

Objection to EPYC Pty Ltd - Jupiter Windfarm Project

Electricity Security & Electricity Prices

I wish to submit my objection to the subject Project because of the expected negative impact on Electricity Security and Electricity in NSW.

Electricity Security

As has now been demonstrated, in South Australia when the electricity supply becomes dependent on wind farms, blackouts are guaranteed. One of the critical responsibilities of any state government is to ensure reliable power. Because politicians ignored engineers who identified the risks, South Australia now has recurrent blackouts. NSW will experience the same consequences if the Jupiter Windfarm Project and other wind farms go ahead.

Wind farms operate intermittently, i.e. only when the wind is blowing – provided the wind is not blowing too fast. To provide security of supply there must be other power plants able to start (and stop) at a moment's notice when the wind suddenly drops off or suddenly blows too hard for the wind farms.

Because wind farms are subsidised, while other power plants are not, wind farms gradually make existing coal-fired plants uneconomical so they close them or raise them to the ground, leaving no adequate backup.

In fact the situation is even more dire than that. An electricity grid needs “spinning supply” generators operating continuously to ensure the characteristics of the electricity throughout the whole of NSW (and eastern seaboard) grid are kept precisely within specifications (voltage, frequency) on a second-by-second basis. Wind farms are technically unable to ever do that. So, as they drive out existing coal-fired stations the whole grid becomes more likely to fail.

For several years, despite its increasing use of wind farms, South Australia has bludged on Victoria and NSW to provide coal-fired backup. Then it closed its last brown coal-fired power station (the Thomas Playford station) and that was “the straw that broke the camel's back”. Victoria has now announced the intended closure of the large Hazelwood coal-fired power station which will take more backup out of the system affecting Victoria as well as NSW, South Australia and Queensland.

Having many wind farms does not provide certainty of stable supply, especially when they are concentrated in particular geographic localities. The national manager of the electricity market (AEMO) produces continuous data on electricity output from all generators. That data shows it is quite common for all wind farms to be producing very little or no electricity. That is because Australia's weather patterns produce similar results over very large areas. So, if there is no wind at one wind farm it is also likely there is no wind at all other wind farms in a large geographic area.

Most of the wind farms approved and built in NSW are concentrated in one relatively small geographic area, the Southern Tablelands. Wind farms in NSW are even more geographically concentrated than in South Australia. That produces very high exposure to weather in one area ensuring that the total wind generated electricity supply in NSW will often go out together. Once one or two more coal-fired power stations are retired in NSW (driven out by subsidised wind electricity) the South Australian blackout experience will be inevitable in NSW – only the effects will impact on more residence/businesses.

I contend that no further wind farms including the Jupiter Project should be approved until NSW has conducted a comprehensive review and produced a plan to ensure the complete and ongoing integrity of electricity supply in NSW.

Electricity Prices

It is a documented fact that throughout Australia and the world, states and countries with the highest levels of wind farm adoption end up with the highest electricity prices. In Australia, the highest prices are in South Australia and as more wind farms are built in other states their electricity prices are also being forced up.

The lower a person's income, the higher the proportion of their income they tend to spend on electricity. Therefore, increased electricity prices hit pensioners, low income earners and welfare recipients the hardest, though everyone is affected.

The problem is not just electricity prices for consumers but for business, driving industry out of the state and out of Australia, destroying good jobs. This is not on the Federal Government's agenda – they want to create jobs but that won't be achievable if we can't guarantee electricity.

It is a state government responsibility to ensure not just security of electricity supply but affordable electricity. The NSW Government needs to be held to that responsibility.

I contend that the Jupiter wind farm project should be rejected, as well as all other wind farm proposals in NSW, since they force up electricity prices in the state, harm most citizens and destroy industry and blue collar jobs.

I strongly suggest that windfarms are not the answer to renewable energy and that the Department should not approve any further windfarm development in NSW including EPYC's Jupiter Industrial Windfarm Project.