

# Flyers Creek Wind Turbine Awareness Group

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Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Dear Sir/Madam:

We are writing to submit our opinion of a proposed 100Mw wind farm (Flyers Creek Wind Farm – FCWF) development within the Beneree district approximately 28km south of Orange in the NSW electorate of Bathurst.

The proponent, Flyers Creek Wind Farm Pty Ltd has made application to the NSW planning dep't under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the construction of an 80-100Mw capacity wind farm powered by 30-40, 1.8-3Mw/annum turbines. Located along ridges, the wind turbines will have nominal hub heights of 80-100m and blade lengths up to 50m. The combined height would be equivalent to a 45 storey building. The proposed wind farm will extend for up to 12km north-south and 6km east-west.

To our knowledge, other than the agreements made between the proponent and landowners who are leasing land for the wind farm, there is no benefit for the greater Flyers Creek community. The nearby Cadia Mine Operations provides significant benefit to the greater community by way of direct employment, funding for local schools/community events, excellent community consultation and improved socio-economic well being. Additionally, nor is there any compensation for those landholders who will immediately neighbour the proposed wind farm.

The Carcoar windfarm is located approximately 13km from the central portion of the proposed FCWF and totals 16 turbines with an annual capacity rated at 10Mw. A 2km buffer around the Carcoar wind farm covers an area of 27 square km and includes 6 residences. As a comparison, a 2km buffer around the FCWF totals 118 square km with at least 36 residences that are not leasing land for the proposal. Theoretically, the Carcoar wind farm has enough capacity to power the nearby town ship of Blayney which consumes 9Mw of power per annum. On Friday, 26/11/2010 after attending a public forum on landowners and windfarms arranged by the NSW dept of ECC&W, the chairperson, Grant Christopherson (Central West Renewable Energy Coordinator – Dept ECC&W) was emailed the following question;

*"It was mentioned that the Blayney townships annual energy consumption is around 9mW/annum. Do you know what the capacity of the Carcoar wind farm is and how is the power generated from the Carcoar farm used? I am wondering that if the capacity of carcoar is greater than 9mW, then why does the windfarm not power the township in its own right?"*

We are yet to receive a reply.

Other than this forum, which was poorly advertised and essentially talking about the benefits of the wind energy in general, there has been no consultation with the wider community by the Central West Renewable Energy Coordinator. In an announcement on 17 August 2009 by the state government, it was noted that the role of the renewable energy coordinators was to "*drive the clean energy agenda and work with the community*". As the FCWF is located within the Central West precinct, you would imagine there to be some consultation from the renewable energy coordinator with the community surrounding the wind farm proposal, there has been none to our knowledge.

The Flyers Creek district is in general a picturesque rural setting. The northern portion of the district hosts a majority of smaller "hobby farm" rural residences and retirees while the southern or down stream portion of the district is host to larger pastoral rural enterprises. People within the district value the tranquillity and view

of the rural setting and it has been noted that over time, the FCWF project has already created some local division of the community. As mentioned above, the Flyers Creek district is also host to the Cadia Mine Operations which was recently granted approval for a significant expansion. The mining operation will border the western portion of the proposed wind farm. We believe there should only be a limited amount of industrial scale use of such a rural landscape and as such would have concern over the cumulative effects of both the mine and the windfarm, particularly so for residences that are situated in between the two in terms of noise and visual amenity.

By late 2009, Australian windfarms were contributing approximately 1% of Australia's electricity demands from some 50 windfarms, the majority of which are in SA and Vic. In line with the Federal Government's Mandated Renewable Energy Target for renewables to generate 20% of Australia's electricity demand by 2020, a heightened number of proposed wind farms are under consideration in NSW. The current state government has identified six rural areas of the best known wind resources to promote the development of wind generated renewable energy:- New England Tablelands, Upper Hunter, NSW/ACT Border region, South Coast, Snowy-Monaro and the Central Tablelands.

The recent surge in wind farms across Australia has not been without controversy with the following points;

- The average capacity factor for wind farms in Australia is around 35% compared to 85% for coal and gas fired power stations. This means that they cannot operate as a stand alone power source and therefore, require back up from either fossil fuel and/or renewable energy with storage. Also, the capacity factor should be noted when developers quote estimated capacity, ie 5 x 2Mw turbines to produce a capacity of 10Mw/annum is assuming continuous operation.
- It is suggested that, during non production events such as low wind, the turbines still require third party power for night lighting, other internal control and communication systems, magnetisation of the generator and to aid the blade assembly.
- The development of some wind farms has led to the division of rural communities. In most cases there is no compensation/benefit to neighbouring landholders that do not lease land for the turbines. In particular, absentee landholders, or those with large properties, are selling permission for turbines that are lucrative and out of their sight but clearly visible from neighbouring properties.
- The development of windfarms with turbines as high as 150m, equivalent to a 45 storey building in a rural setting obviously results in a significant visual impact for nearby landholders.
- The main source of noise from wind turbines is the rotor blades. As wind passes over the blades it creates fluctuations in air pressure that are detected by the human ear. A small amount of noise can also be emitted from the moving parts in the turbines. It has been argued that wind turbines may emit more noise than previously considered. Recently there has been some discussion concerning the effects of infrasound on human health in nearby residences.
- Although some studies have suggested no ill health affects due to wind farms, the issue continues to recur. In October, Family First's Steve Fielding successfully established a Senate inquiry to investigate the health impacts of living near windmills, and the submissions have started to roll in.
- During morning and late afternoon, due to the height of modern wind turbines (120-150m), there is increased chance of shadow flicker for nearby residences.

In December 2009, an inquiry into rural wind farms conducted by the NSW legislative council recommended a minimum setback distance of two kilometres between wind turbines and residences on neighbouring properties. This recommendation has not been adopted by the current state government.

It was also noted that current NSW noise modelling for wind turbine noise is not required to take into account varying atmospheric conditions. It is known that atmospheric conditions can vary between day and night and as a result wind farm noise can be louder at night. The Committee notes the unique sound characteristics of wind farm noise and the different influences on the perception of this noise. The Committee further noted that reputable research has shown that noise annoyance is an adverse health effect that can result from wind farms, such as negative emotions and sleep disturbance.

The Committee also considered the adverse impact that wind farm development can have on the well-being of residents and communities. *"It is important to acknowledge and address the emotional impacts that these*

*developments may cause, since they are an adverse health effect that can have serious consequences such as depression. The impact of wind farms on the well-being of communities in NSW may be compounded by other issues raised through this Inquiry, such as concerns associated with the planning process and the perception that community consultation is a tokenistic exercise that does not genuinely incorporate community concern. Evidence presented to the Committee indicates that an 'appropriate and justified level of consultation' has not taken place for some wind farms in NSW and has resulted in adverse impacts on local communities."*

In May 2010, the then Victorian opposition coalition party released a wind farm policy to take to the recently held state election. A key feature of the policy is a minimum 2 kilometre buffer between turbines and residences;

*A Baillieu Coalition Government will restore fairness and certainty to the planning system for wind farms if elected in November.*

*Launching the Victorian Liberal Nationals Coalition's wind farm policy in Ballarat today with Shadow Planning Minister Matthew Guy, Mr Baillieu said the Brumby Government had allowed wind farms to divide country communities.*

*"Despite being in office for nearly eleven years, Labor has failed to set clear guidelines on location, placement and compensation issues for wind farms," Mr Baillieu said.*

*"It is time to give local communities the key role in deciding where wind farms will go and restore certainty to the planning process for wind farms."*

*Key features of the Coalition's wind farm policy include:*

- the placement of turbines no less than two kilometres from the nearest home unless a contract between the resident and wind farm developer is agreed;*
- the reinstatement of local government as the planning authority for wind farm applications;*
- the establishment of a shared payment system for landowners whose properties are within one kilometre of the nearest turbine, as a compensation mechanism for adjacent landholders;*
- the establishment of 'no-go' zones for wind farms at places such as Wilson's Promontory, the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas, Surf Coast and Great Ocean Road regions, McHarg and Macedon Ranges, Dandenong and Yarra Ranges and sections of the Bass Coast;*
- the exclusion of wind farms in or near National and State Parks, designated tourist areas and designated regional population growth corridors; and*
- the public availability of all data on the energy output of wind farms. (Victorian Liberals Nationals Coalition Media Release, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010).*

We support both the recommendations of the NSW legislative council and the proposed wind farm policy of the Victorian coalition, now in government. While a 2010 survey by the NSW Government on attitudes to renewable energy found in general that there is strong support for renewables, the support fell to almost half for the locations of wind farms within 1-2km from residences.

Diana Laube of the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association (EPLGA), representing 11 member councils based in the west of South Australia, has called for "a national planning system that provides a consistent approach to planning for wind farms that offers protection to rural residents from the well-documented negative effects of these massive industrial developments" (SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AFFAIRS. The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms, SUBMISSION NUMBER: 4, SUBMITTER Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association, 2010).

The Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association suggests that if there is a common theme, it is the belief that city politicians are happy to destroy rural communities in the quest for urban "green" votes.

As South Australia has the largest deployment of industrial scale wind farm development in Australia, the experiences that South Australian local government authorities have had should be noted and considered for any future proposals in other states that at the early stages of such industrial scale wind farm developments such as NSW.

While we do support the renewable energy in principal, we believe that a federal and state legislative frame work has been put in place to in effect create a "wind powered gold rush". This is much more advanced in South Australia and Victoria. We believe that before NSW goes down the same route, a study of their real effectiveness should take place and that as suggested by the EPLGA, a national planning system for wind

farms be established based on the documented effects they had had to date on rural communities.

We also support the minimum 2km set back as mentioned earlier. However, in addition to residences we believe it should also include schools, health care facilities and places of business.

In reference to the proposed Flyers Creek Wind Farm, we believe that due consideration be given to the possible cumulative effects of both the Cadia Mine Operation and the windfarm, particularly for the northern Flyers Creek district.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit as part of the senate enquiry into the social and economic impacts of rural wind farms. Please direct correspondence to, The Secretary, Flyers Creek Wind Turbine Awareness Group, PO Box 1324, Orange, NSW, 2800. Email : [flyerscreekwindturbineawarenessgroup@hotmail.com].

Kind regards,

The members

Flyers Creek Wind Turbine Awareness Group