

Planning and Assessment Commission - Capital Wind Farm - MOD 4

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Issues

- Misleading claims about the impact of Capital 2 on the NSW economy
 - Misleading claims about the potential of Capital 2 to power homes in NSW with renewable energy
 - With this modification the developer is continuing to keep the community on hold while it provides further modifications to its plans
 - Lapse dates are meaningless if they continue to be extended
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Misleading Claims on renewable energy and economic impact

- In its 'assessment report' on Capital 2 MOD 4, DOPE uncritically repeats claims by the developer, Infigen, that capital wind farm 2 will have the following benefits:
 - * production of enough renewable energy to power more than 60,000 homes;
 - * creation of up to 120 full time jobs during construction and 6 full time jobs during operations; and
 - * direct capital investment of \$240 million into the NSW economy"
- The reality is that Capital 2 (like all other wind farms) will only be able to contribute electricity to the national grid when wind resources and the national market for electricity allow. It is factually incorrect to state that this project will power more than 60,000 homes. The power for these homes will largely come from coal fired base load power stations and these stations will need to keep operating even during periods when electricity is purchased from Capital 2. In the absence of any other changes to the architecture of the national electricity grid, there will be little impact of Capital 2 on reductions of greenhouse gas emissions,.
- There will also be a much smaller impact of Capital 2 on the NSW economy than the amount claimed. Given the extent of imported components for the construction of Capital 2 most of the economic impact will occur outside of NSW. There are no wind turbine manufacturers in NSW, which will need to be imported from outside Australia. Even the towers supporting the wind turbines will likely have to be imported from other states of Australia. DOPE state that "the project has a capital investment value of approximately \$240 million". Given that \$240 million is the total capital investment then the claim of \$240 million investment into the NSW economy is grossly

misleading, and undermines the need for Capital 2 to have been given State Significant Development status.

- DOPE is highly negligent in repeating these claims uncritically. The community deserves to know the full truth, not half truth or public relations spin produced by the developer.

Yes another modification

- There have been three previous modifications to the Capital 2 proposal. DOPE's conclusion is that these modifications show a strong commitment by Infigen to the project. Rather, could they show a totally inadequate approach to planning of this project by Infigen, given that it could be longer than 10 years before "there is any material progress in developing the project"?
- As Infigen continues to make modifications to an 'unpopular' proposal, they continue to keep the community on hold and require extra effort and input by the community to consider yet another variation to the project, which may or may not have damaging effects on the local community, through for instance changes to visual impact, noise, disturbance to the amenity of the area (beyond that resulting from the current Capital Wind Farm) and further reductions in property prices.

Lapse dates are meaningless

- DOPE has catalogued that there are "other wind farms in NSW, including Silverton Wind Farm which was recently granted a 2 year lapse date extension following an initial request for 5 years".
- What is the meaning of a lapse date if developers can know that they have a high certainty of being granted an extension?
- On the other hand, the community is left with the uncertainty of a potentially damaging project hanging over its head for a decade or more while developers continue to be granted extensions to the lapse date. I note in this instance that of the 86 submissions from the general public 85 were objections and only one supported. What message from the community will it take for DOPE to stand behind the rules that it sets for developers, including lapse dates? Why does DOPE continue with the farce of inviting submissions and public comment, when they and the PAC continue to largely ignore the content of these submissions?
- DOPE says that it "acknowledges" issues raised both by the developer and by the community. The recommendation for an extension of 2 years to the lapse date shows that DOPE has ignored the views of the community (based on the assumption that

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DOPE actually read the 85 objections) and decided in favour of the interests of the developer. What is to stop Infigen from applying for (and being granted) a further extension of the lapse date in 2 years time? Such a cascading process of extensions creates a high level of uncertainty in the community as well as keeping the community on hold.

- Why in this instance did Infigen not make its application for an extension of the lapse date sooner? Were they already aware of the Department's view that 2 year extensions are generally acceptable? Are they really seeking to push the boundaries of the extension to 2.5 years by waiting till the last minute to make their application? Would they seek to work around the department's rules by establishing some small facility in an attempt to demonstrate commencement of construction, such as installing a work shed?
- Planning Minister Stokes has commented that the new Wind Energy Framework will address problems such as "delays in assessments for wind energy projects, which on average have taken more than 1000 days to be determined." In reality, it is developers who are causing major delays. For instance, The developer for the proposed Jupiter wind farm is just starting to review submissions well over 1000 days after submitting the Preliminary Environmental Assessment and nearly 2000 days since the first written communication was received by non associated community members. At the last CCC meeting for Jupiter, the developer refused to give a timeframe for consideration of these submission, yet the community had a strict deadline 76 days to respond to the EIS. This period was described as an extended period in the light of the Christmas break and only reluctantly extended by 14 days in the light of the major community disaster from the Currandooley fire, that originated near the base of Capital Wind Farm turbines.
- Why does the community get less than 100 days, when developers can expect thousands of days, and continuing extensions? This process is heavily biased in favour of developers

On the basis of these substantial deficiencies in consultation, I call for the extension to the Capital 2 Mod 4 lapse date to be rejected by the PAC.