

To whom it may concern

My name is Annabelle King of 14850 Oxley Highway Walcha NSW 2354. I am writing to make a submission regarding the Winterbourne Wind Farm (SSD-10471) (**Project**) and the Environmental Impact Statement (**EIS**) submitted by the developer of the Project. I object to the application and set out my reasoning below.

Unconfirmed conclusions

The EIS is inconsistent throughout and fails to provide sufficient information for stakeholders and particular laypersons to adequately assess the impact of the Project. There are several instances throughout the EIS in which the developer notes that certain issues are “to be confirmed” or “require further information” or similar. For example, clause 3.4.7 (page 89) provides: *“Use of materials sourced onsite will need to be confirmed through geotechnical testing prior to works commencing”*. Use of onsite materials is of major relevance to how this project will impact the environment. Lack of confirmation in this regard suggests a lack of preparation and research into availability of resources by the developer. This is not acceptable for a project that is set to dramatically change the lived experience of the community, and one of such enormous scale. Further, it highlights that the developer is not able to provide a coherent and complete environmental impact assessment of the project.

Transmission Line

The EIS acknowledges that 23km of new transmission line will be required to connect the Winterbourne Wind Farm to the national grid. For this reason, this is not the best possible site for a wind farm. The White Rock Wind Farm in Inverell for example was built due to its proximity to the transmission lines. Further, the EIS does not at all address how construction of 23km of transmission line will impact the environment because it is outside of the project boundary. It is highly likely the construction of the transmission line will have significant impacts on biodiversity, which should be addressed. 23km is a significant area to traverse from a construction perspective and it seems obvious that a site closer to existing transmission lines would be much better suited.

Telecommunications

The Telecommunications Assessment – Appendix N provides that *“there is potential for the Project to interfere with several point-to-point links crossing the proposed Project Area, and point-to-area style communications hosted by radiocommunications towers located within 2km of the proposed WTG locations.”* As above, further investigations are required to confirm whether this will cause significant interference. Such investigations ought to be done prior to approving the Project, particularly where this could have serious repercussions. It is important for the sake of the community and the Project as a whole to ensure any potential issues are eliminated or at least minimised prior to approving this Project.

Failure to meet requirements

The EIS does not address community engagement to the extent and standard required. This is not acceptable as, in my view, this sets a precedent for the developer’s attitude and intention in relation to the Project i.e., that the community is not a priority. Page 111 sets out a timeline of instances in which the developer claims to have engaged with the community. There are 21 occasions listed here over a 2.5-year period. This is not at sufficient by any standard, for the developer to be confident they have heard the community’s concerns or given them enough information to form a comprehensive view about the Project. Given the industrial size and nature of the Project, and the

huge impact it will have on the community of Walcha, I consider there should be hundreds of instances of community engagement, information sessions etc. It is not and should not be up to community members to seek out this kind of information.

Community

Page 24 of the EIS provides that *“the Project is anticipated to generate up to 400 full time equivalent construction jobs”* and *“up to 39 FTE jobs...in direct and indirect economic benefit for the local region”*. It is unlikely the 400 FTE workers will be Walcha locals, but itinerant workers with no interest in the community. In any event, the claim that this project will produce jobs, and benefit the economy is redundant – we don’t live in tight-knit country communities for job opportunities or economic benefit – we live here for the way of life, the visual amenity, to avoid high cost of living, and to be part of a community.

More jobs will in turn increase the cost of living, housing affordability and availability, divide the tight-knit community in two, damage our roads and fill the town with itinerant workers who are not invested in creating a life and building relationships.

Lack of transparency

The lack of transparency regarding this project has caused significant distress to many members of the community. While we are assured that the developers, relevant landholders and their solicitors and professional advisors have been working on and negotiating this project for almost 20 years, the wider community has been left largely in the dark. This suggests that the community is not a priority in the development of the Winterbourne Wind Farm.

Conclusion

As a community, Walcha acknowledges the need for renewable and alternative sources of energy. The Winterbourne Wind Project has the potential to be such a source, however based on the EIS, Winterbourne Wind Pty Ltd is not in a position to finalise and commence construction of this wind farm. I do not agree with the concept that rural and regional areas should be allocated the burden of resolving Australia’s energy crisis with absolutely no consultation, simply because the Australian government was told that the New England has excellent renewable energy resources.

State and federal governments handing out money is not the solution to the climate emergency. Our governments must closely regulate the development of renewable energy in Australia, not through an economic lens, but through a balancing act of community and stakeholder concerns, environmental impacts and the sustainability of these projects.

I would be pleased to discuss anything addressed in this letter in further detail at any time.

Kind regards

Annabelle King