

Objection to the Bango Wind Farm

History

We had searched for a suitable block of land for 2/3 years before making our decision to purchase Brookdale. Brookdale was unique and was chosen for the following reasons:

- Its size (133ha) meant that a reasonable income from sheep could be made from the land
- Its location in proximity to close farming relatives at Yass meant that we could receive advice and use of equipment and livestock easily
- The land is rolling hills which enabled us to select a house site with absolute privacy
- The land is surrounded by large properties which meant that we have privacy and peace at all times
- The land is fenced into 11 paddocks which enabled the stock to be moved frequently to avoid over grazing
- The land has many mature trees and fallen timber and had not been totally cleared like many in the area
- The land has reliable water sources in most paddocks

After purchasing the farm in early 2010, we planned to work in ACT for a couple more years to gain more equity in the property. Then we planned to retire, sell our house in ACT, and live in the shed at the property while we built a substantial house on the farm.

Our retirement plans would fulfil a long held desire to own and work an agricultural property.

Initial consultation with CWP Renewables

One year after purchasing the property we were devastated to find out that it was very close to an area proposed for a wind farm. Since the Bango Wind Farm (BWF) project was proposed in Jan/Feb 2011, we have had to grapple with the consequences of this on our major life plans.

We were absolutely sure that we did not want to live anywhere near a major industrial installation which would ruin the quiet, peaceful, rural lifestyle that

we had purchased the property to enjoy. The isolation and size of that particular block of land provided the lifestyle that we wanted.

We contemplated all options to avoid having the wind farm anywhere near us and we desperately hoped the idea of a wind farm would disappear.

We did contemplate selling the property, at one stage to CWP Renewables. However there was no certainty that the project would proceed or even a suitable time line on which to base our decisions. We had spent a considerable amount of time searching for a property such as Brookdale and it suited our needs exactly.

We spent some time looking at alternative properties but none suited us as well as Brookdale. However payment for Brookdale from CWP Renewables was far from assured in terms of amount money and timing.

Further consultation

We met a group of new project managers of BWF at our residence in ACT in November 2015. Their main message was that we needed to have a “fresh conversation about the project and your situation.”

After negotiating with Adrian Maddocks, CWP Renewables since 2011, and the consequent amount of stress and anxiety that this project has already caused us, combined with the major life changes that we have had to make for the possible approval and commencement of this project, a fresh conversation is no longer possible.

BWF is still being proposed by the same company, CWP Renewables, and it is still essentially the same project. We see no need to start a “fresh conversation” given that we have negotiated in good faith with Adrian Maddocks for several years. These negotiations have resulted in a “Heads of Terms” (attachment 1) being produced by Adrian in June 2013. This agreement should be the starting point of any further negotiations.

It is agreed that some things have changed since the Heads of Terms. We have almost completed our house and intend to move in, in January 2017. The size of the turbines has increased and now has the potential to impact our lives far more seriously than before.

This project has already caused us to

1. Change our retirement plans

2. Change our building plans
3. Change our plans for managing the farm
4. Change our plans for selling our house in ACT

Lack of consultation

“CWP has a long and respected history of community engagement”

<http://bangowindfarm.com.au/search?words=community+engagement>

This has certainly not been the case in our opinion. Since new employees took over negotiations after Adrian Maddocks, there has been a distinct lack of contact and engagement.

In November 2015 a paltry offer of compensation was made and which we totally reject. During this meeting the CWP Renewables employees showed they were incapable of understanding our position, and showed a distinct lack of empathy for our situation in relation to this industrial installation. They gave us very little further information about the project.

As is the case currently, with the plans on display, there is and was no certainty about the position, number, size and output of the turbines. No neighbour agreement has been offered to us for consideration.

Considering that our newly constructed house is the **closest** to any turbines in the project (ascertained from maps provided to be approx. 800 metres) and that the turbines are going to be the biggest yet built in Australia, why has the company not done extensive consultation with us and why is there no neighbour agreement in place? The arrogance of this neglect is absolutely staggering.

It is apparent to us, that the proponents have not heeded advice from the Director General about the necessity of the comprehensiveness of community consultation. In a letter to Mr Mounsey dated 16/08/2011 the Director General NSW Government Planning and Infrastructure, states “I wish to emphasise the importance of effective and genuine community consultation and the need for proposals to proactively respond to the community's concerns.”

We built a much smaller residence on the property than we had planned, because we did not want to over capitalize with the property's value falling because of this major industrial installation. We are extremely concerned about being subject to the vision, noise, disturbance and other negative consequences of the nearby wind farm.

We remain unable to make major improvements to farm infrastructure when the value of the property decreases because of the wind farm. We are unsure about recouping our investment and about whether we could bear to live close to a major industrial installation.

Noise

Recent research has indicated that anyone within a 10 kilometre radius of a wind farm could suffer health related problems due to the noise and visual impact of the turbines as well as resultant blade glint, shadow flicker and disturbance from any artificial night lighting.

Proponents offer reassurance that noise levels will be monitored – but what practical action can be taken when levels are found to be too high?

In the preliminary EA, page 14/21 proponents state that a “consultant will be appointed to assess the acoustic environment within the vicinity of the site and potential impacts on nearby residences. A management plan to address potential impacts will be developed and implemented.” From our point of view, as the closest residence to any turbine, there is no evidence of a management plan.

Could the proponent provide us with an acoustic assessment at our residence and details about how potential impacts will be addressed?

Bushfire Risk

“The project occurs in an area of low bushfire risk due to the amount of generally cleared and rural type of rural land in the area.” page 30/411 EIS

Our property has been assessed by the Yass Valley Council as having a “moderate” fire risk and has areas of higher risk on it (Attachment 2). This higher fire risk is borne out by the fact that there have been 2-3 bushfires needing extinction each summer for the past few years. All have originated to the east of our property and have had the potential to burn right through our property had they not been extinguished quickly by the local RFS. One fire came within 30 metres of our boundary.

Why do the proponents minimize and generalize the bushfire risk when there is evidence against this?

We could suffer increased insurance costs, or become uninsurable, if turbines are within 1 km of homes or boundaries as fire fighters will not offer aerial

water bombing support in the case of fire. Also heavy machinery operators will not enter the fire area without aerial support.

We are aware of the reluctance of aerial firefighters to fight anywhere near a wind turbine. This could mean they won't be able to water bomb with fixed wing aircraft or helicopters. The consequences of this are extremely serious.

It is evident already that there are significant community divisions about fighting fires in the project area. Many members of the RFS have stated they will not enter windfarm host properties to fight fires. They feel that the host properties have inflicted this project on the whole community with inequitable outcomes and that the turbines will severely limit their firefighting ability and safety.

In normal circumstances, the RFS would unite a community. In the case of this project there are now serious divisions in the RFS and the community.

Water Assessment

As most rural property owners are aware, water is a scarce and valuable commodity in rural areas. There should be absolutely no water made available for a major industrial installation such as this. The proponents must source their water from outside the project area.

The surface and ground water is needed for stock, environmental management, residential use, firefighting. Utilizing water from farm dams or bores on host properties could mean firefighting resources are used up in critical areas during the fire season.

Land Subdivision

In section 4.6.1 Land Suitability (page 98/411), the EIS states "No pending or approved subdivisions by non-involved landowners in the vicinity of the Project were identified through discussions with Boorowa Council and Yass Valley Council." This statement is surprisingly inaccurate in relation to our property. As a condition of a DA approval, the Yass Valley Council required us to combine six lots into two, each with a dwelling entitlement (DE).

Our DA was approved in 2014 for two DEs yet the map produced by the proponents fails to include our two blocks each with a DE. On the map (figure 4.5) our dwelling is marked as a Neighbour Residence. No recognition is made of an existing Dwelling Entitlement (Attachment 3) which we have for our subdivided land.

Our son has plans to build a residence on the adjoining subdivision and close to our residence and the shearing shed. This house site is closer to the turbines than ours, as it is located to the north of our residence.

Visual and Noise Impacts

Page 103/411 EIS “Wind turbines are placed further from non-associated landowners than associated landowners, in order to minimise impacts.” This is not the case with our residence, which is located approx. 800 metres from the nearest turbines. The proponents have made no suggestions about how they plan to minimise impacts at our residence.

Page 104/411 EIS “In response to neighbouring landowner concerns, the Proponent has mademodifications.....by reducing the visual and noise impacts at nearby properties.” No mention of reducing visual and noise impacts to our residence has been made by the proponents.

As the closest residence to a turbine, we expect that the proponents would have conducted a noise assessment on our property. This has not occurred.

The lack of any industrial noise and the peace and tranquillity of our property is something that we value greatly. This peace will be shattered when construction of this project commences, the noise will be evident day and night. It will include both the noise of construction and the noise of the turbines.

The photomontages (PM 22 and 23) from our residence, produced for the proposed development, are inadequate and misleading. Turbines have been placed behind trees and shrubs to minimize their effect. The turbines in the photomontages are grey and dull with a cloudy background. This makes them blend more easily into the background than they would on a bright sunny day.

The visual impact for us, as nearby residents, will be intolerable. We presently enjoy soft calm vistas of rural landscapes in all directions. The visual effect of the turbines will be exacerbated by the additional impacts from noise, resultant blade glint, shadow flicker and disturbance from artificial night lighting.

Ecology

We love our rural land and the lifestyle it has provided us for many years. We have sought to improve the biodiversity of our property by implementing the following measures:

- Carrying half the number of sheep that previous owners have run on the land
- Spelling paddocks to enable regrowth to occur
- Using a Landcare grant to improve the biodiversity of an area of steep land surrounding a stream. The area has been fenced off from stock and we have planted 600 native trees and shrubs. In another area of the property we have built a large dam and fenced it off and planted trees
- Taking an active interest in the number and type of wildlife present on the property. We have superb parrots, rainbow bee-eaters, brown treecreepers, koels, wallaroos, little eagles, wedgetail eagles, echidnas to name a few

The Superb Parrot is a renowned feature of our area, where much effort and money has been put towards its habitat regeneration. Our property and many others in the area are involved in numerous Landcare projects. Millions of dollars spent on initiatives will be in vain if the proposed development goes ahead.

Natural and Rural Environment

The construction and operation of hundreds of gigantic wind turbines, and associated infrastructure, will have significant consequences for the flora and fauna in the area. This alone should be sufficient cause to reject developments of this nature and magnitude.

There will be a profoundly negative impact on the environment with the construction of what are essentially industrial structures with associated infrastructure, such as power sub-stations, power pylons, roads and increased traffic. These structures will be a permanent blight on the rural landscape.

Land clearing for turbines and for transporting the turbines should not be allowed in this area which has already been over cleared for grazing. Many individuals are making efforts to revegetate areas, as we are, and these efforts should be enhanced.

Sustainability

Numerous studies have determined that wind power is the least efficient renewable power generation, especially with regard to the utilisation of natural resources, and in particular use of prime land. Solar power by comparison, could for example be installed and commissioned using existing

infrastructure, be located in remote, less inhabited areas, have less visual impact, with significant reduction in land use, yet with higher output.

Water

“If water is extracted from bores within the Project Site for use during construction, there may be localised and temporary impact on the groundwater regime.” Page 300/411 EIS

Water is such a precious resource in the area and its future supply is not reliable, so it must be conserved for the farmers, their crops and their livestock. No groundwater or surface water should be made available for construction of this project. If the Project goes ahead, the proponents must be made to supply their own water from elsewhere.

Economic disadvantage

“No wind turbines will be constructed within 1 km of any non-involved residence.” Page 344/411. Our residence is within 1km of at least 1 turbine, perhaps more. With no neighbour agreement in place, I would currently class our residence as a “non-involved residence.”

It is well known that land values fall within close proximity to a wind farm. This is not surprising considering the visual disturbance and landscape changes that occur in the vicinity of a wind farm.

We have worked all our lives to be able to move to this property and practice agriculture. It is devastating to have to endure years of stressful negotiations for something we hope will not be approved.

Should this project proceed, we expect to be negatively affected financially, emotionally and suffer health effects.

We are aware that there is a significant lack of protection for non-hosting properties forced to live near wind turbines. The constant stream of community division and community concerns that follow on with each new wind farm proposal should make the NSW government stop approving these proposals in valuable rural areas.

Locating turbines within 2.5km of any dwelling is an unacceptable impact. All of these properties will have visual, noise and property value impacts with no compensation. Whereas neighbours hosting turbines will be compensated handsomely. This is seriously inequitable outcome.

Residence Assessment Summary

Our residence (ID 238, page 350/411 EIS) is described as Neighbour Agreement, under negotiation, medium visual significance, 1km from nearest turbine.

We have had no contact with the proponents since an email on 21 December 2015 (attachment 4) so I would not describe anything as under negotiation.

We negotiated in good faith with Adrian Maddocks, CWP Renewables, from the beginning of 2011 until he left the company in July 2013. These negotiations culminated in a “Heads of Terms” agreement. This agreement was being discussed in depth and we were heading towards some level of understanding.

A compensatory figure mentioned during a meeting with the proponents in November 2015 was an insulting amount, especially considering our residence is 800 metres from the nearest turbine. A further discussion about possible roadworks and fencing has led to no outcome. My husband supplied quotes for this work and there has been **no contact from the proponents since 21 December, 2015.**

Summary

We purchased the property for lifestyle reasons, peace and quiet, privacy, healthy environment, security and for earning an income. Since we first heard about this project we have been beset by anxiety, uncertainty, fear and dread that it might be approved.

We sincerely hope that the NSW government will reject this proposal and that we will then be able to resume our lives unencumbered by stress.

If the project is approved we expect that the proponents will recommence negotiations with us in a more positive and enlightened manner. Our lives will be severely negatively impacted by this proposal and we expect that the amount, type, quality and timeliness of compensation will reflect this.

At this point, we feel our situation has been ignored, minimized and dismissed by the proponents. This situation is documented in the EIS by the inaccuracies when the proponents refer to our residence. It has been reflected in the lack of consultation with us, as well as the lack of a Neighbour Agreement.

Discrepancies also are evident in land subdivisions, dwelling entitlements and fire risk.

If the project is approved and the proponents are given permission to use the latest technological developments in turbine size, this means utilizing the largest turbines in Australia currently; we expect that we should be able to use the latest draft guidelines (link below) on distance of turbines to residences. That distance being 2 kilometres to ensure the least negative consequences to residents.

<http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/~media/1C3284EB49E244FEA7539B8FFFD3D9BA.ashx>

Attachments:

1. Heads of terms
2. Fire map
3. Subdivision map
4. Email