

Western Plains Wind Farm

Project Information

June 2021

Planning & assessment

State assessment

The development application for the Western Plains Wind Farm will be managed by Circular Head Council with oversight of impact assessment by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Tasmania. The EPA is responsible for identifying key environmental impacts for detailed study, assessing impact reports, recommending conditions for approval and regulating environmental impacts.

The EPA has outlined the scope for assessment in the Project Specific Guidelines and the project's Development Proposal and Environmental Management Plan (DPEMP) must demonstrate these have been adequately addressed.

Key considerations for Western Plains Wind Farm include:

- Potential impacts to threatened fauna species during operation including avifauna.
- Potential impacts to threatened flora and ecological communities during construction.
- Potential noise impacts.

These matters require rigorous, technical and comprehensive assessment by independent specialists. The final assessments will be included in the project's DPEMP and after this has been accepted by the EPA it will be put on public exhibition.

Commonwealth assessment

The project has been referred by Epuron to the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for review under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The Department has deemed the proposal to be a 'controlled action' which means it will require controlling provisions for key species and assessment and approval under the EPBC Act. The project will be assessed by preliminary documentation and the response to the request for further information is being prepared.

Approval conditions

If the project is approved, the approval is for the project as described in the DPEMP. Any future owner of the project must abide by the obligations, conditions and commitments attached to the approval. Factors such as the location or turbine height cannot be changed without further approval.

EPA regulatory officers will ensure compliance with any environmental conditions during pre-construction, construction, commissioning, operation and decommissioning.

See right for an outline of the planning and assessment process, and the status for Western Plains Wind Farm (June 2021).

- 1 Site selection and preliminary investigations
- 2 Notice of Intent (NoI) lodged with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Tasmania
- 3 Project Specific Guidelines for the Development Proposal and Environmental Management Plan (DPEMP) issued by the EPA

WE ARE HERE Studies & assessments completed and DPEMP prepared for lodgment with EPA

- 5 DPEMP submitted to Circular Head Council
- 6 Preliminary assessment by Council
- 7 DPEMP referred by Council to the EPA
- 8 DPEMP on exhibition for public submissions
- 9 Responses to public submissions
- 10 Assessment by the EPA Board
- 11 Determination by the EPA Board and approval conditions provided to Council
- 12 Assessment by Council
- 13 Determination by Council

- 1 Referral to the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for review under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)
- 2 Referral decision

WE ARE HERE Request for information

- 4 Information provided
- 5 Determination



Landscape and visual impact

A detailed landscape and visual impact assessment is a requirement of the DPEMP and has been done by an independent specialist.

The project is four kilometres from the town of Stanley and the assessment shows that turbines will not be visible from most areas in Stanley due to the escarpment between the town and the wind farm.

Epuron has created a series of photomontage images (example above) to show what the wind farm will look like from various public viewpoints and the full assessment will be included in the DPEMP.

Health

The relationship between noise from operating wind turbines and health effects has been the subject of extensive review by independent medical and research organisations including the Australian Medical Association and the National Health and Medical Research Centre (NHMRC). To date there has been no evidence of a causal relationship between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects.

The NHMRC has concluded: *“There is currently no consistent evidence that wind farms cause adverse health effects in humans”* and *“There is no direct evidence that exposure to wind farm noise affects physical or mental health”*.

Tourism

The relationship between wind farms and tourism seems to be largely subjective. Wind farms contribute to ecotourism and a number of wind farms are considered a tourist attraction such as Woolnorth Wind Farm in the north-west and Musselroe Wind Farm in the north-east of Tasmania.

Ecology & biodiversity

Avoiding and minimising impacts to threatened species is a key consideration for wind farm proponents, communities and decision-makers alike.

A thorough and comprehensive biodiversity assessment is a requirement of the DPEMP and has been done by independent specialist consultants in accordance with state and federal requirements.

It involved onsite surveys of species and habitats within and surrounding the project site across multiple seasons, with a focus on threatened species and how the project can avoid and mitigate impacts to them.

The wind farm has avoided all impacts to threatened species and the full assessment will be included in the DPEMP.

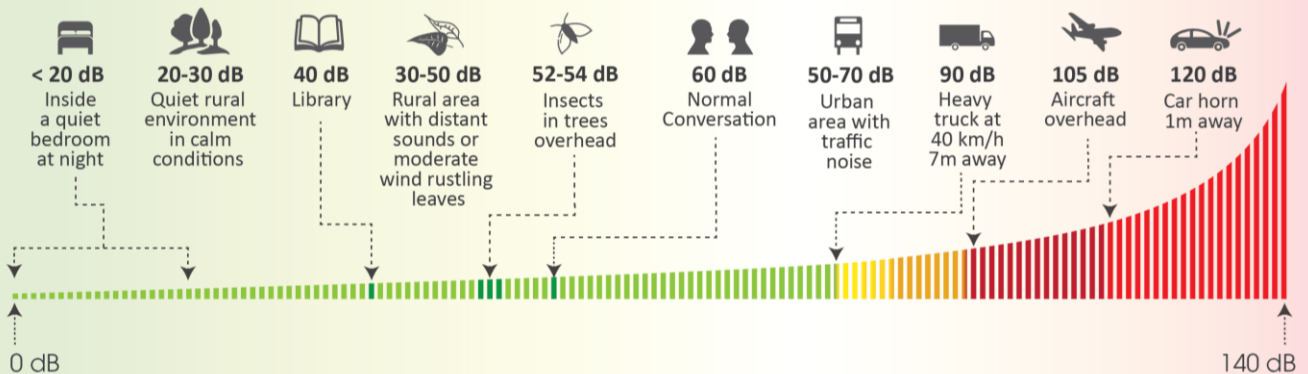
Noise

Wind turbine noise can be accurately predicted and the EPA’s Project Specific Guidelines prescribe clear technical guidelines for rigorous noise assessment.

Compliance with specified noise limits (40dBA or the background level plus 5 dB for any wind speed at any non-involved residence) must be demonstrated using predictions before approval is granted and the wind farm must operate within the prescribed noise conditions during operation.

A comprehensive technical noise assessment involving predictive modelling has been done by independent technical specialists. The project is predicted to be well within the limits specified by the EPA and the maximum predicted noise level in the town of Stanley is 20-25dB.

The diagram below shows noise levels of familiar sounds for reference. The full noise assessment will be included in the DPEMP.



Construction

Construction of the wind farm can only commence after the necessary state and federal approvals have been granted. Epuron anticipates that the construction period would take approximately 10-12 months and it would be fully commissioned and operational within 15 months. An estimated time frame will be included in the DPEMP.

A comprehensive management plan will include compliance with Occupational Health & Safety legislation and cover all aspects of construction consistent with standard working hours, noise, traffic and dust management.

End of operation

Wind turbines have an operational life of approximately 25 years. Options at the end of this period include extending the life of the wind farm, repowering the site with new infrastructure or decommissioning.

If the operator decides not to extend or refurbish the facility the wind turbines will be decommissioned, usually within 18 months of ceasing operation. Decommissioning would involve the establishment of a decommissioning fund by the operator, the removal of above ground infrastructure including wind turbines, electrical infrastructure and maintenance buildings, and returning the site to its former state where practicable.

PROJECT BENEFITS

Growth in Tasmania's renewable energy capacity will deliver clean, cheaper and reliable electricity to households and businesses and create economic opportunities for local communities.

CLEAN ENERGY: The Western Plains Wind Farm would contribute 50.4 megawatts to the Tasmanian grid and support the Tasmanian Government's world-leading target of 200% renewable energy generation by 2040.

JOBES: We expect that the project will generate up to 130 jobs during construction and a few ongoing jobs for operation.

ECONOMIC BOOST: It is anticipated that construction would provide work for local contractors and a boost for nearby accommodation, retail and hospitality businesses.

COMMUNITY FUND: The project commits to a Community Fund of \$3,000 per installed turbine annually (indexed) to support local initiatives and projects. This would amount to more than \$900,000 over the 25-year life of the wind farm.

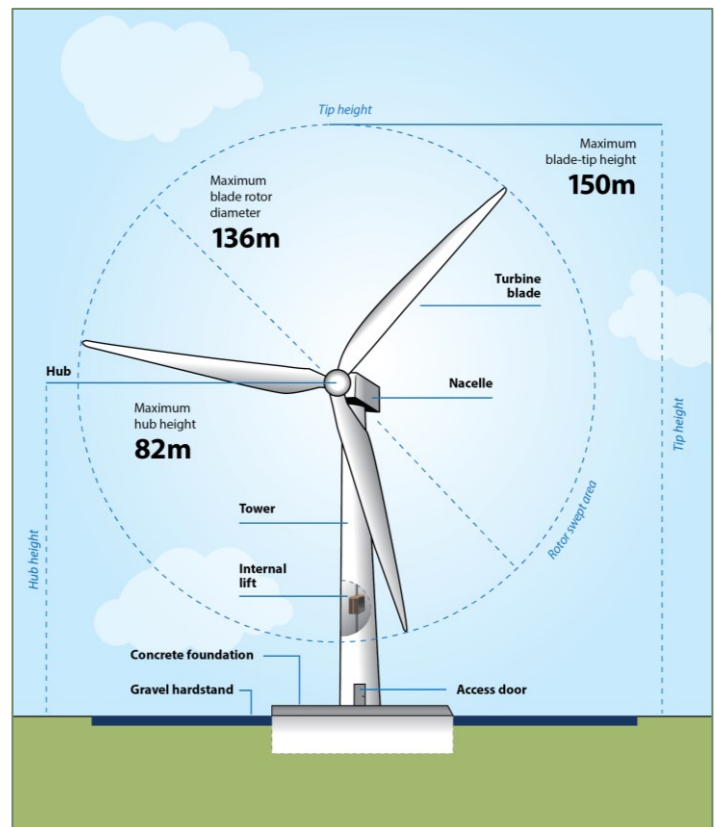


Diagram showing maximum dimensions of the proposed wind turbine model: tower hub height of 82m and blade-tip height of 150m.

Property values

Property prices are influenced by many factors however there is no evidence to suggest that proximity to a wind farm is one of them or to support any correlation between property values and wind farms.

In Australia a number of wind farms have been built on or close to private land and two investigations into whether wind farms influence property values have been done by the NSW Government, with results published by the NSW Valuer General (2009) and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (2016).

These studies reviewed property transactions before, during and after the construction of nearby wind farms and analysed sale prices in the context of broader market trends. Both found there to be no link between wind farms and property values.

More information

Scan QR codes for direct access

Preliminary assessment of the impact of wind farms on surrounding land values in Australia – Research report

NSW Valuer General (2009)

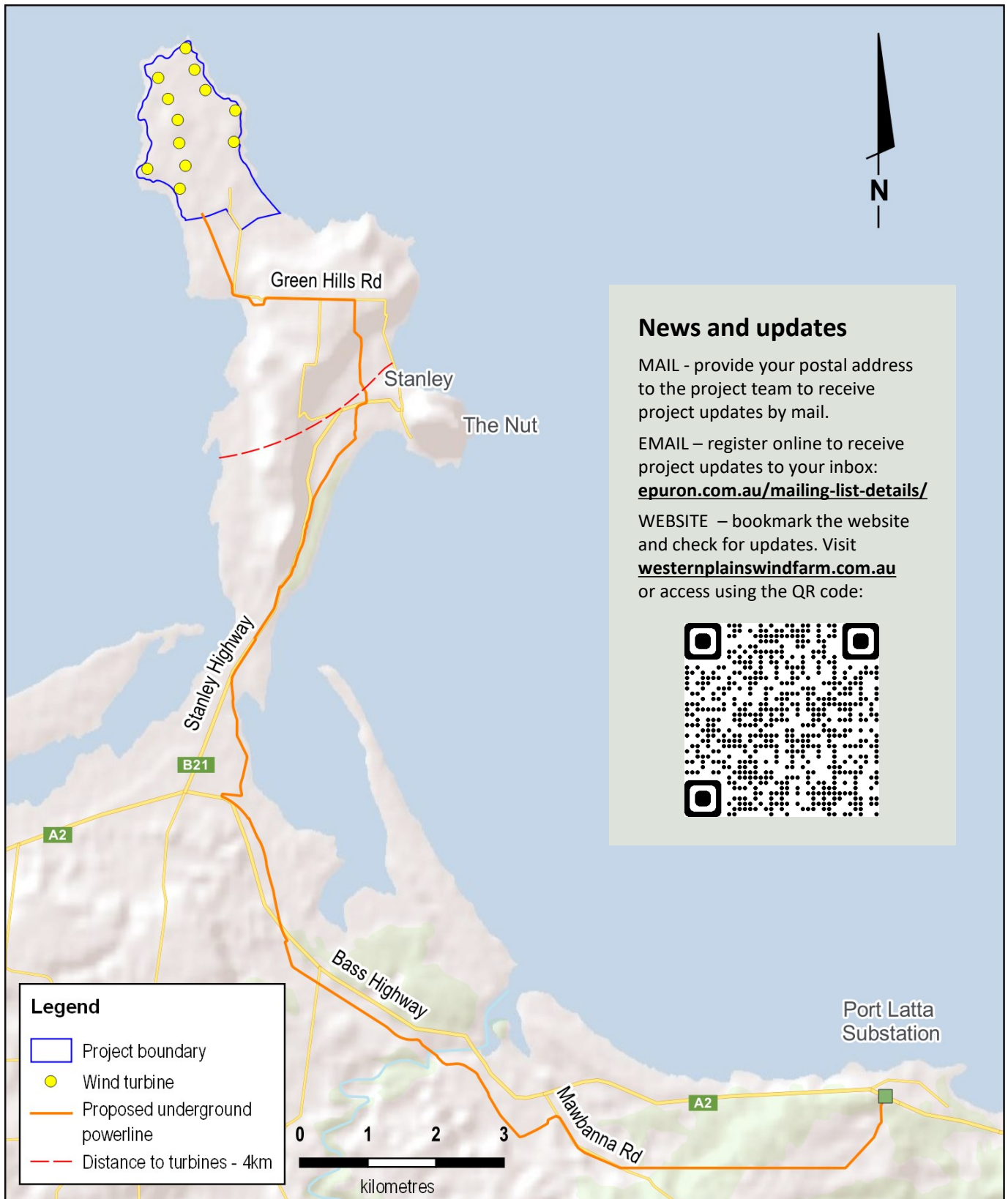
tinyurl.com/hfvtdppr

Review of the Impact of Wind Farms on Property Values

Urbis Report on behalf of NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (2016)

tinyurl.com/4vt6xnkr





Proposed layout of 12 wind turbines at the tip of the Stanley peninsula connected to Port Latta substation via a new underground powerline.

Project team

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