

20 June 2022

Director – Energy Assessments
Development Assessments
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Valley of the Winds Wind Farm Proposal – State Significant Development Application – SSD 10461

This letter is to register my objection to the proposed Valley Of The Winds wind farm project.

Our house and associated dwellings are located within the 4,950 metre buffer as projected from the Girragulang cluster of turbines and identified as dwellings 7 – 12 and dwelling 283.

The key reasons supporting my objection follow.

Visual impact

The Girragulang cluster of turbines as proposed, will immensely deteriorate the high scenic value of our property, not only as viewed from our dwellings, but also as viewed from the entire western side of our property which is bisected by Tongy Lane. The primary view from our dwellings would look directly into the Girragulang cluster of turbines, which if built as proposed, will completely dominate our western skyline. In particular, these 250 metre high turbines are proposed to be built on a ridge line approximately 100 metres in elevation above our residence and associated dwellings, such that the turbines will stand in excess of 350 metres in elevation above our residence and dwellings, all within 4,950 metres buffer zone. This increased elevation and proximity means the proposed turbines will cover most of our western skyline, effectively ruining our primary view. The EIS states our visual impact would be moderate – I disagree and believe our visual impact would be highly impacted due to the number of turbines proposed in the Girragulang cluster, their overall elevation, and their close proximity.

The visual impact from the proposed Girragulang cluster turbines is more acute when viewed from other parts of our property, which are regularly accessed each working day. Some of our access laneways, which we regularly use to move stock and for vehicle access, fall within 2 km of the proposed turbine locations. Additionally, since the Girragulang cluster of turbines are proposed to be located adjoining the western boundary of our property, large parts of our property located on our western side will be well within the buffer zones as stated in the EIS. Together with my family and our employees working in these areas, they can expect to suffer high levels of noise from the turbines and excess shadow flicker particularly during the afternoons, both of which are anticipated by us to be well in excess of tolerable limits for non-associated landowners. The EIS does not consider these issues. This is unacceptable.

There are special areas on our property which are often visited to appreciate the magnificent scenic views, including looking west over the Turee Creek valley. These special areas have historical significance for us and our extended family. They are visited frequently by our extended family and by our employees and their families, often in each case entertaining visitors. The impact of the Girragulang cluster of turbines to these spectacular views from all these special areas would, under the EIS methodology be high impact, or in our assessment effectively ruined— as these views all look directly to the west. With reference to the EIS, we would expect to see all of 51 of the Girragulang turbines hubs and the full blade “circle”. The EIS does not consider this loss of scenic value across our property, instead only considering visual impacts from dwellings, as if we spend our day inside dwellings or as if we are located near built up regions. The EIS and the planning process in general needs to assess not just visual impact, but also impact to scenic value across entire properties for landowners who are not associated with the proposal or with the proponents. Not doing so is a fundamental shortfall in considering all the factors as to whether a project should be refused, re-examined and re-exhibited.

Noise impact

The EIS states that we will hear the turbines since the dwellings are within the 25dB noise contour. The thought of residents hearing any noise from the turbines at night while trying to sleep is unacceptable. We currently greatly enjoy and treasure the lack of any external noise not associated with our property – such as the mostly gentle ambient sounds from our scenic rural living, of birds and possibly intermittent livestock noise – all common sounds associated with on farm living. This is a feature of our property. Constant turbine noise at any level will eliminate this feature.

We depend on being able to recruit employees to live and work on the property. Asking future employees to tolerate any turbine noise will be a further obstacle to the ongoing recruitment challenge. Who would want to live next door to a wind farm – and within 4,950m of the turbines? Being forced to tolerate noise emitted from the Girragulang cluster of turbines is just not acceptable. Another issue is that the EIS only assesses noise impact in association with dwelling location. The EIS lacks detail as to how much noise impact there is across the key working areas of our property and particularly our western side.

Impact to our business

In addition to the point raised above in asking our employees to also live next to a wind farm, the proposed Girragulang cluster turbines would create a serious and negative impact to our business and, to our cropping program. This is due to the Girragulang cluster of turbines adjoining our Western cropping areas, which would place heavy constraints on our ability to continue using aircraft to aerially apply seed, fertiliser and spray, which we rely on each year for the economic viability of our cropping program. Our extensive cropping flats along the Turee Creek valley are some of the most fertile in the area and equal in potential to any in NSW. The slopes and hills on either side of these flats is also productive cropping areas. We rely on aerial services to cover each area. The proposed Girragulang cluster turbines will make our airstrip unsafe to use, due to close proximity to the proposed turbine location and as the EIS states, due to wake turbulence from the turbines. Our airstrip is used regularly by ourselves and our contractors, as well is relied upon by our neighbours.

Given the local topography, there is no other suitable site on our property to relocate our airstrip. Operation of our property relies on the safe use of our airstrip.

Bio diversity impact

The EIS does not provide enough detail on impact to wildlife by the proposed Girragulang cluster of turbines and related to our property. While several studies have been completed within the wind farm project boundary, not enough studies have been completed on areas adjoining the project boundary, which logically is likely to be where wildlife that are directly impacted by the turbines and related infrastructure within the project boundary, will seek shelter. Our property hosts several pairs of wedge tail eagles and other endangered bird species are known to frequent our area (such as the swift parrot). As property owners and together with our employees and neighbours, we go to great lengths to pursue wildlife protection, particularly after the devastating Sir Ivan bushfire in 2017. The thought of now having our protected and endangered birds exposed to turbine strikes is not acceptable.

Additional impacts

The Valley Of The Winds wind farm proposes 148 turbines each up to 250 metres in height. When combined with the proposed Liverpool Range wind farm which proposes 223 turbines also up to 250 metres in height, means in aggregate the Coolah district will be hosting up to 371 gigantic turbines. This is way too much concentration of cumulative negative impacts for our district and community. The cumulative negative impacts are completely overwhelming for such a beautiful and scenic area, and further impacted by transmission wires and towers (of which we have no details). The lack of information as to how the Valley of the Winds wind farm will connect into the transmission grid is a glaring omission from the EIS and only adds to further anxiety for non-associated property and landowners.

The increased levels of traffic in our area and particularly for the neighbouring village of Uarbry will be excessive. The EIS states that Uarbry village will have more than three hundred daily traffic movements during the construction phase of the Girragulang cluster, compared to current daily movements of under 20 per day. This cause immense inconvenience and disruption to the residents of Uarbry and neighbouring properties such as ours.

The EIS is a huge document which I have not finished reviewing in the short time available and reserve the right to provide additional comments after further consideration.