

Jess Watson
Senior Environmental Assessment Officer
Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure
C/o Major Projects Portal

Re: Bookham Wind Farm (SSD-79885459) – SEARs – DPIRD Agriculture and Biosecurity Advice

Dear Ms Watson

I refer to your request of 10 February for advice on the draft SEARs for the above proposal.

Agriculture plays a vital role in supporting state, regional and local economies, and strengthening the social bonds and character of rural communities. The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Agriculture and Biosecurity collaborates with our stakeholders to protect and enhance the productive and sustainable use and resilience of agricultural resources and the environment.

DPIRD Agriculture and Biosecurity has undertaken a preliminary assessment of the project based on the Scoping Report, and the draft SEARs, and note the requirement to undertake an agricultural assessment, soil survey, cumulative impact assessment and Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (LUCRA) for the project as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). To ensure the scope of agricultural issues are sufficiently addressed, the issued SEARs should include the following matters in addition to the matters contained in the draft:

- To interpret and minimise impacts to agriculture, and to inform rehabilitation goals, a thorough assessment of the site's **pre-development agricultural productivity potential** will be required to establish baseline data. In addition to soil assessment referenced in the SEARs, this should include assessment of other factors such as soil fertility, irrigation opportunities and farm infrastructure, and identify areas with potential for cropping and pasture improvement.
- Assessment of cumulative agricultural impacts should seek to put land disturbance/loss (based on land and soil capability classification and other relevant mapping characteristics) into the context of local, regional and statewide availabilities of land resources. This should additionally include estimates of production value loss (both direct and secondary) and potential loss of critical mass of agricultural commodity production to support nearby processing facilities.

- The Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (LUCRA) should include potential conflicts with land owners of the site itself, as well as neighbours, and should be based on direct consultation where possible. It should take note of sensitive agricultural activities such as cropping and livestock breeding, and ways to minimise impacts to these activities should be considered in the final design and management of the project.
- Biosecurity management issues during and post construction must be assessed in relation to potential agricultural impacts (pests, weeds, and potential emergency animal diseases such as Japanese Encephalitis and Foot and Mouth Disease) including a risk assessment outlining the likely plant, animal, and community risks.
- There should be specific justification for any proposed worker accommodation site. The proponent should be aware that the development of extra dwellings on RU1 Primary Production zoned lands remote from towns or villages has the potential to create land use conflicts.
- A Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Management strategy should be prepared which describes the final land use and landform and details how to return the land to its pre-development agricultural productivity potential at the end of the life of the facility or any component. The plan should detail an expected timeline for the decommissioning and rehabilitation program. Rehabilitation plans at all turbine and infrastructure sites during and post construction should detail appropriate groundcover management using locally native or otherwise suitable species to limit dust and other land use conflict issues.

Should you require clarification on any of the information contained in this response, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at landuse.ag@dpird.nsw.gov.au.

Sincerely



Milo Kelly
Agricultural Land Use Planning Officer
Climate & Natural Resources | Agricultural Land Use Planning
South East and Tablelands Region

21 February 2025