

10 August 2018

Executive Director Resource  
Assessments, Planning Services,  
Department of Planning,  
NSW State Government  
GPO Box 39 Sydney 2001.

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **Response to Snowy 2 Exploratory Works Environmental Impact Statement**

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment on the Snowy 2 Exploratory Works (EW) Project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released on 23 July 18. We comment from the perspective of Talbingo property owners and ratepayers (3 properties) who have had a long-standing association with the town and region going back 46 years. While residents of Melbourne, we holiday at Talbingo 3-7 times each year to enjoy all the delightful circumstances the region has to offer, and we support the community at every opportunity.

As noted in the EIS, there appears to be broad community acceptance for the need for Snowy 2 project and the additional, environmentally sensitive power generation that it represents. We support the project and the overall strategy to move Australia to energy supplied from renewable sources.

However, while the EIS is comprehensive, from the perspective of a Talbingo resident it has shortcomings in that it fails to satisfactorily address the impacts of Snowy 2 EW on the local community. Where it has addressed local communities, emphasis has been placed on Tumut and Cooma without the most obvious of towns (Talbingo) impacted by the project being adequately considered.

Talbingo, relocated from its original township as a consequence of the Snowy Hydro scheme, is no stranger to disruption and dislocation created by large construction projects. The village housed the workers and their families during the Tumut 3 Power Station construction phase, and a number of the original Snowy Hydro workers continue to live in the town, along with residents who owned property in the area prior to its compulsory acquisition. While still an employer in the area, Snowy Hydro no longer 'owns the township' and any new Snowy Hydro project proposed for the area should be appraised judiciously for its effect on this town.

Further, we would note that contrary to the 'consultant speak' and boasts of wide community engagement contained in the EIS....

*(EIS Engagement Chapter 4 Page 4)*

*"Snowy Hydro has established strong relationships with community stakeholders and a sound understanding of local community needs. Snowy Hydro's key drivers for engagement with the community include:*

- *understand the drivers and concerns of local communities (Snowy Monaro Regional and Snowy Valleys LGAs) and stakeholders;*
- *provide a range of opportunities for the community and stakeholders to ask questions, provide input and feedback so that concerns or expectations can be considered, managed or mitigated during the development of the EIS;*
- *build and strengthen partnerships with the community and stakeholders to maximise project and community outcomes;*
- *create a feedback loop back to the community regarding how their concerns and expectations have been addressed;”*

...communications channels have not been open or effective with the Talbingo community and local uncertainty has been the defining characteristic of the Snowy 2 engagement strategy to date. The Snowy Valley Shire also appears to have demonstrated little leadership, support and representation for the community during this period of Snowy 2 planning.

Specifically, the following comments on the EIS and its impact on Talbingo are offered.

1. We understand at least two groups of Snowy consultants visited the town during off season periods and interviewed/or surveyed a very small (15) number of respondents. From the EIS, both consultants have failed to comprehend the variable nature of the Talbingo population and associated activity levels. During holiday periods (summer and winter) the Talbingo population can increase from 300 to 1500 people not counting those camped close by at Jounama Creek and along the Blowering Dam foreshore.
2. The majority of Talbingo Service Level Providers (SLPs) were not engaged by the consultants. i.e. education, medical, fuels, food, comms (phone & internet), transport, accommodation etc. This hardly builds the reader's confidence and we think the EIS authors' have underestimated the level of inconvenience, loss of amenity and confusion that is likely to occur among residents, visitors and holiday makers when visiting Talbingo during the works period.
3. Indeed, the mobile data provision for the area is completely overwhelmed during peak holiday periods and will likely be unusable with the addition of Snowy 2 workers. Provision needs to be made to improve this amenity, which could include bringing the NBN to the Talbingo, which is currently not planned.
4. Limited comment is provided in the EIS regarding Talbingo's dependence on Talbingo Dam. Significant numbers of Talbingo's visitors, tourists and others participate in fishing, water skiing, and other boating activities, as well as camping and picnicking on/around Talbingo Dam. Any reduction in public access to the Dam will have a major negative impact on Talbingo and its economy;
5. No mention is made of the Dam being shared by recreational water users and planned 50m X 20m construction barges (pushed by tugs?). Surely special measures are warranted, to facilitate concurrent operation.
6. The Talbingo Dam Spillway is Talbingo's only present swimming area and is very popular on hot days with local families and visitors. In the EIS, the Spillway road is listed for closure and the Spillway is identified for the construction of a wharf and use as a barge terminal for the transport of the heavy equipment up and down the Dam. The EIS fails to address what arrangements are proposed to protect or relocate a key swimming and boating area?

7. The EIS notes the need for a Local employment and business policy/plan but provides no substance. What work/economic benefits can be made available to local Talbingo businesses as a consequence of the EW project?

It should be noted that the Talbingo township overlooks Jounama Pondage providing picturesque views to the north. For the town, the pondage is both a lovely outlook and a source of frustration and tension between members of the community and Snowy Hydro. In the early days, it was Talbingo's swimming area, but for debatable reasons of 'safety' (water levels and waste water treatment), Snowy Hydro has prohibited access to in/on-water usage of the pondage including, more recently, arbitrarily blocking off access to favourite fishing spots. These limitations remain in place despite the precedence of earlier usage and unlimited public access to other similar post generation 'outlet' ponds occurring in the Snowy scheme. Increased access and in/on-water usage of the Pondage for the Talbingo community would be a very favourable outcome/offset from the potential dislocation and inconvenience created by Snowy 2 for the forthcoming EW and major projects.

In short, the EIS viewed from a Talbingo resident's perspective is under-whelming, inaccurate and has been very narrow (perhaps deliberately selective) in its consultation with the locals. As such, we suggest the following actions:

1. The EIS should be revisited with a much wider audience/population questioned, impacts identified and appropriate mitigation strategies proposed with regard to the Talbingo community.
2. The EIS should contain an accurate description of the impacts to Talbingo community along with appropriate and agreed mitigation strategies before it is approved by State Government.
3. The EIS should include both a draft Local Employment and Business Policy/Plan as well as some economic projections/modelling assessing the project's impact on Talbingo (particularly for the holiday periods) and a discussion of any possible 'offsets' available to the community.

Yours Sincerely,



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