

Frequently Asked Questions

MAY 2015

WHAT IS GULLEN RANGE WIND FARM (GRWF)?

- GRWF is approximately 20 to 30 kilometres north-west of Goulburn in the Southern Tablelands of NSW, in the Upper Lachlan Shire local government area.
- The 73 turbine sites within the wind farm are located in a 25 kilometre strip along the north-south ridges of the Great Dividing Range. The northern area of the wind farm is approximately six kilometres south of Crookwell and the southern extent is approximately nine kilometres north of Breadalbane.
- The wind farm was approved by the former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure on 26 June 2009, and then by the NSW Land and Environment Court on 4 August 2010 following an appeal by objectors.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THE WIND FARM WAS CONSTRUCTED?

- During the construction of the GRWF in 2013, the Department received feedback from the community suggesting a number of the turbines had been constructed in unapproved locations.
- While the company maintained that the locations of the turbines were consistent with the project approval, it lodged a modification application for planning permission for the 'as constructed' turbine locations. NSW planning law allows an application to be lodged for this purpose.
- The Planning Assessment Commission refused the modification in October 2014, citing that the refusal was based on the modification's inconsistency with the Draft NSW Wind Farm Planning Guidelines and the significant visual impacts on nearby homes.
- After the application was refused, further investigations by the Department's compliance unit identified that the movement of nine of the turbines was inconsistent with the project approval as they could potentially increase the biodiversity and visual impacts of the project.

WHAT ACTION WAS TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO THE DEPARTMENT'S FINDINGS?

- In line with the PAC's refusal and the Department's compliance investigation, the Department issued a draft order to the wind farm requiring the nine turbines be relocated or removed.
- The company responded to the draft order by providing a range of additional information to respond to the Department's concerns about the increased biodiversity and visual impacts of the nine turbines, and advised that it had either purchased or come to an agreement with the landowners of the most affected properties.

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WHY IS THE MODIFICATION PROPOSAL BEING ASSESSED A SECOND TIME?

- After the company appealed the PAC's decision regarding the modification, the Land and Environment Court set aside the refusal. The PAC agreed to this during the Court proceedings.
- The Court's decision means the Department is legally required to re-assess the application.
- The Department's second assessment of the modification took into account the new information on biodiversity and visual impacts, as well as the company's new arrangements with nearby properties.
- The assessment found there is no risk of significant environmental harm as a result of the relocated turbines.
- This finding also means there is no legal basis for the Department to issue the order to relocate or remove the turbines.
- The proposal is now back with the PAC for a fresh decision, with the Department recommending that the modification be approved, subject to a number of amendments to strengthen the conditions relating to biodiversity and visual amenity.