

Affected community: collateral damage

Who protects the interests of landholders such as myself, whose lifestyle, potential health and property valuation will be radically altered if the Jupiter wind farm goes ahead? The Department of Planning and Environment would argue there are plenty of checks and balances to ensure affected people are protected. The Department requires for instance, the developer ensures it properly consults with the whole affected community. The Department values consultation so highly that it knocked back EPYC's first EIS partly because of 'Inadequate consultation with affected non-host landowners...' (DoPE letter to EPYC, 16/10/15). My experience, prior AND post the first EIS, is that EPYC has performed abysmally in the consultation stakes.

Just because a company can write down the number of meetings it has held, does not mean they're being consultative. The Department needs to formally ask the affected community how we've found these meetings. It should not simply accept the company's say so. I would then start thinking someone is protecting me.

I don't feel EPYC officers are in any way interested in my point of view. When I have had contact with them, it's been an uphill battle to be heard. I don't believe they understand the meaning of consultation. In my mind, consultation is a two-way process in which people listen to one another. This does not happen with EPYC. One example of this is the way they insist on holding public meetings with a divide and conquer strategy. At the Departmental public meeting on 7/12/16, the Department structured the meeting so that everyone could have a say and everyone could hear all that was said. Given the Department officers know how a consultation meeting should be conducted, why are they not insisting EPYC do the same? This is the opposite to what EPYC does in practice and claims is consultation. From my point of view, the pre-first EIS contact I have had with EPYC and the post-first EIS contact is the same dysfunctional process. It cannot be called consultation.

The company cannot be relied upon to protect the interests of the affected community. We are not their interest. We are a nuisance. EPYC's interest is profit and as a largely foreign owned Aussie company (ASIC 1/1/17), they will walk out of the country with the proceeds.

Is it the Department of Planning's responsibility to look after the interests of the collateral damage? They are, after all, servants of the public and we are the public. Trouble is, wind energy business is a State Significant Development, that puts special demands on the public servants to push through the project. As such, all those who complain are annoyances to the public servants as they're trying to please two masters – their politicians and the community. Once again, the community falls by the wayside.

In the meantime, the community has had 4+ years of stress, a particularly onerous summer as bushfires and Christmas and a 2500 page densely written EIS have vied for attention. Who's been thinking about the wellbeing of this community? Many came here as a lifestyle choice, for a quiet and untroubled life. Instead, we have become preoccupied with fighting the Jupiter wind turbines, planned to be located in an area the Department must have known from the beginning as being highly populated, so unsuitable as a wind farm.

The community has become divided, many of those opposed to the development are showing signs of depression and anxiety, to say nothing of exhaustion as we try to keep up the fight but have to get on with our daily demands. Who protects the interests of the affected community who are collateral damage?