

# Hexham Wind Farm

## FACT SHEET

# Socio-economic and Community

The proposed Hexham Wind Farm is located between Hexham, Caramut and Ellerslie in the Moyne Shire in south-west Victoria. If approved, the Project would incorporate up to 106 wind turbines with an approximate height of up to 260 metres from ground to blade tip. The proposed Project also includes an on-site terminal station and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and other associated infrastructure.

As part of the Victorian Government's planning and approvals process for major projects, Wind Prospect is preparing an Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the proposed Hexham Wind Farm. An EES is a requirement under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and includes a detailed assessment of a wide range of environmental and social assessments such as biodiversity, ecology, historical heritage, Aboriginal cultural heritage, landscape and visual amenity, traffic and transport, noise, socioeconomic, and surface and groundwater.

To complete the assessments, considerable research and consultation is being undertaken to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects on the environment and the social fabric of the community during construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed Project. Wind Prospect recognises the value of the natural and built environment in which the proposed Project is based and understands and respects the community's desire to protect both the environmental and social landscape that has existed for many years.

The Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) is being completed in accordance with the Victorian Government Planning Minister's scoping requirements for the assessment of environment effects, and with consideration of best practice social impact assessment approaches. The aim of the SEIA is to identify and mitigate any potential adverse social and economic impacts of the proposed Project on the community and assess these impacts against the environmental and economic benefits.

## How the assessment has been carried out

The social and economic impact assessment evaluates the potential socio-economic and cultural impacts of the proposed Project to ensure that it will contribute positively to the surrounding community while minimising any potential adverse effects. The assessment has been carried out over several years and has involved a number of stages including:

- Defining the social locality of the region where the Project would be located, and developing a social baseline profile which comprises compilation of community characteristics and an analysis of existing social conditions as well as trends.
- Extensive community and stakeholder consultation, including phone interviews, sentiment surveys, gathering feedback during information sessions and near neighbour visits, meetings with businesses, councils, First Nations groups and other stakeholders in the region.
- Preparation of an economic impact assessment, including consideration of high-level agricultural impacts.
- A social impact assessment including an assessment of impact significance.
- Development of mitigation, enhancement and management measures to address social impacts and preparation of a social impact management framework to guide the implementation of the proposed social impact management measures.
- Identification and analysis of social benefits associated with the Project.

## Preliminary findings

Social and economic impacts and opportunities have been identified through the consultation and research activities and include positive impacts such as:

- Intergenerational equity as renewable energy production from the Project will contribute to the net zero energy transition and help to mitigate climate change.
- Enough energy to supply up to 515,00 households annually and an annual reduction of up to 1.88 million tonnes of carbon emissions.
- Increased financial sustainability for landholders who are hosting project infrastructure.
- Other financial benefits include near-neighbour annual benefit payments, one off construction payments and annual energy cost offsets.
- Enhanced social outcomes for local and regional communities through targeted community benefit sharing and investment initiatives.
- Current community sponsorship fund of \$20,000 annually and co-design of Community Benefit Fund for the operational life of the Project up to \$106,000 per year, or \$1,000 per turbine.
- Enhancement of the local economy due to construction workforce influx and associated increase in local economic activity as well benefits to the local supply chain.
- Local jobs in construction and operation and locally sourced services and products across all phases of the Project.
- Local economic development (employment, procurement and skills development) resulting in improved long-term economic and social benefits for the community and the region.

Some of the potential negative social and economic impacts of the proposed Project include:

- Community concern about potential noise and vibration during construction.
- Community concern about potential noise during operation.
- Project hosts receiving greater financial benefits and the impact that could have on social cohesion in the community.
- Community concerns about perceived changes to land use and property value.
- Short-term impacts on social and local infrastructure during construction.
- Increased demand for housing/accommodation due to construction workforce influx potentially affecting accessibility, availability and affordability.



## Mitigation measures

Since the scoping phase, the Project has undergone several design refinements to reduce potential impacts on the surrounding community. Changes to the Project footprint and site layout have been made to address concerns raised by the community and in response to the outcomes of some of the EES assessments.

A framework to guide social impact management for the Project would be developed before construction commences and cover the following areas as outlined in the table below.

## Social Impact Management Framework



### Accommodation and Employment Strategy

Specifies the approach to ensuring there is accommodation for workers which won't put undue strain on local communities and for workers for jobs which cannot be filled locally.

A targeted approach would be taken to identify local employment opportunities, as well as creating a network of local suppliers and partnership opportunities.



### Community Benefit Sharing Strategy

A strategy that explains how the community would benefit from the Project and how the community will be involved in the planning and outcomes of the Project's community benefits program.

Wind Prospect will look to work closely with the community, community organisations and Council to deliver an effective Strategy that provides benefits that the community want and need.



### Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy will define how the community and stakeholders would be engaged and involved in the Project during construction and operation.

Our engagement approach would be tailored to ensure it meets the needs of the surrounding community.



### Neighbour Benefit Sharing

Roll out of the Neighbour Benefit Sharing Program to near neighbours residing within a six kilometre radius of a wind turbine which includes annual payments.

## Next steps

Wind Prospect will continue to engage with the community and stakeholders on the potential impacts and benefits of the Project. All community feedback will be considered as part of the planning process and the community will be updated on how their input has been included as part of the development of the Project.

We will continue to assess the potential economic effects, including direct and indirect impacts of the Project on employment and existing land uses and assess the socio-economic impacts of the Project based on guidelines published by the International Association for Impact Assessment. The final assessment will be submitted as part of the EES documentation for review and assessment by the Planning Minister. The Minister will place the EES and all technical assessments on public exhibition for a period of 30 days. Feedback received from the community during the public review period will be summarised in a Submissions Report and considered as part of the Minister's Assessment of the Project.

## Have your say

The environmental, social and economic technical studies are being finalised and we welcome you to have your say on the proposed Project. You will be provided with advance notice of the EES exhibition and the formal opportunity to submit a submission, however you can provide feedback at any time by getting in touch with the Project team by email, phone or mail.

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*We will be out in the community in the lead up to and during the public exhibition period to answer questions about the proposed Project, the EES, technical studies and any other queries you may have.*

*Visit the Project website for more information on our upcoming in-region engagement activities.*

Wind Prospect respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which our office and each of our projects are located. We also acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to the land and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

## Contact

If you need an interpreter, please call 13 14 50. If you are deaf and/or find hearing or speaking with people on the phone difficult, please contact the National Relay Service on voice relay number 1300 555 727, TTY number 133 677 or SMS relay number 0423 677 767.

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