

## Silverton Wind Farm, Community Consultation Plan

This plan includes key community consultation issues associated with the proposal and strategies to address these.

The format of this plan is:

1. A profile of the community of the Broken Hill / Silverton area
2. Consultation objectives
3. Issue management – what specific issues need separate risk management
4. Project based activities – what vehicles will be utilised to engage the community
5. Documentation of activities undertaken (to be completed after the implementation of this plan)

### 1. Community Profile

Silverton was established in 1880 and at the time was the area's largest township. According to the results of the 2006 census obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website<sup>1</sup>, 89 people currently reside in Silverton. The town is managed by the Silverton Village Committee that has representatives from Government as well as local residents.

Silverton is a small community focussed on tourism. Local enterprises include a pub, cafes, camel rides and historic artefacts. The town and surrounding area is popular with landscape artists. It is considered that issues likely to be of concern to the Silverton community due to their impact on these activities: include visual impact, noise, and dust. There may be opportunities to marry the proposal with tourist enterprises, to produce a mutually beneficial outcome to the local community. The potential for work opportunities and for the area to experience an influx of contractors during the wind farm construction may also potentially benefit existing establishments.

The nearest major regional centre is Broken Hill which is located approximately 25 kilometres south east of Silverton. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 census results, there are 19,361 permanent residents in Broken Hill. Of these, a total of 55.8% are aged between 15-54 years.

Broken Hill is predominately and historically a mining industry town. Metal ore mining is the largest employer by percentage (8.5%) followed by School education (5.4%), Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006. There is expected to be strong interest in the economic opportunities that the proposal may have for local contractors and tradesmen.

The area is proud of its place in many Australian films and series. Tourism is also an important industry for Broken Hill with an estimated 300,000 tourists coming to the region each year. It will be important to demonstrate that the proposal would not be in conflict with the landscape values that attract some tourists. Other values attracting tourists may include the pioneer spirit, the vastness of the outback, unique arid ecology, adventure appeal and the heritage values of the area.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/>

## 2. Consultation Objectives

The objectives of the consultation are:

- To ensure the community is fully informed about the proposal
- To provide multiple opportunities for the community to receive information and provide feedback about the proposal
- To incorporate the feedback into the design of the wind farm where possible
- To provide multiple opportunities for on-going dialogue with the community
- To build positive, trust-based relationships with members of the local community

Wind farm development has a requirement for high land with good wind speed in rural or remote areas of Australia and site finding is challenging and focused. Once a suitable site has been found there is reasonably limited scope for surrounding communities to be involved in making key decisions about proposals.

Notwithstanding these significant consultation difficulties, it is important for the community, in this case Silverton Village and neighbours to the proposal, to be informed about the wind farm development and have input where possible. The community engagement process will focus on the key areas itemised above. The consultation approach should be summarised as

“Use multiple methods to seek out community members to inform them of the proposal and to understand their concerns and aspirations in relation to it. Where possible incorporate their feedback into the design of the wind farm and inform them of where and how this has been done. Build trust over time by being truthful and available.

### **Silverton Wind Farm Development’s mission is:**

To design the best possible wind farm which meets technical, legislative, financial, social and environmental constraints.

### **The community’s position**

While some will object to the proposal, it is hoped that the community will form the view that their collective interests are best served by assisting Silverton Wind Farm Developments with the identification and mitigation of potential impacts of importance to the community. Consultation should also look at how best to maximise the local and regional benefit of the development.

This requires the identification of impacts and opportunities, and suggestions for mitigation of impacts and enhancement of opportunities. It also relies on the community understanding the process of wind farm development and specific issues of interest to the community. The focus of the consultation plan will be on providing this understanding and engagement.

### 3. Issue management

Several issues have been identified below. These issues pose potential risks to the effective identification and mitigation of impacts important to the community. Mitigation strategies have been developed below, specific to the identified issues.

Issue	Risks	Possible mitigation strategies
<p><b>a) Distrust of wind farms</b></p> <p>Much misinformation is available about the pros and cons of wind farms.</p> <p>Wind energy, 'intermittancy' and emissions savings are complex topics, not easily reduced to simple facts and can be difficult to communicate to a wide audience.</p>	<p>Oversimplification of issues.</p> <p>Confusion of issues (i.e. cases at other wind farms may or may not apply to this project).</p> <p>Appear not to be giving sufficient weight to issues important to the community.</p>	<p>Dissemination of clear focussed information;</p> <p>Ongoing contact with community leaders.</p>
<p><b>b) Distrust of approvals process</b></p> <p>The approvals process can be difficult to understand for an audience with mixed exposure to it.</p>	<p>Perception that the process is too difficult to become involved in.</p> <p>Suspicion that input will not be valued.</p> <p>Perception that the project is a fait accompli.</p>	<p>Clearly illustrate approvals process.</p> <p>Clearly define opportunities for community input including what is required and when it is required.</p> <p>Communicate back, identifying where input has been used.</p>
<p><b>c) Distrust in wind farm developers</b></p> <p>Silverton Wind Farm Developments may be seen as a \$2 company.</p> <p>Wind farm developers generally seen as city-based and focused on solving city problems at the expense of rural / remote areas.</p> <p>Perception that the development is an external influence of change over which they have no control.</p>	<p>Anger and resentment.</p> <p>Distrust of impact identification and mitigation.</p>	<p>Establish credentials of the developers.</p> <p>Outline motives and previous projects.</p> <p>Focus on community benefits and potential for the area to be a renewable energy producer.</p> <p>Listen to community and demonstrate having taken on-board concerns raised.</p> <p>Focus on maximising use of regional resources.</p> <p>Build trust by on-going contact with key community members</p> <p>Mitigate as per <b>a)</b> and <b>b)</b>.</p>

Issue	Risks	Possible mitigation strategies
<p><b>d) Distrust in environmental assessors</b></p> <p>Consultants not seen as independent and credible.</p>	<p>Rejection/questioning of impact identification and mitigation.</p>	<p>Establish credentials.</p> <p>Outline previous projects.</p> <p>Listen to community and demonstrate having taken concerns onboard.</p>
<p><b>e) Fear of unknown impacts</b></p> <p>Large volume of technical material to digest.</p> <p>Complex issues difficult to explain to people when they are distressed.</p>	<p>Exaggerated fears spreading through local community and expressed through media.</p>	<p>Explanations of issues delivered in concise, digestible amounts in plain English.</p> <p>Dissemination of issue-specific information i.e. a summary sheet for each issue.</p>
<p><b>f) Staging of the project / involvement potential</b></p> <p>By the time the sites are chosen there is little role for the community</p>	<p>Apathetic or against proposal due to lack of involvement.</p>	<p>Acknowledge the scope for input is limited and thereby reduce the potential to raise expectations unrealistically.</p> <p>Clearly outline areas for community involvement.</p> <p>Actively invite input within this scope.</p>
<p><b>g) The ‘articulate irate’</b></p> <p>As those most against the proposal will dominate responses, the consultation may reflect one-sided view point from community.</p>	<p>Vocal opponents are generally not interested in contributing to the proposal, they oppose the principles of wind farm development.</p> <p>Heated meetings will further deter engagement of the broader community.</p> <p>Interested sections of the community may be “overpowered” and may be marginalised.</p>	<p>Ensure community is engaged in a forum that minimises risk of vocal opponents dominating face to face public consultation.</p> <p>This can be achieved via the ‘drop in’ or open house session, face to face liaison and by using focussed meetings with specific groups invited ie. bird group, neighbours.</p> <p>Meet with vocal opponents and listen to their concerns and articulate clearly where mitigation is possible and what opportunities exist for engagement.</p>

Issue	Risks	Possible mitigation strategies
<p><b>h) Unified message</b></p> <p>Many points of contact exist for the community, including Silverton Wind Farm Developments personnel, consultants, Department of Planning.</p>	<p>Differing messages may create confusion and distrust.</p>	<p>Stay 'on message':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ we are investigating the impacts thoroughly,</li> <li>▪ we will develop mitigation measures to make them as acceptable as possible,</li> <li>▪ we will seek the community's input into identification of issues and mitigation measures</li> <li>▪ we will communicate back, identifying where input has been used.</li> </ul>
<p><b>i) Unequal distribution of benefits</b></p> <p>Residents close to the development are likely to feel more strongly.</p>	<p>These individuals will be more concerned and may run opposition campaigns.</p>	<p>Consultation should engage these people preferentially.</p> <p>Consultation should separate local and broader engagement activities.</p> <p>Ways to mitigate impacts to this group should be discussed separately (i.e. potential for a component of the community fund to look at this sector of the community).</p>
<p><b>j) First impressions</b></p> <p>Once an individual has formed an opinion, it may be difficult for them to reappraise based on new information.</p>	<p>Individuals may discount any benefits of wind farms.</p> <p>Individuals may focus on impacts to their personal amenity and these may be viewed out of proportion based on the information provided by opposition groups from other developments</p>	<p>Present a positive image of wind power as early as possible.</p> <p>Explain the broader context of the environmental benefits i.e. climate change, renewable energy, energy security.</p> <p>Find out what would mitigate aspects of concern and if possible implement them and demonstrate how this has been done.</p>
<p><b>k) Exposure</b></p> <p>Need to get information out to a wide range of people, not just neighbours and vocal groups.</p>	<p>Those not adequately consulted may join opposition groups.</p>	<p>Use established social (and media) channels in dissemination of materials, ie. social and industry groups.</p> <p>Form positive relationship with radio and newspapers (editorials).</p>

## 4. Project-based activities

The following table outlines the different project stages and associated community consultation objectives and activities. For each stage, the level of consultation sought is also indicated:

- Inform: one way transfer of information, promote awareness and educate, or
- Consult: two way transfer of information, seek input and feed-back.

From the initial announcement of the project, which will alert the wider community to the development, the Proponent should follow up with:

- Newsletters,
- Media opportunities
- Community Open House in Silverton
- Attendance at Village Committee Meeting
- Letters to identified residents within 10kms of the proposal site
- Further Open House or meeting with community if desired

Specifically, the community open house forum will seek to inform the community about the wind farm as well as seeking individual and community views on issues that the community perceives as being important. Follow up phone calls, emails, letters can progress individual issues raised. This strategy is designed to be responsive to concerns raised by the community and individuals and will allow complex issues to be dealt with more thoroughly on their own rather than amalgamated with other topics.

It may be appropriate to have a post open house, follow up meeting / 'drop in' session (possibly to coincide with a Silverton Village Committee meeting). This follow up meeting would create an opportunity for Silverton Wind Farm Developments to further address the potential concerns of the Silverton Village community and to provide information on how their feedback has helped plan the most appropriate design for the proposed wind farm. This would also be an opportunity for SWFD to present the key findings of the proposal that is the subject of the Environmental Assessment to be submitted to the NSW Department of Planning.

Finally, closer contact with the nearby properties owners is recommended. Addressing concerns proactively allows the best chance of greater acceptance of the proposal by the broader community. Broader and local activities are separated in some of the project-based activities that follow.

Project stages	Community engagement objectives	Level on the Spectrum	Suggested community engagement activities
<b>Identify sites for turbines and easements and Secure landowners</b>	Transparency.	Inform	<u>1) Local:</u> Contact made with local residents.
	Build trust.		Phone number provided for one-on-one contact (ngh to field calls related to impacts).
	Public to understand justification for wind farms.		Key issues to discuss:
	Public to understand criteria and rationale for site selection.	Consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rationale for wind farms,</li> <li>▪ Stage of project,</li> <li>▪ Why has this site been selected?</li> <li>▪ What might be involved?</li> <li>▪ Will the project definitely go ahead?</li> <li>▪ How we propose to mitigate concerns?</li> <li>▪ Evidence we have done it in the past?</li> <li>▪ What are the landowner's main concerns? (document)</li> </ul>
Public understands development process.		Inform	Resources on hand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Flow chart showing assessment process, where community input is required</li> <li>▪ Auswea fact sheets on key issues,</li> <li>▪ Copy of Cullerin EA for reviewing impact assessment of issues.</li> </ul>
		Inform	<u>2) Broader:</u> Editorial on need for sustainable energy sources and specifics of wind power (local papers). Editorial on the assessment process and stage of the project.





**Public exhibition period**

Inform    Newsletter and/or editorial inviting feed-back to be sent to Department of Planning.  
Consult

**Dept Planning decision made**

Public is aware of the decision.

Inform    Newsletter and/or editorial.

## 5. Demonstration of consultation

The consultation plan outlined above in Sections 1-4 suggests the level of consultation and type of engagement activities that should be undertaken.

In this section, the actual level of consultation undertaken, as of April 2008 is outlined. This section documents the outcomes of the implementation of the consultation plan.

Date	Activity	Objective	Outcome
October 2007	<i>Prepare a community consultation plan</i>	Prepare background information and strategy to guide community engagement activities.	Prepared by <b>ng</b> henvironmental and used to guide consultation during the development of the wind farm.
November 2007	<i>Announcement of proposal</i>	Maximise stakeholder input early in the development of the project	Early identification of stakeholders and community issues.
October 2007 November 2007	<i>Newsletters</i>	Present up to date information on progress of the proposal	2 newsletters distributed.
October 2007 onwards	<i>Media statements</i>	Present up to date information on progress of the proposal	A range of media statements made.
November 2007	<i>Attendance at Silverton Village Committee meeting</i>	To present information about the project to the village community and make personal contact with residents	The 'face' of the proponent was presented to the community with the opportunity for personal contact.
November 2007	<i>Community Open house at Silverton</i>	To introduce the proposal, the development team, some consultants and much information to the community and to seek feedback on concerns and opportunities identified by the community	Good attendance at the open house (62 registrations), much interest in taking part in construction and associated services, Local residents raised concerns about a range of issues including visual impact and construction impacts.
March 2008	<i>Attendance at Silverton Village meeting convened by the Village Committee</i>	Present up to date information on progress of the proposal, discuss community benefits and receive community feedback.	Meeting held at request of Silverton Village Committee for Silverton residents only to answer questions and disseminate up to date information on the progress of the proposal.

## Community Benefits

A number of community benefits were presented to the Silverton Residents at the meeting in Silverton on March 26, 2008. These included the instigation of a community fund, the allocation of funds to be determined by the association/committee in charge of the fund.

Also presented at the meeting by SWFD was the concept of Solar Silverton – a proposal to provide residents of the village with the opportunity to take up the grants offered by the government on solar installations at no cost to themselves.

A number of initiatives were raised by residents at the meeting including:

- A briefing paper on Penrose Park was presented to the Proponent regarding use of the facility for construction workers
- A bridge over a creek on the Common was suggested and a briefing requested by the Proponent
- Upgrading the 22kV power supply to Silverton from two phase to three phase
- De-silting Umberumberka reservoir
- Reviewing the requirements for infrastructure which may be needed due to increased numbers of visitors in the town, mainly construction workers in the short term and increased tourist numbers in the longer term.
- Providing the village with a water treatment plant.

These and other suggestions presented at the meeting and subsequently made by individuals and community groups are being reviewed by the proponent.

Community and stakeholder consultation is on-going