

Submission  
No 26

## INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

**Name:** Ms Beverley Atkinson

**Date received:** 12/08/2009

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To the Director  
General Purpose Standing Committee No 5  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Enclosed a submission made about Pamada's wind farm proposal near Scone.

Thankyou for conducting an Inquiry.

We don't want Good Things done so Badly that it all falls in a heap.

Best wishes, Bev Atkinson

To the Director, Major Infrastructure Development, Department of Planning

18.7.09

From: Beverley Atkinson B.Arch Hons UNSW 76

Re: **KYOTO ENERGY PARK, (SCONE) WINDFARM, 42 TURBINES  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT 06\_0055**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on this Assessment Report, assembled and edited by the proponent, Pamada Pty Ltd, which I accessed at the local Library.

Here in the Hunter Valley, with ever more nearby coal mines being approved by your Department, we might well welcome a project which promises harmless energy. I am a Green type. I see the impacts some people are fearing as being less threatening than those from mining, and somewhat reversible at the end of the life of the windfarm. **However I am keen for the first local non-coal power projects to be exemplary, ie well and properly done, and successful in every way.**

The more I examine Pamada's approach, the less confident I am.

I have worked in mitigating visual impact of new large structures in the landscape, in Britain, with Travers Morgan, 1982-5. We presented multiple illustrated alternatives, comparing the ways that each solution could be incorporated into the landscape given planting schemes, and respect for heritage. That was standard in UK, even then.

Here and now, having determined that there are 36 "residencies" in high impact locations within 2.5 km of a turbine, **the least Pamada should have done is to visit and identify each building group, take photographed views from it, and add a photomontage to truly convey the visual impact on residents.** This simple service has been requested in many ways, from Pamada, for years, and not done.

It is admitted in the report that they don't even know yet whether buildings are houses or sheds. The survey was by air or computer. The report states that my expected kind of survey is "detail" to be done 6 months into construction!

Some objectors did receive visits and interviews but it seems to have been by special request, not routine, and was not followed up by the simple answers required.

Many people will not read further than the executive summary, which is long, fluffy, copiously illustrated with irrelevancies, and appears like pure spin. It leaves much sensitive material for inclusion in Appendices. ***This is shocking.***

Readers will note that some of the statements about Community Consultation are window dressing. False, perhaps mistaken, statements about proximity to houses were made in several public meetings. People will laugh at the illustrations of newspaper publications used for public information, (only one of four being a real local paper).

Re the list of newspapers used: why wasn't the huge circulation of the free Hunter Valley News used widely, rather than the smaller Advocate?

**People will look first for a map/plan** of the project itself, to update the first one given out years back, now changed by deletion of 5 turbines. But they will not find one in the Executive Summary except for a very simplistic one on p 27, and a tiny plan of the power line ideas on p.34. Not until p 82 do we see a satellite map of the project, and then on p 90 and 91, maps of the two sites, isolated from context again. The comparison showing which are deleted comes somewhere in the Appendix.

People will want to see a correction of the "propaganda" view west along Liverpool Street, which the Proponent claims to be wrong and unjust. But it was reproduced in the Executive Summary, without refutation by a corrected view.

**I focus mainly on map provision, and visual impact analysis; my own fields.**

**Visual impact regarding residences** is closely related to **glint, shadow, noise and vibration**, through proximity. Since much of the objection hinges on it, people need to see every one of the 17 prepared photomontage pages in a readily accessed format, up front. But they see 2 only, in the first volume of the Report.

The photos can also help people to understand **real flora and fauna impacts, ground disturbance, need for infilling creekbeds for roads, etc.**

Photos can certainly convey impact better than pages of percentage charts. They easily show how a row of turbines will be seen differently end-on, and sideways.

Therefore, seventeen is a small enough number of montages to show the public, without deleting fifteen of them in the accessible part of the report! I found the full seventeen only by groping through the Appendix volume blindly, since the Appendix volumes had no List of Contents. And the frontispiece photo is of a different project!

Does the Department take note of such smoke and mirrors?

11.1.4 is disgusting. Self explanatory.

Photomontages need not just a viewpoint, but a directional arrow and angle of view, also correctly spelled placenames in large enough lettering, to be credible to locals.

Page 269: is this view actually towards the east side of the project? Hard to place.

Showing the highest impacted residential area, this montage should have viewpoint and angle on a map, on the same page.

Page 270, the both Stations could fit on the lower page, but only one is shown.

I doubt many people have read and understood the Reports for several reasons: the obfuscating format, the huge volume of material which dominates essential matter, and the gobbledegook which passes for valid statement and analysis\*. A fourth reason, the short time for public comment. Council's request for extension should have been acceded to.

\*example: *"The map illustrates areas (defined as potential for high visual impact) that will require further detailed investigation for determination if mitigation treatments at residencies is required."* (sic) Eh? This is typical.

It is actually stated that (to the effect of): *you would see Mountain Station turbines from Kelly Street, (main Highway through Scone) but the buildings are in the way, so you will only see it when you get to a cross street...* This seems to assume that people in the street are to be considered, but those in the buildings are not.

It does not acknowledge that these slot views are vital to the character of Scone. We see no photo from Kelly St zone itself; the centre of the main affected town, not even to refute the "propaganda" photo west along Liverpool Street, as stated above.

It is well recognised in Urban Design that slot views, down side streets to distant landscape features, are important assets to town character. It is admitted in the report (to the effect that) *the slot views from Scone will be affected by the structures on the skyline of the bounding hills*, but this important fact is not stated clearly in the conclusions.

There is (extraordinarily unclear) writing about visual sensitivity, but there is no plain, honest list I could find of the zones and features which are known and seen to be sensitive. The only sensitivity the reporter seems to understand is the annoyance from objectors, resulting in visual sensitivity being tied only to residences!

I will not attempt to list areas of **general public interest sensitivity** here, I don't know anything like all of them, but two obvious examples are Owens Gap and Castle Rock.

A photo of the Little Owens Gap cliffs is included in the report's topography survey, but in no particular context and with no attached comment.

The sensitivity of the cliffs at Owens Gap is acute because they have grandeur seen from the Scone approach; their detail and colour is unusual and fascinating. This is the one place where passers by can examine the cliffs, their caves and the attendant rare black cypress which crosses from the west through the Gap. The aboriginal history here would have to be rich. The height of the cliffs is not great. All this means that to add large elements on the skyline, or in the foreground (turbines and poles) will compromise the scale and the view of an extraordinary and unique feature. Artists paint and photograph this place often. This is visual sensitivity at its height.

The second example seemed to have had a turbine sitting right on top of its essential feature...the Castle Rock, unless I am mistaken. It was on a map, Appendix. It was deleted apparently, but still leaving other turbines in its immediate surroundings.

I actually like the look of turbines. They are an admirable, beautiful piece of engineering. However placing immense turbines on top of low rocks comprising some of the oldest, eroded, fine grained hills and cliffs in the world, is ridiculous. What is not being understood here is the importance of scale. The hills are not high. They are very old, crumpled, full of detail and small texture, patterns of cliffs and transparent foliage. Their detail is intricate, highly divided. **This gives them an illusion of greater height, nobility, grandeur, presence, mystery.** Put a tall, fat white pole on top of this, say half the height of the upper escarpment and scree, and its bubble is burst; its grandeur gone, its mystery removed, it becomes a mere plinth. The pole takes your eye, the detail is forgotten. The scale is destroyed.

The fact is that a turbine 100m high and more, has nothing in common with the scale of the scenery around this whole country, especially where the interest centres on a spectacular little chip of this country, like Castle Rock.

A turbine row may be quite at home on a bare, rolling hill, a stretch of desert or a seascape, its power balanced with the vast scale of its context. But it simply destroys, dominates and belittles the kind of low, intricate, ancient hills and escarpments we have around here.

Added to this is the fact that getting these items in place will involve destruction and building of roadways, filling of creeks and removing trees etc. This will be lasting impact, despite the crude expression of confidence made in the report. Even one track through the wildernesses of Tasmania does damage to the whole ecology. But to stay on the theme of visual impact, I maintain that carving big roads for big loads up and over small rocky hills is likely to leave visible scars.

Yes, encourage Green projects, but not necessarily windfarms on any old land offered you by landowners. Don't be in such a hurry. Wait to prove the first wind projects successful before adding to them frantically. Foster rather, the emergence of the solar technologies which are so much less damaging on and near areas of acute sensitivity.

I am concerned that even just the scenery losses will not be justified by the benefit.

Actual energy generation versus costs in money and environment are not my field, but I know there are concerns as to cost-benefit in the long term, in this Scone project.

Please as our representatives in Government, benefit not just one landowner, who may in fact encounter associated problems anyhow. Benefit the whole zone, population and Government, by promoting ongoing tourism income through conserving the unique jewels this country offers. The scale of the scenery is delicate; leave it intact. **A windfarm can go where it does not destroy the quality of what it lands on.**

**I would recommend an overlay to the "windfarm potential" map, which excludes those areas where, like here:**

**The land height is not great,  
the wind is not extreme nor consistent,  
turbines must be gigantic and numerous to make profit,  
the local scale is delicate,  
the location means high impact visually in populated areas, and/or high impact on the ground re roads and access,  
and energy gains are relatively mild after all the investment is accounted for.**

**Another overlay might take into account areas suited to solar arrays, considering that they can be shipped in, and out, with less invasive works, they have smaller visual impact, the technology is advancing fast, jobs are involved with solar too, landowners can benefit in a similar way, and long term impact is even less.**

Yours sincerely,

Bev Atkinson