

Presentation by: Michael and Robyn Phyland

Re: Proposed Wind Energy Facility (WEF) on Lal Lal Estate.

Introduction

We live at the southern end of Peerewerrh Rd Bungaree and our property's southern boundary borders Lal Lal Estate.

We purchased our 100 acre property in 1998 and moved into the house we built in early 2000. Not long after moving in we learnt of the proposal to eliminate the Bungaree loop as a part of the Regional Fast Train Project. After enduring 2 years of disruption during the construction phase, we now have a rail line 250m to the north of our home. We can now clearly hear and see trains from our yard surrounding our home and the trains are audible when windows are open and at night. As a result of the rail project we had half an acre compulsorily acquired and 28 mature trees cut down from our front entrance.

We initially learnt of the WEF proposal from a leaflet found blowing around the front of our home that had apparently been delivered some weeks earlier. The leaflet led us to believe that the wind turbines would be placed on "Fisken's Hill" which is a considerable distance from our farm. Only when we were informed by a concerned neighbour and a detailed plan of the proposed locations of the wind turbines was released, did we become aware of how close some of the towers would be to our property.

Following publication of the proposed layout of the wind turbines we met with representatives from West Wind. It was clear that they wanted to convince us that they would be good neighbours. They would not guarantee us that we would not hear the turbines. When we were asked if there was anything they could do for us we said that they could remove the turbines in close proximity to our land. This they blatantly refused while at the same time stressing that the installation was still at a planning stage.

At the same meeting we challenged their initial advice that a wind energy facility was to be installed on Fisken's hill. Their response was that they regarded the whole property as Fisken's Hill.

We wish to object to the proposed Yendon WEF on the following grounds:

Zoning

We are concerned that there appears to be no planning guidelines regarding the minimum distance wind turbines need to be placed inside the boundary of a host property.

We ask that planning approval not be granted until enforceable guidelines regarding minimum distances from boundaries are in place and that the guidelines are applied to this application.

Our suggestion would be that turbines be placed a minimum of two kilometres inside the boundary of the host property.

We also ask that guidelines pertaining to the maximum population density within which such an installation can be placed are developed. We understand that the population density surrounding this proposed site is higher than that in the vicinity of similar facilities for which planning permits have been granted.

Granting of a permit for this facility would expose other closely populated rural areas to these types of installations.

Noise

While WestWind contends that the theoretical noise level from their turbines will fall within “acceptable” guidelines at our home, we have no guarantee that the actual noise levels at our property boundary will fall beneath what is considered acceptable, or indeed, be acceptable to us.

Late last year we allowed WestWind to have sound monitoring equipment placed at the front of our home to record ambient noise levels. The timing of this monitoring coincided with the harvesting of a blue gum plantation on proposed site for the WEF. The sound of the machines was clearly audible from our home and would have falsely elevated the ambient noise level. This issue was raised with Westwind who were aware of the situation and who offered to leave the sound recording equipment a further week. We have never been provided by Westwind any data from the testing, or for that matter, any explanation of the findings.

It wasn't until yesterday that we saw the plots from the recorded data. There is no mention of the dates that the data relates to.

Amenity

The proposed installation will industrialise our rural landscape.

We chose to buy and build in this area because of its rural aspect and because subdivision is severely restricted as it is in a Central Highlands catchment zone. In fact from our home it is not possible to see any other house in the district.

Since building and occupying our home we have had a train line constructed 250 metres to the North and now a proposed WEF not much further to the South.

Granting of a permit to build this WEF will erode many of the reasons why we chose to live in this area.

Devaluation

The proximity of the proposed towers to our property will lessen its value.

The Department of infrastructure saw fit to compensate us for the decrease in value of our property caused by the construction of a rail corridor in the vicinity of our property. We consider that the construction of the proposed wind farm far less desirable and expect it will devalue our property even further.

Grant from WestWind contended that in fact property values rise in areas nearby WEFs. This, we expect, would be a consequence of subdivision of land as nearby communities expand, not due to any desire people might have to live under a wind turbine.

Subdivision is not possible in our area.

Landscape

WestWind visited our property and took photos from which they said they would make up montages which we expected would give us some perspective of the visual impact the proposed turbines would have. To date we've not seen anything as a result of those photos.

It was suggested that we plant trees to obstruct the view of the turbines. Trees that we planted on our northern boundary to shield our view and noise from the railway line have barely grown in the last 3 years due to dry conditions.

We don't think trees offer any negating effect of the turbines.

The turbines will be visible from all points on our property.

In Summary

The construction of the proposed wind farm on our southern boundary will further erode our enjoyment of our property and no doubt reduce the value of our significant investment.

We feel victimised and frustrated by the industrialisation of our immediate area and are concerned that there appears to be no regulatory frame work for the proponents of these installations to work within.

We would also like to formally give our support to the report submitted by the LLELAG. The amount of time, dedication, investigation and attention to detail given by this group in their protest against the location of the WEF should be seen as proof of the amount of feeling in the district against the proposal.

We oppose the granting of a planning permit for the wind farm on Lal Lal Estate.