

Grabben Gullen Community Progress Association
C/- 3595 Range Road
Grabben Gullen NSW 2583

18 October, 2015

Dept. Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Minister,

Re: Bialla Wind Farm Project (SSD_6039) - Submission

We are writing as representative of Grabben Gullen residents, to outline our concerns about the detrimental effects on our community from the proposed project noted above. These concerns, outlined below, are based on the previous & current experiences of the negative impact on the local & broader community from the Gullen Range Wind Farm project.

We ask you give serious consideration to our submission for the Bialla Wind Farm project not to proceed based on the cumulative effects it will impose further on residents. We do not believe the application for this project is backed by qualified investigations into the negative impact on the Grabben Gullen community yet espouses benefits which do not outweigh the negative. We believe the application is rote and does not give serious weight to the State Significant Project it has been identified as and we do not consider the benefit of 30 turbines to be a substantial factor in reducing global greenhouse gases when compared to the welfare of nearly 500 directly affected local residents.

Community consultation - There was no initial public consultation with non-host Grabben Gullen residents prior to the Bialla project being declared a "Significant State Development". Nor was there consultation prior to the Gullen Range Wind Farm project being declared a SSD. The residents feel they have been run over 'roughshod' by the Government bodies having made such a decision without prior consultation with the residents who will be directly affected. This has created an immediate hostility towards the Upper Lachlan Shire Council and Government representatives, between host and non-host residents and a sense of futility by non-host residents to have their voice heard.

The Gullen Range Wind Farm project also had a 'Stakeholder & Community Engagement' strategy which appears to be copied & pasted into the Bialla Wind Farm project statement. The strategy is merely 'ticking the boxes' for their application because on the ground it does not truly consult on a two way conversation but outlines the facts of the project with no true investigation of nor consideration given to the feedback from the community directly affected.

Community division - Residents have been divided by these projects into the 'host farmers' and the affected residents. It has caused contention within the community to the point of hostility where once we were a peaceful rural community, there are now hostilities.

Cumulative impact - The EIS plays down the cumulative impact of this project. The aerial maps do not visually identify the close proximity of the already completed Gullen Range Wind Farm project along with itself and the proximity of these to the village of Grabben

Gullen, therefore they are misleading to the Government decision maker. With this intended project it would see the village surrounded by 100+ turbines at a distance of 2klm+ from the North, North East, East, South & South West of the village. The EIS (E3) states the nearest 'major township being Goulburn'. Goulburn is a City 50 klm away from the project site. It also states the Gullen Range Wind Farm being 20klm to the South of the intended project. It is clear from the Bialla Wind farm submissions misinformation that there has either not truly been professional investigations or the applicant is trying to mislead and influence their proposal on misleading information for their benefit.

Aside from impacts outlined in the EIS consideration to this project must be given to the overwhelming impact these will have on the mental health of residents. Though, the EIS states it is primarily agricultural land these projects are in close proximity to a populated rural village where the residents have chosen to reside for the quality of a rural life and not to be surrounded by commercial enterprises. This cumulative effect places visual stress on residents, stress on relationships between residents and personal angst.

Stakeholders - The Stakeholder and Community Engagement strategy paper outlines our Association as being one of the stakeholders, being representative of the community. Never has our Association been invited to be consulted as a representative by any representative of the Bialla Wind Farm nor its Community Consultative Committee nor have we been informed of the individuals on the CCC or its contact details.

Water Supply - (E11 of EIS) The intended project area contains an extensive dam and waterways which are part of a native habitat for flora & fauna. The area also is bordered by and contains a number of natural watercourses which feed through to major waterways. Concern is expressed about the negative impact created by draining dams, the changing of or destruction of natural water courses and the damage to flora and fauna which use these habitats either permanently or on a seasonal basis to breed. With the 'drying' climate, rural residents are more than aware of the shortage of precious water resources. Our locality is primarily agricultural land and these resources are used to maintain stock and to provide water to households and to irrigate crops/paddocks. By draining these dams & changing or destroying natural waterways will have a negative effect on landholders further down the waterways who rely on these resources. Being primarily agricultural land which has been cleared for pasture with little native habitat, removing or destruction of primary breeding areas & havens for fauna is a great concern for the little ecological environment we have and for the future environment in general.

Traffic & Roads - This is an extremely contentious issue & a huge concern for residents with regard to local wind farm projects. Range Road is not a viable option for heavy construction vehicle access. After the completion of the Gullen Range project up to \$6 million was outlaid to repair the damage created by the overuse and abuse of heavy construction vehicles on Range Road. Though the road was not upgraded but 'patched up' to a poor level, to have the road destroyed once again is unacceptable and a waste of money already spent.

In E10 of the EIS it states "the section of Range Road between Gullen Range Wind Farm site access and Grabben Gullen Road is proposed to be upgraded to support the use of the road by RAV's". This section of Range Road has been in a derelict state of repair for years and only in the last week has it been reported to Council as being nearly impassable due to potholes and the collapse of shoulders. It is not acceptable to have residents suffer these conditions because the Upper Lachlan Shier Council withholds road works awaiting funds from wind farm projects.

Range road, in its entirety, is not capable of coping with the number & regularity of this type of heavy vehicle. This road is used by residents to commute, children on school buses and as a livestock cartage route to Goulburn. Range Road is not divided, has minimal width, has reduced visibility due to crests, bends and vegetation with no one point of clear visibility being more than 500m. The Gullen Range Wind Farm project heavy construction vehicles travelled from Goulburn along Range Road to the entry sites of the project. The damage and deterioration and resultant danger to passenger vehicles resulted in the road being sign posted to a 'heavy vehicle access route' and the speed reduced to 80km. This was done after accidents, deterioration, speeding trucks and access vehicles and as a direct result of residents expressing their justified concerns over these safety issues to the media, local council and members of parliament.

Once again, the concerns outlined above add to the cumulative impact on resident's mental health, personal safety and individual angst.

The EIS E10 states "no significant impacts on the capacity of the road network or road users are anticipated". Range Road does not have sufficient capacity to accommodate cumulative traffic generation. Based on residents past & ongoing experiences, some of which are outlined above, it is not acceptable to have Range Road used as a heavy construction vehicle access route. As the intended Bialla project extends through to Bialla Road in the south, this road has been previously upgraded as an access route for the Cullerin Wind Farm which does not traverse through a populated village area and should be the heavy construction vehicle access route in the event the project proceeds.

Electromagnetic Interference - Since the operation of the Gullen Range Wind Farm residents have been subject to extreme interference with their television reception. Prior to this the only time interference occurred was during stormy weather. Since and currently, resident's television reception interference consists of 'pixilation' of varying degrees to the point of no signal reception whatsoever. This occurs on all channel frequencies and with ongoing regularity. Our Association holds a petition signed by residents of 20 separate households who are being negatively impacted however the Gullen Range Wind Farm denies culpability. This only adds to the cumulative negative impact on residents.

Once again, the cumulative electromagnetic affect of this project along with Gullen Range Wind Farm, cannot be denied as a potential health impact on residents as the village alone will be surrounded by 100+ turbines to the North, East, South & West. The EIS speaks of health reports based on residents within a 2km distance from a turbine but does not speak of the health impact on the prospective cumulative affect the resultant situation the residents will face should the project proceed.

Socio economic impact - The resultant devaluation of properties surrounding wind farms has been expressed by local real estate agents. The devaluation is caused directly from the visual impact of the turbines on prospective purchasers who do not want to live near them. Therefore, for residents to sell their properties, the purchase price has to be reduced to a level to make it more attractive to a purchaser or to purchasers who are on a limited budget thereby reducing the socio-economic level of an already marginalised area.

The EIS espouses to create "employment opportunities to the local and broader community". The installation of Gullen Range Wind Farm saw upon 90% of employees derived from interstate for the construction process with one major company being utilised from the broader region.

On behalf of the Association
Lisa Leonard
President

