

Submission by Barry and Denise O'Neill

We believe there are many flaws in the Rye Park EIS and would have major concerns if the proposal were approved. Although we do not live in the locality of the proposed Rye Park wind farm, we do live in the area that would be affected if the Jupiter wind farm proposed for the Tarago region is approved. Approval of the Rye Park project would be setting another damning precedent for us. **Wind farm policies needs to be fairer to non-associated property owners who are forced to live near wind turbines. There is currently not enough protection for them.**

Our main issues are in relation to the stated visual impact and strategic justification of the project.

There are 205 residences within 5km of the proposed wind farm. There are 51 residential dwellings within 2km of the proposed turbines, and 83 residential dwellings within a 3km viewshed of the proposed turbines.

In their visual assessment of the project, Green Bean have concluded that 15 properties will have a medium visual impact (7 associated and 8 non-associated), 15 will have a high-medium visual impact (2 associated and 13 non-associated). Four properties have been rated as having a high visual impact (2 associated and 2 non-associated).

A wind farm should not be developed in an area where there are so many residences within 5km of turbines, and with such a high number of non-associated properties being adversely impacted visually by it.

Green Bean was contracted by the proponent to undertake the visual impact assessment. Would the assessment findings show a higher visual impact rating for many more property owners if the assessment had been undertaken by independent assessors using a valid methodology?

In regard to mitigation against the visual impact to residents, the proponent will offer visual screening for dwellings within 4km of a turbine, where this will be effective. **What about those dwellings that are elevated and have a clearer view of turbines but are further than 4km from a turbine?** The EIS includes that mitigation will be in place within 12 months of the proponent receiving a request for mitigation. **Why so long?**

The EIS does not consider that people choose a home property for different reasons, an important one being for the visual amenity. **In such cases, and where screening will be effective in blocking the view of turbines, the screening will also take away the view which is the reason for the property owners living there.**

On page 177 of the Response to Submissions report, there is the following comment taken from submission 100557 –

“Objects to the placing of wind turbines near residences other than those hosting turbines as they are obtrusive and interfere with people’s right to live peacefully where they have chosen to.”

And the response is simply “The potential impacts of the wind farm, including visual impact, on neighbouring residences has been assessed and found to be acceptable.” **Not in the opinion of the people who are forced to live close to turbines. Green Bean has even assessed some properties as having a high visual impact. Is that acceptable?**

On the basis of the precedent set by the rejection of large sections of the Yass Valley wind farm because of intrusive visual impact, we submit that the Department must be consistent and recommend rejection of this proposal, or at least those sections with the greatest visual impact on neighbouring, non-hosting properties.

The DGRs require, under heading of *Strategic Requirements*, that the EA must:

“include an analysis of the suitability of the project with respect to potential land use, conflicts with existing and future surrounding land uses (including rural residential development, building entitlements and subdivision potential, land of significant scenic or visual value, taking into account local and strategic land use objectives and the potential for social and economic impacts on the local community.”

If approved, the project will affect the ability of associated land owners to subdivide their properties in the future. It may also make it difficult for non-associated property owners wishing to subdivide, and if a subdivision is approved, it could be expected that the value of their subdivided properties would be decreased significantly. For the overall region, it could also be expected that the desirability of owning a rural residential property in the area would be decreased significantly, thereby affecting the growth and economy of the region. The Response to Submissions does not deal with subdivision potential, just refers people to their Council.

In relation to social and economic impacts on the local community, there are already divisions between hosts and other associated landowners, and those suffering lifestyle and negative financial effects from it. This is likely to continue.

It is stated that \$2M - \$3M per annum will be injected into the local community as a result of the project. However, these funds will be provided to hosts and other associated landowners, permanent staff, and Community Fund Contributions. How much of this will go directly to non-associated landowners directly affected by the project but who have not been willing to sign away all their rights to complain about any disturbances, financial losses or ill health due to the wind farm in the future? Nil?

It is claimed there will be 250 full time jobs during the construction of the wind farm, and 12 ongoing regional jobs during the operation of the project. Presumably these jobs will be occupied by workers who live in Yass or other nearby township, or Sydney or further afield, rather than in the area directly affected by the wind farm.

In its Response to Submissions (page 12) the developer, Trustpower, states that it “takes pride in being a responsible the *[sic]* owner and operator of its projects and in its reputation for establishing long term positive and supportive relationships with the communities within which its projects are located. It is committed to achieving strong involvement with, and the active support of, the community surrounding the Rye Park Wind Farm.”

A large number of submissions opposing the development have been received which would indicate that in this case it has not met this commitment. What is the proponent’s evidence for its claim in relation to its other wind farm projects and what has it done in this case to achieve it?