

Objection to EPYC Pty Ltd - Jupiter Windfarm Project

Consultation and use of Consultants

I wish to submit my objection to the subject Project because of the poor consultation provided by EPYC for the Jupiter Industrial Wind Turbine development.

The NSW Planning Department has a long list of complaints about EPYC made by members of the local community alleging false or misleading communication, failure to provide information requested about the wind farm, and failure to pay attention to and respond to the concerns expressed by members of the local community.

In October 2015, the Department of Planning rejected the first EIS submitted by EPYC. The first reason given for the rejection by the Department of Planning in its letter to EPYC, said:

“Inadequate consultation with affected non-host landowners”

At the public meeting held by the Department on December 7th, 2016, attendees complained about continuing terrible consultation by EPYC. When asked, what had changed from its previous letter; the Department could offer no explanation other than it thought it better to exhibit the EIS so uncertainty could be removed.

Charlie Prell is a host for the proposed Crookwell 2 wind farm and an organiser for the Australian Wind Alliance (i.e. the body that represents wind farms and people who support wind farms). Recently the Goulburn Post reported (Dec 13th, 2016) an interview with Mr Prell after the second EIS was publicly released. The report said:

“The fourth-generation farmer, who has been a vocal supporter of renewable energy in regional towns, said a lot of the opposition began with EPYC, the Australian-Spanish company that plans to build the wind farm.

“The communication has been abysmal,” Mr Prell said. “They didn’t outline benefits. The division has been exacerbated due to the lack of information from EPYC. They will face a lot of problems getting an approval. It’s a lost cause.”

So, a wind industry spokesperson says consultation has been abysmal. Locals say it has been abysmal. The Department previously said it was inadequate but has now apparently decided that abysmal is the best EPYC is capable of – so the Department has allowed the EIS to proceed.

While EPYC claims to have consulted with the community, they have done it poorly and not won the confidence of the community – other than those they’ve convinced to sign up as hosts. Communication involves listening and taking on board the community’s concerns but they have failed to do that. Their communication strategy has had two focus points in mind i.e. to sign people up as hosts and/or take up benefit sharing arrangements. They are not interested in

anything else except money and while they can stretch this project out they continue to be paid by the Spaniards who are funding them.

Any EIS submitted for consideration by the Department of Planning should be based on well-researched information that is factual. EPYC and its Consultants have cherry-picked and shopped for information to support their EIS. There is strong evidence of plagiarism and cut & paste methods used to produce the Consultant's reports. Many of them tend to be 'padded' to make them look large i.e. verbose and repetitious and reporting what is common knowledge. Many of the annexes repeat information in their introductory chapters. The EIS is a large document in its entirety with many annexes (I suspect purposely to make the task of delving too deep less attractive.)

It has been demonstrated at public meetings on more than one occasion and with more than one consultant that many locals are far more knowledgeable than the Consultants EPYC have employed.

Much of the EIS is misleading and untrue e.g. in EPYC's EIS Executive Summary E8. Landscape and Visual:

"A Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment was undertaken by Clouston Associates (2016) to assess the visual and landscape character impacts of the Project. The assessment concluded that the Project has a relatively limited visual catchment due to: surrounding topography that encloses the Study Area, blocking many views of the WTGs from distances of over 5 km; and dense stands of tree planting, windbreaks and garden plantings (associated with individual properties) that block or filter views towards the Project."

If the EIS wasn't so serious, this would be laughable and I must question the qualifications and experience of the Consultants used.

In the early days of EPYC soliciting interest from property owners in the Region, news of the industrial wind turbine proposal to non-hosts was by word of mouth. Is this a good way to get people on board for renewable energy and for the greater good? EPYC's attempt to engage, communicate and consult with the community did nothing more than disenfranchise them. Further, when EPYC attempted to lure affected non-hosts into their Benefit Sharing scheme, EPYC refused on many occasions to hold community group meetings so that everyone heard the same information. This demonstrates to me that they were not interested in the concerns of the community or even renewable energy, they wanted people to sign up to Benefit Sharing to shut them up. Is that what consultation is – I don't think so. For EPYC, it's all about the money.

Having had discussions with CCC members the general feeling is that that EPYC's conduct at CCC meetings was less than communicative. EPYC were not there to consult/communicate with the CCC members - they were there because they had to be able to "tick the box" to say they had consulted. Apparently, the approach they adopted was to:

- take questions on notice (questions that have remained unanswered);
- not respond to questions and/or
- refuse to provide information to the CCC members.

Surely this conduct would not provide confidence for CCC members, who represent the community, that EYPC's has any commitment to consult, meaningfully.

The Department's whole requirement of consultation between developers (of any project) and local communities is a farce if it allows the Jupiter proposal to now proceed. It should be rejected as totally failing to consult meaningfully with the community.