

**Submission  
No 100**

## **INQUIRY INTO RURAL WIND FARMS**

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Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Division)

Submission: Inquiry Into Rural Wind Farms

**About PIA**

*The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak body representing professionals involved in planning Australian cities, towns and regions. The Institute has around 4,500 members nationally and around 1,300 members in New South Wales. PIA NSW plays key roles in promoting and supporting the planning profession within NSW and advocating key planning and public policy issues.*

*This submission has been prepared on behalf of PIA NSW by Members of the Institute.*

**Introduction**

PIA NSW welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Committee's Rural Wind Farms Inquiry. This submission has been prepared by PIA NSW as it relates to the land use planning issues.

The Planning Institute of Australia supports greenhouse abatement strategies, energy efficient built environments and other strategies to reduce vulnerability to climate change. The Institute is committed to sustainable development and land management practices and healthy communities.

The Planning Institute of Australia supports, in general, the development of wind farms as part of the solution to Australia's energy requirements, but acknowledges there are valid concerns about their development. It would be most beneficial for the Inquiry to identify up front the specific issues and concerns associated with developing wind farms and to focus on resolving those issues so that the benefits of good, sensible wind farm development with minimal impact on the environment and communities can be realised.

PIA NSW's comments will focus on the second term of reference:

*"Locating rural wind farms to optimise wind resource use and minimise residential and environmental impacts;"*

and the need for guidelines and / or codes to achieve these goals.

#### **Comment**

The location of wind farms often draws the attention of the local community and raises a lot of community concern, mostly associated with the potential noise but also including the amenity and landscape impact. A perusal of the Department of Planning's major development website reveals that there are a number of wind farms that have been approved or that are in the planning system seeking approval.

The main concern associated with wind farms in rural NSW is the lack of suitable planning guidelines.

Guidelines exist in various forms in Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia. The Australian Wind Energy Association prepared some guidelines in 2006. Goulburn Mulwaree Council have a Development Control Plan (DCP) that deals with wind farms. The most relevant and up to date guidelines and codes are the South Australian Wind Farm Environmental Noise Guidelines and the Goulburn Mulwaree DCP.

The Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts released a "Wind Farm Industry Policy Statement" in July 2009 to help the wind farm industry meet the requirements of national environmental law (the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999); and is expected to release National Wind Farm Development Guidelines to accompany the Policy Statement later this year.

Under national environmental law, a proponent needs to consider whether a proposal such as a wind farm will have an impact on specifically identified matters of national significance. However, the States and Territories are primarily responsible for the assessment and approval of a proposed wind farm. It is therefore important that NSW develops State wide guidelines and codes to guide the industry and community with the aim of achieving the overall benefits of wind farms.

#### **Suggested Code or Guidelines to manage design, development and assessment of wind farms.**

PIA NSW would like to see a State wide code or guidelines for the design, development and assessment of wind farms and including procedures for community consultation. The development of guidelines will provide certainty for proponents, the assessor and the community; and consistency in assessment of development proposals for wind farms.

PIA NSW suggests that the code or guidelines should address at least the following:

1. General principles for development of wind farms;
2. Planning and environmental assessment processes and how these are linked;
3. Standard definitions and terminology;
4. Principles for location;
5. Critical issues for assessment, such as (but not limited to):

- a. Noise;
  - b. Landscape values; and how landscape and visual impacts can be managed;
  - c. Fauna and flora during construction;
  - d. Birds during construction and during the operation phase;
  - e. Distance to the nearest house;
  - f. Height of the turbine and impact on flight paths;
  - g. Community concerns around impacts.
6. Clear and open consultation processes:
    - a. There should be detailed community consultation when the proposal is being designed, during the assessment phase, after the wind farm has been approved and during the construction phase.
  7. Best practice guidelines that can be regularly updated drawing on existing international and Australian policy and practice in the area.

PIA NSW suggests that such guidelines should be developed as a priority. It would be most beneficial to involve all relevant parties in the development of such a code or guideline such as communities, proponents and industry, local government and State government agencies. The experience gained from the design, assessment, development and operation of existing wind farms should be examined and positive outcomes used as the basis for guidelines. Case studies of good practice should be highlighted. Existing codes and guidelines should be examined and tried and proven practices and procedures should be adopted.

PIA NSW would be happy to expand on this submission and to assist in further developments of a State wide code or guideline for rural wind farms in NSW.

**PIA NSW Division**

**August 2009**

**References:**

- Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts: *"EPBC Act Policy Statement No. 3 – Wind Farm Industry – 2009"*
- Media Release: The Hon Peter Garrett MP Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts: *"New Policy Statement for Wind Farm Industry"* 14 July 2009.
- Planning Institute of Australia (National Office): *Comments on "Discussion Paper on National Code for Wind Farms" (2006)*
- Planning Institute of Australia (National Office): *Presentation – "Best Practice in Planning - Wind Farm Roundtable September 2006"*