

WIND FARM SUBMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to object to the proposed valley of the winds project. I am a landholder bordering the project area at the southern extent of the Mt hope cluster. I hold over 2000 ha's which is included in the project area, and another 850 ha's adjoining to the south.

My family have been farming here for 86 years.

I have been offered firstly a \$5000/annum option to lease in 2018 and recently \$35000/annum to host a turbine (mh15), or \$9000/annum neighbouring property benefit, however have not signed on as I feel the negative impacts of this development are far in excess of this, and morally have wanted to retain my right to object. I point out the above forgone income to indicate how seriously I am concerned about this development.

Although I gave my consent for the EIS and DA to be lodged as is necessary as a landholder to which the application is related to, I made it conditional. I in no way support this project. Consent was only given as it would be foolish not to accept some compensation if the project was to proceed when the additional turbine placed on my property would not add significantly to the impact of the project as a whole on myself, if the proponent comes good is questionable, as minimal negotiation has been forthcoming.

I oppose this development for many reasons both in terms of its impact personally and to the wider community as a whole. The submission and the consultation that has taken place in general terms seems to have been designed to tick boxes rather than to take on board any concerns of those impacted by the development. I hope the planning authority takes these seriously given no doubt there will be pressure by government to approve this development.

I will attempt to outline some of my concerns briefly and welcome further discussion with planning authorities and invite them to visit on site to gain further understanding.

I understand that the planning authorities have no power to develop policy and are only required to ensure that government policy is adhered to, but will still point out what concerns me most.

Visual impact

The size of turbines and scale of the windfarm is so much larger than the windfarms that have shaped policy settings and community views in the past. Many people consider that windfarms are beautiful and I appreciate that, but I suggest they are visualising much smaller and many less turbines perhaps 3 or 6 in a relatively straight line and regularly spaced, but that is not what is proposed.

The perceived impacts as found in previous studies are irrelevant. I spoke to Robert Dupont, the author of the report to the NSW Valuer General the assessment of windfarms on surrounding land values in Australia he said "that given the increase in scale of modern day turbines and the size of windfarms in general that investigation should be revisited". This report that he did in 2009 is now outdated, and even the author agrees. It is this outdated report that is the basis for every windfarm developer and government department in concluding that there is no evidence for negative effects on neighbouring land values.

It is not only the monetary loss that is personally and more widely important, but also importantly the effect on the neighbour's enjoyment of their property and the broader visual impact to the community and district as a whole. This development and the cumulative effect of other developments will have a devastating impact on the natural beauty of the whole district and the

communities enjoyment of it, apart from tearing the community apart as some will have a financial interest in seeing development proceed but at a cost to others. The proposed windfarm is sited on the top of a highly visible range surrounded by wide open valleys, given this and the size of the proposed turbines magnifies the visual impact particularly when located in such proximity to the already approved Liverpool Range Windfarm.

From a personal perspective (dwelling 298) as can be seen with 69 turbines in view the impact is high. I note it is assessed as moderate by the developer. This assessment is derived as the assessor claims that they can be only seen in 2 60 degree sectors, this is inaccurate as they can be seen in 3 sectors. It is also claimed that the scenic quality class of the area is only moderate. I believe that this too is inaccurate, not only in my subjective opinion but also according to the guidelines for assessment. This is consistent throughout the whole assessment and has led to the conclusion of a lesser impact, which suits the proponent. On Guideline Policy, the whole idea of only looking at the impact from a dwelling is ridiculous. People are at their dwelling mainly at night, during the day when the development is visible they are generally outside on their properties. People value their views from all parts of their property and the district as a whole. I myself have 5 turbines up against the boundary of my property and many within a very close distance, to my land. The assessment guide also notes that the closer you are to a turbine and the higher it is the impact is greater however the assessment does not take into account the topography, when assessing visual magnitude. In our case the closer turbines (less than 3 km) and most prominent to our dwelling are located on top of a steep 250m hill and fully visible magnifying the impact as they would arguably have the same impact of a 500 m turbine located on flat land. The recommendation to plant some screening to offset the impact is also ridiculous as the dwelling which has existed for over 120 years is positioned to capture the valley and mountain views, the views are highly valued, as they are from all parts of the property. Do they seriously think that if I stand behind a tree it will reduce the problem. The photomontage also has been taken from behind a tree (Deciduous) which has blocked the view of these closest turbines. The visual impacts need further independent assessment. Compensation commensurate with damages should exist, the proponents don't agree.

Noise

As is the same with visual amenity this is only assessed from the main dwelling. It is also poorly done as no investigation has been done into baseline background noise from my dwelling thus noise limits have been estimated. The topography and direction of noise source from the dwelling could also have an impact, along with weather conditions. Wind speeds are also greater at hub height than at my dwelling so noise generated in relation to background noise could also be inconsistent with assumptions. The dwelling is located in a very quiet area, perhaps too quiet to meet noise guidelines? Noise pollution also can lead to less enjoyment of our property, Listening is a sense that is utilised all the time. Increased background noise can apart from health nuisance and wellbeing concerns, interfere with farming activities such as when attempting to muster the heavily timbered areas close to turbines, when listening for animals in distress, machinery operations or mask unusual activity.

Cumulative impact

This is an extremely large power generation development in its own right but must be considered in terms of cumulative impact with all other developments that are approved or in planning, this submission does not address this adequately. There is reference to the Liverpool range windfarm however not to all other windfarms in the Orana REZ, or to all solar farms and their associated infrastructure. There is also no reference to the cumulative impacts upon the community as a whole.

Biodiversity impact

On my property alone around 850 ha's of relatively undisturbed native timbered country has to my knowledge never been assessed by either the proponent or any other expert in terms of biodiversity flora and fauna ever. How can a desktop appraisal be adequate when no on site investigation has ever been carried out in this area which is within 100m of proposed turbines?

The proponent also down plays the quality of the windfarm site in terms of soil quality and biodiversity. Although pastures have been somewhat modified through some fertiliser use and naturalisation there are large areas of remnant predominantly native pastures remaining, which exist as little of the ridgeline country is arable, thus it is used predominantly for cattle grazing. This is rare and endangered as most of the better quality soils of this type have succumbed to the plough. It is deserving of conservation. I myself have voluntarily conserved 400ha of lesser quality grassy box woodland adjacent to the site which met the standard for preservation.

The placement of turbines will limit the practicality of aerial weed control which is standard practise in this type of country for the control, of Bathurst burr and St Johns wart both prevalent and declared noxious weeds.

Bushfire

The large area of previously unburnt bushland apart from farmland is directly adjoining the windfarm area, the risk of this and other infrastructure and animals being destroyed is increased due to the increased activity in the area, the application does not address this other than to supply a water reservoir. Additional equipment is also necessary along with fire breaks and access trails to minimise the risk especially when aircraft fire fighting will be limited due to turbine hazard. This also will have ramifications to the township of Coolah when a serious fire occurs. The windfarm site is proposed on and adjacent to bush fire prone land which should be seriously considered when planning development.

Social impact workforce accommodation

The submission states that workers will either be housed in nearby townships or a temporary village on Moorfield Road. Neither of which would be a good solution.

Nearby townships do not have adequate housing or services to cater for such a large influx of population. Demand would exceed supply pushing rental prices higher. The end result would be that many of the current residents would be forced to leave the district, their home and community. Labour is already in short supply locally, this would also have devastating impacts on established business'. After the construction period the towns would then have the opposite problem would the old residents return? No.

To establish a temporary camp was the easy obvious alternative put forward by the proponent. But have they given any thought to this proposition. Where is any information regarding the impact of this part of the development.

The towns do need additional housing supply, perhaps if new low cost housing was developed it would be of benefit in the long term without increasing short term demand, but the amount built has to be carefully considered to get the balance right.

In my view, there has been very little thought regarding the suitability of placing these large upfront labour intensive, long term low labour demand projects in low population areas. Other than the proponents will have fewer objections, less compensation, less restrictions and governments lose

less votes locally but gain more votes broadly. If these mega generation plants are to be built they should be closer to the large regional centres, or in areas that have almost no population at all. Should they be built at all is also debatable. For national security and a competitive power market generation and distribution should be diverse not simply at lowest production cost as this does not directly translate to cheaper power but only profit maximisation, and for whom? A fully owned off shore company? If profits go overseas this is a cost to taxpayers.

Decommissioning

A promise from the proponent to fund the cost of decommissioning is on its own inadequate. If they are unwilling to commit to an upfront or during operations fund then their intentions are clear. It will not only be a cost to be borne by the host landholder but to the wider community if they all fail to complete.

Community views

Most local people are against this project but you won't hear from all of them, as many are busy with their own lives, feel it is a done deal, and not worth complaining about. People are in favour of renewable energy but I don't personally know of anyone that is supportive of this scale of development on the site proposed, other than those who will gain financial benefit or falsely believe they will not be impacted.

Conclusion

The proponent has not genuinely adequately addressed the impacts of this project. Their submission is designed to tick boxes whilst understating the impacts. Their consultation with affected landholders has been in similar vein, not really taking on board community concerns unless they feel they will have a problem with planning permission. This site is unsuitable for large scale energy production. If it is deemed otherwise then justification, more detailed investigation, mitigation and compensation is required.

Other sites currently under investigation are better suited to development at this stage. It is the duty of planning authorities to consider the suitability of this site for development and to take into account all of the above points outlined. Given other sites are better suited which will minimise the negative effects it is prudent to reject this application and prioritise other options to the west of Dunedoo that are closer to the larger communities of Wellington and Dubbo, that can cope with a relatively small percentage increase in activity, are of lesser visual impact as they are sited in comparatively more uniform topography and don't dominate the landscape as much. The already approved Liverpool Range project then could connect to the grid through the existing approved route further reducing the impact to Coolah and surrounds. The proposed Spicers creek windfarm and others closer to Dubbo such as UPC's could then connect to the new transmission line spreading the impact throughout the region. This decision would give the community greater confidence in planning authorities, provide an appropriate level of stimulation to Coolah and Dunedoo, and send a message to infrastructure developers to carefully consider where they propose development. I would also urge you to urgently review your guidelines to ensure better outcomes.

Please save our community, we like it the way it is. That's why we live here.

Paul Francis