

Chalumbin Wind Farm

Project Update: Answering Community Questions

October 2021



Photomontage from Kennedy Highway

Thank you to everyone who visited the community information session in Ravenshoe on 16 September.

We apologise that the session was delayed and overdue, and to anyone who felt that they did not get the information they were seeking.

Thank you also to those members of the local community who have provided us with feedback. We welcome this input and appreciate people taking the time to share with us their priorities and concerns.

The main concerns that have been raised to us are whether the Jirrbal People have been properly consulted and the potential impacts on the environment and local wildlife.

We hope that the information in this update provides some clarification on why the site was chosen, the involvement of the Jirrbal People and the work being done on ecological matters.

Other concerns that have been raised include noise, visual impacts and transport.

We are listening to the community's concerns and will continue to address these and other questions we receive in future updates.

This update and other information materials are available under the 'News' tab on the website: chalumbinwindfarm.com.au.

Please continue to send comments and questions to the project team via info@chalumbinwindfarm.com.au or the online feedback form on the website.

We plan to host more community information sessions in Ravenshoe as soon as practicable and thank community members for their patience.

Thank you

Epuron & The Chalumbin Wind Farm Team

Why do we need more renewable energy?

The Australian energy market is in transition to cleaner sources, to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Over the next 20 years Australia's coal-fired power stations will be retired and more of the forecasted electricity need is expected to come from renewable sources, in particular wind and solar.

The Queensland Government has set a target of 50% renewable energy by 2030 and key regions have been identified as optimal for new renewable energy projects. Meeting this target and energy needs with affordable electricity requires scaling up renewable energy generation, fast.

Why did Epuron choose this site?

Viability of a site for wind energy generation depends on many factors including the wind resource, access to the transmission network, land use and assessment of potential impacts.

This site was originally identified because of its excellent wind resource and proximity to the grid. Since then Epuron has worked with landowners, the Jirrbal People and other stakeholders, and undertaken a significant amount of survey work, to better understand the site and assess the potential impacts of the project.

This work has further demonstrated that the site is an excellent location for a wind farm.

Have the Jirrbal People been involved?

Yes. Epuron recognises the importance of Jirrbal People as a stakeholder for this project as the traditional owners for the area of the Chalumbin Wind Farm.

Epuron has and continues to engage with Jirrbal People about the project and the protection and management of cultural heritage. The project is taking into account the views of Jirrbal People and the findings from site investigations in the planning of the wind farm.

Jirrbal People looking to find out more about Epuron's engagement to date are urged to contact the North Queensland Land Council (NQLC).

Does the project include any part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area?

No. The project has been designed to avoid all direct impacts on the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

Infrastructure has been located away from the protected World Heritage Area and would be separated from it by an existing power easement, and Tully Falls Road would not be used for construction equipment or machinery.

Does the proposal involve clearing any rainforest?

No.

Are key environment stakeholders being involved?

Yes. Epuron and its consulting ecologists have involved and will continue to involve the land managers and wildlife stakeholders for the Tully Falls National Park and World Heritage Area.

This includes the Wet Tropics Management Authority, the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre, Bush Heritage Australia and Terrain NRM.

How much and what type of land would be cleared?

The current proposed design involves a project footprint of up to 1,250 hectares within mostly open Eucalypt woodland. The total area of the properties that will host the project is approximately 31,500 hectares so this accounts for about 4%.

The design is at an early stage so work to minimise the disturbance footprint - such as redesigning to reduce the width of access tracks - is in progress and this area will likely be reduced.

The aim is to only disturb the absolute minimum required to safely construct and operate the project.

Areas that would be disturbed for construction would be rehabilitated afterwards and any residual impacts on vegetation of significance will involve an offset program with the potential to achieve a net positive outcome.

What ecological assessment work has been done?

Over the past year teams of independent specialists from leading Queensland-based environmental advisory group Attexo have been to the site numerous times to conduct various ecological surveys.

These include dedicated surveys for vegetation, regional ecosystem mapping, listed plant species, and fauna species in both wet and dry seasons.

Ecologists based in Ravenshoe and Malanda have been involved in the ecological survey work that has been done so far.

Ecology work is ongoing and further surveys are planned.

What impact could the project have on wildlife corridors?

Because the project is located within a largely intact open Eucalypt woodland and the disturbance footprint is relatively small, most vegetation would be retained and enable the ongoing ecological function of existing wildlife corridors.

Clearing of riparian vegetation with taller trees that have more nesting hollows, the best habitat for the greater glider, has been minimised.

Installation of glider ropes and poles has also been proposed as part of rehabilitation of areas disturbed during construction, to better facilitate glider movement across the broader landscape.

How will rare and endangered wildlife in the area be protected?

Federal and State legislation requires comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts on conservation significant flora and fauna, and measures to avoid, minimise and mitigate potential impacts.

The project is being designed to avoid highly sensitive areas including rainforest vegetation and rare plants, and minimise the number of watercourse crossings and impact on habitat for key species.

This work is ongoing and species-specific, and has the potential to improve the body of research and provide a net positive outcome.

For the Red Goshawk for example, species experts at Queensland Parks and Wildlife and Australian Wildlife Conservancy are being consulted, multiple on-site surveys are being done by specialist ecologists and the project is being designed to minimise impacts on preferred habitat.

What does a net positive outcome for biodiversity mean and what strategies will be used to achieve it?

Any significant residual impacts on species identified under Federal or State legislation necessitate environmental offsets, as prescribed in the legislation and supporting policy documents for the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and the Queensland *Environmental Offsets Act 2014*.

The process of designing the project to avoid and minimise impacts is still in progress, but once this has been completed any residual impacts will guide an offset program.

Strategies are likely to include legally securing and managing land exclusively to create or improve habitat for the particular species being impacted and contributions to new or existing research.

What are the next steps in the environmental assessment process?

Wind farm proposals in Queensland are assessed by the Queensland Government's State Assessment and Referral Agency (SARA).

Epuron also referred the initial proposal to the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) for review under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Based on this initial submission the proposal has been deemed a 'controlled action' under the EPBC Act. This means that environmental assessment for the project is required under both Federal and State legislation and the proposal must be approved by both DAWE and SARA before it can proceed.

DAWE has determined that it will assess the proposal through a Public Environment Report (PER). Draft guidelines for the PER are due to be released for public comment this month and it is estimated they will be finalised in November.

Epuron will then follow the guidelines to prepare a draft PER in early 2022, which once submitted will go on public exhibition.

For SARA the development application will require preparation of numerous technical reports to meet the requirements of relevant state codes. It is estimated that these will be ready by the end of the year, and will then be submitted to SARA, which will assess them with technical input from relevant departments.

Documentation for the project's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* referral and assessment (Referral 2021/8983) is on the EPBC Act - Public notices portal: epbcnotices.environment.gov.au/publicnoticesreferrals

State code 23: Wind farm development - planning guidelines

The assessment framework for wind farm developments in Queensland is provided by the State Development Assessment Provisions' *State code 23: Wind farm development*.

This outlines the matters to be assessed and prescribes the methodology for technical assessments, minimum actions and acceptable outcomes to demonstrate compliance.

State code 23 can be downloaded from tinyurl.com/y3meslhf or by scanning the QR code right.



Planning and assessment

State

- 1 Site selection, initial concept and preliminary investigations
- 2 Pre-lodgement meeting with State Assessment and Referral Agency (SARA)
- WE ARE HERE** Studies and assessments (prescribed by SARA State Code 23)
- 4 Application and assessments submitted to SARA
- 5 *If required* - further information requested and further assessment
- 6 *If required* - public notification of proposal
- 7 Assessment
- 8 Determination

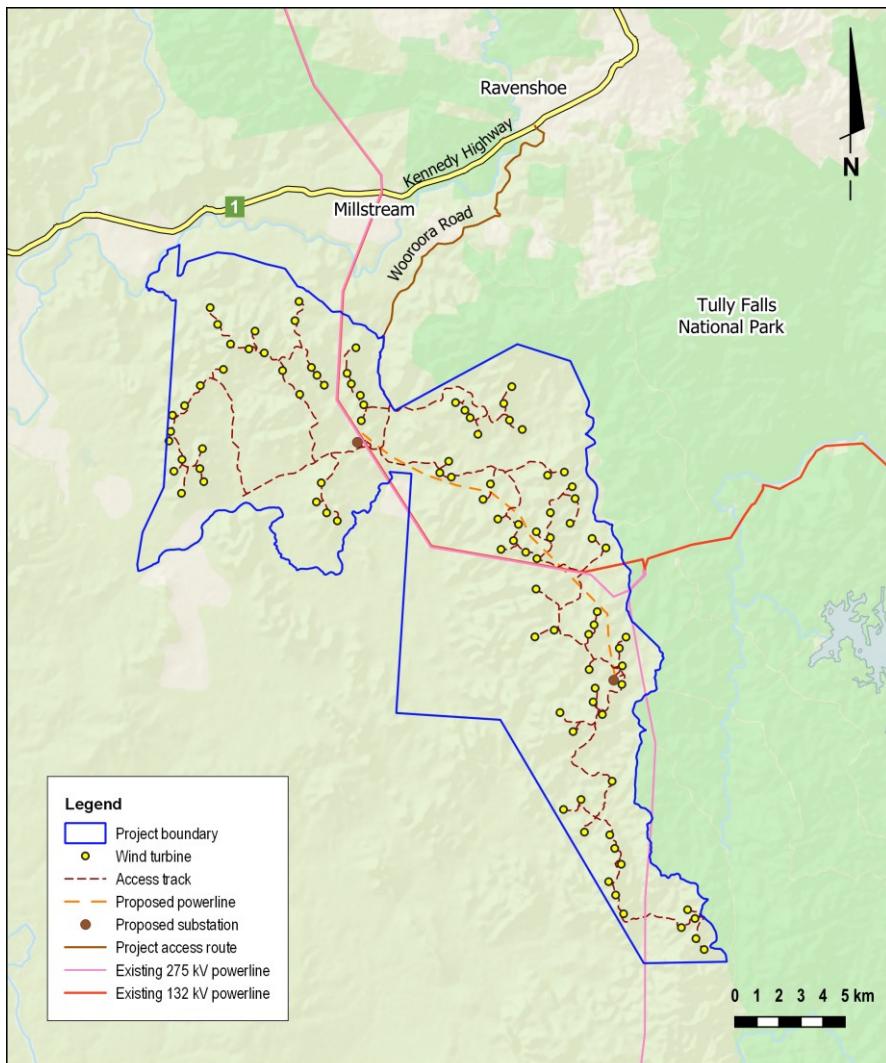
Commonwealth

- 1 Referral to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for review under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)

- WE ARE HERE**
- Determination: Controlled action, assessment by Public Environment Report (PER)

- 3 PER guidelines issued
- 4 Preparation of draft PER
- 5 Draft PER on public exhibition
- 6 Final PER submitted
- 7 Determination

Chalumbin Wind Farm project area and proposed layout



Benefits

JOBS: The planning and assessment phase of the project will involve locally based specialists and workers. The project would provide 250-350 jobs during the construction phase, and 15-30 ongoing jobs for operation.

ECONOMIC BOOST: It is anticipated that the project would provide work for local contractors and a significant boost to the local economy, especially during the construction period and in particular for surrounding accommodation, retail and hospitality businesses.

CLEAN ENERGY: Once operational the Chalumbin Wind Farm would contribute 570 megawatts to the Queensland grid. Renewable sources of energy are the most efficient and cheapest new sources of bulk energy generation. Growth in Queensland's renewable energy capacity will deliver cleaner, cheaper and reliable electricity to households and businesses.

More information

Website: chalumbinwindfarm.com.au or scan the QR code

Register for updates: epuron.com.au/mailing-list-details

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