

POTTINGER WIND FARM

The Hay Plains region is characterized by both trees and shrubs; there are substantial native mammal, reptile and bird populations found within the Hay Shire, and the Saltbush Shrublands provide shelter and food sources for their survival. These grow best on the open, clay soil plains with the species and structure of saltbush and bluebush shrublands being most prevalent. Trees typically occur along rivers and creeks, forming woodlands of species like river red gum, black box, and myall. Elsewhere, you'll find open woodlands and shrublands dominated by Old Man Saltbush, Boree, and Bladder Saltbush. Native grasses are sparse but ground layer plants including Pigface are plentiful and spectacular during spring with the wonderful colours of the wildflowers.

I am opposed to the construction of this gigantic wind turbine farm, battery storage and associated infrastructure that will cause a disturbance footprint of over 1,000 hectares in this unique environment of the Hay Plains. The environmental obliteration of this landscape will leave a legacy of irrevocable land & soil pollution. My concerns focus on ecological damage, the lack of community consultation, accommodation paucity and increased traffic flow on the Sturt Highway. My family settled in Hay in 1874 and have been ratepayers and contributors to this local economy and outlying areas for over 150 years. I am a long-term resident and prior business operator Hay. I am not, averse to development or change, although I am strongly averse to the destruction, deforestation and land clearing of our environment in the quest of Net Zero.

Environmental Destruction & Native animal & livestock risk

In May 2023, we celebrated the release of 19 endangered Plains-wanderers onto adjoining farmland to this proposed development and if it does progress, it will cause considerable impact on their habitat and survival. Despite claims made in the EIS, animals and birds do not observe “habitat corridors or wind curtailment strategies” to ensure that the operation of turbines does not have an unacceptable impact on birds. Fatalities due to wind turbines are significant, but mostly for birds and bats. It is unacceptable to me that the developers see fit to impose acceptable numbers of bird deaths and carnage due to the turbines. There should be no carnage. All fauna native to Australia, including fauna that naturally migrates to Australia, are afforded protection under both State and Commonwealth legislation. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, trade, keep or move them unless authorised by a permit.

The ongoing and expanding practice of land clearing in native animal habitat to make way for wind turbines, access roads and associated infrastructure surely contravenes this ruling.

There is no mention in the EIS of the other mammals, reptiles and birds such as Stubble Quail, Barn Owls, Blue-winged Parrot, which are also known to frequent the area. Our

national emblems, the kangaroo & emu alongside the Short-beaked Echidna, and reptiles such as the Shinglebacks, Blue tongue skinks, and Goannas. Why were not any of these other species noted or listed in the EIS? Do the criteria rely solely on endangered species? There is not enough information supplied, or studies conducted to assess the long-term damage to the environment and to our waterways caused from the microplastics, nano plastics and BPAs shedding from turbine blades, known as Leading Edge Erosion. This is of great concern to manufacturers who are forced to repair the damage that occurs after only a couple of years. The particles eroded from blades include epoxy which is 40% Bisphenol-A (BPA), a frequently banned endocrine disruptor and neurotoxin. Academic research has shown the potential for 62 kgs of epoxy microparticles to be shed per turbine per year.

One (1) kg of BPA is enough to pollute 10 billion litres of water. That's 10,000,000,000 litres. Since 2017, the WHO has advised that drinking water should have a maximum of 0.1 micrograms of BPA per litre. That is the same as 0.0000001 grams per litre of water. Bisphenol-A or BPA is among the most toxic of man-made substances. Manufacturers of everything from juice jugs to appliances are making a point of claiming that their products are "BPA free." Not so with industrial wind turbines, whose blades contain BPA in their resin coating.

The Hay Plains and the Hay district are renowned for low rainfall and during drought periods there is a paucity of suitable potable water storage in troughs, dams, creeks & waterways. Unpolluted water is crucial to the survival of our native animals, birds, and domestic livestock in the region, and the risk of leading-edge erosion particles contaminating these sources is far too risky to consider. This issue of BPA shedding has hardly been addressed or considered by local regulatory bodies, and my understanding is that while there is no mandatory ban in Australia, efforts will be made to regulate it in the future and voluntarily withdraw it from use. The introduction of thousands and thousands of wind turbines all over Australia condones and disregards the hazards related to leading edge erosion and dismisses consumer, environmental and other international regulatory bodies concerns.

Community Consultation

The Southwest Renewable Energy Zone was imposed upon us, and I was dismayed that the declaration was interpreted by the Hay Shire Council to have full license to support the introduction of Wind turbines and solar farms into our landscape. Shire Council and Media announced these proposals as a fact accomplished, leaving myself and others in the community bewildered that this could have transpired so quickly into a sold confirmation regarding the introduction of wind turbines & solar farms despite our local opposition.

Councils claims lengthy consultation, yet I can find little evidence to support these claims apart from a summary of the Ten-Year Economic Transition Roadmap developed as part of the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program. The Hay and Carrathool Regional Drought Resilience Plan outlines key goals, strategies, and actions for councils, businesses, industries, and communities to build economic, social, cultural, and environmental resilience at regional and local/place-based levels. It was not a Hay local or district only consultation regarding the grand scale introduction of windfarms into our world-renowned landscape.

Please see attachment 1.

This document clearly demonstrates that ***both*** Hay & Carrathool Shires participated in the consultation on Drought Resilience. The Hay Shire Council have used the information gathered in this much broader survey in the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program, from constituents in two separate shires, including people living in a completely different ecological landscape and not within a 100 kms of the proposed Pottinger development. The Hay Shire Council claims that 300 individuals participated in the consultation regarding the REZ and the introduction of wind farms to our area, however I find that claim to be very much embellished as wind and solar farms consultations were part of a much bigger picture and fit under only one of the key strategies in the Ten-Year Economic Transition Roadmap. It is evident in the attachment that Hay Shire population of 2,882 and Carrathool Shire population of 2,866 are both very similar, despite Carrathool being a much larger area in size and it incorporates several small townships Hillston, Goolgowi and Rankin Springs. The Carrathool Shire is nowhere near the Southwest renewable energy Zone and even further from the Pottinger Wind Farm development area. 102.7 km to be precise via the Cobb & Sturt Highways.

The Pottinger Development application sits midway between the Edward River Shire previously known as the Deniliquin/ Conargo Shire and the Hay Shire making information & participation collected from the Carrathool shire residents regarding this application completely irrelevant.

Under the guise of these consultations, and a supposed chance meeting between a Council employee with a salesperson from Re-Alliance, a dozen “influential community people” or “thought leaders” from across Hay were brought in to help steer the discussion forward. How and why these people were selected is unknown, suffice to say they were vetted to support their united vested interests in renewable energy. So much for transparency.

See attachment Photo A.

Those discussions now underpin their document; Fundamental Principles for Successful Renewable Energy Development in the Hay LGA, which is being used to cement their support for this development application. The only local people to benefit from this Pottinger development will be the hosts & neighbours within the REZ,

notwithstanding investors, energy companies, opportunist and FIFO workers. It is a known fact that the companies bring their own suppliers and preferred company workers and staff to assist in the construction of these developments. There is no drought proofing or resilience building for the rest of our agricultural industry or community from 247 wind turbines placed on private land. The Renewable energy companies offer huge financial incentives for the hosts with no regard for long term consequences including the disposal of the turbines at the end of their usage time.

The coercive tactics used by Someva and other renewable energy suppliers are like “snake oil” salesmen with little consideration for the people that live, work, pay rates and rent and contribute to our local economy. This document “Fundamental Principles for Successful Renewable Energy” may well have been co-written by Someva and Re-Alliance for Someva and the Pottinger project, then offered to the Hay Shire Council as a sure-fire kick start into an industry that the Hay Shire Council naively has no concept of what the long-term impact will be on our community. Re-Alliance and Someva are both now offering this document as a model of best practice “one size fits all” to other vulnerable target communities in their far-reaching network to transform the whole country into a wasteland.

Media have joined the fervour and perpetuate the corny catch phrases that both Someva and Re-Alliance, and the Shire Council have adopted and are throwing out at every opportunity. Quote from document “I won’t need to worry so much about droughts” – local farmer

“This is happening with us, not to us”. Hay Mayor at Pottinger Hearing 5th June 2025.

Despite these reckless claims, I can assure you that this development and the disastrous encumbrance we face is not ensuring it happens with us, it is happening to us.

See photo B.

Council requests that all parties intending to invest or develop in this region, contact them as a first step, before engaging with individuals and organisations in the community, to be introduced to their Community Roadmap and to ensure a coordinated and efficient approach. I quote; “By doing this work now, the Hay community has the opportunity to prevent overwhelming and uncoordinated engagement from occurring and can keep the overall experience positive. Rather than each and every project engaging separately with the community”.

It is my view that the document was designed intentionally to be offered as a shortcut to bypass the basic rules of community consultation. Every development application is different, and every location of a proposed development is different, so I fail to see how “one size can fit all”.

The initial Pottinger development application and information regarding the Independent Planning Commission hearing and meeting barely saw newsprint in Hay, until May 2025 given the Someva representatives had already attended a virtual roundtable discussion presented by Hay Shire Council, staff and councillors in September 2024. The roundtable apparently outlined an accommodation-to-homes solution that would deliver both worker accommodation and legacy housing outcomes and benefits to the Hay community as a trade off after the closure construction of the TransGrid Camp and other developments on and around the Cobb Highway south of Hay.

None of these meetings constitute adequate & fair opportunity to object according to the rudimentary guidelines of community consultation - and 2 short notice, 3- or 4-hour pop up booths placed outside the council enforced the message. Media focussed on the rewards and positive spin leaving little or no room for scepticism. Continued hard copy and electronic media featured photographs of staff members, councillors, hosts and energy providers all hand shaking and proudly continuing to drive the dogma.

See Attachment 2.

The short-term incentives and grant opportunities that the renewable sector are offering as a trade off in communities like Hay is a paltry amount of generally between \$20 - \$30K per year to be shared among community organisations, schools and clubs etc to apply. Average individual grants range between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to each recipient. After years of living in drought, and difficult socio-economic times of course the community members are excited and flattered to think that these companies care about their future as they hand out cheques for parades and community gatherings, relaxation & mental health activities, workshops and sporting equipment. Community halls and buildings can apply for small amounts to assist with insurance and I.T. equipment, all these items relieving the pressure from the Hay Shire council to support the NGOS, the nonprofit and sporting organisations in the town.

It is very difficult for the clubs and organisations to continue to operate relying on volunteers when we must pay insurance costs and meeting and hall hire costs to Council for our events and activities. Its no surprise that Council will embrace every opportunity to encourage more money into the Shire no matter what the cost to our environment or the fact that it is small change for the companies receiving millions of dollars for turbine and solar panels. Not to mention the many types of government incentives that can be used to promote the adoption of wind power, including tax credits, grants, loan guarantees, feed-in tariffs, net metering, renewable portfolio standards, and green certificates.

See attachment 3.

Accommodation

It is very concerning to me that despite continued issues raised in the Hay Community regarding the lack of housing and clearly identified as an issue in the Ten-year Road map consultation, Council is now pushing and supporting for more wind farms development requiring more accommodation that is simply not here.

See Attachment 4.

Housing in Hay is disproportionally already given over to service the needs of FIFO workers and short-term tradespeople working on TransGrid or other wind and solar development. There is no short term or medium-term domestic accommodation available. There are limited houses available to buy as there is a monopoly of developers and investors and local opportunists who have bought them all and use them to house short term and seasonal workers. Bed and Breakfasts are operated in almost every street, the average cost of these houses to rent per night ranges from \$250 - \$375 upwards. Cheap housing is bought up and proffered to companies to house multiple workers at \$450 -600 per week and higher. They are basic dwellings with basic amenities and these figures are not affordable for local average income workers, or Hay residents looking to rent long term. This is completely out of reach for other local workers and for genuine tourists seeking overnight stays. The Hay Shire Council has no upper limit imposed on the number of Bed and Breakfast accommodation operators and scant or no policy regarding their operation.

I live in between two Bed and breakfast premises that operate 100% of the time at about 95 % occupancy. It is not compatible to residential living with increased traffic from industrial vehicles and trucks, domestic noise, and particularly as most of the occupants are tradespeople on shift work involving noisy vehicles arriving and leaving during very early hours and late at night. It is not uncommon to have these vehicles running at 04.30 am “to warm up” in the colder months. It is an imposition on my lifestyle and for any visitors I have. It is all about profit and these same operators will continue to do this at the cost of our own local resident’s comfort and opportunity to find accommodation security.

It is ludicrous for Council to believe that Renewable companies temporary and mid-term accommodation will be handed over to Council after conclusion of construction to for Council to repurpose as potential affordable housing to less than 3% of the community. Likewise, the statement of purchasing an “an electric bus to travel to Griffith on a daily basis.” There is already a reliable twice daily coach service that links Hay to Griffith and beyond.

Traffic

The increased traffic of heavy vehicles for the transportation of the 247 wind turbines and components required for the development will be pushing the capacity of the Sturt Highway. Since the Turbine sections and components will be offloaded at the Port of Newcastle (874 kms from HAY) or Port Adelaide (681.6kms from HAY) will increase road risk for domestic and local traffic on a busy major highway. The Sturt Highway is a major inland traffic route used by heavy vehicle product & livestock transport 24/7 between NSW East coast and Adelaide.

“Component deliveries are typically spread over an extended duration and at most there are 3-4 OSOM deliveries to site per day. Each turbine requires delivery of between 12-14 OSOM Vehicles under permit and escort, thus utility scale projects can have a considerable impact on the public road infrastructure required to transport these components to site. Individual components weigh upwards of 200 tonnes and pose significant geometric challenges with blade lengths upwards of 85m.” ([Port to Project Logistics for Wind Farms. A Practical Assessment](#))

The Sturt Highway is notorious for Heavy vehicle accidents and has a very sad history of multiple fatalities and accidents and injury all year round. My rough calculation of over @2,500 trips each way and 5,000 return trips from either locations NE or SW will cause more duress on this already overburdened highway. This quest to scourge our landscapes with wind energy is in the peak of green frenzy, yet the machines themselves are pure embodiments of fossil fuels. The cost of fossil fuels for the transport and the emissions surely add to the negatives of this proposal.

In closing, I wish to thank the Independent Planning Commission for the opportunity to present my submission and offer this thought-provoking quote.

God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools. John Muir, Terry Gifford (1996).

Annette Smith.

11/06/2025