



AWA submission to the public exhibition of the modification to the Development Consent of the Coppabella Wind Farm

23/10/2017

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The Australian Wind Alliance supports the modification to the Development Consent to the Coppabella Wind Farm.

About AWA

The Australian Wind Alliance (AWA) is a community based organisation that has over 700 financial members and more than 11,000 Facebook followers. Our members include landholders, farmers, small businesses, and members of the community, including many neighbours to existing wind farms. The Wind Alliance encourages best practice community engagement and supports wind farms for the contribution they make to reducing Australia's carbon emissions and the benefits they bring to regional Australia. We are satisfied that this wind farm is well sited and is well designed and will be positive for surrounding community.

AWA supporters in the Yass/Boorowa region

The Australian Wind Alliance has strong support from residents of the Yass/Boorowa region. Many of these people have no financial interest in this Wind Farm and still support this development in their own backyard. Australian Wind Alliance representatives have been speaking with community members and local businesses for many years and we assess the

mood of the region towards the Coppabella Wind Farm as being overwhelmingly positive. We have spoken to well over 500 people and businesses during this time. The overwhelming response to our enquiries is one of support for this and other projects in the area. The main issue raised with us is to ensure the local community gains the maximum possible benefit from the turbines. The vast majority of comments have been very complimentary towards the transparency, availability of, and communications from the proponent.

Australian Wind Alliance submission

AWA makes the following comments in regards this project:

- The Coppabella Wind Farm is a \$250-300 million investment into this region. Typically, wind farm developers spend about 10% of this investment with local contractors and employees. This means that this project will be injecting between \$25 and \$30 million into the local economy. This will be the largest investment in this region for many decades, possibly in its history.
- If all of the 79 turbines are approved, there will be at least \$1.2million paid to local farmers who host the turbines, each year for the next 25-30 years. In addition to this there will be substantial payments made to neighbours on the same ongoing basis and a community enhancement fund contribution of approximately \$200,000 per year. **This project will contribute a minimum of \$8,000,000 to the region over the expected 25 year life of the wind farm.** This will be a very welcome boost to the economic base of a rural area with minimal impact on the ability to maintain the farming base of the region. Farmers and local businesses will be given an extra level of profitability and resilience in these challenging times for rural Australia.
- We have been pleased to see the proponent, Goldwind, undertake comprehensive engagement and communications with the regional community in the immediate precinct of the wind farm.
- The proponent has committed to a Local Business Participation Program. This will give local businesses the opportunity to participate in the project and will encourage the generation of new skills and expertise in this region. This will maximise the local employment opportunities for residents of the area.
- The proponent will list the project on the Industry Capability Network Gateway to encourage local businesses to register an expression of interest in participating in the project.
- The proponent has committed to an open, transparent, and fair neighbour agreement with residents who live within 5 kilometres of any turbine. These agreements do not contain any clauses to restrict the signatories in any way. They do not contain any confidentiality clauses and there is no time limit (and hence no pressure) for residents to sign them. The Wind Alliance has been championing this type of “benefit sharing” development model for many years. This real and transparent “benefit sharing” should be encouraged by all parties, including planning authorities. We believe this is the intent of the new Planning Framework for Wind farms in NSW.
- The proponent has committed to opening and manning an information shop front in the town of Binalong to offer the local community and passing visitors an opportunity to learn about this (and other) wind farm developments. Once again, the Australian Wind Alliance has been championing this type of initiative and welcomes the move.

- The Coppabella Wind Farm will make a substantial contribution to the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan. This plan supports the achievement of a target of 20% renewable energy by 2020 by attracting renewable energy investments and projects to NSW. The role wind farms such as the Coppabella Wind Farm can play is critical to achieving this objective. Wind farms are the cheapest and most efficient form of generation of renewable energy. If NSW wants to achieve significant levels of electricity generation from wind then we have to build more turbines. The Coppabella Wind Farm can assist in significantly boosting NSW's wind generation capacity.
- A goal of the Renewable Energy Action Plan is to engage communities early and effectively in renewable energy projects such as the Coppabella Wind Farm. We are satisfied that the proponent has improved on previous developers' communications and engagement strategies. The opening of a shop-front in Binalong to encourage direct contact with the community will be effective and something we welcome. We were also impressed that the proponent has made a substantial commitment by having staff on the ground around the site communicating with locals for most of this year. Their negotiation of commercial agreements offering remuneration to wind farm neighbours is a highly commendable commitment and something the Wind Alliance enthusiastically endorses. The Wind Alliance has been campaigning for this type of benefit sharing for many years now. This initiative should be strongly encouraged by all parties.

Comments on the modification currently being considered

The Australian Wind Alliance notes the following:

- The modification to the tip height will increase the distance from the ground to the tip of the blade by 21 metres to a maximum of 171 metres. This is an increase of 14% from the original tip height restriction of 150 metres. This 14% increase in the permitted tip height is insignificant in the context of the project and will allow the developer to take advantage of the latest wind turbine technology that is currently available. This will increase the generating capacity of the turbines and allow the developer the best possible opportunity to bid into a very competitive market for renewable electricity. The Australian Wind Alliance supports this move to capture the maximum amount of energy from the latest available turbine technology.
- The intention to place all 33kV cabling within the wind farm underground. This is a significant improvement to the original consent and should be applauded. By placing cabling underground the developer is minimising any risk of bushfires caused by having the transmission lines overhead. There is also a significant reduction in visual impact from the wind farm on surrounding properties and communities.
- The intention to reuse as much excavation material as possible on the site as part of the construction of the wind farm is logical and is strongly supported by the Australian Wind Alliance. It will also have a substantial, beneficial impact on the project by reducing the number of heavy vehicle movements outside the wind farm site during construction.
- The proposed upgrades to local council roads by the wind farm developer to access the wind farm will benefit to all road users for the long term, and are strongly supported. These roads would not have been upgraded in the near future without the

involvement of the developer. We also note that there is no removal of trees associated with these road improvements contemplated by the developer. This is also strongly supported.

- We strongly support the commitment by the proponent to develop a comprehensive decommissioning plan for the wind farm. We also note the commitment from the proponent to provide for an appropriate funding mechanism for the decommissioning of the wind farm. While the Australian Wind Alliance does not have any concerns about the decommissioning of wind farms, we applaud the proponent for taking positive steps to alleviate community concerns over this issue. This should be strongly supported by all relevant parties.

Summary

The Australian Wind Alliance views this modification as a substantial improvement on the original development application and strongly supports these improvements. This modification should be approved.