

Every minute I sit responding to this Review, or to the current 43 renewable energy projects in the NSW CWO REZ or to invitations to “send your comments” by various bodies, I am not earning a cent. Every second you (and all other salaried persons, whether working for government or a government agency or a renewables developer or a politician) spend dealing with this stuff, you all get paid. This is one very big reason genuine “consultation” with farmers and local businesses never actually occurs. We cannot survive writing or thinking about this stuff until it arrives at the door. Indeed, there are still many people I know who have not heard of ‘Renewable Energy Zones’ or all the projects being proposed where they work and live - hence the delayed response until they become aware of them at the last minute. In addition, these people are not office workers. Many have poor technical skills outside their own areas of expertise and they do not need to know how to type, to register to lodge submissions, to upload documents or to deal with lengthy digital materials.

I have read the Terms of Reference of the Community Engagement Review and most of the links.

I certainly have no time or inclination on this occasion to engage in a detailed and referenced way to many of the issues raised (which is my natural instinct and which I have done on many occasions in the past – to none of which have I had a response). This response, therefore, may possibly be called a rant.

I am old, and as such have a history. I live within the boundaries of the NSW CWO REZ at Yarrabin NSW. Our farm (my wife and mine) is surrounded by three wind farm projects (more than 250 turbines) and a pumped hydro project. It is proposed that the transport routes for one wind farm and the pumped hydro proposal will be along the low grade rural road (mostly resembling a track) that goes through or beside our property for 4 kilometres, 2.5 kms is unfenced.

We have lived here since 1987 and I have my only known history going back to British settlement of Australia in this area. I was born at Gulgong NSW – the town on the \$10 note which is now surrounded by solar and wind developments. My mother was born at Bodangora (where the Bodangora Wind Farm now sits) and my father at Gollan (where the Spicer’s Creek Wind Farm will be imposed). The original family farm is subject to compulsory acquisition for transmission lines. My great grandmother was born a couple of kilometres from where we live now. I have her beautiful handwritten diary dated from 1892 – 1903.

My wife also has her history steeped in rural NSW. Her great grandparents were an overseer and hut manager at Goonoo Goonoo Station at Tamworth. Her historical forbears and relations include Les Murray (the poet) and Murray Gleeson (former Chief Justice of the High Court). Her father was the lead author of the Oxford Companion to Australian Literature and the authorized biographer of Dame Mary Gilmore (for which he was the recipient of the NSW Premiers Literary Medal). All of our families are deeply connected to rural Australia and its culture since white settlement. There is much more that can be added to our cultural connection with rural NSW and the Central West Renewable Energy Zone. We are not alone. There are many others around here with similar long term connections with this place. The CWO REZ build out proposals are destroying our place and will destroy it.

In 1957 during a drought and bushfire season, I stayed with my mother (and teacher) in Wellington NSW while she nursed my grandfather. I played for hours with the aboriginal kids on the banks of the Macquarie River (Wiradjuri, I believe). They were my friends. We have all come to understand their culture a lot better in the

intervening years. Many now own land within the CWO REZ pursuant to our current land ownership laws. There are plenty of aboriginal land rights applications still unheard. Many of us new settlers have very similar feelings of connection to this land as the First Nations peoples. We live together now in the CWO REZ and I can assure you their cultural background has no tolerance for the development of this so-called “renewable energy power station” either.

I am talking about my history and the “culture” that exists in Central Western NSW here because many Australians **have no sense of it.**

I first learned this when I joined the Commonwealth Public Service in Canberra as a 20 year old for a 9 month stint in the Patent Office before going to ANU Law School. I had a good friend whose father was an elected politician from the ACT in the Federal Parliament. He later became a federal Minister. Between my work mates and the connection to the political sphere I soon learned that a lot of people in this country had little respect, or none, for the cultural background from which I had come. Later, at university, I was at times castigated for it. Fortunately not everyone was of that point of view.

The relevance is that the views that led to Christopher Bowen’s renewable energy visions and to Matt Kean in the NSW parliament creating renewable energy zones depend upon two things – **firstly, the decision or belief that our culture and way of life here do not matter, and, secondly, on the good old government principle that you build renewables – wind, solar, transmission infrastructure – in places of least resistance.**

This leads to a third lesson of relevance, one I learned from 17 years as a citizen of the ACT. (I worked for 10 years as a solicitor in private practice during which I was an elected representative of the ACT Law Society). During this time I met many people in the Cth Public Service and Local Government as private citizens. On one occasion, I had a discussion with a Deputy Head of a Department relating to government policy in relation to mining uranium in the Northern Territory. Eventually I asked “*What do you do if “they” (the relevant Minister) still don’t agree with your position?*” He replied, “*We change the facts.*” **Data (i.e. facts) can be manipulated.** So it has transpired that government agencies (such as the **CSIRO**) provide expert reports that coincide with government policy. “**He who pays the piper calls the tune**” also applies to commercial enterprise. Developers of renewable energy projects are all required to provide “expert” technical papers that comply with planning requirements (SEARS). And they do. They obfuscate, manipulate, and omit with gay abandon.

It is my submission that the present position in which we find ourselves depends on the above matters – the Australian Government is manipulating facts and assertions in respect to the costs and efficiency of Australia’s transition to renewables - wind, solar and pumped hydro. More importantly, they hold the inhabitants of renewable energy zones such as the CWO REZ, their culture and way of life, as expendable.

The current method of progressing the roll out is to ensure that there is **as little information as possible until the last minute and to then literally swamp landholders with “expert” reports that tick all the boxes needed.** There are many examples – every EIS of every project. To-day I see the EIS for EnergyCo’s REZ build out is published – 8,000 pages of it. Twenty-eight days is the time frame for our response. The sentiments set out in the letter below say it all:

Residents of the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWO REZ) have several projects to understand at present, 43 at last count. Each project contains a wordy EIS usually 3000 – 4000 pages. Energy Co are the architects of the renewable zone therefore it stands to reason that their task is the most complex.

Landowners don't get a choice as to whether they host transmission lines, and evidence thus far suggests those who are willing to take part don't have much good to say about the consultation process.

If you are unwilling to host transmission lines the process is questionable.

Landowners received their compulsory acquisition letters in May for a project that only released its EIS on 28 September. With the Department of Planning exhibiting the EIS until 25 October it is likely that the landowners will be compulsorily acquired before any response to submissions is even available.

It appears that any comment or recommendations by any government agency or council or local group much less the individuals who live in the community will be totally ignored. Why else would you commence the compulsory acquisition process prior to any determination by the Department of Planning?

Greens MP Cate Faehrmann is Chair of an Upper House Committee to further investigate underground transmission lines. This report is not due until 31 March 2024. Too late for Central West Orana residents. Why another inquiry? Cate Faehrmann took part in the previous inquiry and had this to say "Multiple witnesses gave evidence to the committee regarding the increased risk that overhead transmission lines pose during bushfires" which was ignored and she indicated that the previous State Government inquiry was "tick and flick exercise" and "a sham". Despite environmental concerns and increased fire risk it appears Energy Co and the Department of Planning (both departments of the NSW State Government) have already approved this project without any amendments.

Are we not given the same rights because we live in the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone?

The manipulation of facts and assertions in relation to our "energy transformation" leads me to **"the big lie."** I hear continually from Mr Albanese and Mr Bowen just how cheap, reliable and efficient this renewables build out will **ultimately** be for all of us. I don't think that the words used just happen to repeat the "objects" of the National Electricity Law. It is quite deliberate and it is a "big lie." The "big lie" phenomenon is a well-known technique in political circles in our modern world. It was first popularized by Walter Langer, a psychoanalyst who profiled Adolf Hitler. He said *"people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one; and if you repeat it frequently enough, people will sooner or later believe it."* Hitler is said to have used the technique and, lately, Donald Trump with his "stolen election" claim. Mathew Rozsa comments "psychologists and sociologists throughout the 21st century have been intrigued by the Big Lie strategy – meaning a story pushed by a political leader that is clearly bald-faced, yet so grandiose as to make it hard to believe that someone would fabricate it."

In 2009, I was confronted by our first wind farm development proposal for erection on our farm boundaries. Thinking it an interesting idea, I spent months researching it. Eventually, I could see that not a great deal had changed in relation to wind energy. My uncle had a wind turbine on his farm a few miles from the village of Goolma NSW. It was supposed to provide electrical power for the farm 32 volt system which was common before the 240 volt was connected to the district. But it screamed and whined at intermittent intervals and rarely, if ever, charged the battery systems which would then require charging by a "peaking power plant" called a petrol engine. It was an expensive and ineffective system and the turbine was ultimately strapped off permanently.

By 2015 when the federal Senate Wind Farm Inquiry was heard, my wife and I had written many submissions relating to them, with passing commentary on solar farms.

My wife (who has two 1st class honours degrees, a University Medal and topped her graduating classes in both Psychology and Law at ANU) had no problems reviewing expert articles and engaging in discussion with experts in various disciplines. This work also involved reading CSIRO reports and many more. Ultimately, our wind farm submission was submitted under my name and I was invited to attend the Inquiry to give evidence.

As I was not yet cynical, I was excited by the subsequent appointment of the Wind Farm Commissioner. But it became apparent shortly thereafter that he was essentially a proponent of wind and solar farm developments and an enabler for the entire industry.

In the case of the present Review, there is no secret of his “enabling” role. The Terms of Reference make it abundantly clear that it is his role to “clear the pathway” for the proposed developments – to expedite them.

Conclusion

The farmers and business people in this district know very well the shortcomings of wind and solar power, and that it is also a lie that the wind and solar resources in the CWO REZ are the best energy resources available. They also know that anything they say or submit will make little difference. The Commissioner will be able to claim *“no real problems except with developers.”* The cultural divide discussed in this submission is not understood and not relevant. Those I know who have spoken to Mr Dyer have reported he is a nice man and he does listen. Well, that’s nice, but even condemned prisoners are given a last meal of choice.

My father and my wife’s father fought in the Second World War with the Australian Infantry Forces. They fought firstly against the Nazi German Imperialist armies in the Middle East and secondly against the Imperial Japanese army in Papua New Guinea and surrounding islands. They fought to stop invasion of our country and its way of life. Now rural Australians find themselves in a new battle against ideological imperialism manifesting itself in a physical invasion of our land and destruction of our rural amenity and way of life.

The smouldering resistance to renewables (wind, solar, pumped hydro, batteries etc) in this district will not be overcome by Mr Dyer’s Review. It’s time governments and developers and proponents of all types started to accept that our rural regions are not unoccupied and are not waiting for “an energy revolution.” I have written to any number of politicians that if a site is needed for a small modular nuclear reactor for the generation of electricity then there is space on our farm for it. We know the current plan is a dud. We know the premise is a big lie. We know that some local councils and some local politicians have fallen for it. We know that proponents, motivated by the commercial reality of subsidies and profits, repeat the mantra. We know that government agencies are so far down the road of the big lie that they now need to ignore electricity and planning laws and avoid compliance with them or there will be no electricity at all.