

7.8.2024

NSW Department of Planning & Environment

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Objection to the Proposed Junction Rivers Wind Farm Development

We are writing to formally object to the proposed Junction Rivers Wind Farm development, based on a number of serious concerns that we believe could significantly affect us, as neighbouring landowners, as well as the wider community.

We are 4th generational farmers and caretakers for the 5th and 6th who work and live alongside us. Our farm comprises 7000ha of rich, fertile red soil and along the river is developed irrigation country. We currently grow prime hard wheat, malt barley, legumes and fat lambs and employ over 25 people including contractors throughout the year. It is suited to a wide range of farming, be it horticulture, viticulture, cotton to name but a few.

We have had to buy our land from our family, improve it to what it is today and as a result carry large debts. This is something we chose to do, because we love doing what we do. Along the way we have had to battle droughts, floods, mice infestations, grasshopper plagues and the list goes on... But, never would we have envisaged that we would have to battle a multi billion dollar company too. For them to come into our district and propose to build a 96 x 300mtr turbine wind farm on neighbouring properties, is absolutely soul destroying.

We have been advised that our land values will decrease as, let's face it, what dinky di Aussie farmer would choose to live and work beside a wind farm and all the possible issues it brings with it? This exposes us to financial ruin if one day the banks decide to foreclose on us, who do we turn to then? This is having an untold impact on both mental and physical health and is cruel to see. I ask that you give consideration to our plight.

The reasons for our objection are detailed below:

1. Loss of Production

The proximity of the proposed development to our property poses a significant risk to our crop production. The development could adversely affect crop yields due to potential fire hazards, increased spray drift, and other disruptions. The presence of these turbines could lead to decreased productivity, which directly impacts our business's viability and income.

2. Rise in Costs

We are concerned that the development will likely lead to skyrocketing insurance premiums for our business, with some insurers even indicating that our farm might become uninsurable due to the increased risk. Additionally, we will be forced to use more expensive insecticides and herbicides to mitigate the risk of damage from spray drift caused by the turbines, further increasing our operational costs.

3. Rates

Our local council, the Murray River Council, has not guaranteed that our rates will remain unchanged if the development proceeds. With the anticipated increase in traffic due to the wind farm construction and operation, we are concerned that the council may raise rates to cover the costs of repairing and maintaining our already

deteriorating roads. This added financial burden on local residents, coupled with the strain on infrastructure, could significantly impact our community's economic stability and viability.

4. Visual and Noise Impacts

The visual and audible presence of the wind turbines will be substantial. The turbines will alter the landscape significantly and create noise pollution, both of which will negatively affect our quality of life and the enjoyment of our property.

Windlab have expressly acknowledged in the attached correspondence that there will be impacts on our property and on the community.

5. Fire Risks

Windlab's plan to construct a 30 metre firebreak around each 300 metre turbine is inadequate given that the turbine blades alone are 100 metres long. In the event of a fire, the risk of uncontrollable spread is high, and our local volunteer fire brigade will lack the resources to combat such fires effectively, particularly if aerial firefighting activities are impacted. We are extremely concerned about the risk of damage to our property, and also our potential liability should a fire start on our property and spread to the development, given the significant value of the turbine infrastructure.

6. Spray Drift

We use a range of chemicals to ensure the health and productivity of our crops. The application of these chemicals poses a significant risk to the local environment if not managed carefully. Incorrect spraying can lead to contamination of nearby water sources, affect neighbouring crops, wildlife, and native vegetation. To mitigate this risk, we carefully monitor weather conditions and plan our chemical applications to minimise spray drift.

We are deeply concerned that the proposed development could worsen spray drift issues. The rotating blades of the wind turbines may spread chemicals over a larger area than intended, increasing the risk of damage to neighbouring properties.

Moreover, we have not received any information on how the development might impact spray drift or whether aerial spraying will remain feasible on our property if the project proceeds. We believe these critical concerns have not been adequately addressed in the planning process.

An experienced agronomist has estimated that safeguarding against spray drift due to the wind turbines will cost us an additional \$160,000 per 4,000 hectares. The unpredictable changes in wind conditions caused by the turbines cannot be accurately forecasted, complicating our ability to protect our crops and significant impacting our farming practices.

7. Community Division

Our community has always made efforts to remain cohesive, one example is that the community banded together to purchase the local hotel to keep it from being sold to outside interests, so that the community could have a place for locals to gather.

It has been upsetting to see the division and discord in the community caused by the proposed wind farm development, which is contrary to our goal of fostering a supportive community environment, especially given the high rates of mental health issues amongst farmers and residents.

8. Health Impacts

There is growing concern over the physical and mental health impacts associated

with wind turbines, including headaches, hearing issues, anxiety, depression, and fatigue. These health concerns are well-documented and warrant serious consideration.

9. Costs Passed Onto Consumers

Government subsidies for foreign wind and solar companies, through mechanisms like Large-scale Generation Certificates (LGCs), ultimately lead to increased costs for consumers. This hidden cost burden on the public needs to be acknowledged and addressed.

10. Use of Land

The proposed development site is part of a highly fertile and productive area known as "The Golden Triangle," characterised by rich red soil and favourable growing conditions. Windlab have portrayed the land to be arid grazing land, which it is anything but. This region actually supports the cultivation of high-value crops such as protein wheat, malt barley, and lentils. The wind farm's location on such valuable prime agricultural land beggars belief and is an inappropriate and unproductive use of land, and there are surely other locations that are better suited to such a development.

11. Forest Creek and Airstrip

Forest Creek runs from Coleambally, New South Wales and through our property, where it enters the Edward River. We also have Lake Talbetts in the vicinity of the development. Although they have not had water in them for decades due to banks being put in place further up, creating diversions, they still nevertheless are noted on maps as creek and lake. There are also registered and unregistered airstrips in the vicinity of the development, and to our knowledge, these features have not been adequately addressed in the development's environmental assessments.

12. Misleading Information

We were initially told by Windlab that the turbines would be 150-160 metres tall, and upon reading the planning documents, we have found out that they are going to be 300 metres tall.

There has been inconsistent information provided by Windlab, including discrepancies in the turbine height and claims about the construction of a substation. We were also told that we were the only neighbouring landowners not to have signed Neighbour Agreements in respect of the development, which turned out to be untrue when we consulted with other neighbouring landowners. Add to this the fact that we were told we could not discuss our concerns outside of our house.

The lack of transparency and misinformation have undermined our trust in the development process and raises concerns about the thoroughness of the process and the level of community consultation.

13. Lack of Consultation

We believe Windlab has failed to properly consult us and address our concerns about the proposed development. We feel disrespected and dismissed, with our concerns dismissed as jealousy that the development is not taking place on our land. On multiple occasions our request to be met with as a group of worried neighbours has been denied. We requested this style of meeting so as to have our issues addressed in an open and honest manner and to ensure transparency. Because, whilst by some varying degrees they differ, we all share the same issues and

concerns.

14. Impact on Salt Levels

The 96 turbines with a height of 300 meters will each require a substantial base with significant weight, which raises concerns about how the development will impact on the watercourse and salt table in the region.

We are concerned that the development could potentially lead to a rising salt table, which could adversely affect our cropping land and agricultural productivity. This issue has not been adequately addressed by Windlab during the consultation and planning process.

15. Land Devaluation and Financial Impact

We believe the development will significantly impact on land values in the region. The potential devaluation of our land due to the development will impact on our equity position and could threaten our financial stability, as we have significant borrowings which are secured against our land. Windlab have failed to acknowledge and address the financial repercussions for us and neighbouring landowners if the development proceeds.

16. Lack of Australian Evidence to Support Development

The evidence relied upon by Windlab during the planning process is not predominantly from Australian sources or studies, making it difficult to assess the validity of the information provided by Windlab about the impact of the development on us and the community as a whole. We believe we need more reliable, local data to make an informed decision about whether or not to support the development.

17. No Assurances from Windlab

Windlab has consistently refused to provide any written assurances regarding the impact of the development on our property and farming business, including the impacts on our health and wellbeing, land values, farming practices, bushfire risk, spray drift losses, including devaluation, income loss, and other impacts.

18. Ownership of Project and Developer Obligations

We are concerned that Windlab may sell the development to another party, leaving us without a clear point of contact or any certainty about who will operate the project into the future. We are also concerned about the ability of the developer, whether that is Windlab or a successor, to fulfil any obligations in around the decommissioning of the infrastructure and restoration of the land at the end of the project life.

19. Threat to Bird Species

Our area is known for its rich birdlife including, but certainly not limited to bush curlews, regent parrots, major mitchell cockatoos, kookaburras and pelicans, attracting many visitors. The impact of turbine blades on bird species, including potential fatalities, has not been adequately addressed in Windlab's reports. The environmental consequences for local wildlife must be thoroughly considered and addressed by Windlab.

For these reasons, we strongly object to the proposed Junction Rivers Wind Farm development and we urge you to consider these concerns when assessing the project.

Regards

Greg & Sally Rae