

Brett Wilkinson  
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20<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Re: Thunderbolt Wind Farm SSD-10807896

To Whom it may Concern

I would like to **Object** to the above Proposal on the following grounds,

- 1) Failed community engagement.
  - a) In the two years leading up to the exhibition period of the Environmental Impact Statement Exhibition Period, Neoen has conducted an extremely poor attempt at community engagement, which is a legislated requirement.
  - b) One community 'drop in' session was conducted in a cafe in Uralla, 20-50 km away from impacted landholders, during covid restrictions. A second community drop in session was conducted at Kentucky Hall, on a saturday afternoon, where key technical staff were to be 'available' online to answer questions. Kentucky Hall has no internet access, even through the mobile network. The only Neoen staff present were their community representative ( a School Teacher) and Her husband.
- 2) Negative impacts on biodiversity and catchment hydrology
  - a) Because of the weight of the turbines and their associated footings, the large number of the turbines, and the substantial road network associated with them, surface and sub-surface water drainage including the springs that feed local farm dams and creek lines in the Looanga Creek sub-catchment is likely to be altered. As a result, there is likely to be a risk of increased runoff from rainfall, increased soil erosion, and reduced water quality in Looanga Creek and the adjacent Carlisles Gully. There will be unknown impacts on spring-fed dams and creeks and the habitats they support.
  - b) The Looanga Creek sub-catchment was less affected by New England Dieback during the 1970s to 1990s. As a result, it is more intact in terms of habitat. It is home to several Critically Endangered Ecosystems under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999).
  - c) The Looanga Creek sub-catchment is home to koalas, and the endangered Bells Turtle and various threatened and declining woodland bird species (Huggett, 2019). A short distance downstream, the MacDonald River supports platypus, another iconic Australian species currently being considered for the threatened species list.
  - d) The catchment is also home to the critically endangered Bendemeer White Gum, and various native grass species that are in serious decline across the

New England, such as Wallaby Grass, Kangaroo Grass and Silky Brown Top to name a few.

- e) The turbine installation and road construction will involve clearing many trees and shrubs in high value biodiversity conservation areas. Most of the trees in this area are classified as high-value koala habitat species. The New England is recognised in the NSW Koala Strategy as a refugia for the species.
  - f) The road network and associated water drainage will significantly change the catchment hydrology of Looanga Creek sub-catchment, leaving large areas of bare ground, risking increased rainfall runoff, soil erosion, and damage to water quality in Looanga Creek and the adjacent Carlisles Gully – major contributors to the beautiful MacDonald River in the upper reaches of the Murray Darling Basin
  - g) This industrial scale development proposes to clear, damage and pollute critically endangered ecosystems containing significant habitat for endangered species, which goes directly against State and Federal Government policy. Important species that provide ‘fabric’ and structure to our local biodiversity and agricultural ecosystem function will be at risk of further decline.
- 3) Negative impacts on land values
- a) The Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) in NSW were announced before any large scale land use planning was conducted, in which all factors were considered. This land use planning remains absent.
  - b) Farmers know how to do farm planning. Farmers have been involved together in Catchment Planning. They know how to plan and how to engage and how to work together. Their involvement in Land Use planning would be a natural next step.
- 4) Endangered Species threatened
- a) The New South Wales Government is committed to doubling the number of koalas in New South Wales by 2050. The NSW Koala Strategy is the next step towards this long-term goal, backed by \$193.3 million over five years.
  - b) The Strategy delivers a range of conservation actions to secure habitat, improve koala safety and health, support community conservation, and improve our knowledge of koalas.
  - c) This is an extract from the EIS The tree-felling process will include the following:
    - i) Prior to Felling Habitat Trees
    - ii) Completion of actions recommended from the pre-clearing surveys, including (but not limited to) salvage of identified habitat features, additional surveys to determine threatened fauna usage of the area (if required), identification of active dens or burrows, any actions required to discourage fauna occupation and weed or feral fauna management requirements
    - iii) • Removal of non-habitat trees/vegetation as close to the habitat tree felling date as possible in order to create disturbance to discourage fauna usage of the habitat trees

- iv) Shaking of habitat trees (with heavy machinery) as appropriate to encourage fauna to abandon trees.
- v) On the Day of Felling Habitat Trees
- vi) All habitat trees will be subject to a visual inspection to survey for threatened species
- vii) Trees previously identified as containing fauna will be shaken and then felled, providing no threatened species are identified
- viii)•The lowering of hollow-bearing trees will be done as gently as possible with heavy machinery
- ix) If a threatened species is identified in a habitat tree on the day of felling, the supervising person is to advise the most appropriate method to minimise potential harm. This may include leaving the tree overnight, further shaking to encourage the animal to vacate the tree, gradual removal of branches to discourage ongoing use, soft-felling of the tree with the animal in the tree, or measures to capture and relocate the animal to secure habitats
- x) Uninjured animals should be released on the day of capture into nearby suitable

Due to all of the above I object to the proposed development

Regards,

Brett Wilkinson