

## Landscape: my quality of life

At a meeting on 23/1/17, the DoPE's recently hired landscape expert, Mr Terry O'Hanlon, asked the attendees to describe their landscape, in a broad sense and their particular view, and what it meant to them. While I was not present at the meeting, I was pleased to hear that at least some of those adversely affected by the proposed Jupiter wind turbines, were being asked the question. I'm aware that EPYC's landscape consultant made no attempt in the EIS to understand what landscape meant in the community, despite it being a fundamental requirement in the Jupiter SEARS.

I would like to add to the conversation begun by Mr O'Hanlon, by sharing what landscape means to me.

A landscape in its broadest sense is a combination of the surrounding physical elements and its living components. To many of us who live on 100 acres with a typical rural view (ie Southern Tablelands 'Modern'), the latter features are the most important. The Department and landscape professionals in general don't appear to understand this. They describe that the first mentioned purpose of early community consultation is to establish the key landscape features, areas of scenic quality and key viewpoints and then to rank their significance. This restriction to the permanent material features of the landscape perhaps explains why the Department finds it so hard to comprehend our opposition to the destruction of the landscape we value.

They picture water forms in a physical sense: streams, lakes, rivers, swamps and reservoirs (and only natural landscape water structures, overlooking built forms such as farm dams), but ignore the changing nature of droughts and floods, the waterbirds that find water forms vital for life and the domestic and native fauna that interact with them. This is part of our landscape.

They imagine the vegetation as a lifeless object with extensive areas of similar vegetation or very limited variation in colour and texture, whereas we walk the paddocks. We see the animation; the freshness of the lucerne, the vibrant yellow canola crop in late summer (and the flurry of activity on the days it is harvested), or the life of spring, wattles in bloom, the cycle of the deciduous trees, the gambolling lambs, the joey testing its newfound legs, the ducklings on the pond and the sly old fox. This is part of our landscape

Developers and their consultants describe the rounded hills and the broad shallow valleys of the landforms. We see the activity of our distant neighbours from the time the fire in the hearth is stoked on a cold and frosty winter morning. We see the ongoing development typical of a rural residential area, new neighbours in the distance and the benefits they bring. We also see the start of a bushfire, don our PPE and head off to the fire station, to control the fire and hope our aerial fire fighting colleagues have unrestricted aerial access. The January 2017 Capital Windfarm fire brought this into stark perspective.

As a daily reminder of what we are fighting against, we also see the existing industrial intrusions, the turbines of Capital and Woodlawn and the high voltage

transmission lines that scar their way to Sydney. Unfortunately, this is part of our view, and it is not consistent with a rural landscape. You can guarantee we will not be asked our opinion of these incursions in any community survey.

EPYC and its consultants ignore the seasons which bring snow, the parched countryside, the greens and browns; the yellows of the wattle and the migratory birds as they arrive and later depart. This is part of my landscape

They completely ignore the sky. Cloustone did not ask anyone in the community their views on landscape, particularly community attitudes to the spectacular rural sunrises and sunsets, or the dramatic vista of an approaching thunderstorm, or a panorama of weather with rain to the west, sunlight to the east and the mixture of shafts of light through dark clouds in between or the soaring majesty of a wedge tail eagle? This is part of my landscape. This is a key reason for my living here.

EPYC and its consultants would have you believe that landscapes can only be seen. Not only do we see our landscape, we hear it and feel it. (If you live in Tarago near the Woodlawn bioreactor [rubbish dump], you also get to smell it). During the day we hear an intermittent, variable, unpredictable and pleasant array of natural sounds and at night we hear the nocturnal calls and we hear the silence. A wind farm will introduce a regular, pulsing annoying noise that for days does not sleep when we do. And for those sounds outside our audible range, some of us will feel them in a very negative way. We sense our rural landscape and of course, to sense a landscape, you have to be near it continuously, as we are.

EPYC and its consultants ignore the natural noises, the quietness, the calmness and the bracing. These are parts of my landscape. They describe a landscape that city folk see at weekends. Perhaps a wind farm is suitable in that environment. Not in ours. If the politicians insist on wind farms, then they must be sited to destroy the view of as few people as possible, because, destroy the view they will. This is my landscape and it will be slightly different to my neighbours. No consultant can define it for me. The key issue for all of us is the visual impact that a wind farm will impose on our particular landscape.

EPYC recommends landscaping in the form of screening. Most associated with the project from the PAC to DoPE, to many landscape architects and to the community are yet to be convinced that it is possible to screen a 173m turbine so that it is not seen from multiple angles from the property. Further, any screen alters the landscape substantially which adversely affects the quality of life of people living in close proximity to wind turbines. I did not settle in my rural property to look out towards a screen, above which are numerous turbines that interrupt my view of the sunrise.

Unfortunately, the Visual Assessment Bulletin (December 2016) invests the developer with power that minimises the role of the affected community and maximises the benefit to the developer. Landscape consultants would agree with this position. The Bulletin also takes a literal and circumscribed position on what constitutes value in a landscape, again ignoring the lived reality of the community within that landscape.

Analysis of the landscape character and scenic quality must be done by the affected community, not by the developer. Developers typically minimise the quality of the landscape. They may use terms including 'featureless' to convince the decision makers that any alteration to the landscape is not going to affect neighbours. To expect the developer to accurately assess the landscape character and scenic quality is a fundamental error in the Bulletin. If they called my view 'featureless' I'd shirt front them!

Descriptions of landscape is the another worrying point in the Bulletin. 'Key landscape features can include natural features of the landscape (for example, a distinctive mountain peak) .... Consideration of areas of scenic quality involves the identification of areas of the landscape that are of high scenic quality and those that are moderate or low. Finally, it is important to establish which viewpoints are important to the community.'

This is an interesting paragraph from the point of view of the community, as finally the community point of view is acknowledged, but it comes last! And yet, the imposition of the wind turbines is all about the community. When the Bulletin refers to 'key landscape features' it makes an example of a distinctive mountain peak. How does one describe a key landscape feature when there is no 'distinctive' peak, but a lovely, undulating series of hills? Is this what some developers have termed 'featureless'? Yet, this view is what I wake to each morning and love. It is my 'key landscape feature' but I suspect it would not count as that by the developer or their consultants. I do not think it's possible to place a high, medium or low value on a landscape of people living in the country. Our landscape is our context.