

# Kyoto energypark



## 5. Community Participation



## 5.0 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

It was a requirement of the Director General (DG) of Planning that “an appropriate level of consultation” with government agencies, interest groups and the local community be undertaken in the preparation of this Environmental Assessment. This Section describes the consultation process and identifies the issues raised by stakeholders during that process. Reference is also made to the Sections within this Environmental Assessment where these matters have been addressed.

### 5.1 Community Participation Strategy

To facilitate effective Community Consultation and to satisfy the requirements of the Director General’s, Pamada:

- Prepared a Community Participation Plan to ensure the effective dissemination of information and the collection and documentation of the responses;
- Identified the full range of stakeholders, including authorities in addition to those identified by the Director General;
- Discussed the issues and distributed information to ensure that this relatively new technology (to the area) could be fully understood and evaluated by the community;
- Identified the need to differentiate the consultation process for government authorities and other quasi-government bodies, from that designed for the local community, local organisations and business groups.

### 5.2 Community Participation Plan

The Community Participation (refer to *Appendix N*), was prepared specifically in relation to the process of consulting all interest groups other than the identified government and quasi-government authorities.

The key objectives of this Plan were to:

- Identify all key stakeholder groups and gain an understanding of their particular area of interest and influence on project outcomes;
- Develop appropriate methods for engaging each stakeholder group;
- Provide the local community with accurate information about the proposed Kyoto Energy Park;
- Provide opportunities for the community to raise issues, make comments, ask questions and provide essential local knowledge;
- Indicate how the feedback would be considered in the decision-making process and set prioritisation of issues .

The other component of consultation with the general community was the Community Engagement Plan. The key elements of the Community Engagement Plan were to undertake:

- Earliest possible dissemination of information about the project via the various media outlets;
- Development of a range of appropriate communication materials, activities and events, to best meet each particular communication need;
- Personal communication with all local residents, community groups and businesses;
- Create greatest possible knowledge about the proposal at a local level;
- Create greatest possible opportunities for face-to-face meetings with nearest residents and direct feedback;
- Ensure continuity of opportunities for individual and group engagement throughout the life of the project, including site visits and information leaflets;
- Ensure local enthusiasm for and “ownership” of the project.

### 5.3 Community Consultation Methodology

In accordance with the Community Consultation Plan, consultation to August 2008 has included:

#### 5.3.1 Media Coverage

The bulk of media coverage was undertaken by the local newspaper, the Scone Advocate. Several articles have appeared in the Newcastle Herald and the Sydney Morning Herald with specific discussion generated on ABC Radio programs (Muswellbrook and Newcastle) and NBN TV news. It should be

noted that media coverage in relation to the initial wind farm proposal began as early as 2003. Because of the unique nature of the project media coverage has been extensive and is ongoing.

The newspaper articles have generally maintained a neutral position and have been informative. Articles have outlined both positive and negative impacts of the proposed development. At a regional level there has been a greater focus on the potential of the development in combating global warming and supplementing coal fired power production. A summary of media coverage received to date is contained in *Appendix M Media Coverage and Advertisements*.

Arguments supporting the development are based on environmental issues while arguments against the development are predominantly issues such as impact on landscape, serenity, noise, viability efficiency and appropriateness.

The proponent’s strategy for media management has been to:

- Engage the media in the Community Participation Plan;
- Issue press releases about the progressive status of the project;
- To establish a page on the project website to list the chronology of media coverage of the project for access by all the community.

The development of the proposal in the context of the local area will ensure that media interest and coverage will be ongoing.



Figure 5.0 Examples of Newspaper Media

### 5.3.2 Public Consultations

In accordance with the Community Participation Plan a number of methods of consultation were undertaken in relation to the proposed Kyoto Energy Park. These included preliminary community consultations undertaken by the proponent, face to face meetings with local residents, phone conversations with key community organisations, local media coverage, letters and community updates, meetings and formal presentations, and a Community Information Day (refer to Section 5.3.4). Additionally information and announcements have been made on the Kyoto Energy Park website.

Public consultations have been summarised below. The following initiatives have been undertaken to facilitate direct consultation between the community and the proponent:

- An initial Community Information Newsletter on (1 January 2007), followed by a formal letter to all local residents, introducing the project and advertising of the details relating to an inquiry phone line;
- Formal presentations of the project inception and progress meetings to the Upper Hunter Shire Council (Scone) and to the Local Aboriginal Land Council at Muswellbrook;

- On site indigenous archaeological survey with the Local Aboriginal Land Council and Identified Aboriginal stakeholders;
- Establishment of the Kyoto Energy Farm website in October 2007, to allow the community direct access to updated information;
- Establishment of the Pamada Scone Office just off the main street in Scone. This office was staffed on a part time basis (usually 2 days per week), by the Kyoto Community Liaison Officer for meetings and appointments.
- Community information update brochure January 2007, 2 July 2007 and 3 January 2008 (see Figure 5.1 below);
- Community Information Day, promoted to all members of the public, by direct mail outs, advertisements and articles in local press, Council 'Whats on' website, brochures and posters set up in shop fronts and public places;
- Meetings with local residents, held on either a one-to-one or small group basis with residents in the vicinity of the proposal;
- A number of phone interviews generated from the establishment of the Stakeholder Register;
- Independent consultation and telephone questionnaires with local business stakeholders by Key Insights Pty Ltd as part of the Socio-Economic investigation and Community Feedback Survey;
- Response by the Kyoto Energy Park Liaison Manager to queries and concerns raised by residents.

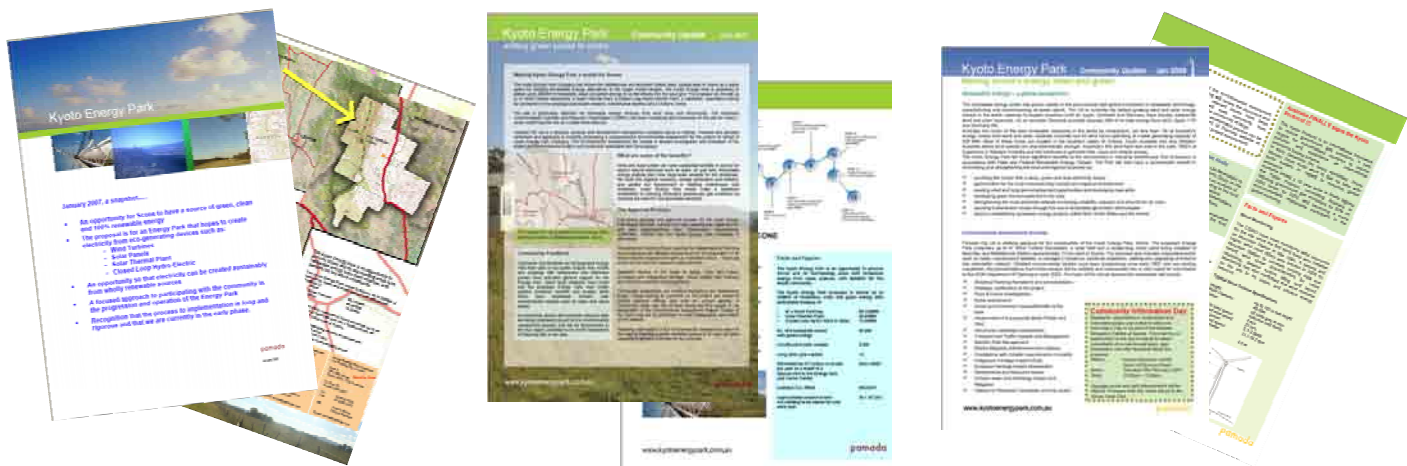


Figure 5.1 Examples of Community Information distributed to Local Community and Stakeholders

**5.3.3 Consultation with Stakeholders**

As part of the community consultation process Pamada were active in informing community groups and business organisations with the Scone area. These included presentations, and progress flyers to the Scone Chamber of Commerce and the Country Women’s association. Pamada were also involved in a Scone High school project competition, which was published in the Newcastle herald (*Appendix N*).

A Scone Office was used during the consultation period just off the main street in Scone (see Figure XX below). The office was staffed by the Community Liaison Officer on a part time basis (usually two days per week). The office was also used for meetings with numerous residents, media consultation, general office duties and communications. After hours numbers were displayed during unattended hours.

As part of community consultations, Key Insights’ established a stakeholder register comprised of key interest groups in the Scone area (including community groups and forums, schools, government organisations and chambers of commerce). Of the twenty two interest groups identified, Key Insights conducted seven phone interviews with representatives from these organisations.

An overview of phone consultations conducted with key community organisations about Kyoto Energy Park provided a brief insight into the community’s current awareness, concerns and interests. Upon conducting phone interviews, a lack of interest in the subject and knowledge of the development was

evident. The majority of people interviewed, were aware of the proposal once given a brief description of its location.

Overall, consultation with stakeholder groups uncovered mixed views about the proposed Kyoto Energy Park. The lack of responses indicated limited interest in the project; however, issues surrounding information accessibility and availability were highlighted.

A full description of organisational consultation and outcomes is contained in the Key insights report Appendix K.

The Community Information Day was organised to provide community stakeholders with current up to date information about the project.



*Figure 5.2 Pamada Scone Office off Kelly Street, Scone*

### **5.3.4 Community Information Day**

The Community Information Day was held on Saturday 16th February 2008 and was held to provide the community with access to project information, speak with the proponents and core consultants, understand project issues to date, ask questions about the development and comment on the proposal. An estimated 150 local people attended, and a total of 56 feedback forms were received.

The views of those community members who attended, ranged from strong opposition to strong support. Those most strongly opposed to the project were more likely to be immediate neighbours. Some residents of the Scone township were also concerned about the impacts on the amenity of the town. Those in support of the proposal were generally committed to “green energy”. Many appeared to be open minded and curious or attended with a specific question for the proponent.

The responses received indicate that whilst support does exist for the proposed development, there are still many residents undecided and have further questions and concerns. It should be noted that typically, those opposed to a project are more likely to make a submission in writing.

Furthermore, the feedback forms highlight that most residents are supportive of environmental quality, renewable energy and sustainability.



*Figure 5.3 Community Information Day held at Scone Equine Research Centre*

#### **5.4 Issues Raised by the Community**

As a result of the independent Community Information Day Survey initiated on the Community Information Open Day, Key insights Pty Ltd received 56 feedback forms. In summary, there was mixed support for the proposal. The community's main concerns related to the proposed location of the wind farms in the area generally but in particular:

- the potential for noise impacts;
- the aesthetic/visual impacts; and
- the effect on local property values and the use of the land.

Other concerns raised included:

- the effects on flora and fauna (loss of vegetation, impact on threatened species eg. bird strike);
- detract from the rural character and cultural heritage of the area;
- greenhouse gas emissions;
- electromagnetic interferences;
- traffic and transport;
- construction impacts and grid connection impacts;
- possible vibrations; and
- dust.

The potential for greater employment during construction was acknowledged by the general census. It should also be noted that while many submissions were concerned about the potential impacts of the proposed Kyoto Energy Park in the locality (as identified above), there was considerable support expressed for the idea of introducing renewable energy sources reflecting a general community concern for the long term contribution to climate change solutions and general health and well being of the environment.

In addition to those issues of concern raised by the community, Pamada supplemented the list of issues to be addressed with those raised by the Focus Groups, with other issues raised in the assessment documents for other development of a similar nature and the issues for consideration in the Council's Local Environmental Plan and Land Use Strategy.

A copy of the Community Information Day Report undertaken by Key Insights Pty Ltd is attached in *Appendix K - Key Insights Pty Ltd- Community Information Day Report (25th February 2008)*.

## **5.5 Prioritisation of Issues**

Independent of the review and ranking of Focus Group concerns, all community queries were logged by Pamada. A copy of this record was made available to the community consultation specialists to allow these issues to be included in the specialist's review and analysis of all feedback. At the time, Pamada ranked all of the issues raised by the community as a HIGH priority. The potential environmental impact of all other issues was then ranked HIGH, MEDIUM or LOW dependant on their likelihood and consequences.

The HIGH ranking issues were identified as noise; visual impact; flora and fauna, reduced property values and impacts on the use of land from grid connection. Community members who are opposed to the development are predominantly surrounding and adjoining residents.

Community members who are in favour of the development see the Kyoto Energy Park as an opportunity to support environmental sustainability, renewable energy use and regional economic benefits (predominantly residents from the wider Scone and Upper Hunter communities).

The results of the identification and prioritisation of issues have been used to inform and focus the discussion and analysis contained in this Environmental Assessment.

## **5.6 Specialist Investigations Undertaken**

Following an initial evaluation of all of the potential and actual issues of concern raised by government authorities and the community, a range of technical reports were prepared as part of the process of preparing this Environmental Assessment.

These reports provide an evaluation of the technical issues associated with the project and include recommendations for mitigation and/or management measures to avoid, or at least minimise, the potential or actual impacts likely to arise from the development. Following this an Environmental Risk Analysis and a Statement of Commitments was provided and formed the basis of a range of management plans and preventative works to appropriately address those issues of concern identified in the consultation process.

## **5.7 Status of the Consultation Process**

Pamada has completed an extensive public sector and private sector consultation program which has informed the completion of the required Environmental Assessment. The process will continue throughout all subsequent phases of the project, including throughout construction and its ongoing operation.

Pamada initiatives that are to continue to be implemented include:

- An ongoing consultation program to provide information during the public exhibition, construction and operational phases.
- Access to the Pamada enquiry line, email and website.
- Ongoing communication with all community stakeholders to ensure delivery on Pamada commitments resulting from the Environmental Assessment.
- A "Nearest Neighbours" strategy as a supplement to the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to ensure community access to senior project staff for resolution of concerns.
- It is to be noted that Pamada is also committed to provide seed funding for on-going community and education programs. It will do this by facilitating the Mt Moobi Foundation Charter managed by non politically-aligned community representatives.



### No windfarms in Scone

Going through recent issues of *The Advocate* missed on a trip to Spain I was unpleasantly surprised to read of a proposed installation of wind farms on hills near Scone.

Parts of Spain we drove through are awash with wind farms. Blighted by them would be a better description.

These windfarms may be a triumph of industrial design, and in promotional pictures and videos they do have a certain individual elegance.

But, up close, they are gigantic, up to 150 metres high; as tall as a football field is long plus 50 per cent.

In groups or rows they completely overwhelm and visually annihilate the landscape for kilometres around.

Nobody who is financially or politically disinterested in wind farms but who lives close enough to see or hear them finds them attractive, quite the opposite.

Scone district does however have some of the most attractive country in NSW, heritage grade landscape I suggest.

We don't need the visual pollution of heavily government (ie taxpayer) subsidised wind farms. Please put them in some else's backyard.

By Dr Mj Hunter

[The Scone Advocate](#) 28 June 2007

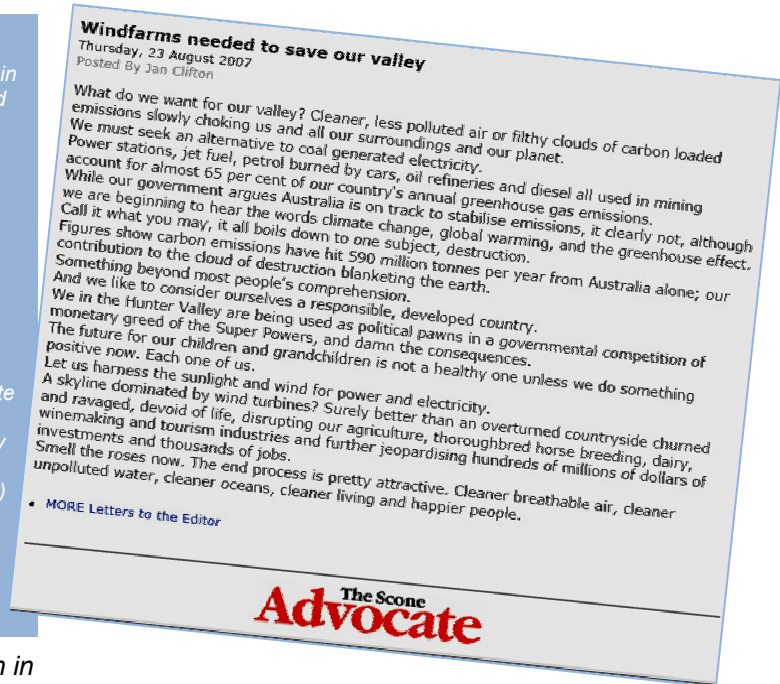


Figure 5.5 Examples of Resident Letters as seen in the *Scone Advocate* and published on the web.

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