

Director – Energy, Industry & Compliance
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

6th December 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Objection to Thunderbolt Wind Farm Modification 1 (SSD-10807896)

I am writing to object to the proposed Modification 1 for the Thunderbolt Wind Farm. I've read through the Modification Report and, speaking as someone who lives and works in this area, I have serious concerns about how this change will affect the land, the roads, the wildlife, and the people who rely on this region.

1. This is not a "small" modification – it's a major change

What's being proposed is much bigger than the company makes it sound. The modification includes:

- changed truck routes and roadworks
- more heavy vehicles and oversize loads
- new land clearing
- a new 50-metre tower
- changes to key approval conditions
- almost two extra years of construction

These are not minor adjustments. They change the scale and impact of the whole project.

2. Two more years of construction will seriously affect locals

Nearly two extra years of noise, dust, truck movements, workers coming and going, and general disruption is a big impact on people who farm or live nearby.

The report glosses over this as "not significant," but anyone living here knows:

- the roads are already busy and even with ongoing roadworks, are not adequate
- dust and vibration affect stock and farming operations
- construction noise carries a long way
- the impacts add up over time.

Stretching out construction by almost two more years makes a big difference to everyday life.

3. Traffic impacts are brushed aside

The Modification Report uses a lot of "we expect," "we assume," and "we anticipate." But there's no firm plan for:

- how often OSOM trucks will come through
- how local roads and narrow sections will handle it
- impacts on school buses, farming machinery movements and livestock to market movements

- what happens when other REZ projects are on the roads at the same time.

Locals know these roads better than anyone, and we know they're not built for this level of heavy vehicle traffic even with the upgrades that are currently taking place along the New England Highway.

4. More vegetation and wildlife habitat will be cleared

Another 7.23 hectares of ground disturbance is not small. This affects trees, understorey, riparian areas, and several threatened species that live in or move through this landscape.

Offsets are not guaranteed, and the report doesn't fully explain where credits will come from or whether they even exist. Being nature positive is important to us and our farming business.

5. Pine Creek and Copes Creek are home to Bell's Turtle – but this hasn't been assessed

One of the biggest gaps in the Modification Report is that it doesn't even mention the Bell's Turtle (*Myuchelys bellii*), even though Pine Creek Dam, Pine Creek, and Copes Creek are known habitat and movement areas for this threatened species.

Information already supplied to the IPC before approval shows that:

- Bell's Turtle lives in these waterways and moves along them
- they use the banks and nearby flat areas for nesting
- young turtles rely on quiet, undisturbed margins to survive
- their survival downstream of Pine Creek Dam depends on stable water flows and undamaged stream habitat.

There are at least two possible nesting areas close to the proposed disturbance areas. Yet the Modification Report contains no assessment at all of how track upgrades, clearing, earthworks, sediment, or extra construction time might affect the turtles, their nests, or their young.

For a species already in trouble, any disturbance can be serious. Ignoring them completely is a major flaw in the assessment.

6. Cumulative impacts haven't been properly looked at

There are many wind, solar, and battery projects under way or planned across the New England region. Our roads, services, and environment are already under pressure.

But the Modification Report:

- doesn't model combined traffic
- doesn't consider combined dust, noise, or disruption
- just says impacts will be "limited," without backing that up.

This simply isn't good enough for a region already carrying multiple large projects.

7. Cultural heritage work seems incomplete

The new disturbance area hasn't been properly surveyed, and there's little evidence of meaningful consultation with Aboriginal groups. This is an important area, and cultural heritage deserves proper attention, not a quick overview.

8. Visual and noise impacts haven't been properly updated

The new 50-metre tower should have been assessed with new photomontages and visual modelling. None were provided.

Noise modelling also hasn't been updated to include:

- new roadworks
- night-time or early-morning OSOM movements
- extended construction time.

This leaves big unanswered questions.

9. Water use hasn't been updated

If construction runs for almost two extra years, water use will increase. Yet the Modification Report has no new assessment of how much water will be needed or where it will come from, especially during dry periods. Pine Creek Dam is important for Bell's Turtles and for local fire fighting. Our farms and our local communities will be impacted by the development's increased water use from the dam.

Summary

In summary:

- the modification is much bigger than described
- the impacts on local people and farms are underestimated
- Bell's Turtle habitat in Pine Creek/Copes Creek is ignored
- traffic and road safety issues are not properly studied
- wildlife and vegetation impacts are underplayed
- cultural heritage work is incomplete
- key assessments (noise, visual, cumulative, water) are missing or inadequate.

Based on all this, I ask the Department to reject Modification 1, or require a full new assessment, not just a minor modification.

Thank you for reading my concerns. Please confirm that my objection has been received.

Yours sincerely,

Craig Zirkler.