

Tuesday, February 07, 2017

Mr. Chairman

I have a question the answer of which will determine my submission to you today.

Discussions with officers of the Planning Department have led us to believe that your commission was the opportunity to have this application rejected. But your PAC 2015 / 16 annual report quotes "The commission did not refuse any proposals" of the 76 applications considered. In the previous year only 3 out of 52 were rejected and last year the Sydney Morning Herald reported that the PAC is "little more than a rubber stamp". I have the article here if you wish to see it.

So my question is:-

Is rejection of the Development application going to be considered by you or are we only going to talk about conditions to be imposed on the acceptance of the application?

I don't want to waste your time or my time discussing the reasons to reject the application if, as the report indicates it will most likely be accepted.

Professor Lipman and gentlemen,

My concern about the matters before you are that the transmission line for this proposed wind farm is to be considered separate to the windfarm application and secondly the poor quality of the assessments made by the Development of Planning and Environment. Their report is rubbish and not of a standard for you to be able to make an informed decision.

I will illustrate the inadequacy of the Department's assessment by referring to three of the matters of importance – Visual Impact, Socio Economic Effects and Site Rehabilitation.

Initially, however, I wish to address the question of the transmission line from the proposed wind farm being treated by Newtricity as a separate development application.

The inability of the proponent to obtain a transmission line during the past three years highlights the depth of the opposition in the district to this development. This is after considerable funds have been offered to land owners for access. My neighbours and I do not believe that they will obtain access for a transmission line. We also believe that there needs to be an end to the uncertainty and upset that this application has caused in the district.

Therefore, I submit that you place today's development application on HOLD for 6 months. If at the end of that 6 months period the proponent has not obtained a transmission line the application for the wind farm be rejected.

There was a precedent in 2015/16 when the PAC placed an application on HOLD. I Draw the very the real distinction between placing this application on hold rather than granting

consent to the development subject to confirmation of the transmission line. The latter uses your commission to endorse the wind farm and thereby provide added financial credibility to the project. I don't believe that it is the role of the commission, Nothing is to be lost by placing the application on hold.

1. **Visual Impact:** The Department acknowledges that the visual impact of the wind farm is the "dominant issue of concern" but concludes that the "visual impact of the project would be moderate to low due to the local topography and vegetation which would limit or screen views of the wind turbines on the site".

Nevertheless "the Department has recommended conditions requiring Newtricity to further reduce the visual impact of the projects. Their conditions include "giving owners of residences within 4 kms of the turbine the ability to ask for additional screening or landscaping measures to be implemented on their property". "With these conditions in place, the Department considers the visual impacts of the project to be acceptable". (pp ii)

Let's look at what is proposed,

These turbines will be 185 metres high. That's 50% taller than the multitude of turbines already installed or approved in the district.

That's the height of a 56 storey office building. The AMP centre in Sydney and there is to be a forest of 31 of them, some within 1km of the 7kms main road and the Department thinks they can be screened by additional planting!

The tallest tree in the world the Sequoia redwood, is only 85 metres tall!! But the department is also insisting that "the turbines are painted off white grey that minimises the potential for glare and reflection".

This childish assessment not only insults the community but is a ludicrous arguments to put before the PAC.

2. **Socio Economic Effects (ppiii)**

"The department has acknowledged that a number of the submissions raised concerns about the potential adverse impacts on property value in the area"

"However the Department considers the project is unlikely to result in any discernible impact on property value"

And they've come to this conclusions without speaking to any local real estate agents! I purchased my property five years ago at a heavy discount due to approval having been granted for a wind farm well away on the neighbouring property.

I'm sure you're aware Mr. Chairman after representing country people for twenty years how family farms become the superannuation funds for retirement. This project if approved, will wipe hundreds of thousands of dollars off the value of neighbouring properties.

I really think this community has paid more than its fair share of contributing to the nation's renewable energy targets and it is time to look elsewhere.

The Department's executive summary refers to the importance of the Crookwell areas superior wind resources and easy access to major electricity transmission lines. The same could be said of Sydney's coastline from Maroubra to Palm Beach and the

Brindabella Range outside of Canberra and they don't require lengthy transmission lines with the resultant inefficient loss of energy generated.

This assessment by the Department is uninformed and treats the Crookwell Biala community with contempt.

3. Site Rehabilitation:

I have not been able to find any serious attention given by the Department in its assessment of this major area of concern.

Professor Lipman, you would be aware of the problems in the mining industry with the failure to address correct site rehabilitation at the development consent stage. The same problem is evident in Europe with wind farms that have reached the end of their commercial lives.

I would suggest that if you approve this project you impose the following conditions;

1. That the cost of rehabilitation be independently assessed and that those funds be deposited with the local council by the wind farm operator. I emphasize funds deposited, not a bank guarantee.
2. At the audit held every three years the cost of rehabilitation be reassessed and any additional funds required for rehabilitation be deposited with the local council and
3. That the host farmers be advised that ultimate responsibility for the cost of removal of the turbines and rehabilitation of the site rests with them.

In summary the poor quality of the department's submission makes it not possible for the commission to make an informed decision on the application. The separation of the transmission line from the wind farm application can only be viewed as a ploy to assist the developer.