

Objection to the Planning Department, NSW:

I, Suella Tritton, object to the Winterbourne Wind Development as proposed by Vestas and specifically to the Amended Report (as part of the Response to Submissions) filed with the Department of Planning. I object on the following grounds:

Lack of Community Support

1. Engagement efforts by Winterbourne Wind have been insufficient. The community has not been adequately informed of project changes, and 74% of Walcha LGA objected to the original EIS.
 2. There is no comprehensive decommissioning plan or financial bond. The self-assessed decommissioning plan, due five years before decommissioning, leaves the community at risk of abandoned turbines.
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The Project is in the Wrong Location

1. Biodiversity impacts remain significant, with the site adjacent to sensitive areas like the World Heritage-listed Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.
 2. The closest turbine is approximately 6 km from Walcha, contradicting the Planning Department's draft guidelines recommending a minimum distance of 10 km.
 3. Construction vehicle access will severely disrupt Walcha's local businesses and community.
 4. Vehicle access involves 31 intersections on Walcha's local roads, with 10 lacking safe sight distances.
 5. Project traffic through Fitzroy and Derby Streets poses risks to pedestrians and local traffic.
 6. The project introduces unacceptable safety hazards for school buses and road users in the area.
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The Project is Too Large

1. Cumulative Impact

Construction is delayed to late 2026 and will last 52 months.

- It will overlap with up to 10 other projects around Armidale and Tamworth, impacting roads and stretching the workforce.
- Social implications of a large influx of workers have not been fully considered.

2. Extended Construction Period

The construction timeline has been extended from 30 to 52 months, resulting in:

- Increased negative impacts on local businesses.
- Adverse effects on tourism.
- Significant disruptions to the community.

3. Large Construction Workforce

The project requires a workforce of 390 people.

- Winterbourne Wind's aim to source one-third from Walcha/Uralla is an "aspirational target," not a guarantee.
- Local businesses and Walcha Council will struggle to find necessary tradespeople.
- Reduced access to local services and trades for residents.
- Pressure on both short- and long-term accommodations, likely increasing rental prices and displacing local tenants, affecting tourism and event visitors.

4. Heavy Vehicle Traffic

Over 1,655 over-size over-mass (OSOM) vehicles will travel down Thunderbolts Way from Uralla to the project site over 20 months.

- These roads are not currently approved for such vehicles, and the pavement design is inadequate, leading to continuous road damage and repairs.
- Concerns about the safety of commuters, including school children.
- OSOM vehicles will travel through Walcha on Derby and Jamieson Streets, raising safety and amenity concerns.
- The amendment report mentions OSOM vehicles using CB radios to coordinate with school buses, but this does not mitigate the safety risks during peak traffic times.
- There is no clear information on the routes for returning empty OSOM vehicles, which may impact other key roads in the area.

5. Uncertain Resource Sources

The source of gravel and water remains unclear.

- If onsite resources are insufficient, additional heavy vehicle traffic not accounted for in the Traffic Impact Assessment will be required.
- The project demands 800 megaliters of water, potentially sourced locally, risking shallow water tables that neighbors depend on.

The Cumulative Impact Assessment fails to include Ruby Hills.

Concerns Over Developer Trustworthiness

1. The project relies heavily on self-regulation by Winterbourne Wind, which is inadequate given past failures to demonstrate professionalism and adherence to regulations.
2. The Community Benefit Fund payments only commence after the project is fully commissioned. If the project is built in stages, the community may not receive full benefits until at least 2030.
3. Winterbourne Wind has a history of disregarding rules:
 - Requested five extensions for the Response to Submission without proper notice, violating NSW DPIE requirements.
 - Provided inconsistent and unclear information to the community, such as conflicting statements on OSOM vehicle schedules.
 - The EIS and subsequent submissions contain errors and misleading or poorly presented information, undermining trust.
4. Self-regulation extends to critical safety and environmental responsibilities, including road safety and biodiversity protection. Given their track record, it is unreasonable to expect compliance post-approval if they cannot adhere to requirements beforehand.

Conclusion

The size, location, community impact, and poor regulatory compliance history of the Winterbourne Wind project present serious concerns. I urge the Planning Department to reject this proposal to protect the well-being, safety, and interests of the Walcha community and its environment.

Regards

Suella Tritton