Received - mailroom 20 Jan 2023

Attention: Mr Iwan Davies
Planning and Assessment
Department of Planing and Environment

RE: WINTERBOURNE WIND FARM SSD-10471

. Dear Mr Davies

I am a long term Walcha resident with interests in a rural holding, and frequently commute within the project area. I am a long term advocate of renewable energy; however I have reservations regarding the scale and cumulative impacts of the Winterbourne wind farm and subsequent projects (Ruby Hills and Brackendale).

[redacted]

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Mr Iwan Davies
Senior Planning Officer
Resource Assessments & Planning Services
Department of Planning & Environment

WINTERBOURNE WIND FARM SSD-10471

Dear Mr Davies

I am broadly in support of renewable energy, and comprehend the imminent supply problems facing the grid. However the scale and intensity of this project raises several concerns around traffic management, biodiversity, biosecurity, visual amenity, acoustic pollution, and social division. Without further mitigation of the aforementioned issues I am not in support of the Winterbourne wind farm, nor the concentration of renewable energy projects in a very limited number of Renewable Energy Zones.

The dramatic increase of heavy traffic brings about some serious issues, particularly in relation to the Oxley highway east of Bendemeer and the Moona Plains road. Both are very narrow and winding, relative to the traffic they support. The dramatic increase in heavy traffic brings about three main issues-

Firstly, significant time delays are expected as there are limited opportunities to pass wide loads, especially for livestock trucks, local roads do not accommodate safe passage in many locations. A drive to Moona Plains in a B-Double would demonstrate this point. Map F3-6 reveals the minimalist approach to mitigating this issue.

Secondly, the destruction of local roads, this was aptly demonstrated with the recent upgrade of Walcha water supply, with around 10-20 additional heavy vehicle movements per day resulting in a severely damaged road, small vehicles were forced to travel on the incorrect side to traverse the worst areas. Map F6-18 shows an additional peak vehicle movement of **336 heavy vehicles** and **313 light vehicle** movements per day on sections of the Winterbourne road.

Thirdly, but most importantly, the mere increase in heavy traffic is likely to present a major safety hazard, before even considering the compounding impact that damaged surfaces present. During the 2019 fire season a modest increase in foreign traffic on these roads, lead to an increased accident rate.

I understand others have raised issues around specific species loss, my concern with this subject goes to the broader problems within the biodiversity offsets scheme, whereby the funds are accumulating and not finding appropriate projects, furthermore areas that are set aside as offsets, are frequently not new, but merely conserving pre-existing areas that are already protected, resulting in a net loss of habitat. One alternative may be to mandate re-vegetation in adjacent areas within the project area.

Another major concerns is in regard to biosecurity, primary producers in NSW have biosecurity plans in order to mitigate the spread of invasive vegetation (i.e. African love Grass, Chilean needle grass, serrated tussock etc.) and to prevent the transmission of animal diseases (i.e. Bovine Johne's Disease, Ovine Johne's Disease-OJD, Foot rot, Foot and Mouth Disease etc.).

To that end many producers have developed plans that involve the exclusion of foreign vehicles onto their land, and where this is not practical a thorough vehicle wash down is required.

One disease of particular relevance for the project is OJD, a wasting condition in sheep that results in morbidity and mortality. Recently this disease has inadvertently been brought into the district by a land owner within the project area.

With a long life span in the soil (several months), it seems highly likely that both faecal matter and soil will be transferred between properties with the high movement of traffic and machinery, particularly in the construction phase. This is problematic as many sheep producers and two studs reside within the project area, infection of which may result in restricted market access and further spread of this disease. Whilst a Vaccine exists, it is less than desirable as accidental injection may result in amputation for the operator.

The possibility exists to mitigate some of these effects by reducing the initial scope of the project, to the area originally planned (i.e. - turbine number B46 through to B116 approx.). This drastically reduces the number of affected neighbours as the majority in this smaller zone support the project. It also proportionally reduces the number of vehicle movements. If this phase is managed in an acceptable manner, then additional phases may be considered more favourably by the broader community.

In addition the construction time frame may be significantly extended to encourage longer term employment and reduce the extreme pulse of workers, traffic and resources. This may result in more sustained benefit for the local community and reduce the intensity of adverse impacts.

Renewable energy are inherently diffuse, as is the existing electricity network, furthermore energy storage is a major factor limiting the uptake of renewable energy (especially roof top solar), hence it would seem logical that a proportion of the tens of billions of dollars proposed for REZ network infrastructure, would be better allocated to R&D into energy storage technologies. Improvements in storage technologies should enable the diffusion of generation over greater area, closer to the point of use.

In conclusion this project has significant merit in supplying renewable energy into the national grid; however the scale and intensity of impacts to a relatively small geographic area require greater mitigation. A reduction of scale and extension of construction time frame may be more palatable.

Thank you for your consideration.

*I have made no political gifts or donations within the past two years.