Gullen Range Wind Farm proposal referred to independent Commission

The NSW Department of Planning & Environment has referred the Gullen Range Wind Farm modification application to the independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) for determination, recommending that two turbines be relocated.

Gullen Range Wind Farm lodged an application to retrospectively modify its project approval in April after a Department compliance investigation found a number of the wind farm’s turbines were built in unauthorised locations.

The Department’s assessment of the modification proposal closely examined the potential visual and noise impacts on nearby properties and found that two of the wind farm’s 73 turbines – BAN_15 and BAN_09 – have been built in unacceptable locations.

A Department spokesperson said the two turbines, built 178m and 167m from their previously approved locations, have caused greater visual impacts on neighbouring properties.

“As a result, the Department has recommended that the BAN_15 turbine be uprooted and moved back to its previously approved location,” the spokesperson said.

“In addition, we have recommended that the BAN_09 turbine also be moved to its original location, unless the owner of the neighbouring property agrees to be purchased by the wind farm.

“A number of other turbines have been built in locations that are inconsistent with the original project approval, but the impacts on neighbouring properties have been found to be negligible.”

The Department has also recommended that:

- the wind farm’s Compensatory Habitat Package be revised and the offset area increased to account for the updated areas of biodiversity loss;
- the project approval be updated to reflect current best practices for noise, tonality, decommissioning and community consultation; and
- additional landscaping conditions be adopted to ensure the visual impacts of the substation are minimised.

The independent PAC will make the final determination on the modification application, at arm’s length from Government.
The Department is still considering taking compliance action against the wind farm for constructing turbines in unauthorised locations.

The Department’s assessment report and further information on the wind farm is available at: www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au.

Further information about the PAC’s determination can be found at: www.pac.nsw.gov.au.

Media contact: Mark Worley (02) 9228 6174