

CONDUCT OF WIND FARM AUDITS

BACKGROUND

Of the 13 wind farms approved by the government, three are in full operation. These are:

- Capital Wind Farm near Bungendore;
- Cullerin Range near Gunning; and
- Woodlawn Wind Farm, also located near Bungendore, to the north of Capital Wind Farm.

The Department's audits will be conducted on these three operating wind farms.

PURPOSE OF THE AUDITS

Due to the community interest in wind farms and the complexities concerning noise emissions from wind turbines, the Department will be auditing the Capital, Cullerin Range and Woodlawn wind farms to determine whether they are in compliance with their conditions of consent.

The information collected by the audits will also be used to analyse the performance of the wind farms against the draft [NSW Planning Guidelines - Wind Farms](#).

SCOPE OF AUDITS

In general, the scope of the audits will include:

Auditing compliance against consent conditions

- Assessment of whether the three selected wind farms are operating in compliance with their conditions of consent with a particular focus on noise requirements, but also including other operational aspects such as visual amenity, flora and fauna (bird and bat strikes), blade flicker, community contributions and electromagnetic interference; and
- Review of all compliance assessment reports provided by the proponents for the three wind farms.

Independent noise compliance assessment

- Given the technical complexity of noise, the Department is engaging an independent acoustic specialist to undertake the noise compliance component of the audits;
- The acoustic specialist will conduct noise monitoring at each wind farm to evaluate compliance with noise-related conditions of consent including noise limits; and
- The specialist will report to the Department on its assessment and make recommendations on measures to mitigate any identified non compliances.

Audit Reporting

- A separate Audit Report will be produced for each wind farm;
- Draft Audit Reports will be made available to the relevant councils, EPA and proponents for comment;
- Upon finalisation, each Audit Report will be available on the Department's website; and
- Each Audit Report will present the full audit findings including those made by the independent acoustic specialist, together with recommended actions to address any adverse findings.

Review performance against the Draft [NSW Planning Guidelines - Wind Farms](#)

- Analyse the performance of the wind farms against the Draft Guidelines; and
- Prepare a report summarising the performance of the existing wind farms against the Draft Guidelines, which will be made available on the Department's website.

CONSULTATION

The audit will involve active consultation with stakeholders. This includes:

- Issuing all residents within 4 kilometres of a wind farm turbine with a questionnaire relating to the operation and performance of those wind farms to inform the audit;
- Arranging face-to-face meetings with those survey recipients who wish to raise compliance related matters directly with the auditors;
- Reviewing responses to questionnaires and clarifying matters raised where required; and
- Holding discussions with the relevant Councils and State agencies to discuss progress and any matters requiring clarification.

TIMEFRAMES

The audits will be conducted from April 2012 to July 2012. The acoustic monitoring component of the audits is expected to occur between May 2012 and July 2012 as these months present worse case conditions for noise impacts on residences from the operation of wind turbines.

The wind farm Audit Reports are expected to be finalised and made publicly available during August 2012.

FUTURE ACTIONS IN RESPONSE

The Department will review and take appropriate action on any non-compliances identified during the wind farm audit program in accordance with its Compliance Policy and Breach Management Guidelines. The Policy and associated Guidelines are available on the Department's website under 'Compliance'.

The audits are also intended to assist the Department with the finalisation of the draft [NSW Planning Guidelines – Wind Farms](#).

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