



## **\$190 MILLION WIND AND SOLAR FARM FOR THE UPPER HUNTER VALLEY**

Tuesday 9 February, 2010

The NSW Government has approved plans for a \$190 million wind and solar farm – providing renewable power to more than 47,000 homes in the Upper Hunter Valley at Scone.

The *Kyoto Energy Park* will be constructed by Pamada Pty Ltd, with a generating capacity of up to 113 megawatts of renewable energy through:

- 34 wind turbines;
- A hydro electric generator using recycled water; and
- Up to 100 hectares of solar panels.

The facility will create 183 construction jobs and 12 ongoing jobs, and save 100s of thousands of tonnes of carbon.

“This is about harnessing the wind and the abundant sun of Australia,” Premier Kristina Keneally said.

“*Kyoto Energy Park* is a model for future power generation.

“The amount of energy created through renewable sources at this plant is equivalent of removing around 60,000 cars off the road a year.

“NSW would like to see more clean, green infrastructure projects like the *Kyoto Energy Park* - that support jobs and our low carbon economy.

“I am very pleased to see this project moving forward – it is part of the government’s plan to support reliable sources of renewable decentralised energy.

Since 2004, the NSW Government and councils have approved 17 wind farms with the potential to supply up to 2,926 megawatts of energy into the State’s electricity grid.

The Government has a package of planning policy reforms specifically designed to attract green investment and create green jobs across NSW through renewable energy projects (*see details below*).

Planning Minister, Tony Kelly, said the approval followed extensive community consultation

As a result of the consultation process, Pamada removed eight planned wind turbines that would have impacted on the community, environment and Scone Airport. This is in addition to five proposed turbines that were already removed from the initial proposal.

Mr Kelly said 67 conditions on the approval will limit its impact on the local environment and surrounding land owners. They include:

- Measures to limit noise impacts;
- Screen planting to limit visual impacts; and

- A management plan to minimise risk to local bird and bat species.

“This plan satisfies requirements with respect to noise management, visual impact, environmental conservation and impact on pre-existing local industry,” Mr Kelly said.

“As part of the approval, Pamada Pty Ltd will contribute more than \$86,000 per year towards a community enhancement fund,” Mr Kelly said.

“That fund will be operated by an independent steering committee, and will be used to support local infrastructure and community initiatives.”

## **Background notes – Windfarms and renewable energy**

- Over the past six years, 17 wind farms have been approved by the NSW Government and local councils, with the potential to supply up to 2,926 megawatts to the State’s electricity grid.
- The Government has already introduced a package of planning policy reforms for renewable energy, which will attract green investment and create green jobs across NSW.
- Measures include financial incentives, more timely assessments, dedicated resources, increased certainty, industry partnerships and community partnerships.
  - Financial incentives: The Government is waiving the additional fees associated with a renewable energy project being classified as ‘Critical Infrastructure’ from August 2009 onwards, providing significant financial incentives.
  - Timely assessment: The Government has said we will assess any major renewable energy project application within four months - around half the current average time.
  - Dedicated resources: A team of dedicated “go-to” people has been employed within the Department of Planning, to assist renewable energy investors in NSW to negotiate the planning approvals process.
  - Increased certainty: All renewable energy projects with a generating capacity of 30 megawatts or more will be declared ‘critical infrastructure’, providing them with a standardised assessment process
  - Community partnerships: The Government is establishing Precinct Advisory Committees, involving councils and community members in six Renewable Energy Precincts, to provide community input into renewable energy issues. These are located in the areas with the best wind resources: the NSW ACT Cross Border Region; the Central Tablelands; the New England Tableland; the Upper Hunter; the South Coast; and the Cooma Monaro Region.
- The Government will follow these measures up with measures to encourage investment and job creation in other forms of clean and renewable energy, such as solar, co-generation and tri-generation in urban areas.
- The Government’s adoption of a 20 per cent Renewable Energy Target in the updated State Plan - in line with the Commonwealth’s target – which will drive major new investment in the generation of renewable energy.
- While these measures will streamline the development of renewable energy projects in NSW they will not detract from the existing rigorous assessment processes applied to wind farm projects.
- All wind farm projects assessed by the Department of Planning will be subject to a minimum 30-day public exhibition period and wind farm proponents will be required to actively address concerns raised in public submissions.
- The Department of Planning is also currently working with other States and the Commonwealth Government to develop a set of consistent national wind farm guidelines - under the direction of the Environment Protection and Heritage Council - to ensure greater certainty and transparency for wind farm developers and local communities.