

The Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance objects to the Tilt Liverpool Range Wind Farm modification – SSD – 6696 – Mod 1

The Uarbry Tongy Lane Alliance is made up of those sandwiched between the Liverpool Range wind farm and the proposed Valley of the Winds wind farm. Given our situation we were motivated to organise a community meeting to share facts from the Tilt EIS “modified” project to the community. We were overwhelmed by the number of people who attended the meeting (between 150 and 200 attendees in a population of approximately 900).

As a result of our community meeting and surveys to the community it is evident that the only supporters of this development are the those receiving a financial benefit and/or those who do not live in the Coolah area.

Our community meeting was held on 6 October 2022 at Coolah. The meeting was held at short notice, with little advertising and the attendees were residents of the community, many of whom had little knowledge of the details of the wind farms. The presentation of the wind farm projects was compiled directly from information in the Environmental Impact Study.

The community meeting attendees were concerned about the cumulative impact of two developments so close to each other and the Tilt project’s numerous modifications that will result in enormous community impact. The only vocal supporter of the project at the meeting lives in another town 45 minutes away and is a renewables land host.... **the only supporters of this development are those receiving a financial benefit and/or those who do not live in the area.**

We shared a survey with the community through the local paper (Coolah Diary) and made the survey available at the community meeting. 95% of survey respondents said that the impact of the wind farm on scenery, views, local native wildlife, the environment, health and wellbeing would be negative. Interestingly of the 13% of survey respondents who expect to benefit financially from the wind farm, these respondents still reported that the impact on scenery, views, local native wildlife, the environment, their own health and wellbeing would be negative. 99% of respondents said the wind farm would have a negative impact on their own health and wellbeing. Most of our survey respondents live in Coolah, the remaining respondents live in Uarbry, Cassilis, Leadville and Bundella.

“Modified project” – really?

This is not a modified project it is a new project:

- Turbine height is increasing from 165 m to 250 m, a 52% increase in height.
- Turbines in the modified project are sited outside of the previously approved development corridor
- The footprint of the development is increased

- The impact of native vegetation is increased. The modified project removes an additional 1249 ha of native vegetation.
- As a result of the larger turbines the hardstand around each turbine is greater, requiring increased clearing around each turbine.
- Land clearing for roads, cabling and transmission lines and towers has all increased.
- There is an increase in the number of concrete batching plants
- This “modified” project now has severe visual and environmental impact on the Coolah Tops National Park. However, Tilt will have the reader believe that visitors to a National Park don’t look around nor come to the park for the local native aerial fauna or to appreciate the scenery.
- This “modified” project increases the amount of critically endangered Box Gum Woodland destruction.

Irreversible environmental destruction

- A large proportion of the Liverpool Range wind farm is in Tier 2 Regent Honeyeater Habitat. The Regent Honeyeater is critically endangered and Local Land Services released their Tier 2 Habitat map for the Regent Honeyeater in the same week the Tilt modification application was published.
- The Tilt project will remove 427 ha of the critically endangered ecological community – Box Gum Woodland. Destruction on this scale will have serious and irreversible impacts.
- At high risk from the development are the barking owl, large bent-winged bat, powerful owl, swift parrot, white throated needletail and regent honeyeater.
- All aerial predatory birds are known casualties of wind turbines: Wedge tail eagles being the most common in the carcass collection statistics.
- At no stage has Tilt addressed cumulative impact. Instead, Tilt is contributing to local wildlife losses.
- At the same time the Federal Minister for the Environment releases an updated Threatened Species Action Plan, the NSW State Government aids profit driven developers such as Tilt in land clearing that will certainly result in habitat displacement and contribute to endangered species demise.

Cumulative impact

Below is Tilt’s response to cumulative impact:

In terms of cumulative impacts, there are no approved, under-construction or operational wind farms in proximity to the Project. As such, there is no requirement to undertake a cumulative impact assessment as part of this Modification Application. Nearby proposed wind farms, including the Valley of the Winds project to be located west of Coolah, will need to consider the cumulative impacts associated with the Project as part of the development applications for those proposed projects.

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-6696-MOD-1%2120220908T011536.944%20GMT>, page 115)

This is not a “modified project” the material changes of this so called “modified project” are too vast to be simply labelled “modifications”.

Tilt use their label of “modified project” to avoid all discussion on cumulative impact. Is DPE really going to let them get away with this? The impact of this project has dramatically increased given the increased footprint of the project, the fact that turbines are now proposed outside of the original approved plan, more of the transmission infrastructure is above ground, and most noticeably the turbine size is now 250 metres – a 52% increase from the approved project. Tilt themselves acknowledge that this results in more native vegetation destruction more non associated dwellings impacted.... yet they see no need to examine cumulative impact!?

This Tilt “modification” exceeds all limits on land clearing approved in the original development.

This Tilt “modification” now has an enormous negative impact on the Coolah Tops National Park not just visually and audibly but environmentally. How much of the aerial fauna will be killed by the neighbouring wind turbines? How many vulnerable and threatened bird and bat species will become collateral damage for this development?

Tilt has brought with it transmission corridors, the constant changing of this transmission corridor is continuing to have huge impacts of the mental health of neighbouring farmers – is their land going to be compulsorily acquired by EnergyCo to link the Liverpool Range wind farm to the grid? Is their land going to be devalued because of the transmission towers and network of wires over their land and beside their homes? These are some of the cumulative impacts of an industrial development in a rural environment.

Added to this cumulative impact is the further land clearing that will take place along the transmission corridor to connect the Tilt project to the grid. This corridor will result in additional serious and irreversible impacts to threatened, endangered and vulnerable species of flora and fauna.

Increased traffic, increased road degradation, increased number of non-associated homes negatively impacted by noise, increased loss of visual amenity at non-associated homes, increased risk of adverse outcomes given the obstacles to effective aerial firefighting, increased water usage that may threaten users downstream and increased social division. These are all impacts that will likely interact and result in greater adverse outcomes that are not currently assessed by TILT.

Tilt, like other wind developers, is a profit driven business. Whilst our community have accepted the previous development application that was approved by DPE in 2018, ANY increase to the project in terms of size of turbines or any impact on the land, native vegetation, fauna, neighbours or non-associated dwellings up to 20 km away is unacceptable. There will always be bigger and “more efficient” turbines that will emerge over time, but the scope and effect of these changes is NOT a modification, and our community is expected to suffer the consequences of this for-profit venture that will change our lives and our landscape forever.

If allowed to proceed unchecked this Tilt modification will likely be the biggest social and environmental disaster in the region’s history.