

## Thunderbolt Wind Farm SSD-18087896

I wish to place an objection to the proposed Thunderbolt Wind Farm. I have outlined my reasons below.

## Objections

### Biodiversity and landscape

The proposed area for the wind farm development includes some of the last remaining forest in the Kentucky area which suffered from extensive dieback in the 1970's. The proposal would require significant tree felling in this area to create extremely wide dirt roads that would fragment the landscape and cause serious potential issues for endangered species such as the Koala. Given that the State government is currently offering land-holders significant sums of money to preserve koala habitat, this seems ironic. Neoen proposes an offset using the NSW Biodiversity Assessment Method but that won't save the local koalas.

The pictures purporting to show the proposed effects of the wind turbines on the local landscape are misleading at best. Almost every picture was taken at a location designed to hide their true impact on the local community. Here is an example I created showing the highway turnoff to Kentucky village. It shows the local telecommunications tower (60m) for height reference and only includes 5 sample turbines vs the actual 32 turbines expected to be installed.



### Noise

The noise assessments do not include any information on potential impacts from blasting during construction of turbine bases. It particularly fails to address the on-going noise impacts on at least some of the non-involved near-neighbours. The noise assessment shows that some of these neighbours currently have background noise levels of 25dB(A) while proposing that the noise criterion of 35dB(A) is acceptable. This is a doubling of background noise since the dB scale is logarithmic. This would clearly have an affect on the neighbours, with sleep disturbance a distinct possibility.

As Kentucky, Wollun and Balala are rural areas, the proposed cutoff of 35dB(A) is actually substantially higher than the noise level experienced during daily life, particularly at night. Visitors to my house have commented that it feels like they have gone deaf because it is so quiet.

### **Traffic**

The New England highway near Kyabra already has quite a high number of accidents given the road often suffers from black ice during winter and, like all roads in the southern New England area, has a poor sub-soil for high-weight/high-volume traffic. This all combines to ensure that the roads will suffer significant degradation from additional traffic in the area. This cost, along with waste management, is likely to fall to the local Uralla Shire Council which is already proposing significant rate increases of nearly 50% over the next few years to meet existing rising costs.

### **Aviation and Aerial firefighting**

The proponent claims there will be no impacts to aviation from the turbines but there are a number of private landing strips adjacent to the project which will be restricted in use. Aerial spraying will be significantly curtailed on properties within proximity of the wind farm and aerial firefighting will not be possible anywhere near the turbines. Ironically, at the online presentation, Neoen tried to claim that firefighting was possible near turbines by showing a picture of a very small grass fire near a turbine. Given that we have forest with a high canopy, the fires are not small and aerial firefighting aircraft would be required to fly within close proximity of the turbine blades. No pilot is going to risk their life doing this!

### **Telecommunications**

The proponent admits that " Mobile phone services may be susceptible to interference in areas that are currently receiving a weak signal". This includes the entire area as Kentucky has a single mobile tower (on Sidling Hill - next to the project area). Without access to this, and with failing landline services, the local community will find they have no communication options open to them other than satellite internet. Given that State and Federal government agencies all require mobile connections for logon authentication, this represents a significant challenge to locals who already struggle with internet access.

The proponent also notes "here is potential for the proposed WTGs to interfere with ... terrestrial television broadcasting, particularly in areas where there is already poor or marginal signal coverage". Again, this is all of Kentucky where TV signals are usually received either from north of Armidale or west at Mt Kaputar. Given the only NBN alternative available to us is NBN Satellite, are they seriously suggesting that we should now get satellite TV because they want to build a wind farm? It's not as if we have unlimited city-style internet to watch streaming TV.

"... relevant dwellings may be able to receive an alternative signal" is offered as a suggestion. Given we already get a signal from a single source depending on where the house is located, that is NOT an option.

### **Economic impact**

Nothing in the proposal indicates how the Kentucky, Wollun or Balala residents will benefit from this project. Labour will be largely sourced from outside the region as it requires specialist skills and any staff who are living in the region will likely be located in Armidale or Tamworth since Uralla has little available housing or hotel space. Armidale and

Tamworth are located 40-80km from the project site. The only locally sourced staff will be labourers and concrete trucking which, again, will come from Armidale or Tamworth.

Claims about clean energy produced could power the local region are beyond misleading as all of the generated power will be feed into the high voltage lines running through Kentucky and destined from consumption in places like Newcastle and Sydney. If we have a local blackout (a very frequent occurrence) the wind farm won't keep the locals online!

"On-going economic stimulus" is particularly misleading. Host landowners and neighbour benefit schemes do not stimulate the local economy, they line the pockets of a select few. The Community Benefit Fund will be split between 2 council areas and it is highly likely that not a single cent will ever be spent in the Kentucky area.

### **Community Engagement**

Community engagement is, without doubt, the biggest failure by the proponent to date. There simply is NONE! As a near neighbour, I've had a single cryptic phone message to "Ring Joanne at Neoen on xxx". If I hadn't know who Neoen was, I would have simply assumed this was a scam. The rest of their engagement has been via glossy brochures exclaiming the virtues of the wind farm with no solid information.

The failure of Neoen to have even one community meeting is just astonishing. They have operated a stealth model where they will meet with only a single person at a time. *Divide and conquer!* seems to be their motto. Without other people present, how can we learn what is important and what will affect us. They have also claimed meetings with host landholders as "community engagement" which is clearly untrue. It is simply a contract negotiation. Combined with the Community Consultative Committee's failures to actually represent the interests of the local community, it would seem that the proponent has failed at every turn.

Reference to an online survey is interesting as the locals were not even told of it's existence and apparently it had to be completed online. Given the large number of locals who don't have internet access, I'm guessing that the local votes were stacked by hosts and neighbours who were receiving financial benefit. The votes from respondents in places like Uralla, Armidale, Tamworth and Walcha are irrelevant as none of these people will be affected by the wind farm.

The proponent also refers to "separating the Thunderbolt Energy Hub into two stages" as a plan to "minimise potential negative impacts". To most locals it appears as another example of divide and conquer. When they apply for the second stage, they will claim that any of the additional impacts are somehow minimised because they are already existing and there will be no reference to the cumulative impacts of Stage 2 plus all of the other wind farms that are proposed to be built in our area.

It is telling that Neoen has "sought to enter into agreements with the **MOST** affected near neighbours ... Agreements are in place with the **MOST** affected nearby landowners." What about those that live close by but have not been offered an agreement and why? At least some of the neighbours claim that they haven't been contacted by Neoen at all. Given my only contact was the phone call mentioned above, this is not difficult to believe. It appears that effort to contact locals was at an absolute minimum.

*\*Note that references to "Kentucky" can be taken to also refer to Kentucky, South Kentucky, Wollun and Balala.*