

Yass Valley *Wind Farm*

Project Update | July 2014

Status of the wind farm

The Yass Valley Wind Farm is located around 30 km west of Yass and on land to the north and south of the Hume Highway. Both the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the subsequent Preferred Project Report (PPR) have already been on public exhibition – the EA in November 2009 and the PPR from December 2012 to March 2013.

Following submissions to this report, Epuron has provided a response to the submissions raised to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).

The updated Preferred Project & Submissions Report is currently being reviewed by DPE prior to their detailed assessment. Over time the requirements for various studies can change as knowledge improves, and DPE has requested additional information on some aspects. For example, the potential habitat offered by hollows in dead branches and trees has become a more significant issue for the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) since the original biodiversity assessment was prepared. Epuron has been working with OEH to quantify this potential impact to habitat where wind turbines are located in close proximity to dense woodland.

It is anticipated that the wind farm assessment and determination will be completed in the coming weeks. Epuron will provide details of the final Preferred Project & Submissions Report once it is accepted by DPE.

Ongoing consultation

Epuron's consultation with stakeholders is continuing including through CCC meetings, newsletters, media articles, the website and direct correspondence. Please contact us if you would like to be put on our direct mailing list.

Jobs and opportunities

Epuron is working with the Southern Tableland group to put on a Renewables job forum in the region. For information about this group see their website at <http://southerntablelandsrenewables.org.au/>

Don't forget to let us know if you would like your name to be added to the list of local people interested in working on the wind farm. Please send your name, address, phone number and email along with your skills and experience and/or equipment for hire to info@epuron.com.au

Renewable Energy Target Review

In February 2014 the Abbott government appointed a review panel to examine the operation, costs and benefits of the Renewable Energy Target (RET).

The review panel, led by Dick Warburton, is to report to the government by mid 2014.

Many commentators see this review as the catalyst for the government reducing the size of the RET or eliminate it entirely. This would prevent wind farms being built in the current environment.

The Palmer United Party has recently announced its support for the RET and stated that it will vote against any change until after the next election in 2016.

This is welcome news and will hopefully provide sufficient market certainty to enable wind farm development to proceed, wind farms to be built and landowners and communities to receive the associated economic and environmental benefits.

See overleaf for a brief summary of the RET and recent research on its impacts.

The RET reduces power bills!

The Renewable Energy Target (RET) is not well understood. Some people, even politicians, think and claim it is a big subsidy for wind farms. Some ask 'when do the wind farm companies get the cash?' Others blame the RET for recent increases in electricity prices.

The RET is a policy mechanism which requires a percentage of our electricity to come from renewable energy. There is no government subsidy and no sack of cash provided to wind farm operators. Electricity retailers are required to purchase a certain percentage of the power they sell from renewable energy generators or pay a penalty.

The cost of this obligation is passed through by the retailer to customers. In NSW the average annual household electricity bill is \$2100. The RET makes up just \$40 or <2% of that. By comparison 'poles and wires' make up 50% of the average annual bill at over \$1,050, and savings from switching retailer are often greater than 10%.

In comparison, recent modelling by ACIL Allens Consulting for the RET Review shows the RET actually leads to a significant **reduction** in household power bills. In comparing various scenarios, ACIL Allens found that in the long-term the highest cost case was the no-RET case, and the lowest cost case was the case with the highest RET. A target of 30% renewables by 2030 saves households \$150 per year by 2030 over the no-RET case.

This is because of the increase in competition at the wholesale level is reducing the overall cost of power in the wholesale markets. So households actually save money overall because of the RET.

The Howard government, in introducing the Renewable Energy Target understood that as long as we need to address rising carbon emissions we will need to tackle the problem at the source by moving our power generation towards renewable energy. This was supported by the subsequent Rudd and Gillard governments which increased the size of the RET.

EPBC Act

In addition to the State Government's development application process, wind farms are also generally assessed under the Federal Government's Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC).

The EPBC referrals for the project were made in two parts in September 2013: Yass Valley (north of the Hume Highway) Reference 2013/7002 and Conroys Gap Stage 2 (south of the Hume Highway) Reference 2013/6989. Details of the referrals can be found on the Department of Environment website <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/about-us/legislation/environment-protection-and-biodiversity-conservation-act-1999/public>

Both of the referred projects are controlled actions under the EPBC Act and further documentation has been prepared to progress both through the EPBC Act process.

The EPBC Additional Information reports are on public exhibition from the 2nd to the 29th of July and copies can be viewed at Yass Valley Council and Harden Shire Council offices and on the Epuron website.

Any comments on the Matters of National Environmental Significance in these reports should be mailed to Epuron at the address below or emailed to info@epuron.com.au by the 29th July 2014.

Please send us your feedback



Write to us:
Epuron
Level 11, 75 Miller Street
North Sydney NSW 2060



Email or Phone:
a.wilson@epuron.com.au
www.epuron.com.au
02 8456 7400



Recent field inspection with NSW OEH