



OBJECTION BY TOMAREE RATEPAYERS and RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION Inc. (TRRA)

Hunter Offshore Wind and other Renewable Energy Projects

Declaration of Interest

TRRA Inc. actively represents the community on a range of issues that affect the Tomaree Peninsula including planning and development, economic development, cultural infrastructure and resources, the built and natural environment, tourism and other grass roots issues.

TRRA inc. networks with other local organisations on issues of shared interest and works to ensure that our Council and other State and Commonwealth authorities consult with the community and maintain transparent and accountable processes.

Having regard for TRRA's objectives as outlined above, the proposed infrastructure and services are very much within the interests of our Association.

Several TRRA members attended the consultation session held at Nelson Bay and reviewed the document "Overview of the Proposed Area".

Introduction

TRRA recognises the national and global benefits which are associated with the move to renewable energy generation and welcomes initiatives directed towards this objective. This was a universal feeling expressed by the majority of those attending the Nelson Bay community consultation of in-principal support for renewable energy systems.

The natural terrestrial and marine assets of the Tomaree Peninsula are highly prized by its 30,000 plus population and the community is well aware of the critical importance of the need to protect these assets. They provide a backdrop for our lifestyle and a resource for a major local tourism industry and other industries relying on the pristine marine environment.

Accordingly, our community wishes to raise an objection to the current proposal on the bases of a lack of procedural fairness and on the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposal. The concerns underpinning these objections relate to the potential impacts of an extensive wind farm off our coastline without the time allowed for due process associated with a thorough investigation of these concerns prior to any

decisions being made. From the responses voiced at the Nelson Bay Consultation, we believe our concerns are widely shared across the Tomaree community.

Procedural Fairness Objection

A Timeline that doesn't Allow Adequate Environmental Impact Studies. The speed with which the project timeline sees the progress of the project would not seem to allow sufficient time to address the impact on marine eco-systems. Little is known about these eco-systems and the time allowed for environmental impact studies would not seem anywhere nearly sufficient to fill this knowledge gap.

Hidden Drivers. There was a strong perception that the international corporations behind the proposal are setting the development agenda at the expense of proper planning and considerations of environmental impacts. Underlying this is the suspicion that these corporations see massive profit potential that could not be made in jurisdictions where controls and environmental hurdles are harder to negotiate than they are in Australia.

Power Supply Control. One concern is that the Government will fail to negotiate sufficient control over power supply costs in a market-driven, commercial project. This is based on fear of a repeat of the scandalous mistake associated with the export of East Coast gas being controlled by large corporations at the cost of Australian consumers.

Environmental Objections

Effect on Marine Eco-systems. There was no detail provided on the windmill anchoring systems. How will the anchoring systems not present a hazard to migrating cetaceans which traverse the Hunter proposed area? Is it possible to install adequate warning protection systems (active or passive sonar deflectors?).

Security of Anchoring Systems. The maritime history of the Hunter, Central and South Coast is littered with failed systems that relied on sea anchors to keep infrastructure in place. Absolute confidence was always expressed at the time that measures were in place that would secure everything from wave power generators to fish farms. All have proven to be futile challenges to the violent nature of East Coast lows and the corrosive effect of the marine environment. There has been a recent disastrous experience with an aquaculture project just north of the entrance to Port Stephens when a large breeding pen was completed ripped from its anchorage. A long and costly clean-up followed and the project was abandoned. It is understood that the relevant NSW authorities were left with some financial responsibility for the restoration. TRRA would appreciate information on the experience at equivalent reference sites and details of the planned engineering in this harsh marine environment?

Visual Pollution. There is a concern that the wind farms will present visual pollution along the unique pristine Tomaree coastline during the day. The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service is nearing the completion of a Coastal Walk from Tomaree Headland to Birubi Point costing around \$7 million. The objective is to offer visitors enhanced views towards the open ocean from the coastline, including from the many elevated headlands

along the route. The view from the top of Tomaree Headland is iconic on a national scale and already attracts 200,000 plus visitors per year. In our assessment the view from the 161-meter summit would be impacted by the wind turbines in the proposed area. An additional concern is that illumination of the infrastructure could destroy the much-cherished 'black sky' off this coast with anti-collision and other lighting on the windmills. This may preclude future astronomical opportunities.

Social and Economic Objections

Commercial and Recreational Fishing. Both commercial and recreational fisheries operate in the proposed area and there need to be plans to manage any conflict with these significant activities, which attract yearly the highest concentration of boating activities during holiday periods in the State¹.

Whale and Dolphin Watch Tourism. The commercial Port Stephens whale watching cruises are a vital component of the winter off season tourist economy, so assurances are essential as to avoidance of such interruptions.

Onshore Infrastructure. TRRA would be concerned if there were intrusive structures such as transmission lines needed to collect and connect the offshore generated power from the planned area to the state transmission grid. This could impact the relatively pristine littoral zone could significantly impact the principal tourism economy of Port Stephens.

Recommendations

TRRA makes the following recommendations to overcome our objections to the proposal:

- a. Adjust the permitted installation zone to an area at least 15 nautical miles offshore to ameliorate visual pollution and below latitude 32deg 50.5'S (Fern Bay)
- b. The timeline for resolving the area to be assigned for offshore wind be delayed until thorough independent (not engaged by a developer) environmental impact studies are conducted to determine the likely effect on marine eco-systems and identify mitigation measures. This should include the determination of cetacean migratory patterns past the Hunter Coast.
- c. Before approval is given to any development of offshore wind farms, the government ensures that independent maritime engineering advice is obtained that provides assurances about the long-term resilience of proposed anchoring systems to historical and predicted worsening weather along the Hunter Coast.
- d. Onshore infrastructure be restricted to existing industrial areas around Newcastle.
- e. Any contracts and licences to operate for the supply of power from offshore wind providers maintain adequate control over supply and the cost of supply to

¹ Based on Marine Rescue NSW statistics.

Australian industry and residents by the Commonwealth so as to avoid
Australians being held hostage to corporate enterprises.

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