

We, as founding directors of Walcha Wind, are making a submission **in support** of the Winterbourne Wind Farm project.

Walcha Wind Pty Ltd is company formed in December 2004 by Mirus Wind Pty Ltd and 10 Landowners who were looking for an opportunity to diversify their income as they became aware of the valuable wind resource that existed on their land as well as the ideal remote location of the area. These 10 landowners were neighbours so they set about developing potential Lease Agreements and a Code of Conduct which they took over 4 years to finalise with legal advice. Part of the plan was to have a generous Community Benefit Fund which was way ahead of its time. Mirus Wind worked closely with this group and together they waited for the right opportunity to arise such as a wind farm developer who was interested in developing a wind farm project. There was a robust consultation process with Walcha Wind and other landholders and neighbours during 2018-19 and in 2020 the 10 directors and other landholders signed Lease Agreements with Vestas, one of the best wind turbine manufacturers and developers in the world. Vestas has negotiated with the 10 farmers as a group which has created a smoother process and strengthened the cohesion amongst the turbine and infrastructure hosts as well as the neighbours who have been offered generous neighbour payments.

As part of these negotiations we were able to secure a 5% share of ownership in the project to share the financial benefits with not only turbine hosts, but with the neighbours and the general community. As the income would be variable, it was not well received by the local council so a very generous Community Benefit Fund has since been negotiated for the Walcha Community (in return for the 5%) which involves an annual fixed income indexed to the CPI for the life of the project.

The project has always been discussed openly in the community with friends and neighbours and Vestas have engaged in open and transparent communications and Walcha Wind's mission has always been "to share the financial benefits of the Winterbourne and subsequent wind farms with the whole of the wider Walcha community"

The EIS is a comprehensive document and we appreciate the courtesy and professionalism shown by the contractors studying the locations of the turbines, the biodiversity studies, the indigenous heritage studies and the location of sub-stations and other infrastructure sites. They always advised us that they would be present on our properties and followed any requests we made. Vestas has been made aware that abundant gravel is available on various properties as well as water supplies if needed.

- Walcha Wind directors are mindful of the urgent need for a consistent and reliability electricity supply which can only happen with the investment in renewable projects as the coal fired power stations closed ahead of schedule.
- The majority of turbines on each individual agricultural holding take up a small amount of land, mostly on less productive hill country in a reasonably isolated area. The agricultural land being used for this development has not involved a conflict of land use as the development is spread amongst many farms and is not

concentrated in a small area. Vestas has attempted to locate turbines in locations that require minimal disturbance to the vegetation.

- The construction of roads on farms for the project is seen as a positive for the management of our rural properties where they will exist as well as providing better access to fight fires for the Rural Fire Service. The challenges will arise during the construction phase. The construction period causes the most local disturbance and change for both the host landholder and the local community.
- Walcha Wind has developed a "Code of Conduct" which is legally binding and agreed to by the Developer. This Code of Conduct covers many of the potential issues that may arise between the Developer and the farmers during the life of the project. Overall, we think that wind turbines and the agricultural sector can happily co-exist.
- This development will increase the overall productivity of our farms as well as create a long-term source of income with no overhead costs, helping with the fluctuating income from extreme droughts, biosecurity threats, new livestock diseases and weather events and can be of benefit when considering succession planning.
- We believe the construction of this renewable energy project will add to the resilience of our small rural town by creating opportunities for local jobs (16 new local jobs in our town) for on-going service and maintenance jobs and contractors and bringing extra money into the community. There will also be increased tourism opportunities and the project has the potential to bring an increased number of visitors to our town which will increase the income for accommodation operators as well as cafes & restaurants.
- The project has the potential to arrest the population decline from our region which has been happening for the last 30 years and exacerbated by the closure of a timber mill and forestry areas in our town.
- Powerlines over agricultural land can be an issue and we have negotiated with the Developer, that the powerlines between turbines on rural properties will, wherever possible, be built underground. The main connecting powerlines will be over-head and landowners will receive an annual rental payment for this inconvenience.
- As host landowners earn income from this project, they will be able to better maintain their on-farm infrastructure, employ more outside labour and invest in regenerative agricultural techniques to improve the land and production.

- The income from the project will help us with our succession planning, enabling a transition to retirement and this will encourage young farmers to stay on the land.

Wind Farm developments will always have their challenges, especially during construction and this project is no exception.

**Walcha Wind Pty would like to recommend that the Department of Planning, as a condition of consent, give serious consideration to the following:**

- 1. Ensure aviation lights on turbines are shielded from the line of sight to residences to minimise the impact on a wide area in the district.**
- 2. Ensure good traffic schedules are well publicised for local traffic during construction.**
- 3. Decommissioning. The Department of Planning needs to ensure that, as part of the Development Consent, a fund is established to cover the cost of decommissioning.**
- 4. Penalties need to be able to be charged where contractors or the developer breach conditions in the "Code of Conduct"**

As a group, we have been diligent in the fight against climate change and so help the NSW Government, as set out by Minister Matt Kean and the NSW Parliament, meet its objective of supplying 50% of the energy in the State from renewables by 2030 .

Our dream was to supply renewable power to 1 million homes in the next 10 years.