

Project: Burrendong Wind Farm, SSD-8950984

Director – Energy Assessments
Development Assessment
Department of Planning and Environment

OBJECTION SUBMISSION

ATT: Natasha Homsey (Planner), Director – Energy Assessments, Minister for Planning & Public Spaces

Please accept this letter as my objection to the Burrendong Wind Farm, SSD-8950984.

Project Area: 3058HA

Number of Turbines: 70**

****Review number of turbines per HA. 70 turbines on just over 3000HA, the proximity seems extremely high, compared to the other wind projects in the CWO REZ.**

My objection to this project is based on my deep concern and lack of confidence in relation to any potential benefits of Industrial Renewable Energy vs the disastrous Rapid Renewable Transition across rural & regional NSW/Australia

VALUES & PRIORITIES

My involvement in agriculture, love of nature and experience in community development and rural town revitalisation has provided me with a background that **values and prioritises** the following:

- Rural Communities, their people, their contribution, and their character
- Our people – individual physical and mental health, and capacity
- Our environmental assets, including bushland and biodiversity
- Our precious soil and water resources
- Australian agriculture - food & fibre production
- Unique interconnectedness and interdependence of the land, water, flora and fauna, rural people and rural communities
- Our cultural, Aboriginal and historical heritage and assets
- Responsible, equitable and fit-for-purpose developments that empower and enable rural communities
- Intergenerational equity
- Unbiased scrutiny of feasibility and cost-benefit-analysis
- Attitude of critical thinking and common sense

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS

The **project impacts** (cumulative and residual) that are of **significant concern** to me are:

- Social impacts, loss of community cohesion and character
- Environmental impacts, loss of native grassland, woodland and flora and fauna
- Agricultural and Property Impacts, loss of productive Agricultural land, cumulative decline in food and fibre production
- Water
- Loss of property rights

- Decline in rural property values
- Unavoidable impacts to nearby residents
- Health and environmental hazards – transparent consideration
- Loss of natural landscapes to industrialised developments, including energy generation and transmission
- Workforce, competition with existing industries for employees, TWAs, temporary population growth, traffic, noise, dust and anti-social behaviour
- Decommissioning processes and certainty, and recycling ability of project infrastructure
- Rushed and unbalanced Energy Transition – ineffective state-wide **coordination** i.e silo'd approach to project assessment and approvals
- No reliable base-load power source identified in transition
- Capability of local communities and LGAs to cope with the numerous impacts and demands of State Significant Development/s

PLANNING ASSESSMENT CONTEXT AND PERSPECTIVE

Included in my objection submission are my many concerns, mostly related to rural communities, rural landscapes and the environment. Could the Planning department please address the following question:

What preparation, study and practical experience is present within the planning team of each project assessment to allow sufficient and reasonable understanding of context and perspective to these numerous objections and many, many concerns? Eg. Sound perspective of land areas – the difference between 70 turbines on 3000HA to 60 turbines on 9000HA. What does 50,000HA actually look and feel like? How long does it take to drive across? Rural community living – the fact that you commonly run into your Doctor, Footy coach and Shire Councillor at social gatherings, that your kids school teacher and your Dad both get called out to a road accident (as volunteers) AND that it is highly likely that they KNOW the person in the accident. That all of the people in your close circle, have friends and family that overlap with your professional and community circles too. That when one family struggles, the whole community FEELS it.

It has not been demonstrated as yet to our community, by any developer, EnergyCo or the Planning Department that there is ANY demonstrated and true understanding of rural communities, farming and rural landscapes and as such, I question HOW ANY PROJECT can be fairly or adequately assessed without this?

If I was to be asked to assess the impacts of a major road/tunnel project on suburban living or city living – I certainly could not relate or begin to understand, as this is not part of my lived experience or knowledge. Facts and figures on paper, do not give a full or true picture and cannot be the only mechanism to decide the fate of rural NSW. Minister, I urge you to consider the objections of local community members, landholders as their plea before it is too late. I fully support the need for their local concerns to be fully understood and properly addressed. I believe, once we know better, we should do better. The NSW Planning Department cannot continue to assess these projects without demonstrating proper understanding and appreciation of the very people, communities and landscapes impacted.

LOCAL CONCERNS AND OBJECTIONS

The value of local objections and concerns cannot be overlooked. The review of objections MUST consider and acknowledge that majority of the objections will have been completed in time outside of and on top of normal business/employment/family/community commitments, on top of life's normal challenges such as

financial stress/illness/grief/relationship breakdowns/heatwaves/natural disaster impacts. The local objections are not completed in a climate controlled/airconditioned office, with real coffee nearby (ironically both of which use a great deal of power to provide!) and a team of support or resources at their fingertips. The time invested into their objections is due to a deep care for the local environment, local people, farming and as such the value of their concerns must not be underestimated and are deserved of intense consideration.

WEIGHING UP THE TOTAL IMPACTS AND COSTS

The cumulative and residual Social, Environmental and Economical impacts are simply TOO great. They are a cost we should not force future generations to bear. It is our generational responsibility to act in a considered and balanced way in regard to all developments with such substantial cumulative and residual losses and costs. This Renewable Energy transition is not about saving our environment and securing the future of Australia, if it was, we would be spending the time needed to get it “right”.

I wholeheartedly believe that landowners and rural communities should have the right to reject developments which they consider unsuitable, risky or damaging. This is their home, livelihoods and businesses, family history, potentially generations of irreplaceable livestock genetic development – the chance of having both home and livelihood significantly and negatively impacted simultaneously is less likely when you live in urban areas, but is common occurrence when these developments impact rural and agricultural areas. Powering the nation is undoubtedly important and vital for the future of our country, but not at the cost of one group of people – rural landholders. This should be a balanced transition that demands a fair and equitable delivery of a diverse range of sustainable energy generation and storage solutions.

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act), Division 2.6 Community Participation

Project: Burrendong Wind Farm, SSD-8950984 IS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH EP&A Act, Division 2.6

Landowners and rural communities should be actively invited to participate in project acceptance, planning, impact mitigation and be actively involved, collaborated and empowered throughout the engagement process. It is not merely an act to inform and consult. As we know better, we should do better. A sound and effective international Quality Assurance Standard for Community & Stakeholder Engagement is the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) 2015. This isn’t new, there should be no reason why best practice community engagement is not occurring. The level of local objection submissions received to this project would evidence this.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.	
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Project: Burrendong Wind Farm, SSD-8950984 IS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act), Function: State Significant Infrastructure Guidelines

The guidelines state 3.1 Introduction “All SSI projects require the approval of the Minister under Division 5.2 of the EP&A Act before they may proceed. Prior to determination, they are subject to comprehensive assessment with extensive community participation under the EP&A Act. The main steps in the assessment are shown in Figure 1 and explained in more detail in sections 4 to 14 of these guidelines. While all SSI projects undergo the same comprehensive assessment, **the scale and impacts of these projects can vary significantly. Consequently, it is important to ensure that the level of community engagement and assessment required for each project is proportionate to the scale and impacts of the project.** All SSI projects are determined on their merits, having regard to their economic, environmental and social impacts and the principles of ecologically sustainable development.”

UNCONSIDERED RISK

As an individual and as a farming family, we have embraced renewable energy and utilise it to power our home and farm. 10 years ago, I personally could only see the many benefits of renewables. Now, living in the first NSW Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), the Central West Orana REZ, I have many, many concerns and questions about Australia’s Net Zero commitments (the Paris Agreement) and the rapid transition to renewables. I fear, it lacks integrity, fit-for-purpose scrutiny, simple cost-benefit-analysis and common sense. I believe, the ultimate financial price will be paid by all Australians, however the environmental, agricultural and social costs will see rural and regional communities bear the brunt of them in the coming years. This presents a massive and unfair intergenerational risk in my opinion.

I fear that Renewables are the “green veil” we have been sold as our countries ticket to reducing greenhouse emissions as Australia’s main contribution to fighting Climate Change in line with the Paris Agreement. However, this “green veil” of renewables, may end up being the exact opposite, it may cumulatively become the “green dream injection” for the environment and the future for rural and regional Australia. The economic investment opportunity is the “carrot stick” being used for Councils and the regions, but does anyone really know and want to understand what the associated **sum-total costs** and trade-offs will be? Will loss of community character matter, or loss of families, will damaged water systems, loss of flora and fauna matter? Will combined and simultaneous loss of agricultural land and reduced production of food and fibre matter – what will really matter most? While it is not the responsibility of this project developer, I haven’t found or understand where robust scrutiny has occurred and continued monitoring and assessment of the feasibility, cost-benefits or cumulative and residual impacts of these industrialised energy projects and the rapid transition to Renewable Energy are required.

SNIPPET OF PROJECT IMPACTS

The findings of the detailed Agricultural Impact Assessment state that there are numerous potential impacts to Agriculture. Including:

- Loss of agricultural land and production
- Impacts on the local region
- Increased traffic and dust
- Additional visual and noise impacts
- Biosecurity risk and spreading of weeds
- Soil erosion and scour from slopes

- Changes to livestock management
- Impacts of decommissioning the Project

In summary, it appears to me that any potential impacts to agriculture has suggested mitigation measures which implies that the impacts are negligible. While projected Total Gross Income Loss may be a value used for quantifying and comparing (project by project), where is the **sum total** of these losses recorded, monitored and assessed? **Sum total across the REZ and the sum total across the State?** Where it is shown to consider income losses, where are the total loss of food and fibre outputs calculated? The total reduction of Kgs of beef or lamb produced, the total reduction of wool produced, over the life of the project? Over the life of the REZ? Over the entire State for the next 20 years? While the losses of income are relevant to farmers, the losses of food available for the supermarket shelf – would surely be of interest to everyone? We might meet our net-zero targets, but the trade-offs in the process – WHO IS MEASURING THESE?

The assessments that have been undertaken, eg Social Impact Survey's etc, are the levels of participation adequate and at a level comparable with that of a **State Significant Project**? If there is no measurable level of participation required – why not? If there is, what is it?

The Management Plan's that are yet to be completed, I believe these should be presented for public consideration at the time of exhibition, and should these be included in an amendment report, the public should have provision to comment and raise concerns at that time.

CAPACITY TO MEET INCREASED SERVICE DEMANDS

Do the local communities and the LGA have the capability to meet the service demands of these SSDs? The State Government, should be funding and conducting a thorough Capability Study in each LGA and work to collaborate with and support the LGAs to meet these additional demands. Eg. Extra staff in hospital emergency wards, extra emergency services personnel, adequate bushfire protection provision, additional classroom or education requirements, if these requirements aren't identified and assessed **HOW CAN ANY LGA OR COMMUNITY BE ENABLED TO COPE WITH THE DELIVERY OF THESE PROJECTS?** Once identified – where are these additional service personnel going to come from? It is vital that this planning occurs now, before the impacts are fully realised and experienced.

IF this project is approved, how will the community benefit from hosting this infrastructure? At the very least, significantly reduced energy costs for the directly impacted residents and communities should be a part of the benefits delivered. The benefits should not just be a pool of money for more volunteer run and delivered projects or more Council run projects.

SUMMARY

I accept that this submission is relevant to one project, but it would be remiss of me if I did not urge all to consider that while Renewable Energy many have many, many instances where it can be used effectively and sustainably, powering Australia by constructing **INDUSTRIAL RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS AND INDUSTRIAL RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONES** – termed "*Renewable Energy Power Plants of the Future*" by the Minister, across bushland, agricultural land and in the oceans – across the very environments we are seeking to protect and save, cannot be the solution we continue to accept.

Rigorous scrutiny is needed before it is too late. Scrutiny into the GENCost report (the justification of the cost), scrutiny into the feasibility and cost-benefit analysis of the REZ model and industrialised renewable energy projects, scrutiny into future base-load power provision, scrutiny into utilising *existing infrastructure* for installing solar and photovoltaic energy generation plants, scrutiny into the efficiency and sustainability of large-scale renewable energy generation and constructing new transmission lines to carry

power excessive distances to where it will primarily be consumed, scrutiny into the opportunities and benefits of diverse energy generation sources and a balanced transition.

I acknowledge and appreciate both the considerable complexity and the inhibiting bureaucracy around the conversation on how to sustainably power our nation into the future. These two factors deter many Australians from becoming involved or actively seeking to understand. I would urge anyone to dig-in and consider that this “Industrialised Renewable Energy Transition” is not the renewable and sustainable answer for the future of energy generation in Australia.

Yours Sincerely,

Sal Edwards

Volunteer, Farmer & Community Capacity Builder

Warrumbungle Region NSW