

Bowmans Creek Wind Farm

ISSUE #6

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Planning Stages

This wind farm is a state significant development, subject to the highest level of assessment by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE). Below are the key stages in that process, and the status of the project.

- 1 Scoping report and environmental assessment requirements (SEARS) requested from the DPIE
- 2 SEARS issued by DPIE
- WE ARE HERE** 3 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) report prepared and submitted to the DPIE
- 4 Application reviewed by the DPIE
- 5 EIS put on exhibition and public submissions accepted
- 6 Responses to public submissions
- 7 Regulatory assessment
- 8 Regulatory determination



Assessment studies near completion

Over the past nine months Epuron has been consulting with the local community and working with specialist consultants to assess the environmental aspects of a potential wind farm development at Bowmans Creek, approximately 10km east of Muswellbrook.

The resulting studies, along with recommendations to address any potential issues, form the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and will be an important part of the development application to be submitted to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE). Once the studies and EIS are submitted to the DPIE for review, the DPIE will place them on public exhibition.

The EIS is still being finalised and it is anticipated that it will be lodged with the DPIE in July 2020. In the meantime, please see overleaf answers to key questions raised during consultations to date.

Information sessions will also be conducted for interested community members to further explain how any concerns raised have been addressed, and to provide the opportunity for further questions. Given current physical distancing guidelines, for safety and accessibility, these sessions will be hosted online. Please see below details for three possible different times that you can join us online. You are invited to register for one of these sessions. Note that there will be identical information presented to each.

Why a wind farm at Bowmans Creek?

The Hunter area is a key source of energy generation for NSW. As existing power stations age, it is well placed to continue this tradition into the future, as well as secure jobs and economic benefits for the region, through the development of new clean energy technologies.

Wind-generated energy currently accounts for about 8.5% of Australia's energy mix, and is the cheapest form of new energy generation.

Bowmans Creek was selected as a suitable location for a wind farm because of the area's high wind speeds, confirmed by extensive wind monitoring, and close proximity to a high voltage transmission network. The site is also compatible with surrounding land uses of energy generation and agriculture.

Community Information Sessions – July 2020

During these sessions Epuron's Bowmans Creek Wind Farm project team will present the status, progress and proposed timelines for the development. Each session will be conducted via Zoom and moderated, with attendees able to submit questions.

To maximise the opportunity to hear from participants at these session numbers for each will be limited and registration will be essential. Additional sessions will be scheduled if required.

Tuesday 21st July at 12pm

Wednesday 22nd July at 5pm

Friday 24th July at 3pm

REGISTER HERE: trybooking.com/eventlist/BOW

If you are unable to attend online and would prefer a one-on-one meeting please contact us using details overleaf >>

Property Values

The potential for wind farms to impact the value of properties in the surrounding area has been the subject of two separate studies commissioned by the NSW Government, one in 2009 done by the NSW Valuer-General and one in 2016 done by Urbis on behalf of the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

“The 2009 study found that properties in rural/agricultural areas appeared to be the least affected by wind farm development, with no reductions found near any of the eight wind farms investigated. The only properties where a possible effect was observed were lifestyle properties in Victoria within 500 metres of a wind farm, some of which were found to have lower than expected land values.”¹

The 2016 study reviewed any available literature from previous studies and then conducted analysis on properties that had sold multiple times including before and after the wind farm was established. This is referred to as ‘same property resale analysis’.

“The findings from our review of case studies in NSW and Victoria did not identify any conclusive trends that would indicate that wind farms have negatively impacted on property values. Our same property resale analysis indicates that all of the properties examined demonstrated capital growth that aligned with the broader property market of the time.”¹

1. Review of the Impact of Wind Farms on Property Values, Urbis 2016

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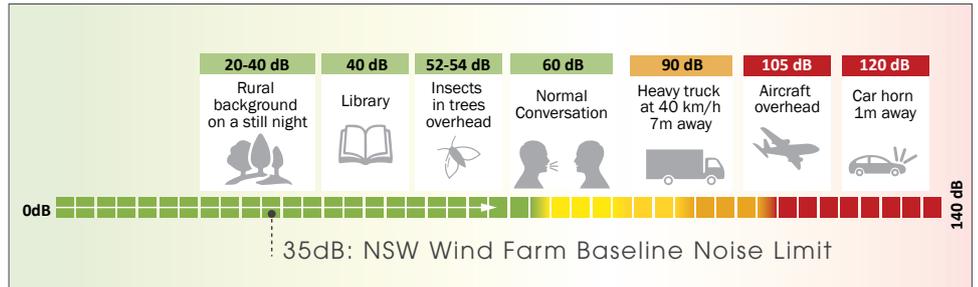
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Answers to key questions

Noise

Noise levels from the proposed wind farm can be accurately predicted at surrounding houses by following the NSW Government guideline for wind farms. NSW has adopted the strictest limits of anywhere in Australia and the project would have to demonstrate it could meet those limits prior to approval and after construction via a monitoring program.

The noise limits for the project at surrounding houses is 35 decibels (dB) or the existing background noise level plus 5dB, whichever is greater. A scale of common noise levels by way of comparison is shown below. The Noise Assessment in the EIS will show the predicted noise levels for all nearby houses to demonstrate compliance against the noise limits.



Bushfires

Bushfire risk and access to fight fires on a wind farm site will be assessed for the Environmental Impact Statement.

Wind monitoring masts and wind turbines are designed using materials to provide a safe path for lightning strikes to the ground. They are also designed with materials to limit fire risk and with systems that can monitor and respond automatically to conditions inside the turbine by following shutdown and isolation procedures.

The issue of fire safety is taken seriously with bushfire management plans being established at all wind farms and developed in consultation with the Rural Fire Service (RFS). The bushfire management plan would also establish procedures in the event of a fire moving through a wind farm. Drawing from examples around Australia, when fires have started on neighbouring properties and travelled towards a wind farm, the turbines have been stopped remotely and access to the site provided to local RFS to utilise the access tracks between turbines. Access tracks have also served as natural fire breaks for grass fires.



Access track providing a grass fire break.

The RFS has in the past assessed the risk of wind turbines when fighting fires and stated the following position:

“A fire moving across the area of a wind farm is generally managed in the same way as any other bush fire. Firefighting strategies by ground-based resources would continue and be subject to prevailing weather and topographic conditions.” “... aircraft would avoid wind turbines in the same manner as they avoid other obstructions, such as power lines.”

- NSW Rural Fire Service’s submission to the Select Committee on Wind Turbines, 2015.

For more information on answers to key questions, please visit our FAQs page at bowmanscreekwindfarm.com.au/faqs