely project completion – 50%
2. Local community engagement – 20%
3. ACT economic development benefits – 20%
4. Reliance on Treasury Financial Guarantee – 10%

The ACT Government is aware of the at times contentious nature of large-scale wind farm developments in Australia. This was taken into account in the design of the Wind Auction process and resulted, in part, in the above local community engagement criterion being included.

Since the announcement of the Wind Auction there has been significant comment, both in the media and via correspondence, in relation to opposition to, and support for, wind farms in the broader ACT region. In this context it is important to note that the Wind Auction provides for proposals that may relate to potential wind farms that are located anywhere in the geographic area connected to the National Electricity Market. This includes all jurisdictions in Australia, excluding Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

London Circuit, Canberra ACT 2601 GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601  
Phone: (02) 6205 0218 Fax: (02) 6205 0368 Email: GENTLEMAN@act.gov.au  
Twitter: @GENTLEMANMick Facebook: www.facebook.com/MickGentleman



It is also noted that proponents are required to satisfy zoning and proximity requirements and community consultation obligations in preparing a development application applicable to the relative jurisdiction where the prospective wind farm is to be located. This process is a matter for those jurisdictions and is outside the control of the ACT Government, unless the proposed wind farm is to be located within the ACT.

While the Wind Auction allows for a potential wind farm in the ACT, such a proposal is not expected, as the ACT is not considered to offer sufficient wind resources for a large-scale wind farm. A significant proportion of the ACT also falls within Namadgi National Park and this is also understood to be a factor in the Territory being unlikely to be considered a suitable site by proponents.

The ACT has already clearly demonstrated that it is prepared to use 'its own backyard' as a location for large-scale renewable energy generation, as evidenced by the Solar Auction process and the approved so far of the two solar farms in the Territory, the Community Solar initiative presently under way and the energy-from-waste and next generation solar initiatives which Minister Corbell also announced earlier this year.

In regard to the possible health impacts of wind farms, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) commissioned an independent systematic review of the existing scientific literature to examine the possible impacts of wind farms on human health, including audible and inaudible noise. The review considered a wide range of evidence, comprising both peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed ('grey') literature. To ensure all emerging research has been captured, in September 2012 the NHMRC conducted a call for submissions of evidence for consideration in the independent evidence review. The independent evidence review on the health effects of wind farms commissioned by the NHMRC is now available on its website: ([http://consultations.nhmrc.gov.au/public\\_consultations/wind\\_farms](http://consultations.nhmrc.gov.au/public_consultations/wind_farms)).

In summary, the systematic review indicated that there was no consistent evidence of direct health impacts.

Wind turbines were found to be associated with annoyance for some people. However, with the exception of annoyance, sleep quality or sleep disturbance and quality of life—the latter possibly related to health—there was no consistent association between adverse health effects and noise from wind turbines.

The assessment process is overseen by an independent expert Advisory Panel, which will make recommendations to Minister Corbell in due course as to what is considered to be the best value for money proposals. The ACT Government is not able to predict the outcome of the Advisory Panel's assessment, however we have the utmost confidence in its ability to critically analyse all aspects of proponent responses, including how those responses may align with public comment regarding community consultation. Minister Corbell too shall be mindful of these matters in his consideration of the Advisory Panel's recommendations to him.

Yours sincerely



Mick Gentleman MLA  
Acting Minister for the Environment

15/10/14