

11. Conclusion

The preceding analysis has shown that the project is in an area that can accommodate the visual change of the Proposed Delburn Wind Farm and will not be detrimental to the views, character and amenity of the area within the viewshed of the Project.

The Project is proposed to be located entirely within an area that is used for managing timber and forestry plantations and will connect directly into an existing high voltage transmission line. The land to the north east of the site is occupied or in transition from open-cut coalmines and coal fired power stations with supporting infrastructure and transmission lines. The remaining land in this area, part of which is used for farming and agriculture is retained with a special use zone applied to areas reserved for future exploration and mining.

The majority of the area to the east is used for farming, which is not a sensitive use. Views from these areas towards the project are influenced by existing vegetation within the surrounding road network, farming and conservation areas.

Closer to the site and in the areas to the south and east comprises a folded and complex landscape where views change dramatically from clear long views to completely screened. These changes occur over very short distances.

Section 4 of Clause 52.32 (Wind Energy Facility) requires an application to provide a site and context analysis including specific information relevant to landscape and visual impact.

Although not specifically required by Clause 52.32 we have also included views from 24 local roads within and around the project and project viewshed. The inclusion of these views provides useful context and further granularity to understand and consider the impacts to the local community. This analysis also gives further detail and information upon which to consider the intricacies of the landscape and the potential views and visual impact that might be experienced from the residential dwellings where access may not have been granted.

The following summary sets out the conclusions for views and visual impacts as required by Clause 52.32.

11.1 Townships and urban areas

Views from most locations within the nearby towns and locality will be filtered or screened by a combination of topography, vegetation or buildings and other structures.

Views are typically limited to the edges of townships or areas such as recreation reserves that allow for clear views over large open areas. Where visible, the turbines would not be dominant features due to the scale and extent of vegetation in most views towards the Project.

The overall visual impact from these majority of the areas would be **Low - Negligible**.

There may be views from residential dwellings where breaks in vegetation have been created to take in specific views or aspects. Views from these locations would be considered in a more detailed assessment should they be of concern to the individual owners.

11.2 National Parks, State Parks, conservation and recreation areas and walking tracks

There are many kilometres of recreational trails within the viewshed and areas that immediately surround the project and include walking tracks, cycling routes and rail trails.

Outside of towns and built-up areas, walking trails tend to be located in heavily vegetated areas such as the Lyrebird Forest Walk, Morwell National Park and the trail to Petersons Lookout. Views along these trails tend to be confined to the trail and immediate vicinity by the extensive canopy vegetation and supporting bushland.

Rail trails comprise well-made paths, gentle grades and the ability to cover considerable distances for walkers, running and cycling. The Grand Ridge Rail Trail runs along part of the eastern and southern boundaries of the site between Boolarra and Mirboo North. Many views from the trail are filtered or screened by topography, vegetation or a combination of both. The Gippsland Plains Rail trail further to the north provides wide, open and long-distance views over large areas of cleared flat farmland. When looking towards the Delburn Wind Farm from many locations along Gippsland Plains Rail trail, views include operating power stations, powerline infrastructure and many other constructed elements. The turbines would be visible; however, they would be at such a distance and in a context that they would not be visually dominant features. There will be locations where views to the turbines are possible where a break or gap in vegetation permits. Turbine visibility would form part of the dynamic views afforded along the trail. There will be limited to no views from key trail locations such as entrances or designated stops.

Views from elevated locations such as Mt Tassie to the south-east, Tyers and Petersons lookout to the north enable long views over the Latrobe Valley. In most directions, views include a tapestry of cleared farmland, towns and developed areas, coal-fired power stations and the open-cut coalmines within the valley and supported by a backdrop of vegetated hills and plantation forests.

Further, views from elevated lookouts are often modified by atmospheric conditions that can limit or filter long views.

For these reasons, the overall visual impact of Recreational Trail Viewpoints is assessed as **Negligible**.

11.3 Tourist routes

Overall, the visual impact of the Project in views from Tourist Routes and Highways will be assessed as **Low**. This is due to the majority of views towards the Project being limited by vegetation within roadsides, plantation areas and adjoining farming properties and screening afforded by nearby and surrounding topography. Views and visual impact would be further modified by the presence of other infrastructure which at times will be noticeable if not more dominant than the presence of the proposed wind turbines.

Highways and Tourist Routes within the viewshed include Grand Ridge Road, a local tourist route that runs south from 10km south of Warragul to Mirboo North and then heads south-east, and the Strzelecki Highway which runs through the middle of the Project. When travelling south, views along the Strzelecki Highway will be diverse and range from open clear views which include several turbines, to large sections encapsulated by roadside vegetation, with extensive timber plantations beyond.

Views from sections along the Strzelecki Highway towards the northern end of the Project will include turbines in long-range views also contain the elevated views of Mt Baw Baw and the national park to the north, high-voltage transmission lines and timber plantations. While these views may be currently available, timber in the adjoining plantation areas will filter and screen these views.

11.4 Major roads

Overall, the visual impact of the Project in views from major roads would be assessed as **Low-Moderate**. This is due to the majority of views towards the Project being limited by vegetation within roadsides, plantation areas and adjoining farming properties and screening afforded by nearby and surrounding topography.

Major roads include Hazelwood Road and Monash Way to the east and the Morwell – Thorpdale Road which runs through the part of the northern end of the site. Major roads are frequently used by locals as they go about their daily lives in the area and have a moderate number of road users.

Major roads throughout the viewshed vary from open clear views towards the Project to folding undulating topography that open and close to views towards the Project. Views in Section 8.4 have highlighted the ability for vegetation to filter and screen views to the Project from major roads within the area.

11.5 Local Roads

The assessment of views and visual impacts from local roads reviewed 24 locations from a range of distances and viewing angles towards the Project. The assessment of these views concluded that overall, the visual impact from local roads would be low. This assessment considered the viewer numbers, landscape sensitivity, availability and duration of views, and was supported by imagery from the site, photomontages and virtual reality imagery presented to the community at the community consultation days.

Views and visibility of the proposed turbines from local roads will vary greatly depending on location and proximity to the Project. The local road network is located within a landscape of great diversity ranging from views over cleared flat farmland where long views are available across the valley floor and plain, through to confined views from the tightly folding landscape of the vegetated elevated hills.

Local roads within the area to the west tend to be more confined due to the rolling hills, extensive roadside vegetation and trees within the pine plantations of the Project. Views in this location tend to be more dramatic due to the regular closing and opening up of views across the landscape permitted by topography and vegetation.

More broadly the views from areas to the east of the project that are near or within the SUZ1 would be less sensitive to visual change due to the presence of electrical generating and distributing infrastructure, there are however sensitive views to elevated features such as Strzelecki Ranges and Mt Baw Baw.

Overall visual impact from local roads is assessed as Low. This is in part due to viewer numbers and the visibility of turbines which would be influenced by topography and vegetation and the context of the view where these are available.

11.6 Residential dwellings

The greatest potential for visual impacts would be from individual dwellings located in close proximity to the Project. The majority of these dwellings are located in and around the same hills on which the turbines are located. The preceding assessment has shown that views from these areas are diverse and visual impact changes dramatically over a short distance. There will be views from some dwellings that will have a high visual impact where neighbouring dwellings who are at a similar distance to the proposed turbines will have no visibility at all. This is due to the topography of the landscape in which the dwellings are located, the orientation and proximity to vegetation both within the private realm, roadsides, plantations and forestry areas.

The SAA shows that there is greater theoretical visibility for areas to the east in the clear flat plains near to Hazelwood and Yinnar. From areas to the north of the Project such as Moe, Traralgon, Coalville and Narracan visibility is largely confined by topography. The SAA in these locations demonstrates that many dwellings in these areas will have little to no visibility.

Further, the SAA also shows that although there are a number of residential dwellings within 6.0km of a turbine many of these will also have no visibility due to topography. From those dwellings where it has been demonstrated that there is the potential to see turbines, views from many of these dwellings are further modified by the presence of vegetation within the surrounding landscape.

11.7 Other considerations

The South Gippsland Planning Scheme Clause 21.13 Infrastructure *Objective 2 seeks to ensure that the use of alternative energy technology does not detrimentally affect the surrounding environment. Specifically, strategy 2.2 discourages tall structures on ridgelines or in view corridors.*

There were originally 5 turbines located within this area in the Concept layout. 2 turbines have been removed in this area within the current layout (Version 3.5). This clause is unique to the South Gippsland Planning Scheme and does not reside in any of the other planning schemes.

Further to the planning review, several viewpoints were selected within the South Gippsland Council area to consider the impacts of this clause. These included viewpoints H5-H10, M10, M11, L15, L16, T8 and recreational trail viewpoints RT1b, RT1c and RT2.

Views and legibility of a ridgeline varies depending on viewer location, aspect and angle. This is evidenced by the views within the areas near to Boolarra, where the township is in close proximity to the windfarm, however the turbines would not be visible, due to the topography to the east which appears as a ridgeline and would create a visual shadow and screen the turbines. From locations where the elevated hills appear as a ridgeline these views are from flatter areas generally to the east and north east of the project in locations such as Yinnar and the lower lying areas adjacent to the Morwell River. These areas are located within the Latrobe Shire and outside areas that this Clause applies.

Views and visibility of the proposed turbines from within the South Gippsland Council area will vary greatly depending on location and proximity to the Project. The views are located within a landscape of great diversity ranging from views over cleared farmland, through to confined views from the tightly folding landscape of the vegetated hills. Where visible through gaps in vegetation and topography, the turbines would not have a detrimental impact on ridgelines or view corridors within this area. Furthermore, there are no locations from the affected areas of the South Gippsland Shire where the area on which the turbines are located is legible as a ridgeline.