

### **Valley Of The Winds – Wind Farm Submission**

After careful consideration of the Environmental Impact Statement undertaken by UPC/AC Renewables Australia in relations to the Valley of the Winds Wind Farm, I have some important concerns about the outcomes of their study.

The area that they concentrated the research on was only in the immediate vicinity of the wind turbines and associated infrastructure. This area fails to take into account the surrounding remnant bushland which hosts many threatened or near-threatened species.

On my own property “Cossington” I have the following threatened species:

- Vegetation communities associated with White Box, Yellow Box and Blakely’s Red Gum Woodland which are listed as endangered under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act (BC Act) and critically endangered under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Conservation Act of 1999 (EPBC Act)
- Narrow-leaved Ironbark, Black Cypress Pine, Stringy bark, Grey Gum, Narrow-leaved wattle open forest on sandstone hills in the southern Brigalow Belt South Bioregion and Sydney Basin Bioregion, which are listed as Near Threatened under the BC Act
- Inland Scribbly Gum, Red Stringybark, Black Cypress Pine, Red Ironbark open forest on sandstone hills in the southern Brigalow Belt South Bioregion and norther NSW South Western Slopes Bioregion, which are listed as Near Threatened under the BC Act.
- White Cypress Pine, Narrow-leaved Ironbark, Buloke grassy open forest of the Dubbo region, southern Brigalow Belt South Bioregion, which is listed as Near Threatened under the BC Act
- Habitat for multiple threatened species listed under the BC Act and EPBC Act which have been confirmed within the vicinity of my property including Barking Owls, Red-Tailed Black Cockatoos, Glossy Black Cockatoos, Grey-Crowned Babbler, Little Lorikeet, Masked Owl, Speckled Warbler and Spotted Harrier. It is also likely that there are several other threated species that may utilise my property, but have not been previously recorded within the vicinity of this site.
- Habitat for *Tylophora linearis* – listed as Endangered under the EPBC Act and Vulnerable under the BC Act and although this species has not been confirmed within the vicinity of my property, this species is associated with the following vegetation community mapped on my property (Narrow-leaved Ironbark, Black Cypress Pine, Blakely’s Red Gum shrubby open forest).

This area of remnant bushland is of critical importance to the ecology of the Coolah Valley and surrounding area. I have 367 hectares of this native remnant bushland on my property “Cossington” which was severely impacted by the Sir Ivan Bushfire in 2017. I was so concerned about its recovery, that I undertook the task, totally at my own expense and at great cost to my business, to fence off and exclude livestock from this area.

Five years on and we are slowly seeing some improvements in this landscape as the Flora and Fauna recover from this devastating event. I have seen a return of many of the above-mentioned species, but I am very concerned that the construction of this wind farm will set this recovery back years, if not forever.

My main area of concern is for the birds that are now thriving in this area. I know that studies have proven that wind turbines kill a large number of birds and I find this very distressing after finally seeing these threatened species return to their once burnt-out environment.

At one meeting with UPC/AC renewable Australia, I did voice my concerns about bird morality to be told that “cats and foxes kill a lot more birds than wind turbines”. While this may be true, this is, in my opinion, even more of a reason to protect these species while we can. I have undertaken a considerable baiting program with the Leadville Pest Animal Management Group to help with this feral animal control and improve outcomes for these threatened species.

Another concern that I have is that UPC/AC Renewables Australia have said that they want transparency in what they do. I find this claim interesting and potentially untrue, when the first time I am made aware of a proposed 400-person (approx.) workforce accommodation area was when I received the EIS map in the mail on 24/5/22. I am sure that I should have been informed about this development as it is located right on my boundary, and especially since it will cause considerable disruption to the running of my farm business. This will greatly increase noise and traffic along my boundary and pose a huge threat to my bio-security plan with so many unknown vehicles and people within very close proximity to my property.

I do not believe that the chosen site for this workforce accommodation is suitable as it will be built on very sandy loam soil which has considerable risk of erosion and becomes extremely boggy when wet – we are currently experiencing these factors at the moment.

This wind farm will have a negative effect on my working conditions and productivity. The livestock on my property will be greatly impacted by constant traffic, noise and disruption. Grazing management and paddock utilisation by stock will be adversely affected as they will be continually disturbed during the construction phase.

Another concern I have if the Valley of the Winds wind farm is allowed to go ahead, is for the safety of Coolah and the surrounding environment in the event of a fire. I was on the Hannah’s Bridge Bush Fire Brigade fire truck during the Sir Ivan Fire in 2017, and the smoke was so thick that we could not see other trucks, under lights, within 3 metres of us. One of the main things that saved many homes and building in that fire, including my own, was the water bombing aircraft. I can’t see how these aircraft could possibly work safely under these conditions with 250m tall wind turbines in their path despite the fact that UPC/AC Renewables Australia say they can turn them off. This does not help if firefighting aircraft cannot:

- 1 get close enough to waterbomb
- 2 see the structures
- 3 carry out their duties because of the risk of impact.

The final point that I would like to make is the visual impact on the environment that the wind turbines will have. I have lived in the Coolah area my whole life (56 years) and have travelled around Australia and overseas but always return to the beautiful Coolah Valley

which is one of the most picturesque that I have seen. I feel very fortunate to live here and I think it would be a devastating blow to this environmental gem to cover it with these wind turbines.

I believe this is a case of the right technology in the wrong environment and I would not like to see this Valley of the Winds wind farm project approved until these concerns have been addressed.

Yours sincerely

James McMaster