

Flat Rocks Wind Farm Stakeholder Report



Winner Best Secondary School

Theme the future of your town - submitted by Kojonup District High School students

1. Local Council

Moonies Hill Energy (MHE) met with the two local shire CEOs, Kojonup and Broomehill-Tambellup, in late 2008 to discuss the general concept of the Flat Rocks wind farm (FRWF) prior to the submission of an application to install wind monitoring equipment on-site. A formal presentation of the project and summary of impact studies was given to Council in November 2010 prior to submission of the development application. Development Approval was granted by the Shire of Kojonup (6/0) at a Special Council Meeting 23 November 2011.

An anomaly in the Broomehill-Tambellup Town Planning Scheme caused MHE to withdraw its original development application in June 2011 whilst a scheme amendment was approved. During this time WA planning processes changed with regards to developments over \$7M and the Broomehill-Tambellup section of the FRWF was therefore assessed by a Joint Development Assessment Panel (JDAP). On first sitting, the JDAP ruled the wind farm use incompatible with the farming zone despite a positive recommendation by the Broomehill-Tambellup Responsible Authority Report. MHE appealed this decision and secured a reconsideration of the decision in July 2013. This resulted in a unanimous decision and Development Approval for the remaining section of the proposed FRWF project.

MHE continues a good working relationship with both Shire CEOs and planning staff and regularly provides updates on the project.

2. Government Stakeholders

Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) has supported the FRWF project by allocating two development grants to support initial on-site wind assessment and later completion of the environmental impact studies. The GSDC is keen to assist MHE maximise the benefits of the FRWF project in the Great Southern Region, ie assist with discussions for WTG delivery through the Port of Albany.

Other relevant bodies contacted in relation to the project include:

Shire of Katanning, Department of Environment & Conservation, Office of the Environmental Protection Authority, Department of Transport – Regional Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Western Power, Civil Aircraft Safety Authority, Airservices Australia, Royal Flying Doctor Service, Royal Australian Air Force, Main Roads and Albany Port Authority.

3. Traditional Owners

The FRWF project area is covered by two applications for determination of native title, namely the Wagyl Kaip claim, Number WC98170 (Federal Court File Number WAD6286/98) and the Southern Noongar claim WC961109 (Federal Court File Number WAD6134/98). There is also an active Aboriginal Progress Association in Kojonup, whose members were consulted.

As a result of the site inspections and project discussions, the indigenous representatives were satisfied that the FRWF project area contains no sacred or significant Aboriginal heritage sites. Accordingly, they signed a form approving the Project.

4. Community Consultation

Throughout the project's development a number of consultation activities have occurred to disseminate information to the neighbouring landowners and general community. An initial concept meeting was held in August 2008 with potential turbine hosts and immediate neighbouring landowners. MHE approached interested landowners during July-August 2010 to negotiate licence/lease agreements. In September 2010 neighbouring landowners were invited to a meeting to discuss the planned impact studies and the project's development. Several neighbours took up the offer of one-on-one meetings in their homes with MHE staff in the following weeks. Further notification to the surrounding region was undertaken through the release of media statements in the local newspapers.

MHE has responded to several journalists requests for interview (radio and print media) at various stages and via issues raised in "letters to the editor" in local community paper – The Kojonup News.

Two community Open Days were held in May 2011 following a community mail out invitation and advertisements in the local papers. The first meeting in Broomehill was attended by 31 community members and the second meeting in Kojonup had 59 community members attend. The Open Days previewed the findings of the environmental impact studies and allowed the community to meet and ask questions of the MHE representatives. As a follow up to these meetings MHE called for submissions to ensure the community had an opportunity to comment and obtain information on the project. MHE commissioned a website – www.mhenergy.com.au – to post project information, project updates, environmental impact study results and provide an avenue for people to provide feedback as well as contact MHE directly.

5. Issues of Concern

During the course of community consultation and development approval process several issues were raised which are common to all wind farm development projects. These included;

WTG proximity to residences, general health concerns, visual impact of WTG, potential noise and interference with TV and radio signals, agricultural aircraft safety, fire risk and affect on property values.

A total of 59 submissions were received in response to the planning application in Kojonup (41 against, 11 support, 7 agency/undecided).

Two submission periods were undertaken in Broomehill-Tambellup – 1st round - 28 submission (20 against (7 reside outside Great Southern Region), 2 support, 6 agency/undecided), 2nd round - 29 submission (20 against (5 from 1 property), 9 agency)

MHE addressed all issues raised by the community in the reports prepared for the development application and via individual letters to concerned community members. Opponents to the project have stated since the final JDAP approval that they accept the umpires decision and wished the proponents well. "From here, this project, if it goes ahead, does need to be a success because with that will come the rewards that the community has been spoken to about and the fears the neighbours have will prove unwarranted. That would constitute a success and it'd be a great outcome.."

All avenues for objection are now closed following the approval from the JDAP for the BH-TA section in July 2013