

# Birrema & Carrolls Ridge

## Wind Farms

Project Update No 3 | December 2012

### Planning process uncertainty leads to ongoing delays

Since our last newsletter, substantial changes to the NSW planning requirements have had a significant and ongoing impact on many wind farm developments in NSW, including Epuron's Birrema and Carrolls Ridge projects. This has led to substantial delays to both projects until the government establishes a clear and consistent path for wind farm planning assessments to proceed.

In 2011, the NSW Government scrapped Part 3A of the Planning and Environment Act under which wind farm projects were assessed. Transitional arrangements were put in place for projects that were part way through the Part 3A process. Under this arrangement proponents of 'transitional' Part 3A wind farms had until 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013 to lodge their Environmental Assessment (EA).

However, in August 2012 the Department of Planning and Infrastructure unilaterally notified wind farm proponents the date for lodgement of EAs had been brought forward by 11 months to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2012. This late notice did not allow Epuron sufficient time to complete the EA for Birrema Wind Farm before the deadline, and accordingly the transitional arrangements no longer apply.

In parallel with these changes, the NSW Government released their Draft Wind Farm Planning Guidelines just before Christmas 2011. Despite its commitments, the new planning approach outlined in this draft has not been implemented. The key element of this new approach (the 'Gateway' process) is not in place, and details of the assessment requirements (e.g. the noise assessment procedures) are not clear. This results in considerable uncertainty for both Carrolls Ridge and Birrema wind farms as there is no clear process through which either project can be assessed.

We will of course keep you updated once the planning process is clear.

### Other projects in Yass region

Epuron has recently bought back the proposed Conroy's Gap Wind Farm and Yass Valley Wind Farm from Origin Energy. Conroy's Gap is already approved, and the Yass Valley development is going through the final stage of the Part 3A process. Epuron hopes for planning approval in mid 2013, and further information is available on our website.

Epuron is also continuing with its Rye Park development which was sufficiently advanced for the EA to be lodged before the 30<sup>th</sup> November deadline.

### Wind monitoring



Epuron is continuing to monitor wind speeds at both sites to more accurately predict wind patterns and likely energy yield.

The wind speed at Carrolls Ridge is excellent. The pronounced ridge feature allows a very clear understanding of the wind flow patterns across the site. However, the wind speed at Birrema is less certain as the terrain is far more complex.

To improve our understanding of the wind flows at Birrema and help confirm the feasibility of the project, Epuron has recently installed additional wind monitoring equipment including a second 62m wind monitoring mast and a ground-mounted Sodar as shown above.

While only the size of a box trailer, the Sodar uses similar principles to radar to measure wind speeds up to 200m above the ground.

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### Birrema Wind Farm Status

The proposed Birrema Wind Farm was originally submitted as a Part 3A project, with preliminary environmental assessment work carried out on site. The assessment of this project has been delayed as a result of the ongoing changes to the planning and assessment process in NSW.

Epuron has continued development work on the project including carrying out a number of environmental studies at the site. Ongoing wind speed measurement has continued and been expanded to better understand the wind regime on site.

The complex terrain means it is difficult to accurately assess wind speeds at the site, with existing indications lower than initially expected. Once a full 12 months of wind measurement has been completed at the new monitoring locations, Epuron will be in a position to carry out a revised wind speed assessment and wind turbine layout.

Epuron is therefore continuing to make progress while waiting for the revised planning assessment process to be finalised, at which time Epuron will be in a position to determine how to proceed with the project. We will continue to engage with the community as we determine our next steps.

### Carrolls Ridge Wind Farm Status

The Carrolls Ridge Wind Farm was initially part of Yass Valley Wind Farm but was separated out from that development mainly due to uncertainty about impacts to the Eastern Bentwing Bat species which during the summer months inhabits the Wee Jasper cave system and forages on site. Much work has been done to refine our understanding of this species to ensure we minimise any potential impacts.

Wind monitoring continues on site, and the majority of assessment works have been carried out on site. Epuron will continue to engage with the community and potentially involved landowners with a view to lodging an environmental assessment for the site once the new Wind Farm Guidelines and related assessment process has been confirmed.

### Your feedback is important to us

Epuron appreciates that the uncertainty about the development of these wind farms is not helpful. Please contact Donna Bolton on 02 8456 7400 if you would like to discuss any aspect.



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### Eastern Bentwing Bat



The Eastern Bentwing bat is a species of micro-bat which is widely spread throughout NSW. However, it is classed as a vulnerable species chiefly as a result of the limited number of suitable breeding locations available.

They are commonly found in many areas of NSW including the coastal strip around Sydney.

Typically, from late spring to early autumn the bats gather in large numbers at one of 3 known breeding locations in NSW, including the Wee Jasper caves. If any of these breeding locations are heavily impacted this could elevate the risk profile for the species.