

# PALING YARDS WIND FARM SOCIO-ECONOMICS

## PURPOSE

Environmental Resources Management Australia Pty Ltd (ERM) was engaged by UFWA to conduct a socio-economic impact assessment of the project.

The purpose of the socio-economic assessment was to establish the existing economic profile of the local area and identify the potential employment and economic impacts that the proposed development could have on the local community and wider region.



**THE SITE IS IN A GENERALLY ISOLATED LOCATION AND THERE ARE NO NON-PROJECT INVOLVED DWELLINGS WITHIN THE 2KM BUFFER ZONE FROM ANY OF THE PROPOSED WIND TURBINES.**

## KEY FINDINGS & IMPACTS

### Economic impacts

The project is likely to stimulate the Oberon Shire economy as a result of greater income generation and subsequent expenditure in the region. The project has the potential to deliver direct and indirect benefits for host communities and the local and regional economies.

It is also anticipated that the project would provide flow on economic benefits including:

- increased employment opportunities;
- commercial opportunities from the economic investment;
- up-skilling of the local workforce within a growing energy market; and
- project involved landowners with lease agreements are expected to benefit directly from additional income.

### Employment

The proposed wind farm has the potential to create:

- 65 full time jobs during the construction phase
- 11 permanent jobs during the operational phase.
- further temporary employment for the decommissioning or re-powering of the site.
- up to 10 additional contractors once every 10 to 15 years as part of major site overhauls.

### Capital Investment

The total capital investment for the Paling Yards Wind Farm is estimated to be approximately \$275 million. There would be an injection of capital investment spending into the region consisting of:

- construction and operation phase wages; and
- the purchase of local materials and services where available.

Although it cannot be accurately calculated, there would be a level of direct economic benefit for the Study Area and the Oberon Shire as a result of the project's capital investment.

In addition, UFWA is exploring potential options to support the local community surrounding the site, including through the establishment of the Oberon Community Enhancement Fund for community groups and organisations.

### Indirect impacts

The project is likely to provide a range of flow-on effects and noticeable boosts to the local economy through various income and expenditures.

ERM found that there would be indirect employment benefits to the rural community, Oberon Shire and the broader region, as a result of the project. The employment of labour for the construction, operation and decommissioning of the project has the potential to increase demand for local goods, services and infrastructure. In turn, local retail, accommodation and entertainment businesses would experience a greater demand. While the impact would be highest in the construction phase, it would continue during the operational phase.

The project has the potential to increase local tourism and correspondingly increase expenditure on local services.

### Changes To Land Value

It is not anticipated that the project would adversely impact land values of neighbouring, non-project involved properties to the project.

The value of properties on which there will be wind turbines should increase, as the registered leases will run with the land ensuring that the rights to rental income for the turbines are transferable with the sale of the property (Community Affairs References Committee, June 2011).

In relation to neighbouring properties and properties with views of the turbines, there is little evidence to suggest that the land values are detrimentally affected by the project. Generally, impacts to the property values are primarily experienced during construction and commissioning of projects, and once a project is established, the prices recover with little to no adverse impacts on land prices (Offer Sharp & Associates, 2003).

The Preliminary Assessment of the Impact of Wind Farms on Surrounding Land Values in Australia (2009) found that:

- Wind farms do not appear to have negatively affected property values in most cases.
- A property's underlying land use may affect its sensitivity to price impacts.
- No reductions in sale price were evident for rural properties or residential properties located in nearby townships with views of the wind farm.

### Community investment

UFWA is committed to supporting local community organisations in the local area. The activities of UFWA are not limited to wind farm planning and development but extend to operating the wind farms with a view to becoming a long-term member of the community.

As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting local community organisations UFWA is exploring potential options to support the community surrounding the site, including through the establishment of an Oberon Community Enhancement Fund for community groups and organisations.

### Potential Future Road Upgrades

The construction of up to 55 wind turbines on agricultural land would require the mobilisation of heavy vehicles in the region to deliver materials to the development site. A detailed traffic assessment has been undertaken as part of the EA for the project.

There are sections of the existing road network that provide access to the site which may require upgrading to accommodate the construction vehicles and equipment that is required to be transported to the site.

The traffic report notes that the Transport Management Plan (to be completed prior to construction) will propose any intersection and road upgrades along over-dimensional routes to safely accommodate the manoeuvrability of these vehicles, as required.

### Community Consultative Committee

In accordance with the Draft NSW Wind Farm Guidelines (Draft Guidelines), UFWA are in the process of establishing a Community Consultative Committee (CCC). The purpose of the CCC is to provide a forum for discussion between the proponent, the community, Council and other stakeholders about the project. If the project is approved, the CCC will provide a forum for ongoing communication with the community during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the project.

The CCC will comprise, in accordance with the Draft Guidelines:

- An independent chairperson;
- Five to seven representatives of the local community and other stakeholders;
- One representative of the local council; and
- Two representatives of the proponent.

UFWA has sought nominations from local community members and/or affected stakeholders to represent the community for the CCC through a media release and advertisements in local newspapers.

### Community Consultation & Concerns

UFWA is highly committed to understanding the full-range of community perspectives in the local area. UFWA has engaged the community in the project, through a community consultation and engagement program. An important component of the consultation program was the door-knock surveys carried out by UFWA representatives on 30 and 31 May and 1 June 2011, and again on 5 and 6 July 2011.

The site is in a generally isolated location and there are no non-project involved dwellings within the 2km buffer zone from any of the proposed wind turbines.



PHOTO Hilltop (non associated residential dwelling) (Proposed View)