

Objection to the Planning Department, NSW,

Regarding: **WINTERBOURNE WIND FARM**

From Batting for Boorolong (B4B) – A Community-based organisation advocating for Responsible Energy Developments in the Boorolong and Surrounding Regions.

Batting for Boorolong (B4B) objects to the Winterbourne Wind Development proposed by Vestas, specifically regarding the Amended Report submitted as part of the Response to Submissions. Our objection is based on the following points:

Concerns Over Developer Trustworthiness

1. The project's reliance on self-regulation by Winterbourne Wind is insufficient, given their past inability to follow regulations or demonstrate professionalism.
 2. The Community Benefit Fund will only start disbursing payments once the project is fully commissioned. If staged, full benefits may not reach the community until after 2030.
 3. Winterbourne Wind has shown a history of non-compliance:
 - They requested five extensions for the Response to Submission without proper notification, in violation of NSW DPIE rules.
 - They provided inconsistent and unclear answers to community inquiries, such as conflicting information about OSOM vehicle schedules.
 - The EIS and related documents contain numerous errors and misleading content, reducing public trust.
 4. Self-regulation extends to crucial safety and environmental measures, including road safety and biodiversity protection. Their poor compliance history raises doubts about their commitment to these responsibilities post-approval.
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The Project is Too Large

1. **Cumulative Impact**

The delayed construction start (late 2026) will overlap with up to 10 other projects in Armidale and Tamworth, straining roads and depleting the regional workforce. Social impacts from the influx of workers remain unaddressed.
2. **Extended Construction Period**

The construction duration has increased from 30 to 52 months, leading to:

 - Heightened negative effects on local businesses.
 - Adverse impacts on tourism.
 - Major disruptions to the community.
3. **Large Construction Workforce**

The project will employ 390 workers.

 - The “aspirational target” to source one-third from Walcha/Uralla is uncertain.
 - Local businesses and the Walcha Council will face challenges finding necessary tradespeople.
 - Local residents will experience limited access to trades and essential services.
 - The pressure on accommodations will drive up rental prices, displacing residents and affecting tourism and event visitors.
4. **Heavy Vehicle Traffic**

Over 1,655 over-size over-mass (OSOM) vehicles will use Thunderbolts Way over 20 months.

 - These roads are unapproved for such vehicles, and the pavement design is insufficient, leading to continual road damage.
 - Safety concerns for all road users, including school children, remain unaddressed.

- OSOM vehicles will pass through Walcha, affecting safety and local amenities.
 - The amendment report's mitigation measures, like using CB radios to communicate with school buses, are inadequate for ensuring safety.
 - There is no clarity on the routes for empty OSOM vehicle returns, risking impacts on other major roads in the area.
5. **Uncertain Resource Sources**
- The sources of gravel and water are unclear.
- If sufficient onsite resources are unavailable, additional heavy vehicle traffic, not accounted for in the Traffic Impact Assessment, will be required.
 - The project needs 800 megaliters of water, possibly sourced locally, which could deplete shallow water tables affecting neighboring properties.

Additionally, the Cumulative Impact Assessment has neglected to include Ruby Hills.

The Project is in the Wrong Location

1. The biodiversity impacts remain significant due to the project's proximity to sensitive areas, including the World Heritage-listed Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.
2. The closest turbine is approximately 6 km from Walcha, contrary to the Planning Department's draft guidelines recommending a 10 km buffer.
3. Construction vehicle access will severely disrupt Walcha's local businesses and community.
4. The project involves 31 intersections on local roads, with 10 lacking the necessary sight distances for safety.
5. Project traffic through Fitzroy and Derby Streets presents dangers to pedestrians and local road users.
6. The project introduces unacceptable safety risks for school buses and general road users in the area.

Lack of Community Support

1. Engagement by Winterbourne Wind has been inadequate. The community has not been properly informed of project updates, and 74% of Walcha LGA residents opposed the original EIS.
2. There is still no comprehensive decommissioning plan or financial bond. The proposed self-assessment decommissioning plan, to be developed five years before the end of the project, puts the community at risk of being left with abandoned turbines.

Conclusion

The Winterbourne Wind project's scale, inappropriate location, impact on the community, and the developer's history of regulatory non-compliance present significant concerns. Batting for Boorolong (B4B) strongly urges the Planning Department to reject this proposal to protect the welfare, safety, and environmental integrity of the Walcha region.

Regards,
Batting for Boorolong (B4B)