



SEAN DOODSON

SUPPORT

Submission No: 165598

Organisation:		Key issues: Energy Transition, Social and economic
Location: New South Wales 2354		
Submitter Type: I am a member of the local community who would be particularly and directly affected by the proposed development		
Attachment:		

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I am in favour of the proposed Thunderbolt Windfarm.

The impacts and inconveniences of the proposed development pale in comparison to the projected impacts of climate change and we are already experiencing its effects. We need to rapidly transition to renewables to mitigate these effects. And this project is a significant step in that direction.

Taking into account the economic benefits, the mitigation measures outlined in the draft conditions of consent, and the need for society to transition to renewables, on balance I am in favour of the project.

However I provide the following comment on two aspects that I am concerned about; the proposed Voluntary Planning Agreement with Uralla Shire Council and the decommissioning of the windfarm.

With any development comes some level of impact and inconvenience which will affect some people more than others and the development will benefit some more than others. The contributions that the developer makes to the community is a form of compensation to ensure that a greater part of the community benefits. We have seen this with the New England Solar farm in Uralla, with many local organisations such as the preschool, sporting clubs and events benefitting from grant funding.

I am significantly concerned about the proposed VPA which will have the funds administered by the local Councils rather than through a community benefit fund model. The proposed VPA has taken control away from those most impacted by the project and those who are the intended beneficiaries.

The Voluntary Planning Agreement seems to me like a government tax rather than a fund that benefits the community as intended. A government tax in that Uralla Shire Council is justifying its position by stating that it needs the funds to cover road maintenance (of unspecified roads) and a fund for the cost of decommissioning the windfarm. I am concerned that under such an arrangement the funds for community enhancement will be greatly diminished and the small communities of Kentucky and Balala will be overlooked in favour of other parts of the LGA.

Councils' adoption of this stance is in contrast to other local Councils who have entered into Community benefit/enhancement funds which are administered either by a third party or Council and overseen by a committee of community, Council and developer representatives. Examples include Inverell Shire Council and the Sapphire Windfarm, New England Solar Farm community benefit fund and the proposed Hills of Gold Windfarm (where both Tamworth Regional Council and Upper Hunter Council have agreed to establish community benefit funds).

I am uncertain that Uralla Council will have the resources to prepare and carry out a satisfactory strategic plan as they are short staffed and have stretched resources as it is. I am also concerned that if they do acquire extra resources to administer the fund that this will diminish the money available for projects.



These contributions should be managed independently of Council by a community benefit fund whose sole role is to administer the fund for the community. This will be more efficient and more agile than an understaffed local Council.

It is concerning that Tamworth and Uralla Council have seemingly pushed the developer to enter into a VPA with minimal community consultation. I understand that the developers preferred model is a community benefited fund and this has been reflected by the community consultative committee which was already developing ideas for funding. I was not aware of it until I reviewed the project documentation this week on the IPC website. I have since spoken to many people in the local community and all were unaware of the VPA arrangement, all were expecting a similar model to New England Solar Farm.

Here in Kentucky we have several projects and initiatives that we are hoping to secure funds for, however I am concerned that the proposed planning agreement will now mean that we are competing with many more interests including internal council interests. I strongly recommend that the proposed VPA be scrapped in favour of a Community Benefit Fund model.

In regard to the decommissioning of the windfarm I am concerned that there is no consideration of costs in the proposed conditions of consent. The developer should be required to pay an annual sum or a bond to the government or a trustee to cover the decommissioning costs, such as with a mining project. The costs can be spread out over the life of the project to ensure that the cost of decommissioning and rehabilitation are met. Such a mechanism should be applied to all renewables projects.
