

The Commissioners
The Planning Assessment Commission
NSW Department of Planning

Re: Gullen Range Wind Farm Modification 1

11th June, 2015

Dear Commissioners,

It terrifies me to stand up here. Partly because I am not used to public speaking, but mainly because I fear I am not going to get a fair hearing from the audience, and because I fear offending friends and neighbours who may have a different view to me. So please, I ask you all to hear me out, even though you may not agree with what I say. I mean no offence. I am just taking the opportunity to speak from my own experience.

I am speaking today as a member of the Australian Wind Alliance, but also as a community member and very close neighbour of the Gullen Range Wind Farm. For transparency sake, I must also declare that my in-laws are one of the hosts to the Gullen Range Windfarm.

I am a member of the Australian Wind Alliance because I want to be a part of a collective voice that supports the development of wind energy projects that are done well. We, the Australian Wind Alliance, are supportive of wind energy projects that communicate effectively with the community they are built in, and adhere to sound principals that ensure the entire community is able to genuinely

benefit from the project. The Gullen Range Wind Farm has been far from ideal in many of these aspects, but it is my hope that we can make the most of all the great benefits the wind farm does bring to our community, and support other future projects elsewhere to be done in a better way.

Wind energy is an important part of what I believe to be a necessary and inevitable shift towards renewable energy in Australia and worldwide. Each wind project that is built is part of the ongoing process of research and development that is leading us towards better and more efficient technology. Throughout the world wind energy is playing a big part in the shift from outdated fossil fuel technology to clean renewable energy. I feel really happy to live in a region that is part of this energy transformation.

I moved to Bannister 5 years ago and I feel so lucky that I have moved into such a welcoming and positive community. When I moved here planning for the Gullen Range wind farm was already well under way. Knowing that, I and my family chose to buy property and live 1.7km from turbines, and are happily raising our 3 children there.

I have watched with awe as the turbines have gone up and now majestically turn on the horizons surrounding us. I enjoy conversations with my 3 small children about how the wind turbines are producing electricity from the wind, and how much cleaner that is than making electricity from coal, gas or uranium.

Occasionally I hear the turbines, but as I reflect on these positive aspects, I do not find the noise offensive. I sleep as well as 3 small children will let me, and those children sleep a lot better than many children I know of that live nowhere near wind turbines.

I am also heartened that the turbines are having a financial benefit to our local community in regards to employment during the construction phase, as well as the ongoing maintenance, road works and tree planting, of which I am looking forward to being the recipient of. There will also be further employment as the community enhancement projects start to roll out. We are definitely looking forward to having solar panels on our own roof as part of that scheme.

It is also heartening to me that the wind farm is helping to support family owned farms stay as just that. It's tough making a living from the land, but it is important that such productive land as ours continues to produce the food and fibre we need. Wind farms are one options to help boost income from the land without reducing its productivity.

It should be mandatory however for wind energy companies to utilize proximity rent models so the financial benefits of wind farms can be spread more widely and fairly throughout the community. Effective community engagement models should also be mandatory in future developments, so that the projects can have an even better impact on the communities they are built within.

I look at those turbines and I feel quite conflicted, because I know that although I am happy to have the turbines so close to my home, some of my friends and neighbours do not feel the same way about the wind farm. Some of them feel their lives have been hugely adversely impacted by them. But it seems strange to me that those of us who do not mind, or even like the wind farm feel we have to talk in hushed tones about our enjoyment of its benefits, while those who do not like it seem to have a much louder voice. As I mentioned to begin with, one of the reasons it terrifies me to get up here and speak is because I do not want to offend

my friends and neighbors who don't like the turbines, but I would feel I am letting those who are not offended by them down if I do not speak.

But let's get to the point about these modifications.

I support the recommendation from the NSW Planning Department that the proposed modifications should be approved. The original proposal stated that minor alterations to the originally specified positions of the towers would be accepted.

In my opinion, a difference of 150m is indeed a minor alteration in position and will have very minimal impact on the overall experience of the turbines by those living close to them. Most of the turbines have been shifted by far less than 150m.

I live 1.7km from the closest turbine, and I am sure that if any of those turbines were 150m closer, further away, left or right, there would be no real change in our experience of them in regards to visual changes, noise, flicker, or health effects, of which we experience none.

I also understand that the reality of the geology or habitat that is found on site is often significantly different to what was expected during the planning process and hence necessitates these minor movements. If moving a turbine by 150m saves a stack of trees being cut down, then I am all for it.

I am also convinced from the Department's recommendations that the impacts on biodiversity, traffic, aviation and telecommunications have all been sufficiently considered and will not be significantly impacted by these minor changes in position of 9 turbines.

I do however think that a specific distance of how far the turbines can be moved without explicit permission should be set for future developments to avoid confusion and conflict. Communication about these changes could have also been much better handled to avoid this conflict.

I know there will be some very loud voices in this room who will not agree with my position, and they are very well entitled to that opinion. But, in agreement with Mhairi Fraser's comments at the Crookwell 3 PAC, I am surprised by how few community members and neighbours of the wind farm are actually significantly concerned by the turbines, lesser still by these minor alterations.

What I am concerned about, is the division and the controversy. That is what I want to go away, not the wind turbines. My speaking here today is largely in the hope that it will give some volume to those voices who want to use electricity, but don't want to destroy the planet by doing so. My hope is that the collective effort of a few small voices can help start to heal the hurts in our community so we can thrive on what is great about where we live, rather than bonding over things we don't like.

I look out on the landscape from my home and I see an already highly altered environment. I see roads. I see land that has been cut up into paddocks with fences. I see trees in straight lines. I see a vast number of foreign animals, such as sheep and cows and horses. I see houses with their gardens full of exotic plants. That landscape to me is already anything but natural. I use electricity, and I plan to keep on using it, so if Australia needs somewhere to make it in a way that isn't going to create the pollution of fossil fuels, I am more than happy for it to be in my back yard.

Thank you.

Dimity Taylor - AWA Member

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