



CATHERINE WOOF

OBJECT

Submission No: 165400

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| Organisation: | | Key issues: Biodiversity, Visual impacts, Noise and vibration, Agricultural impacts and land use, Social and economic, Physiological - infrasound noise / electromagnetic interference / shadow flicker / blade glint |
| Location: New South Wales 2355 | | |
| Submitter Type: I am the owner or a tenant of a neighbouring property to the proposed development | | |
| Attachment: FF89D75A-6BEA-4FDB-BEFB-740DOCE00D61.jpeg | | |

Submission date: 3/23/2024 9:05:27 PM

Thunderbolt Wind Farm

SSD-10807896

I am the owner of Bendemeer which is adjacent to the hosts Kyabra and Looanga. I bought Balmoral in 2005 and run it as a superfine merino breeder and wool business together with Stephen Johnston.

I hold a BSc 1st Hons in zoology and biochemistry from ANU and a Master's in Creative Arts from University of Wollongong. Work includes in the pharmaceuticals industry for Therapeutics Goods Admin. and as a regulatory associate for a pharmaceuticals company in the USA. I am a practicing visual artist having exhibited in the US and in city, regional and commercial galleries in NSW and the ACT.

My submission to the NSW DPI covered some concerns on the impact of the wind farm on the merino sheep business and farm residence, as well as concerns about its impact on biodiversity and safety due to an increased fire risk owing to an impaired ability to control fires arising in or near the development due to restrictions on aerial firefighting and absentee landowners.

This submission will cover additional concerns in these areas arising from new information, but largely focus on impacts to my visual arts practice and as a person with a diagnosed severe neuropsychiatric disorder.

In summary, I will recommend the removal of or relocation of turbines 23,24,25,26,27 and 28 to 3km from the boundary of Balmoral.

Merino breeder and wool business.

T28 is approx. 200m from the boundary of one of our most important lambing paddocks and close to other lambing paddocks. We lamb our ewes on the southern part of the farm. I drew attention to the EIS statement that we will be notified about construction and (nocturnal) and other maintenance as inadequate for minimising disturbance to lambing ewes. This has not been adequately addressed in Neoen's response. The proponent shows no intention to cooperate with the farm calendar at this most stressful time for ewes. Lambs will die. Noise from operating turbines will mask the bleating of lambs trying to reunite with their mothers. Fleeces will have increased tenderness or breaks. I cannot put a dollar value on this, nor on the value of distressed animals nor my own or Stephen's distress.

The EIS states that the construction phase will produce dust (amounts not given) but that attempts will be made to mitigate this. The vagueness in the report does not reassure me that dust won't penetrate and devalue fleeces. Has this been evaluated in the field? Kyabra is a cattle only operation.

Turbines are likely to dry soil in grasslands and affect their ecology (Wang et al., Science of the Total Environment, vol 857, Part 1). Thus T28 is likely to dry adjacent grazing areas on Balmoral including green pick necessary for milking ewes.



With respect to increased fire risk, the AAAA has stipulated a 3km no fly zone around turbines. This creates a no fly zone over the entirety of Balmoral. Since the May 2022 submission date, additional experience by rural firefighters working on wind farm fires have demonstrated impaired capability due to the presence and operation of turbines. Mr Stephen Johnston addresses these in his separate submission.

However, a no fly zone will also prevent aerial feral pest control on Balmoral.

Recently LLS carried out aerial control of pigs, deer, goats, wild dogs and feral cats at no cost to farmers. NONE of the hosts nor associates took part, despite large pest populations of pigs and deer on Kyabra and Birralelee. My business already is wearing the cost of this lack of community cooperation as pigs and deer flood the farm, ploughing paddocks and wrecking fences, killing new born lambs and compromising bio security. My business will wear the cost in time and money for shooting, baiting, trapping, resowing pasture, dead lambs and fence repairs. Damage from lack of pest control by these neighbours has been considerable and ongoing. Neither Kyabra nor Looanga bait for foxes, or if they do, they have never notified us as per LLS regulations. The burden will be even greater if the wind farm goes ahead.

The opportunity to aerielly spread fertiliser and seed is also denied by this exclusion zone.

Biodiversity.

Turbines 23,24,25 and 28 would be in moderate to high biodiversity areas with good canopy cover. Notably they would be located in areas designated as having moderate to high quality koala habitat, confirmed in the case of the proposed location of T28 by the sighting of a koala on Balmoral just 350m away. Turbines 23,24 and 25 are not only proposed to be in a high fire prone area, but also will fragment a continuous band of moderate to high quality koala habitat that extends from within Balmoral, incorporating old growth forest, for about 1000 ha. Such intact forest is habitat for the endangered robin species.

Arts Practice (including visual impact, noise, flicker and nocturnal lighting)

The landscape has been rated of low to medium aesthetic at 1053 m above sea level out to the coast, down the sweeping valley towards the Kyabra homestead, the new residence on Banalasta, across to Turkey Mountain, then partly along the Nandewars as they snake to the Northwest, further clockwise to Mt Duval, hold favourable comparison to any other places I've been to, and is a worthy subject for Von Guerard or Glover on a fine day. In mist, rolling storms, sunset, sunrise and a clear moonlight night the view is even more wonderful. I have never seen such skies elsewhere, including the US Southwest or the Netherlands. They are glorious. Everyone who has been to "The View" as we call this place, feels exhilaration.

Stephen and I enjoyed an evening picnic to see the McNaught comet in 2007 stretching across the night sky.

A major factor in our choice to live on Balmoral was its scenery, night sky and biodiversity. After inspecting the property before buying it, Stephen turned and asked me "Do you think you can paint here?" This was an absolute criterion for our new home, that I could paint there.

The studio is next to the house with double doors opening to the South and East and North East, directly onto turbines 23,24,25 and 28. I use it for sometimes 12 hours at a stretch, into the evenings. The deciduous trees will not mitigate flicker, flashing red lights and noise. I bought a caravan, unregistered, that I use as a mobile studio, on the Southern and Eastern parts of the property. These four turbines will affect my vision and concentration.

A lot of my work incorporates images of the night sky, as in the series "Still Lifes with Planets". The night sky is part of our lives, as we observe eclipses, meteor showers, planetary alignments and so on.

Earlier in my life I celebrated the launch of the space shuttle with champagne with my late husband, as we saw Halley's Comet in 1986 at the Hamilton Observatory, and were regular visitors to the Mt Stromlo Observatory until it tragically burnt down in the 2003 Canberra Fires.



Flashing red lights will diminish inspiration from the night sky.

I have visual trouble caused by LED lights, first reported to my optometrist in Australia in 2015. I reported the same symptoms to my physician at Stanford medical Center, caused by flicker from neon lights, in 1989. At the last appointment the optometrist described this as Visual Snow Syndrome. My visual field is flooded with images of dots when I look at LED lights. It restricts driving at night, computer use, and Christmas lighting is horrible. Prolonged exposure causes cluster headaches, tingling, pain and numbness on the LHS of my face, pain and watering of my left (dominant) eye and nausea. I can't paint or be outside due to photo sensitivity, and need a

day or two in a quiet dark room wearing earplugs to recover.

Flicker from turbine blades according to Umwelt's report will be ~moderate at my residence (and studio). I am very anxious that I will be affected if I go outside, especially to work in the paddocks. This will be compounded by nocturnal aviation safety lighting.

Since January 2020 I have exhibited one work only.

Mental Health.

From early adulthood I have suffered from a severe neuropsychiatric disorder, first diagnosed as schizophrenia, then Bipolar 1 by three psychiatrists, two of them Professors of Psychiatry (psychological medicine) involving hospitalisation on a number of occasions.

I managed, even during the 18 years of a 28 year marriage when my late husband suffered from an inoperable brain tumour, to work and paint, and serve as a volunteer. A diagnosis of PTSD was added to my medical history in 1990.

In January 2020, distressed and exhausted by the drought and fires, after the first rains, I climbed to the View to enjoy the first greening of the valleys and mountains - my personal tonic and adjunct therapy. At the end of January I learnt about the proposed wind farm, and even more d value.

My parents were enthusiastic bush walkers and we walked and camped as a family and with friends throughout NSW, in Victoria and Queensland as a child. I joined the Coast and Mountain Walkers when a teenager, and whilst living in the USA hiked in Northern California with the Sierra Club.

The view from the crest of the Nandewars emoralising, that it was a ~done deal. Then the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. I was also responsible for the care and health of my mother, then living in an aged care facility in Armidale.

I can no longer respond with joy to the scenery on my farm, to experience the uplift that has helped me so much recover from illness and adversity in the past. It is as though Neoen has taken away an efficacious medicine with no side effects.

One of the reasons for my taking up farming at the age of 50, apart from falling in love with a farmer, was the knowledge that an anticipation of future pleasure, of goals, are so necessary to help depression, as would be sunlight and exercise, and working with animals. Combined with art, this would be a change from nearly two decades of caring for my husband whilst his illness gradually took him away from both of us.

It took a couple of years for many people in the district to recover from 2017 to 2019. A study by ANU researchers concluded that resilience and psychological growth emerged when people affected by drought and fires were part of a supportive community. This proposal has rent the community, interposing secrecy and division at a very critical time for our recovery.



With worsening symptoms, including psychosis and suicidal thinking, I was admitted to a psychiatric facility in early 2022. I discharged myself, too soon as it happened, because there were too few beds and I felt other people were in greater need. They probably were.

Other affected neighbours have also reported mental distress requiring treatment, of sadness and grief at the possible loss of the intact landscape we love. This is compounded by a defeating loss of morale by the proposal being described widely as a "done deal". Some valued people have already cut and run. This will gather pace as our community is fragmented.

A report on mental health services in the New England Hunter health district highlights it suffers from below state average services in many aspects of mental health care. We have 1.4 times the state average for suicide, Armidale has twice the state average for hospital admissions for self harm. We have higher alcoholism, higher vulnerable population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and a high rural population that incurs a higher risk of mental health needs as well. Against more severe drought, floods and fires due to climate change, a rolling increasing burden as more and more renewable energy proposals are approved against fracturing communities, sometimes effects emerging in neighbours after years, this burden on the system will increase. There will be suicides and depression, grief, anger as our landscape is rapidly and irreversibly lost. There are too few beds already, no full time psychiatrist at Armidale. There will be a pervasive loss of morale occasioning inevitably a loss of productivity in a population so many of whom are struggling to adapt their farm business to climate change, just when creativity and a sober and detailed, yet optimistic consideration of the future is most needed.

Neoen's response is to engage in hand waving without adequate justification to downgrade a community perceived high risk of adverse mental health risk to medium risk, then through "ongoing community engagement" to the needed end result, low risk.

And this magical result achieved when the pharmaceuticals industry hasn't added a significant new medication for thirty to forty years!!

Talk therapy won't work. I feel as though I have been mugged and some property stolen. The muggers (NEOEN) return, tell me I shouldn't feel so bad, under a neighbourhood agreement offer some of my property back as long as I keep quiet, they tell me if I continue to talk to them, I'll feel a whole lot better! Neon harmed me and robbed me in the first place, while telling me the police are looking the other way.

A further indication of Neoen's neglectful, sloppy and ignorant approach to our region is its one sentence consideration of the emergency medical assistance provided by the Westpac Rescue Helicopter, especially as it may be required to assist accident victims along the black spot area of the New England Highway that runs extensively adjacent to Kyabra. They approached the Royal Flying Doctor Service for comment and there was no response. There was no follow up on this vital matter. No consideration from Umwelt that they might be wrong in this matter. None. This must reflect on the diligence and good faith of the rest of their work.

I accept that the process of approval/disapproval will be long. It has to be, as does the approval of a new drug. But as with a new drug, the real downsides will only become apparent with time and exposure to a large population including our fellow, silent creatures who rely on us to intercede for them.

It has been like a long game of chess, where Neoen has all 32 pieces, all white, all kings and queens. Every time we think one or two of the pieces may be more to the black than white, a piece WE can play with, it gets painted gleaming white overnight by Umwelt. And on it goes.

So many of the costs are externalised:

Firefighting on an industrial site, externalised to ageing volunteers

Mental health impacts onto already inadequate services



Feral pest control onto neighbours, deprived of the services of aerial shooters

Potential health consequences due to impaired functioning of the Westpac Rescue Helicopter service

Demand on accommodation that already disadvantaged the disadvantaged (a personal friend has been affected by this)

Demand on health services by temporary workers

traffic delays and wear on roads

Loss of biodiversity including habitat for koalas, an iconic species

The use of my land to mitigate the effects of noise and visual amenity loss for both myself, host and associates

The use of my vegetation as depicted in the schema for property 55, all of it deciduous, some of it near the end of its life, maintained by me at my own time and expense, especially during drought when time and water are in short supply and best spent on stock, and would be appropriated by Neoen for another use in conflict with its use by me as emergency stock fodder - more externalised costs

*Too many costs are unquantifiable. In January this year I came across this passage in *Orwell's Roses* by Rebecca Solnit (2021). It describes well my feelings for the country hereabouts, as *artworks* and the pleasure that arises from them are like the watershed lands on which nothing commodifiable grows but from which waters gather to fill the streams and rivers that feed the crops and people, or where wildlife lives that is part of the agrarian system, the insects that pollinate the crops, the coyotes that keep the gophers down. They are the wild lands of the psyche, the unexploited portion, preserving the diversity, the complexity, the systems of renewal of the larger whole, as the worked land does not.*

*Attached is a drawing I did in 2012 that came out of my feeling for this place, and I think it is pretty close to this quote. It's titled *Heart of Gold*.*

I ask that the Commission not approve this proposal, most importantly because of fire risk to Balmoral and the community of Kentucky across the highway.

If it is approved, then to remove turbines 28, 23,24,and 25, or move them to beyond 3 km from the boundary of Balmoral. I am worried in case of fire that turbines 26 and 27 may impede safe exit for residents of the Green Valley Rd if a fire gets out of control near them and cannot be accessed by aerial firefighters.

I ask that consideration be given to a proposal that successful applicant for renewable energy proposals give financial support for a full time psychiatrist in Armidale together with additional financial support for mental health services.

Respectfully submitted

Catherine Woof

I ask the Commission not to approve this proposal, first and foremost because of the very real threat it poses to fire control.



"Heart of Gold" © Cath Woolf 2012