Submission
No 59

INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS

Organisation: New England Strategic Alliance of Councils

Name: Mr Robert Furze

Position: Director of Development and Environmental Services

Date received: 21/08/2009

Our ref:

Your ref:

GUYRA SHIRE COUNCIL
TOP OF THE RANGE

Civic Centre
158 Bradley Street
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GUYRA NSW 2365

21st August, 2009

The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No 5
Parliament House
Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000.

Dear Sir or Madam.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the enquiry into rural wind farms. As NSW grows, it is certainly desirable and becoming critical that alternate forms of energy to coal fired power stations are identified and developed. Whilst there are other alternatives to coal fired power generation such as nuclear power and solar technologies, at this point in time, wind energy would seem to have advanced to the point where it has become the most viable alternative to conventional coal fired power stations for relatively large commercial electricity production.

Due to the additional up front development costs electricity generators are reluctant to invest in wind generation and it would seem critical that the current renewable energy target proposed by the Federal Government is adopted as soon as possible. This would force electricity suppliers into a commitment to purchase such energy and give developers the confidence to proceed with such developments.

According to the NSW Wind Atlas the New England is one of the areas with high potential for wind farms. This has generated significant interest from consultants who have installed numerous wind monitoring towers in the area, most of which show great promise. In the Guyra area two wind farms, each containing twelve turbines, have been approved however the first of these development consents is due to expire in April 2010, without having proceeded. This is apparently due to a lack of commitment by electricity suppliers who are reluctant to purchase the energy.

The reduction of Green House gas emissions generated by electricity production-

According to the proponents, each of these developments, which involve the construction of 12 wind turbine generators (WTGs), will provide up to 20MW of power from a renewable resource. Each of these developments will provide enough power to supply up to 6,000 homes and will avoid the production of up to 45,000 tones of greenhouse gas emissions per year from coal fired turbines.

communities the property values generally increased when they were compared to values prior to the projects coming on line.

It is understood that the owners of the properties in Ben Lomond, upon which the wind farms were to occur, considered the impact on their operations would be minimal with the base of each turbine only impacting on a circular area having a width of between four and eight metres. Reports from local real estate agents and anecdotal evidence from property owners, where the wind turbines are to be installed, have indicated that rather than reducing property value of properties wind farms and even properties with the potential for such development have an increased value. It is generally considered that a wind farm is an asset and potential purchasers are attracted to the site due to the additional income from the development which purchasers consider will have little effect on the operations of the property itself.

The impact on properties adjoining such developments would appear to be minimal although there may be some impact as a purchaser may be concerned about the possible increased cost for the aerial application fertilizer on the property. There has been no other noticeable reduction of value as a result of the proposed wind farms.

Mechanisms for encouraging local ownership and control of wind technology;

There has been some interest regionally in the installation of domestic wind turbines to service individual dwellings; however, at this stage this has not proven to be economically viable, with most developers preferring solar installations for the smaller domestic developments.

The potential role of energy generated by rural wind farms in relation to the Australian Government's proposed renewable energy target;

If a single wind farm development in the New England containing 98 turbines can supply the required energy for 49,000 houses and avoid in excess of 34,545,000, tones of greenhouse gas emissions per year from coal fired turbines their potential role in achieving the Governments proposed Renewable Energy target is enormous. The site in Ben Lomond has the advantage of having the main electrical line in the area adjacent to the site which will facilitate the access to the national grid. This will not always be the case but there are a significant number of areas indicated on the Wind Atlas which have-

- suitable wind speeds;
- are located near an electrical grid with available capacity; and
- local landholder support.

Any other relevant matters;

There have been several community consultation meetings held in the Guyra area and an office was established in the centre of town to give all members of the community an opportunity to comment on the proposed 98 turbine wind farm development. There was virtually unanimous support for the development with only two letters of concern relating to the aerial application of fertiliser. Not all communities are as welcoming of wind farms and residents in the Glen Severn Shire, made representations to the council objecting to the visual impact on landscape values and the amenity in the area by the same development.