

Appendix 9

Stakeholder Consultation Program

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COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Mount Emerald Wind Farm

October 2013

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Description of Site

Mount Emerald Wind Farm (MEWF) is a “greenfield” wind farm development being pursued as a partnership between RATCH Australia and Port Bajool. The site for MEWF is located on the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland, approximately 20km to the south of the town of Mareeba and 15km north-west of the town of Atherton. The site is approximately 47km north of the operating Windy Hill wind farm.

The estimated generating capacity of the project is approximately 180-210MW. The final configuration for the site will involve between 60 and 70 turbines depending on the WTG manufacturer and the size of the turbine ultimately selected, and on the optimisation of the site layout and configuration which is yet to be finalised.

1.2 Consultation Methodology

The objectives of the community engagement program were to ensure that the community and stakeholders were:

- Informed about the Proposal, through an ongoing commitment by the Proponent to provide information, allowing a good understanding of the proposed development and the likely impacts;
- Actively engaged on issues of concern to them, to identify and consider options for eliminating or reducing impacts; and
- Given ample opportunity to provide views on the proposal.

2. PRELIMINARY CONSULTATION

The landowner, Port Bajool approached Transfield Services to discuss the possibilities of positioning a Wind farm at this location in March 2009.

Preliminary consultation meetings were held with local and state government agencies to identify potential opportunities and constraints associated with locating a wind farm in this locality during the period from July to December 2009.

Additional briefings and meetings were held with Tablelands Regional Council and their Planning Group team, with an application to install monitoring equipment on-site approved in November 2009.

Potentially impacted neighbouring landholders were contacted and informed of the potential project, with some taking the opportunity for a meeting with project developers in the period from May – August 2009.

Further notification to the surrounding region was undertaken through the release of a media statement to the local newspapers in August 2009.

3. STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND CONSULTATION

The following organisations have been identified as having a vested interest in the outcome of the proposed MEWF:

- Tablelands Regional Council
- Landholders
- Communities in Atherton Tablelands area, most notably Mareeba, Atherton and Tolga
- Bar Barrum and Muluridji People

- North Queensland Land Council
- Near neighbours
- Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) includes Mines and Energy
- Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) includes Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
- Local Rural Fire Brigade
- Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Mareeba Airport and Aerial Agriculture companies
- Tourism Queensland
- Department of Transport and Main Roads
- Network Service Provider (“NSP”) operating in the region of the proposed project area - Powerlink
- Electricity Off-taker
- SunWater
- Springmount Waste Disposal Facility

4. CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

A summary of key stakeholder engagement and consultation activities undertaken throughout the course of the development is outlined in the sections below, with a list of the consultation activities is included as Appendix A – Stakeholder Consultation Program.

A summary of some of the key activities is shown in the table below.

Date	Stakeholder	Description
May 2009	Various neighbouring landowners	Introductory meeting with discussion on general project concept
July 2009	TRC mayor and planning staff	Introductory meeting with discussion on general project concept
September 2009	TRC planning staff	Wind monitoring tower application
January 2011	Landowners meeting Oaky Valley residents	Project information and questions
March 2011	Public Open Day	Public meeting with approx. 60 attendees; also involved media release and advertisement, newsletter #1, information booklet
March 2011	Traditional Owners	Preliminary meeting and discussion with group representatives
July 2011	TRC councillors, planners and media	Site inspection
July 2012	TRC (Mayor, CEO, Planners)	Submissions received on project Key issues – noise, crop dusting, shadow
September 2012	Public Open Day	Public meeting with approx. 150 attendees; also involved media release and advertisement, newsletter #5
September 2012	Public Site Inspection	Guided trips of the actual wind farm site

Date	Stakeholder	Description
Sep/Oct 2012	Media releases	Addressing issues and questions raised at the September 2012 Open Day
November 2012	Website	Launch of dedicated website www.mtemeraldwindfarm.com.au
February 2013	Traditional owners	Initial meeting in respect of cultural heritage management plan

4.1 Local Council

Preliminary discussions were held with Tablelands Regional Council (Mayor and Planning Staff) in mid-2009, regarding the general concept of the wind farm and particular issues and requirements which may arise.

Ongoing informal meetings and communications have occurred throughout the development, primarily with planning staff, to provide updates on development progress and address general issues as they arise.

A formal presentation was given at the TRC meeting in September 2012.

4.2 Government Stakeholders

State

Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) – regional development, employment opportunities,

Department of State Development Infrastructure and Planning (DSDIP) – Planning Scheme, State Planning Policy

Office of Clean Energy (OCE) – renewable generation, project brief - updates

SunWater – protection of irrigation assets,

Department of Energy and Resource Management (DERM) – project briefing, land management

Department of Science Information Technology Innovation and Arts (DSITIA) – vegetation

Premier and Ministers – general briefing

Federal

Department of Sustainability Environment Water Population and Communities (SEWPAC) – environmental approval

Australian Trade Commission (AUSTRADE) – opportunities for services and investment

Ministers – general briefing

4.3 Traditional Owners

The North Queensland land Council Aboriginal Corporation (NQLC) is the native title representative body for this area. They have indicated both the Bar Burrum and Muluridji Peoples should be contacted in regard to identifying the appropriate party for the area. Following preliminary discussions with these groups it was determined the Bar Burrum People be identified as the traditional owners of the site land.

Further meetings and discussions have occurred and will continue in respect of entering a formal Cultural Heritage Management Plan between the parties.

4.4 Community Groups

Mareeba chamber of Commerce – project economics, opportunities

Atherton Chamber of Commerce – project economics, opportunities

Tourism Tropical Tablelands – project economics, opportunities

Regional development Association of Far North Queensland and Torres Strait (RDAFNQTS) - Tropical North Queensland Regional Economic Plan

Advance Cairns – project economics, opportunities

4.5 Community Consultation

Throughout the development of the project a number of consultation activities have occurred to disseminate as much information to as wide an audience as possible.

During the development a formal Community Engagement Plan was developed to identify key stakeholders, appropriate engagement opportunities and resources required to support this flow of information.

The provision of information about the project has been undertaken in a number of ways as outlined in the sections below.

Throughout the consultation process a contacts register has been maintained where members of the public and business community are able to register themselves and directly receive any information releases regarding the project. The business register will also serve as a list of potential services to be supplied to prospective contractors required to build the project should it proceed. Currently there are 63 community and 47 business registers recorded.

4.5.1. Media, Newsletters and Information

The proponent of the wind farm is committed to maintaining communications with the local community via regular provision of information throughout the development process to as many near residents of the project site as possible.

An initial media release was issued by Port Bajool in August 2009 stating their intention to jointly investigate the potential for a wind farm. Further media releases have been issued at regular intervals since this time.

Concurrent with the invitation to attend the community Open House, advertisements were taken out in local print media including the Tablelands Advertiser and Mareeba Express.

A specific media release was issued in June 2011 to local media outlets and many media articles have been published in the local Tablelands media and Cairns Post since August 2009.

In addition to formal media advertising, MEWF has responded via journalists requests for interview (radio, TV and the print media) and via 'Letters to the Editor' to issues raised by 'the community'.

These requests average approximately one per month.

The first edition of a project newsletter was released in March 2011 and included an invitation to attend a preliminary consultation open day.

Newsletters were initially sent to immediate neighbours and placed in post offices and newsagents of nearby towns.

Further newsletters were directly sent to those members of the community who had registered an interest in the project as well as using nearby post offices and newsagents and posted to the project website.

A list of all the formal information releases is shown below, with copies of the information included as Appendix B.

Announcement of Joint Venture and commencement of investigation	August 2009
Mt Emerald Wind Farm Community Newsletter 1 – Information Day	March 2011
Mt Emerald Wind Farm - Information Booklet	March 2011
Mt Emerald Wind Farm Community Newsletter 2	June 2011
Mt Emerald Wind Farm – Summary of Development Application	August 2011
Mt Emerald Wind Farm Community Newsletter 3	September 2011
Update of Investigation and key issues	October 2011
Mt Emerald Wind Farm Community Newsletter 4	March 2012
Announcement of Community Open Day	September 2012
Summary of issues – post community “open day”	September 2012
Addressing issues – post community “open day”	September 2012
Addressing issues – post community “open day”	October 2012
Addressing issues – post community “open day”	October 2012
Addressing issues – post community “open day”	October 2012

4.5.2. Community Open House

MARCH 2011

An Open House was held at the Mareeba Heritage Centre on 31 March 2011 and attended by approximately 60 local residents. This forum introduced the project to the community and facilitated one-on-one discussion with the proponent’s representatives. Concerns and issues raised by the community in these discussions were recorded to allow these matters to be considered.

Project information displayed throughout the centre during the event, providing information and talking points for those present. Information displayed at the open house was consolidated into a booklet made available to all in attendance. A further Open House is planned to update the community on progress through the environmental assessment process and provide a summary of the outcomes of the assessment, with feedback assisting in forming a response to council’s information request.

SEPTEMBER 2012

Meeting held at the Mareeba Heritage Centre on 19th September 2012. This event was attended by approximately 150 visitors. Expert consultants in fields of environment, noise and visual were available to answer questions throughout the day.

Information displayed included over 40 posters showing information specific to MEWF and wind farms in general. A detailed visual display was available to show actual scale views of the wind farm from various locations around the region including individual resident locations.

4.5.3. Site Inspections

As part of the September 2012 Open Day, visitors were offered the opportunity to tour the wind farm site. Approximately 60 visitors used this opportunity to help them to locate the site within the region and obtain a better understanding of site conditions and its surrounds.

In October 11 2012, as a follow up to the Open House inspections the public was given the opportunity to visit the nearby operating Windy Hill wind farm. 40 people visited the site where they were able to access the base of an operating turbine and gauge for themselves potential impacts at close range.

The opportunity to visit the operating Windy Hill Wind Farm was repeated October 12, 2013 with a similar number of people attending.

4.5.4. One-on-one Meetings

Throughout the development process the proponents have engaged in numerous one-on-one consultation activities with interested or concerned residents. These activities have ranged from face-to-face discussions with individuals and groups, written correspondence and electronic and telephone conversations.

A correspondence register outlining electronic (e-mail) correspondence has been maintained with a summary of this register showing a total of 230 contacts being made. It should be noted two individuals are responsible for approximately 70% of these contacts.

4.5.5. Website

The proponent's website (www.windfarms.net.au) has been noted as a key source for information. Whilst covering the full scope of wind farms under development throughout the country, the website provides detailed project information on the Mount Emerald project as it is published.

A specific Mount Emerald website (www.mtemeraldwindfarm.com.au) has been available since November 2012. This site contains all posters generated for community meetings and relevant information as it becomes available with links to other pertinent sites.

Furthermore, the website provides a mechanism for people to provide feedback as well as contact the Proponent. The website continues to be updated on a regular basis in conjunction with key project milestones.

Posters and website were updated to reflect this updated information.

4.6 Issues of Concern

Following the acceptance of the Development Application by TRC in March 2012, an information request was issued in April 2012 listing 68 items requiring further information. The information request is an amalgam of submissions received from the public, council requests and those from referral agencies.

The number of questions and the detailed research, including in some instances, detailed scientific studies and the replication of previously completed studies, particularly the visual amenity studies, required to adequately answer them has necessitated an increase to the response period. It is intended all questions will be answered once the full information is available.

The issues raised by the community at the "Open Day" in September 2012 have been addressed in the advertisements placed in the Tablelands newspapers during October - December 2012 and in the content of the Mt Emerald Wind Farm website.

4.7 Community Survey

A community survey was conducted by Auspoll in March 2012 at an early stage in the community consultation process to identify community attitudes to the proposed Mt Emerald Wind Farm. The results of this survey are provided in Appendix C.

Key outcomes of this survey were:

Overall, there is both high awareness and strong support for the Mount Emerald Wind Farm development.

- Over 80% of respondents are aware of the proposed development.
- Around three quarters of respondents (76%) support the project, with only 13% opposed to it.

There is a strong recognition of the environmental benefits of wind farms in general and this is the main reason people support the development.

- Around 90% of respondents agree that wind farms are a good option for Australia's energy needs and a good option for the environment.
- 56% of supporters say they support the Mount Emerald project because it is environmentally friendly.
- In contrast only 10% of supporters identify the local jobs and benefits it could bring to the community as a reason for their support.

There is also considerable synergy between the importance of various local factors and the positive impact that the wind farm will have on these factors.

- The local economy and local employment opportunities are the factors that are considered most important by respondents and they are also the factors that are most likely to be seen as being positively impacted on by the wind farm.

Being an eyesore and being too close to homes are the main unprompted reasons for opposition.

- 32% of opponents say it will be an eyesore or unattractive
- 29% of opponents say it is too close to residences
- 23% of opponents mention noise levels as a reason for their opposition.

The vast majority of respondents believe that the wind farm will not have a negative impact on their favourite aspect of the local landscape or on the most important local historical or culturally significant sites.

- Less than 30% of respondents think the wind farm will have a negative impact on their favourite aspect of the local landscape.
- Most respondents are not aware of any local historical or culturally significant sites, but of those that are, less than 30% think the wind farm will have a negative impact on these sites.

People generally don't know very much about the project but most would like to know more.

- 79% of respondents say they only know a little about the wind farm, while 61% say that they would like to know more.
- People would like information about a whole range of issues, from basic location and size details to information on who benefits, impacts on wildlife, and employment opportunities.

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- Three quarters of respondents identify local newspapers as their preferred information channel for the project.

The project is also seen as being managed in a responsible way that takes care of the environment and needs of local community.

- 58% of people agree that the project is taking care to consider the needs of the local community while only 12% disagree.
- Similarly, 56% of people agree that the project is taking care to protect the environment while only 7% disagree.

4.8 Community Consultative Committee

MEWF have proposed a Community Consultative Committee for Mt Emerald similar to that developed and implemented at other wind farms around the country.

The structure of this committee has been developed in conjunction with other companies and the Clean Energy Council's Engagement Officer to ensure the committee charter and proposed operating regime provide the best possible outcomes.

A possible Chair has been approached and potential members identified, along with a timeline for commencement initiated.