

Submission re Winterbourne Wind Farm (SSD-10471)

Applicant Vestas, Copenhagen Infrastructure + WalchaWind Pty Ltd

Location Walcha NSW

Council Area Walcha and Uralla Shire

I object to this industrial development on many grounds including but not limited to:

- The proponent has made the public statement that their EIS is a fluid document.
How can this be for a document equivalent to a Development Application to be fluid?
- The proponent has failed in its duty to liaise in a meaningful way with the community.
Despite many requests to address community meetings the proponent has consistently failed to attend and has also refused multiple requests for face to face meeting with a local member of parliament.
To be meaningful engagement must meet the needs of both all parties the proponent has failed to engage with the community. We demand a proponent that demonstrates a desire to work with our community not this one which refuses to engage with us.
- There is no social license for this development the Walcha community recently responded to a survey regarding this development and overwhelmingly the responses were NO
523 Surveys completed
79.7% Expressed concerns and objected to the proposal
8.8% Expressed no concerns and supported the proposal
Public Meetings facilitated by the community group 'Voice of Walcha' routinely attract hundreds of locals indicating a high level of concern regarding this project.
- The business model of the REZ is being implemented with no community consultation, this is being addressed by Energy Co, but it is a little late. This business model is clearly unfair as it concentrates industrial developments in small rural communities where the cumulative effects of multiple projects is only now being understood by those communities.
- The unfairness of Energy Co process continues in the clearly inequitable expectation of New England, that it produce two to three times the capacity of other REZs.
Demand that the New England carry the burden of 8gw compared to 2.5 – 3gw from other REZ areas is unfair.
- Cumulative effects of so many projects proposed in our region demands an independent cumulative effects assessment to be completed. Individual proponents superficially address cumulative effects of their projects but are not required to consider other proposed developments in the immediate region.
- CASA have stated the ability to fight fires with planes/helicopters will be severely limited by the presence of wind turbines. This will result in a heightened risk to the community, homes, livestock, pastures and the local environment.
- Noise pollution both audible and infrasound will be an issue and have a negative impact on community, this is well documented overseas and demonstrated in recent Australia's court ruling. Audible noise and infrasound can carry for long distances and some of the turbines are within 6km of the Walcha township.
I question how a Noise Assessment can accurately calculate likely noise pollution from turbines which are the tallest ever proposed to be used on land within Australia
- The visual pollution will be considerable with the resulting lack of amenity to local community and negative impact on the tourism.
- End of Life Decommissioning – Who is taking Ownership – Who Pays
The EIS does not clarify who pays, there is no commitment via a bond to be paid by the proponent there are a number of scenarios documented in the EIS but these are not commitments therefore worthless. I ask again who pays for decommissioning.

- A negative impact on day to day living will be felt in many areas, traffic congestion with hundreds of light vehicle movements each morning and evening plus grid lock on the only main access road into Walcha as a result of heavy vehicle movements. The community and high numbers of tourists will be put at unacceptable risk on local roads due to high volumes of traffic movements.
Other impacts will be overloading our already limited medical services.
Heightened demand on limited rental accommodation.
Existing low unemployment and high demand on skilled workers will see increased lack of skilled labour available to local business/property owners due to inability to match high salaries paid by developer.
- Biodiversity credits of \$64M are acknowledged by the proponent in this EIS but the reality is once biodiversity is lost from this area it is gone for good.
- Loss of biodiversity will include loss of habitat of many threatened flora and fauna known to live in the area. The EIS acknowledges bird and bat losses particularly from the high populations of Wedge Tailed Eagles in the area. The EIS states mitigation will be to remove bird carcasses and they promise to develop a Bird and Bat Adaptive Program (whatever that maybe)
- Over its lifetime 20-25 years over 147 tons of toxic resins/BPA will be shed by turbine blades over local area including National Parks. Not acceptable.
- 115 Kms of new roads on ridgelines.
Where will the 500,000 tons of gravel and 150 ML of water be sourced from
- A clear conflict of interest exists for consultants engaged to provide assessments for the EIS, this is a flawed process.
- The NSW Planning process clearly discriminates against communities:
Developer is allowed months/years to develop their EIS
The Department will take weeks/months to review that EIS and still fail to identify inaccurate or incomplete assertions in the document.
Communities are allowed 28 days to respond to the 2000+ page EIS document

General Comments:

This EIS is incomplete, inaccurate and shoddy; it demonstrates the disdain with which the proponent has treated the community throughout this process.

The hours and hours of time this process demands of community members who are busy with earning a living and raising families but are determined to protect their chosen way of life is clearly an unfair burden.

The damage to the cohesion of small rural communities, when this level of development is proposed, is well documented and continues from the initial assault for decades as already experienced in Australia.