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RECLAIMING LANGUAGE LAND LIFEWAYS

MEDIA RELEASE

Anaiwan custodians concerned about impacts of mining billionaire's proposed wind farm on country and culture

ANAIWAN COUNTRY (Armidale NSW), August 7th 2023—A proposed wind farm development northwest of Armidale is of growing concern to local Anaiwan people worried about the possible destruction of threatened bushland areas and disturbance of cultural revival activities.

The Boorolong Wind Farm could span over an area 20 kilometres long and 8 kilometres wide, hosting up to 107 turbines, each of which could be up to 300m high. Only about 2km away from one potential turbine site is the 600-acre [block of bushland bought back by Anaiwan people in 2022](#) following a successful crowdfunding campaign. Another two potential turbine sites are located less than 3km away from the property (named *Nyambinga Kyuna*). Representing the largest single patch of country owned outright by Anaiwan people, *Nyambinga Kyuna* holds enormous value for the local Aboriginal community in relation to the revival and practice of language, culture, and traditions. Furthermore, some potential turbine sites are in wooded areas, meaning substantial clearing of precious remnant bushland would occur. There are also a number of potential turbine sites located close to environmentally significant areas, including some within just 500m of the Booroolong Nature Reserve.



The bush block bought back by Anaiwan people in 2022 [pictured above], called *Nyambinga Kyuna* meaning 'Our Country', is quickly becoming a home for the revival of Anaiwan language and culture.

[Nēwara Aboriginal Corporation](#), an Armidale-based non-profit Anaiwan community organization dedicated to the revival of Anaiwan language and culture, holds serious concerns about the impacts that this large-scale industrial development could have on koalas, birdlife, biodiversity, and threatened

vegetation communities in the area. We are also concerned about how the noise and visual impacts of the turbines and other wind farm infrastructure would disturb the revival and practice of culture in the area, especially at *Nyambinga Kyuna*.

We now have a place that we can truly call our own. This is a place where we can speak our language, sing our songs, dance our dances, tell our stories, practice our ceremonies, and reclaim our traditional land management practices. And we will stand strong to protect it.

Nēwara supports renewable energy in principle, and we see it as an important part of the push for climate justice. But the transition to renewable energy must not trample over Aboriginal peoples' rights. And these rights include our right to [Free, Prior and Informed Consent \(FPIC\)](#) when it comes to developments proposed on our traditional lands, a right recognised in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We feel that the Boorolong Wind Farm project proponent Squadron Energy, which is owned by mining magnate Twiggy Forrest, has thus far failed to respect our fundamental rights as an Anaiwan community stakeholder group and Aboriginal landholder in close proximity to the proposed development. Dismissive of the international best practice FPIC framework, Squadron refers back to weak statutory 'consultation' processes and touts a 'cultural values mapping' exercise conducted earlier this year which was, in our view, tokenistic and culturally inappropriate. We are very disappointed and disheartened by Squadron's lack of genuine and positive engagement with us to date, and we do not believe that they support our right to self-determination. Squadron have yet to give us reason to think they take our concerns seriously, refusing thus far to provide us with assurances that they will take action and amend the project to mitigate the very real negative impacts that their wind farm project could have on our land and culture.

Nēwara opposes the Boorolong Wind Farm project in its current form. No amount of crumbs handed out from Squadron's community sponsorship program could possibly make up for the damage that their development could do to Anaiwan culture and country. Squadron and other renewables companies wanting to operate on Anaiwan Country need to provide concrete assurances that our interests as Anaiwan people will be respected, including but not limited to:

- 1) protective buffer zones around significant bushland areas;
- 2) mitigation of disturbances to our community's cultural practices and use/enjoyment of Country;
- 3) avoidance of substantial clearing of native woodlands; and
- 4) protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

It is also essential that these companies invest back into our community in substantial and long-term ways which support the revival of our culture, the sustainable management of our traditional lands, and provide economic opportunities for our people.

The rush to develop the New England region into Australia's biggest renewable energy zone is at risk of repeating what happened in the 1830s and 1840s here on the Tableland when squatters flooded Anaiwan Country with their livestock, creating a prosperous pastoral industry which dispossessed and disregarded the traditional owners. But there is another way, a way that respects our fundamental rights as the first peoples of this land and treats us as partners in the fight against climate change. We invite Squadron and other renewables companies, along with the NSW State Government's EnergyCo, to walk this *kara rūnyera* (good path) with us. This is an opportunity to engage in true reconciliation.

Board of Nēwara Aboriginal Corporation

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