

23rd October 2008

Dear Sir / Madam

**RE: Planning Focus Meeting, Yass Wind Farm, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

Thank you for attending the Planning Focus Meeting for the proposed Yass Wind Farm.

The attached final minutes have been sent to all participating agencies and amended as appropriate to ensure that the comments noted are accurate and in context; changes were made to the Department of Lands, Department of Planning, Harden Shire, Department of Primary Industry and the Rural Fire Service comments only.

As discussed, these minutes are intended to 'kick-off' agency consultation. You will have further opportunity to provide comments to the Department of Planning after the Project Application for this proposal has been lodged.

If you would like to pass further comments on to the Department of Planning directly, please contact Neville Osborne [neville.osborne@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:neville.osborne@planning.nsw.gov.au) or Marek Cholinski, [Marek.Cholinski@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Marek.Cholinski@planning.nsw.gov.au).

Thank you again for your participation which will assist us in carrying out a thorough assessment of the proposal.

Yours sincerely



Tim Browne

*Project Officer, nghenvironmental*

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**Participants included:**

- Neville Osborne and Marek Cholinski, Department of Planning
- John Daunt, Department of Lands
- Dr Sandie Jones and Lyndel Walters, Department of Environment and Climate Change
- Cressida Gilmore, Department of Primary Industries
- John Franklin, Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority
- Sharon Langman, Harden Shire Council
- Suzanne Jurcevic, Yass Valley Shire Council
- Ben Bates and Mahesh Nagarajan, Country Energy
- Maurice Morgan, Roads and Traffic Authority
- Michael McManus, Transgrid
- Rodger Ubrihien, Bega Duo Designs
- Simon Davey and Julian Kasby, Epuron
- Brooke Marshall and Tim Browne, **ngh**environmental

**Meeting format**

Participants met in Binalong on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2008 where a presentation on the proposal was given by Epuron Project Manager, Simon Davey and **ngh**environmental's Brooke Marshall. Two of the three precincts were visited on day one, Carrolls Ridge and Marilba Hills. Participants initially proceeded to the Carrolls Ridge precinct near where a monitoring mast is due for erection.

Participants asked questions and presented issues of relevance to their agencies. The group then relocated to the Marilba Hills site on the northern side of the Hume Highway, near a telecommunications tower. This area was chosen as it afforded a good view of the Marilba Hills proposal area. Similar to Carrolls Ridge, discussions within the group focussed on identifying issues of concern from a number of agencies.

On Wednesday October 15<sup>th</sup>, the participants were taken to the main ridge at the Coppabella Hills precinct. Due to the size of the precinct, it was considered impracticable to attempt to see a large portion of each precinct in detail. As such, the site inspection sites were chosen to facilitate extended views of each precinct. At each stop, Julian Kasby gave an overview of likely infrastructure placement and views to other ridges within the development envelope. The number of turbines and their placement would not be decided until after the results of specialist studies.

Key issues discussed at the meeting are indicated below.

## Comments from participants:

Agency	Issues raised
Department of Planning	<p>The Department of Planning representatives, Neville Osborne and Marek Cholinski, raised the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential socio-economic impacts and the ability of members of the community to shape the final infrastructure layout</li> <li>• Was Epuron considering a different approach to the community fund that had been offered in past project applications lodged by Epuron? Simon Davey indicated that benefits for the local community was important but Epuron was not yet committing to a voluntary community fund, based on feedback in relation to other projects, and will consider the issue further during the project development phase.</li> <li>• Sought clarification that the archaeology assessment going to include appropriate consultation. Brooke Marshall indicated that the advertisement had been issued and consultation would be as per the DECC guidelines.</li> <li>• The potential impact to local airfields</li> <li>• Need to consider the proposal in the light of the 'maintain or improve' principle</li> <li>• The general access routes for all precincts</li> <li>• Potential cumulative impact of the proposal</li> <li>• Potential soil and erosion issues particularly at the Coppabella Hills precinct</li> <li>• Are there potential locations for other wind farms in the vicinity of the three precincts? Simon Davey indicated that although Epuron was not actively developing other potential sites in the area, given the wind resource and electrical grid it is probable that there may be future wind energy development in the area.</li> <li>• Indicated that they would like the outer envelope for development to be clearly defined in the Environmental Assessment ie: the 'worst case' impacts</li> <li>• Wanted to ensure that maps of the proposal were presented clearly at appropriate resolutions</li> <li>• The DoP inquired about the potential impact of low air pressures around blade tips to bats.</li> <li>• Consideration of water issues regarding the construction phase and water sourcing, need for batch plants as well as affects on local catchments from the project.</li> <li>• DoP stressed the importance for good community consultation during the proposal</li> <li>• The proximity of non associated dwellings to consequent visual and noise impacts</li> <li>• The amount of vegetation clearing at Carroll's Ridge</li> </ul>
Department of Environment and Climate Change	<p>DECC representatives, Dr Sandie Jones and Lyndal Walters, raised the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DECC indicated that under the Protection of Environment Operations Act 1997 wind farms were no longer licensed and during construction and operation any issues (breaches) relating to noise would default to local Councils rather than the EPA branch of the DECC.</li> <li>• DECC also enquired as to whether concrete batch plants would be required onsite during the proposal. Further, the DECC indicated that should concrete batch plants be required during the proposal this may trigger the requirement for the proponent to obtain a license under the POEO Act specifically relating to concrete batching.</li> <li>• The DECC indicated that grid connections outside of the development envelope should also be considered as part of the environmental assessment</li> <li>• The DECC indicated that any assessment would need to include amount of proposed clearing of native vegetation and proposed offsetting associated with potential clearing. DECC also indicated that if exact amount of clearing within each vegetation community could not be finalised using the 'development envelope' approach then offset calculations would be based on the entire development envelope</li> </ul>

Agency	Issues raised
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DECC representatives noted that there was evidence of habitat for arboreal mammals and abundant woodland (Carrolls Ridge) which is likely habitat for birds and bats and a likely corridor. The DECC were also interested in the potential impact of low air pressures around blade tips to bats.</li> </ul>
Murrumbidgee CMA	<p>Murrumbidgee CMA representative, John Franklin raised the following issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CMA were concerned with the amount of vegetation clearing and the quality of any vegetation that would require clearing</li> <li>Potential impacts to land holders regarding any offsetting requirements</li> </ul>
Department of Lands	<p>The Department of Lands representative, John Daunt, raised the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is potential for native title implications at the trig station at Carrolls Ridge. Further, it is unlikely that native title has been extinguished in this area.</li> <li>There appears to be no Crown land affected by the proposal other than perhaps a couple of Trig reserves</li> <li>For most wind farm projects it is mostly Crown roads that are affected. Crown roads, particularly those that are not constructed, are generally not suitable to be used for wind farm access tracks and such use is not favoured by the Department. It is suggested that proponents locate such tracks and the associated underground and/or overhead cables within easements on private land.</li> <li>Lands are aware that access tracks and cables may unavoidably have to cross over Crown roads.</li> <li>Department of Lands is a Roads Authority and for this and other Part 3A developments and is required (per Section 75 V of the EP&amp;A Act 1979) to grant consent under Section 138 of the Roads Act 1993 for works on Crown public roads. his consent is usually provided by the granting of a licence which authorises the works on the Crown roads and sets the conditions and rental applying to this consent. uch a licence can also be extended to apply to any similar works located on Crown land such as Trig reserves provided that native title issues are satisfied. The consent of the Surveyor General will also be required for any works to be located on Trig reserves.</li> </ul>
Department of Primary Industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cressida Gilmore, of DPI, raised the following issues:</li> <li>There is two current exploration license that has the potential to be affected by the proposal, specifically at the Marilba Hills precinct. Further, the DPI indicated that potential exploration work is likely to target the Mt Mylora prospect located in the northern portion of the Marilba Hills precinct. Part of ELA 3559 does cover the Coppabella Precinct as well so whilst it appears at this stage the main issue is impacts on exploration in the Marilba Hills precinct, the Coppabella area will also need to be assessed for impacts.</li> <li>From a fisheries and agriculture point of view, potential indirect impacts such as sediment laden runoff should be assessed as well as ccess roads over waterways (if there are any) needing approval from DPI Fisheries Division and the need to comply with Fisheries policies and guidelines.</li> <li>Mitigation measures for managing weeds will be required to be detailed particularly as they will most likely be introduced from trucks and any imported soils. Weeds will also take hold on disturbed soil areas, particularly on access roads and disturbed sites for cabling and other associated development. Those areas will need particular attention.</li> <li>Adequate mitigation measures for the control of soil erosion and dust, generated particularly from the internal access roads will need to be implemented.</li> <li>Impacts on the existing farming operations will need to be minimised. In particular, you will need to ensure that livestock are not able to escape from the property as a result of opening gates for trucks.</li> <li>Containment of any substances from any proposed substation is required to ensure that the contamination of pasture and dams does not occur.</li> <li>It will be important also to consult with landholders in the vicinity of the wind farm to assess community issues and concerns.</li> </ul>
Roads and Traffic	<p>The Roads and Traffic Authority representative, Maurice Morgan, made the following comments.</p>

Agency	Issues raised
Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careful consideration would have to be undertaken when identifying the route for infrastructure to be transported to site.</li> <li>• The RTA were concerned with ensuring the safe movement of vehicles</li> <li>• Safe viewing areas off the Highway should be considered</li> <li>• Access points from the Hume Highway should be carefully considered. The RTA indicated that the Hume Highway may have restricted access points and access points should be indentified in consultation the with RTA</li> </ul>
Yass Valley Shire Council	<p>Suzanne Jurcevic, raised the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a result of the Conroys Gap wind farm, the Yass Valley Shire Council have determined not to support wind farms within the LGA</li> <li>• Council would expect some form of community funding to be part of any proposal</li> </ul>
Harden Shire Council	<p>Sharon Langman raised the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council would consider some form of community funding to be an appropriate part of any proposal. Administration of the fund considering the close proximity to Yass LGA would be of interest (previously, community boards have been problematic in Harden)</li> <li>• Council would also like the visual impact of the proposal from both the Hume Highway and Burley Griffin Way assessed</li> <li>• Potential impact to farmers in the immediate vicinity to realise the 40 hectare minimum for dwellings in the area.</li> <li>• Soil erodibility issues in the Coppabella precinct</li> <li>• The presence of an emergency communications tower used by the RFS, police and Council in the vicinity of the Coppabella precinct</li> <li>• This is the first wind farm proposal for the Harden Shire</li> </ul>

**Comments from agencies unable to attend the PFM:**

Agency	Comments
Defence	Flight Safety – will the site of the wind farm have any affect on the safety of military flying operations? Communications – are there any Defence line-of-sight communications such as microwave link paths passing through the wind farm site? Defence radars – is the proposed wind farm site in proximity to Defence radar? Please keep Defence informed of the proposal. When do you expect that Defence would be requested to formally provide comment?
Airservices Australia	Indicated that the following information would be required <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• heights in AHD and coordinates in WGS84 of turbines</li><li>• An assessment could then be made on receipt of the required information</li></ul>
Rural Fire Service	The Rural Fire Service is concerned that the development may provide a source of ignition for a bush fire either by lightning strike or electrical/mechanical failure. The RFS are however confident that these can be overcome by appropriate design consideration.
Department of Water and Energy	The Department of Water and Energy were unable to comment at this early stage of planning process. Ongoing consultation with the DWE will continue throughout the planning phase of the proposal.