

BBCAG Issues Paper

Subject: Proposed Bendenine Wind Industrial Development

Summary of concerns held for impact of construction of the above development located close to our homes, businesses, schools, farms and natural spaces.

We support renewable energy initiatives and the urgent requirement for emissions reduction, however this specific development raises serious long-term environmental, health, economic, safety and aesthetic concerns for our community.

Our primary objections include:

1. Mental Health Impact

The proximity of large turbines to residential areas poses risks of noise pollution, shadow flicker, and potential health effects, including sleep disruption, mental health concerns and stress. Anticipation of the project has already caused significant stress and anxiety for our households and community. The psychological impact of losing our voice, losing control over our environment and the visual and noise intrusion from turbines are well-documented concerns under the NSW SIA Guidelines.

- **Community and social cohesion** – the impact of proposals such as these are well-known: conflict and division between families, friendships, neighbours and small communities caused by suspicion, disagreement and resentment about sitings, environmental impacts, aesthetics, habitat loss, noise and visual pollution, small number of landowners profiteering from a neighbour's loss. Already this project has caused friction between friends and neighbours stretching back generations.

2. Visual and Landscape Impact

The proposed scale of the project, up to 90 turbines at 260m high, will significantly alter the natural landscape and rural character of our area, reducing the scenic beauty that defines our region and will drive away tourists upon which many of our local businesses depend.

3. Inequity for the Yass Valley and region

Approximately 25% of all wind farms in NSW are located within 100 km of Canberra. This heavily concentrates the visual, environmental and infrastructure burden on one part of the state. There is a saturation of wind farms in the Yass Valley and immediate region - the current Rye Park wind farm and the Bango wind farm and 4 more projects planned for the region including Bendenine,

Bookham, Wee Jasper and Coppabella. Urbanised regions carry far less of the burden. This imbalance must be addressed by equitable and thought-out planning.

4. Impact on Property Values

Previous proceedings before the NSW Land and Environment Court show that proximity of wind turbines can reduce residential and rural land values, especially where visual and noise impacts are significant. We are deeply concerned about the negative impact this project will have on the value of our property, other homes, businesses and the local economy.

5. Wildlife and Ecosystem Destruction

Turbines impact Country by clearing landscapes and biodiversity, blasting which destroys ecosystems and affects the water table. Turbines threaten local wildlife species and ecosystems, particularly already threatened bird and bat species and will decimate valuable ecosystems in the area. The nearby Bango Wind Farm has already recorded significant mortality of the threatened Little Eagle and Superb Parrot species due to turbine strikes and clearing of native vegetation which is a Key Threatening Process under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. Turbines pose a clear and unacceptable risk to the native animal and bird species in the proposed development area, including the as yet untouched native biodiversity and habitat which exist along the ridgelines between the villages of Bowning and Binalong.

6. Bushfire risk

Large-scale turbines and large transmission lines complicate bushfire prevention and emergency response efforts. The RFS will be unable to deploy rural fire fighters into our area - high transmission lines increase the risk of electrocution during times of fire and smoke and aerial firefighting is impacted due to limitations on planes to enter an area affected by fire where turbines are located.

7. Cost to the community

While the proposed wind project offers a modest (up to) \$500,000 community contribution, an analysis on the cost benefit of the development not proceeding suggests the economic, social, and environmental costs to the region could far exceed this figure. For example, a proposed \$500,000 community contribution is disproportionately low when weighed against:

- Potential losses to land values (approx. 10%-30% reduction of each property affected)

- Increased insurance premiums and potential land-use restrictions results in reduced productivity and farm business resilience
- Tourism reductions costing an approx. min. loss of \$1M–\$2M annually
- Intangible but significant mental health and insurance impacts

Choosing not to proceed with the wind farm may protect or enhance the region's:

- Long-term land value
- Tourism viability
- Agricultural resilience
- Social and mental wellbeing

8. Impact on Aboriginal heritage

The development threatens areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage value. The Bowning and Binalong region is known to include sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Any development in this area must undergo rigorous cultural heritage assessment and audit. Proceeding without this work would violate the principles outlined in the NSW Heritage Act and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act.

9. Inadequate Community Engagement & Lack of transparency

Many residents feel the development process has lacked meaningful engagement and transparency. The community was given inadequate notice of community engagement sessions, and there was a lack of detail provided at these sessions. Many residents believe their concerns have not been considered or addressed as multiple requests for further information from the proponent have been ignored and requests for a public meeting denied.

10. Alternative Locations and Technologies

Planners must consider alternative sites that are suitable for this development such as industrial land or degraded areas further from residential areas and valuable biodiversity and/or other renewable energy solutions that carry fewer adverse impacts.