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#### CURRENT AFFAIRS

# Slicing Up Wind Farm Spin

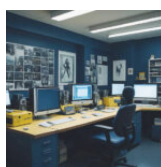


By  
Guest  
Columnist

Posted on May  
7, 2022

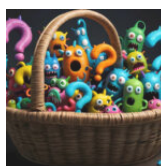
An article in the *Sunday Tasmanian* (April 10) entitled 'Wind farm design tweak' informed readers that Epuron hopes to have its development application for the St Patricks Plains wind farm proposal before the Central Highlands Council around July.

#### LATEST NEWS



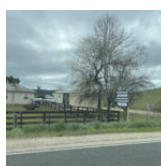
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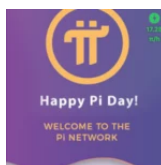
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The Too Hard Basket

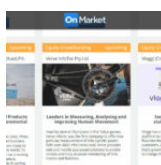


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The report then referred to a petition tabled in Parliament by Liberal member for Lyons John Tucker, who endorsed the statements made by the 273 signatories – described as ‘locals’ – who supported the project. The petitioners requested the House to assist with approval of the project. This petition is now before the House of Assembly for consideration and has been found to contain misleading statements and procedural irregularities.

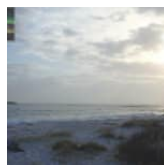
Those who are informed about the wind farm proposal would have known that a formative step in a development such as this is for the proponent to lodge a Notice Of Intent (NOI). Epuron produced this for the Environmental Protection Authority in June 2019. It is publicly available.

In the petition circulated, signed, then tabled in Parliament, 273 persons made seven statements which included:

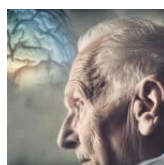
3. It is a suitable distance from residential properties, a noise assessment has shown that



No PDFs!



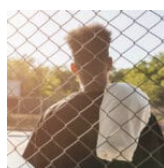
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CLIMATE CHANGE  
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## RECENT COMMENTS

James the Last on **HACSU Concerned Over Ramping Transfer at Hobart Hospital**

Roderick on **Hobart Emergency Dept Upgrade Downgraded**

Roderick on **New Image Reveals Stadium Visual Impact**

residential amenity  
would be protected.

A noise assessment has not yet been submitted to the Environment Protection Authority, but the noise modelling has been shown to be fundamentally flawed. In February 2022, Epuron and its consultant Marshall Day Acoustics, were on the defensive after they applied a 40 decibel base limit on residents instead of the EPA's requirement of 35db. Epuron and Marshall Day Acoustics were unaware of the change to the noise limit in 2020. Some homes are less than 3km from the nearest turbine. Residents within 7km of turbines (about 300) will hear noise at certain times. Most are within 4km of nearest turbine.

Importantly, Epuron's Notice of Intent (p9) states: "Noise will be generated by the turbines which may have the potential to impact nearby residents."

4. It is outside of  
protected  
landscape areas.

This is wrong. There are five areas of land within the project boundary which





have a conservation covenant. The Steppes historic area and state reserve of 48 ha is close to the project boundary and is within 3km of three turbines.

The NOI (p9) states: “Given the elevation of the site, and the length of the blades, the turbines will be highly visible and have the potential to impact the visual amenity of the area.”

NOI (p8): “Three threatened native vegetation communities listed under the Nature Conservation Act 2002 have been identified within the site.”

#### 5. It is also outside of protected wildlife areas.

Untrue. Epuron has identified 17 known Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle nests within or on the site boundary. This apex predator is classified as ‘threatened’.

There are also a number of endangered plants.

The NOI states (p8): “A number of threatened flora and fauna species listed under the Threatened Species Act 1995 were also

## identified in the Natural Values Assessment.”



Independent MP Kristie Johnston has requested Energy Minister Barnett verify the accuracy of the statements made in the petition.

Given the deceptive claims made, the No Turbine Action Group was given permission to view the ‘tabled document’, supervised by an officer of the Clerk of the House.

Of the 273 reported signatures appended to the document, only 215 have the required name, signature and addresses, and some are lacking a street address. A large number of entries on the petition have either no name, no address, or no signature. Interstate addresses – such as Melbourne, Wangaratta, and Newcastle – were included. A family of five made entries in the same handwriting. Were the family members all persons aged 18 years and over?

There is a noticeable lack of support from those near the wind farm. Even though the petition has been available for many

months, few locals close to the project actually signed: Miena (14), Arthurs (3), Wilburville (0), and Flintstone (5). There were no signatures from Hollis Banks, Penstock, or Shannon. The largest aggregate of signatures (77) was from Bothwell – 30 kms from the southern-most turbine, and very unlikely to be disturbed by blade noise.



**Epuron has lauded the petition, headlining it on their Tasmanian wind farm websites, suggesting along with the articles cited, that it “gives an insight into the level of enthusiasm for the project.”**



**The cheer squad of eight individuals from “this sleepy part of Tasmania” is never seen at community information sessions – where 90% of the attendees consistently tell Epuron to pack up and find a suitable site – but their enthusiasm is unbounded when they’re coached by an industry spin doctor.**



Teresa Nichols says: “There was some paperwork at the store and people were signing it left, right, and centre, saying that they don’t have anything against it.” Where this particular crush occurred is not stated, but it reads like a piece of industry propaganda. Which it is.

The petition claims the site is ideal to maximise local jobs and manufacturing. However, few long-term local jobs for Tasmanians will occur if employment at existing operations is the example. But the same number of potential jobs could be created by turbines sited on land west of Bothwell (including host landholder land) with a good wind resource, nearby transmission lines, fewer neighbours, fewer wedge-tailed eagles and apparently strong endorsement – if the nod from 15% of the town’s population can be described as ‘strong’.

It was also stated that “the site is ideal ensuring community engagement and development.” Whatever that means, community consultation by Epuron has



been tokenistic and has required the intervention of the Minister for Energy. Long-term financial returns appear to be dependent on a community fund, dispersed by a select committee, after the operation begins.

There's no doubt that two councillors on the Central Highlands Council will benefit financially if Epuron's wind farm is approved, as they will host turbines on their privately-owned land.

### **WIND INDUSTRY WIND-UP**

*The Mercury's* wind farm article then focussed on statements made by Tony Goodfellow, co-ordinator of RE-Alliance. This is a wind industry-funded lobby group. From his home in Ballarat (Victoria) Goodfellow said "locals also recognise the wider economic benefits...such as an increase in local jobs as well as the opportunity to upskill and maximise their local manufacturing industry."

There's no more specific detail in the newspaper about the shower of benefits which will





apparently fall on the area, especially regarding local industry input to the project. A blog on the RE-Alliance website contains no supporting analysis to quantify the economic benefits. However, there's no shortage of gloss.

In this biased and rambling puff-piece, Goodfellow quotes the "voices that are often not heard, but are vitally important". These would be the voices of the same 'silent majority' which Epuron says backs their St Patricks Plains development, but who show up in very small numbers, if at all, at the community engagement sessions, which the company continually insists are democratic.

Several locals have been interviewed for the REA blog, and have plenty of 'facts' to present.

"In an open letter of support, Kate Walker and John Barnett said 'initiatives that bring a financial return to communities are sorely needed, and this will be an exceedingly well-run, democratic, exemplar

demonstration of this in practice.”

As these exact words also appear on the petition to Parliament, it can be assumed that these two locals were the authors of the document.



**Unless they are major shareholders in the wind farm, how will they know that the business will be well run, or democratic, or exemplar?**

**Apart from the annual slush fund, profits will go to China (as they do from Cattle Hill), or more likely**

## **Korea, now that Epuron has sold out to a subsidiary of Korea Zinc.**



Garage-owner Geoff Herbert maintains “there are 10-20 people working at Cattle Hill wind farm and St Patrick Plains is going to be double that – 20-40.”

While his business was a direct beneficiary during the transporting of components to Cattle Hill , and selling supplies to billeted construction workers, can he supply accurate details on the employees at Cattle Hill who don’t travel from Melbourne or Sydney to get on-site? 10 to 20? Really?

He also says the Identiflight eagle detection system is ‘fantastic’- although he doesn’t go into detail. As its 18-month trial is currently being evaluated, Geoff must be relying on ‘inside knowledge’ – a source not renowned for its accuracy in horse racing.

*Tasmanian Wedge-tailed  
Eagle, x-rayed after a  
turbine blade collision.  
Image courtesy Nick  
Mooney.*

## **INTELLECTUAL IGNORANCE**

Perhaps the most galling comments in praise for the new wind farm, its eagle protection and its petitioners are attributed to Dr David Meacheam. An academic, now retired in the lake country, he sits on the panel which doles out grants from Cattle Hill Wind Farm. Did he add his name to the questionable support petition to parliament?

He castigates those alarmed by casualties in both the threatened wedge-tail and the endangered white-bellied sea eagle ranks. A petition was circulated late last year calling on the state government to halt all wind farm development until proper protection measures were put in place

to protect our remnant eagle populations.

Dr Meacheam called the document 'intellectually dishonest'. He stated: "In fact you read the first couple of paragraphs and there's no mention of the wind farm, 'do you want to protect eagles da da daa' so of course you sign. But you read on and it's only when you're well into the petition that you realise that you are opposing the wind farm development."

"Intellectually dishonest"? This really is the pot calling the kettle black. Dr Meacheam has no moral high ground, intellectual or otherwise, when he's prepared to utter a blatant lie. The petition begins:

## STOP KILLING OUR EAGLES

The petition of the undersigned residents of Tasmania draws to the attention of the House the killing of Tasmanian eagles by an ever-increasing number of wind turbines.

Nowhere does it mention St Patricks Plains, or Epuron's proposal. Each of the seven points listed underneath is a statement



of fact, able to be checked, and detailing the appalling lack of protection for our two dwindling eagle species.



Over 1,400 people called for a moratorium. Each one was proud to state their name and address, either on an E-petition (1,036) or a paper facsimile (400+). No-one scrubbed their name out.

The full text of the E-petition can be viewed on the House of Assembly website: [https://haepetition title=Petition%20Details](https://haepetition.title=Petition%20Details)

Dr Meacheam complained of the document: “There’s no recognition of the wind farm technology at Cattle Hill and which Epuron have undertaken that they will use at St Patrick Plains wind farm.”

The IdentiFlight system is still being evaluated. It appears to be lessening eagle collisions, but no publicly-available information is available aside from the two wedge-tails reported as fatalities in the Environmental Review 2021. Likewise, solid information on the effect turbines have on population dynamics,

especially breeding pairs, is yet to be published. David Rogers, Senior Environmental Scientist for Goldwind (operator of Cattle Hill Wind Farm) is currently preparing the initial findings now that the 18 month trial has ended.

While everyone hopes that the system is a winner, academics generally wait for publication of scientific papers before applauding success. Epuron is aware of this, and had Dr Meacheam attended the public meeting at Steppes Hall on February 21, he would have heard Project Manager Donna Bolton dodge the direct question about making installation of IdentiFlight at SPPWF a condition of sale. She would only commit to “using the best available technology at the time”.

### **YOU’LL NEVER KNOW IT WAS THERE**

People with skin in the game are landowners Shauna and Paul Ellis. He’s hopeful that there’ll be a fund, accruing over the lifetime of the project, so that “at the end of its life the wind farm will be pulled down and it will look like it is now, the only thing that’s





left is roading that the landowner wants". He'd better be right, or he'll be faced with some big problems 25 years down the track.



Epuron has repeatedly denied NTAG's request that a \$30 million, up-front bond be paid by the operator of the SPPWF to ensure the decommissioning is adequately funded. Costs in the USA currently run to \$US530,000 (\$A740,000) per turbine. Disposal of the non-recyclable blades is becoming a major issue there, and in Europe. We all stood and watched in awe as the blades were trucked to Cattle Hill. It's unlikely we'll watch a similar procession as they head back to China, so are the Ellises hoping that the 10,000 tonnes of blades from Cattle Hill and St Patricks Plains can be cut up and buried at the Waste Transfer Station?

Shauna says, "We love our land.... there's no way we would agree to do something that is detrimental to it." Can she explain how the massive footings will be removed, each one comprising

around 1,000 cubic metres of reinforced concrete? (That's a total of about 6,000 loads using the largest concrete truck available). Or will they be merely covered over, and continue to alter the hydrology of the area?

### **WHERE'S THE STRATEGY?**

There's no doubt Tasmania needs additional energy capacity as we electrify our domestic, industry and transport sectors. But we need a proper strategy for its generation and its end use. How much is needed for local consumption? Is it for export? Is it for pumped-hydro? Is it for hydrogen manufacture?

**We have no plan – just ad lib, aspirational announcements by a government with no consideration for the scale and**



TO TOP

**beauty of  
our island.**



**We can  
never be  
‘the  
powerhouse  
of Australia’  
or ‘the  
battery of  
the nation’  
as spruiked  
by our  
Energy  
Minister.**

**We produce  
less than  
4% of the  
energy in  
the  
National  
Electricity  
Market, and  
that’s  
unlikely to  
change as  
mainland  
states also  
scale-up  
their own**

## renewable generation.

Communities need to be consulted first, before they learn that an industrial scale wind farm is being built on their doorstep. With the Government proclaiming a need for 9,950 MW of new wind power, many Tasmanian localities have unpleasant surprises in store. Ask the people who live in Stanley how they feel.

Why are we rushing to destroy our local environment while claiming to save the planet? New profit centres, perhaps?

The final word to highlight the lack of credibility in the RE-Alliance blog and the pro-wind farm petition should go to roving wind-farm-lobbyist Goodfellow. Epuron makes it clear in their NOI: “Given the elevation of the site, and the length of the blades, the turbines will be highly visible and have the potential to impact the visual amenity of the area”.

But Tony assures readers:

“The view most people see of the wind farm is driving past – it’s nestled in the



plains among the trees,  
surrounded by higher land  
so there are limited distant  
views.”



That’s just plain dishonest.

*“...limited distant views...”  
? The reality from  
Waddamana Road. Visual  
by NTAG consultant.*

*Greg Pullen is a committee  
member of the No Turbine  
Action Group.*

**RELATED ITEMS: BOTHWELL,  
CATTLE HILL, CENTRAL  
HIGHLANDS COUNCIL, DAVID  
MEACHEAM, EAGLES,  
EPURON, GEOFF HERBERT,  
IDENTIFLIGHT, JOHN  
BARNETT, JOHN TUCKER,  
KATE WALKER, NTAG, PAUL  
ELLIS, RENEWABLE ENERGY,  
SHAUNA ELLIS, ST PATRICKS  
PLAIN, THREATENED SPECIES,  
TONY GOODFELLOW, WEDGE-  
TAILED EAGLES, WIND FARMS**



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## RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

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Plight Approve Lift  
of Central Caps on  
Wayalin Highlan Major  
Wind Energy  
Farm Generati

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