

7.0 Visual Impact

The following section assesses the visual impact of the proposed wind farm through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The assessment was undertaken through the following methods:

- Identification of the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) based on topography alone;
- Assessment of significant viewpoints as identified from the ZVI;
- Development of photomontages from viewpoints with the highest visual impact;
- Assessment of the cumulative visual impacts based on existing and proposed development in the area.

Section 7.5 summarises the overall visual impacts.

7.1 Zone of Visual Influence

7.1.1 Zone of Visual Influence Process

The Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) identifies the areas of surrounding land from which the Wind Farm may be partially or completely visible. The ZVI has been determined through the use of digital topographic information and 3D modelling software.

As accurate information on the height and coverage of vegetation and buildings is unavailable, it is important to note the ZVI is based solely on topographic information. Therefore this form of mapping should be acknowledged as representing the worst case scenario, in reality the zone of visibility of the Capital II Wind Farm is far less than that shown in the following ZVI figures.

The ZVI focuses on distances less than 10km away as per the Director Generals Requirements. Although the proposed development may be visible from further than 10km away, distance limits visibility greatly.

Figure 8 illustrates the extent to which the proposed wind turbines would be visible based on a wind turbine at a height of 157m above ground level (shown in blue).

Due to the variation in visibility of the turbines, the ZVI has been divided into three figures, northern, central and southern group (as identified in figure 9). Each of these groups have been analysed as a single entity as well as the overall catchment.

Following the development of the ZVI using a digital terrain model, detailed site investigations were undertaken to ground truth the findings and define a visual catchment for the proposal. The visual catchment essentially being the area of land which will have views to the wind turbines. It is from this analysis that viewpoint locations were selected for further investigation.

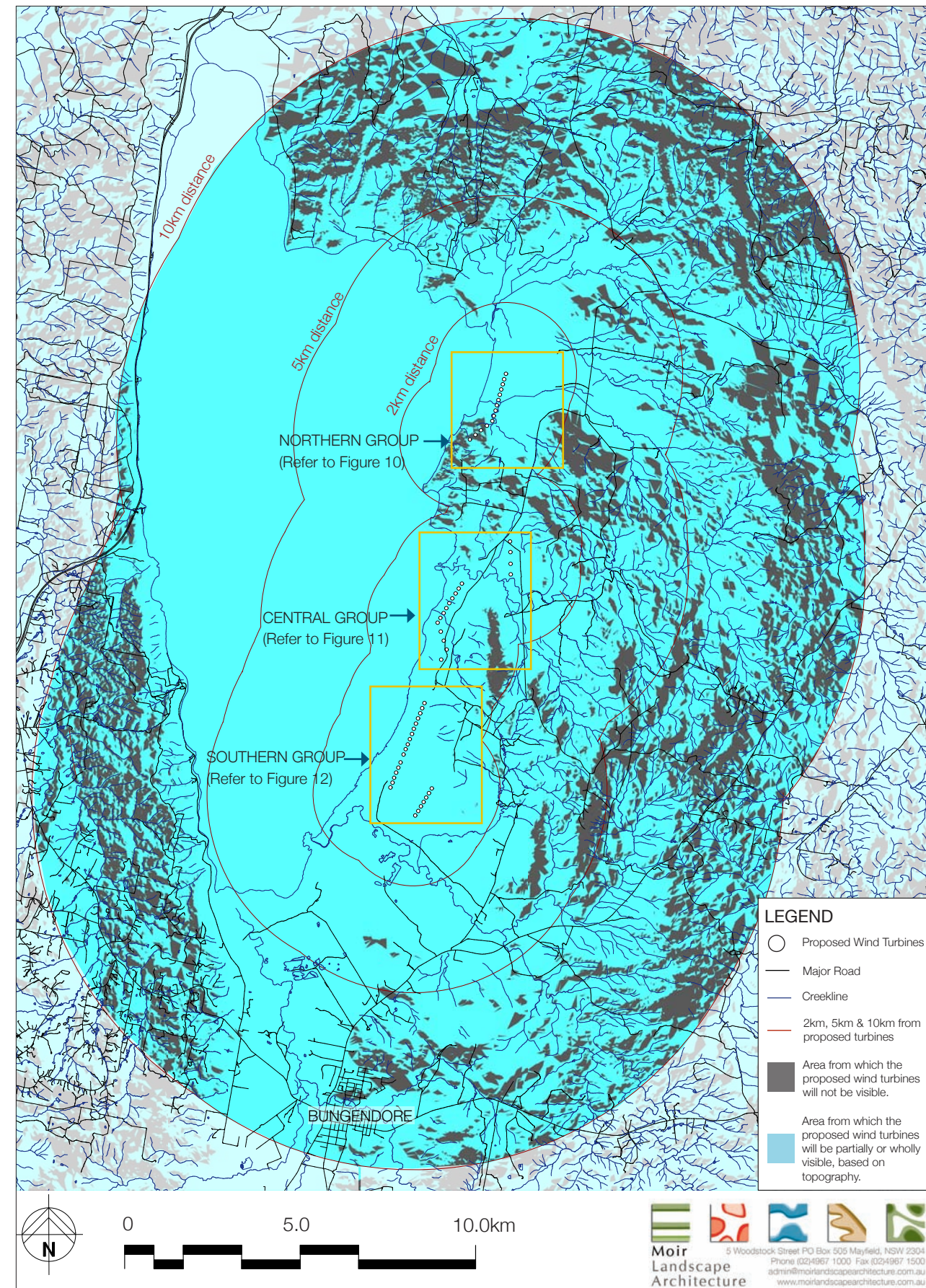


Figure 9: Zone of Visual Influence (based on topography), Overall Catchment.