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NSW Planning Assessment Commission

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Reference: D502-18 Bango Wind Farm

Dear Commissioners

I would like to comment on the Department of Planning and Environment's recommendations on the Bango Wind Farm (BWF).

I am concerned that the Department has not given enough consideration to the overall issues of noise, visual impact and biodiversity impacts; as well as those issues which will directly affect my life at my residence (238), which are noise and visual impact.

Context

My husband and I purchased the property Brookdale (residence 238) in 2010 with a plan to enjoy a rural lifestyle and make an income from sheep. Shortly after we purchased the property, Adrian Maddocks (BWF) approached us with the plans for the wind farm. We were devastated to find out that the very reasons we had purchased the property for, those being peace, tranquillity, rural life, rural vistas and a healthy active outdoor life, would now be compromised by this project.

We engaged in many discussions with Adrian and over the course of a few years, realised that the project would inevitably happen and that we would be severely affected.

We reached the point where Adrian drew up a Heads of Terms agreement where BWF would buy our property for 3 times what we paid, as well as pay compensation for any improvements that we had made. Despite that financial incentive, we did not agree to the contract as we valued our lifestyle on this particular property as being greater than any amount of money that he could offer.

Visual Impact

"The local community does place importance on the landscape as many residents have chosen to live in the area for the rural character of the landscape" p17 BWF Final Assessment. We are part of the community who greatly values this rural landscape, we do not want to reside and work in the midst of an ugly industrial installation.

"The area definitely has high scenic value to those who live there" p27. Indeed it does. In our case we built our house oriented north to capture the magnificent views and for solar access. Consequently, our main views will be of the turbines which are located to the north of our residence.

Table 6 (p30) states that BWF assessed the visual impact of our residence as low, yet the Department's assessment was high. Throughout this project the proponents have always tried to minimize the impacts on residents. This is a good example of such minimising.

As the occupier of a residence which will have a high visual impact from the BWF project, I am hoping that this impact will be minimized by reducing the number of turbines closest to our residence. Visual

mitigation would be useless, particularly considering that noise will also be a significant issue at our residence.

Turbines 25, 45, 62 and 111 have a high visual impact to our residence (238), according to the Department (Table 6, p30). These turbines should be removed if the project must go ahead.

The Department states that all 3 of residences 60, 144, and 238 would have visual impacts primarily attributed to the magnitude of the same 3 nearest turbines in the southern Mt Buffalo cluster. This presents a strong case for removal of these 3 turbines.

“BWF has committed to implementing appropriate visual mitigation” p27. BWF has never mentioned visual mitigation to us and now BWF is forced into discussing it, in the final hour of the project’s approval.

The Department states that “In regard to residence 238, Turbine Nos. 25, 62 and 111 are located within 2.3 km of the residence, with the nearest turbine (i.e. Turbine No. 62) being located 1.8 km away. There is some screening of these turbines from existing vegetation. However, given their elevation on a ridgeline approximately 70 m above the location of the residence, these turbines have the potential to dominate the view from this residence” p31.

Furthermore, “The turbines located further to the north and northeast in the Mt Buffalo cluster (i.e. Turbine Nos. 17, 45 and 102) would be shielded to some extent by the southern edge of the ridgeline and intervening topography” p31.

It is unacceptable that we should have to suffer the visual impact of the 3 turbines located within 2.3km of our residence. The Department states that the issue is “finely balanced”. We hope that these 3 turbines will be removed. It is inequitable that our residence and 2 other residences should have to endure the visual impact of these particular turbines.

As the Department states, the 3 closest turbines to our residence have the potential to dominate the view. The turbines should not be built if they will dominate our view.

“Many of the VIA photomontage baseline photographs have light to heavy cloud cover reducing the contrast and visibility of the wind turbines. This reduces the value of the photomontages” p5 Independent Review of the Amended DA.

The photomontage from our residence (PM 22) is taken from one point which hides some of the turbines behind vegetation. At other points from our front verandah, more of the turbines would be revealed. It is misleading to just consider the one photomontage.

The turbines in most photomontages are extremely light in colour and contrast, and this makes them difficult to see. This leads to an unreliable view of the visual impact to our residence. The photomontage is unprofessional and unacceptable and should be rejected as an accurate representation.

Noise Impact

“Using conservative assumptions, the noise modelling found that the project would be able to comply with the relevant operational noise criteria at all non-associated residences, except for non-associated residence 238.

The noise level at residence 238 is predicted to exceed the criterion (i.e. 35 dB (A)) by 2 dB (A). However, the conservative assumptions in the assessment and the minor nature of the potential exceedance, the Department considers that the criterion could be readily achieved by operating the

closest turbines in noise management mode or using sector management, and compliance with noise criteria could be confirmed through monitoring once the final turbine model is selected and commissioned” p6.

The Department predicts that the noise level at our residence will be exceeded by 2 dB at wind speeds of 9 m/s and 10 m/s as measured by the criterion. Noise level, unlike visual impact, is measurable. Consequently, the two turbines which will exceed the noise criteria should not be built.

It is unacceptable to build the turbines and then allow the company to use “noise management mode or sector management.” The noise levels at our residence exceed the criteria, as measured, consequently these two turbines should not be constructed. This is especially pertinent considering the final turbine model has not yet been selected, and could produce more noise than predicted.

Living on our property and in managing the sheep, weeds and fencing, we spend most of our waking hours outside. The noise from turbines will be greater outside our residence. The closer we are working to the northern boundary, the worse the noise will become. We should not have to endure noise levels above the criterion when working on our property, neither should our livestock have to endure excessive noise.

“Alternatively, this issue [noise] would be addressed if the Planning Assessment Commission decides to remove the turbines nearest to this residence [238] to reduce visual impacts, as discussed above”p45. This option, removing the turbines nearest to our residence, is the one that should be implemented because of the dual impacts on our residence of excess noise and visual impacts.

When measuring pre BWF project noise levels, the Department has found that “background noise levels were found to be relatively quiet” p45. Indeed, this is true, since low noise levels is one of the many reasons we have chosen to live in the area. Low noise levels, isolation, rural views are what we enjoy when working on our property. Please do not rob us of these precious commodities by allowing this project to go ahead.

Additional Impacts

BWF expect to be able to build bigger turbines than any project yet built in Australia and then keep them at the same distance from residences. Surely if the turbines are larger, there should be a greater setback from residences.

The use of two different turbine layouts in the proposal has made it extremely difficult to comment on. BWF should have been restricted to one turbine layout.

BWF propose removing 47 turbines to assist with loss to biodiversity. This is simply not enough, the project must not go ahead. There are many biologically sensitive areas in the project zone. As well, many local residents have spent their lifetimes improving diversity on their land by planting trees and fencing off areas of native vegetation from grazing stock.

I remained concerned about increased traffic and damage to local roads during construction.

No trees should be removed along roadsides for passage of wind farm equipment. Roadside trees and vegetation provide valuable habitat for wildlife and connect up with larger areas of native vegetation.

Conclusion

Turbines will highly dominate the landscape character. They will permanently ruin the rural vistas, and to us personally, cause undue stress and anxiety because of the noise and visual impacts.

“The proposed overall turbine height of 200m to blade tip is significantly greater than the adjacent approved windfarms. This, combined with the elevated location of the turbines in the topography, will likely exaggerate any dominance issues” p4 Independent Review of the Amended DA. My opinions are represented here, the visual impact will be totally unacceptable.

Our residence is in the unenviable position of being adversely impacted by excessive noise levels. The noise levels as we work in different parts of the property will be even higher.

Our preference is for the BWF project to be rejected entirely. The quality of our lives at our residence will be severely diminished by this project.

The community has become divided since the inception of this project. The community is divided into those host properties who will receive windfall profits from hosting turbines and the rest of the community who prefers to retain the peaceful rural character of the area. Many of the host properties are owned by absent landlords who will not suffer from noise and visual impacts, loss of biodiversity, excess traffic and damage to roads.

Should the BWF be constructed, our property and residence will be subject to excessive visual and noise impacts. The three closest turbines to our residence (25, 62, and 111) should be removed since they will cause an unacceptable degree of noise and visual impact to our residence.

Jane Hedges

Residence [REDACTED]

“Brookdale”

25/03/2018