

## MINUTES

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### Collector Wind Farm Forum

Meeting: February 9, 2013 at the Bushranger Hotel, Collector

In attendance: Clair Baxter, James McKay, Gary Poile, John Reardon, Dieuwer Reynders (Observer), Frank Ross, Sharon Swincer, Martha Truelove, Anthony Yeates, Deborah Cameron (Chair), Emily Doyle (Secretary)

Meeting commenced: 10.30am

Meeting concluded: 12.30pm

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### General discussion

*These minutes serve as an account and a general record of the discussion at what was the second meeting of the Forum. This is not a verbatim record and is therefore not conclusive. These minutes also reflect the tone of the gathering.*

The meeting commenced with a brief overview of the Forum attendees:

- Clair Baxter – works for APP and involved in the preparation of the Environmental Assessment
- James McKay – President of Collector Community Association
- Gary Poile – local farmer and bee keeper, President of the Pumpkin Festival, formerly held numerous volunteer positions within the Collector community, his property will host wind turbines from the Collector Wind Farm
- John Reardon – feels that this will have a big impact upon Collector and wants to oversee its development
- Deiwar Reynders – attending as an observer, works for the Office of Environment and Heritage, specifically on the renewable energy precincts program
- Frank Ross – member of Collector and District Historical Association inc and also interested in the environmental and economic issues of the proposed windfarm
- Sharon Swincer – Secretary of the Collector Community Association, background of governance and funding
- Martha Truelove – lives two kilometres from a wind turbine thus has a personal but also community interest, strong supporter of clean energy
- Anthony Yeates – works for the proponent, Ratch Australia
- Deborah Cameron – facilitator works for KJA
- Emily Doyle – works for KJA, background of environmental science, acts as independent Secretary for the Forum

Deborah Cameron tabled minutes from the previous meeting and correspondence with the Upper Lachlan Shire Council regarding the change of Council representative. No issues were raised.

**Deborah Cameron** tabled quotes obtained for developing a Collector Wind Farm Forum website. It was agreed to utilise the Ratch Australia website for a dedicated Collector Wind Farm Forum web page. The web page will host agendas and minutes and include a preamble (how committee established, who is on the committee, Forum key messages). Upon the project's approval this outcome will be re-examined to consider whether the Forum should have its own website.

**Anthony Yeates** then gave the Forum an overview on the project approvals process. The Project has now concluded its public exhibition (end of September 2012) of which, 68 opposed submissions, 58 for and 14 comments were received (total of 140 submissions).

The submissions have been reviewed and a Submission Report has been prepared. The final draft is now with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

After consideration of the submissions, the following changes have been proposed:

- Removal of five wind turbines from the north-east corner of the site due to a range of concerns raised (revised total of 63 wind turbines)
- Approximately 20 turbines slightly repositioned to accommodate local biodiversity

Once the Department of Planning and Infrastructure accepts the proposed Submissions Report it will be posted on the Department's website, and Ratch Australia will release a newsletter to update stakeholders. The Department will then prepare its assessment of the project (expected approximately April/May 2013) and refer the project to the Planning Assessment Commission (which will be open to the public). An approval decision is expected mid 2013 after which, if approved, Ratch Australia will proceed with the project, subject to ongoing economic assessment. It was noted that Cullerin Wind Farm, close to Collector, was one of the best performing wind farms in the country in 2012.

**James McKay** noted the majority of submissions in support of the proposal were from outside the Collector area.

**Anthony Yeates** confirmed this as correct.

**Anthony Yeates** then tabled a page that provided a high level overview of the current status of the Australian wind farm industry and the economics of wind farms (attached).

**Sharon Swincer** said that Ratch Australia should not feel the community supports the project due to the number of positive submissions. She asked if Ratch Australia would carry out another community survey to investigate the percentage of people that support/oppose the project. There was a general feeling that the initial survey did not reflect the true community climate and a general observation that statistics were able to be distorted.

**Anthony Yeates** said that another survey had been considered but decided against by the proponent. The proponent was uncertain of its value and felt that the statistical picture was open to interpretation.

**Gary Poile** said that he has been approached by many people who support the project however, they would not go out of their way to speak up about it as they feel that the surveys are being used as an instrument to divide the community.

**Martha Truelove** said that she has not been asked to participate in any of the surveys, though she was a near neighbor to the proposed wind farm.

**Anthony Yeates** tabled a report conducted by South Australia's Environment Protection Authority which addressed the generation of infrasound by wind farms (attached). He considered that report to be factual and offered the report as information.

**James McKay** enquired as to if the REC scheme was safe with the current regulatory uncertainty. The REC scheme was reaffirmed publically in September 2012 and is predicted to not be removed.

The meeting moved to review *Appendix C – Guidelines for wind farm community consultative committees of NSW Planning Guidelines: Wind Farms* as per James McKay's request. **James McKay** said that renewable energy is needed and the State Government should take greater responsibility for the process. Currently they have identified wind areas and have not done much more.

Through this discussion it became apparent that a set of key messages and Forum regulations were needed by members of the Forum so as they can easily explain the purpose of the Forum and their role. To solve this issue KJA will develop and circulate a draft set of key messages for Forum members to review.

As the meeting progressed to general business, there was a discussion about the Forum and its potential. Members were positive about the Forum and felt that it could play a constructive role locally and as an example to other communities. Simultaneously the Forum presents a good opportunity for the Collector community to benefit from the renewable energy project. The Veolia Trust was discussed with the positives and negatives of the program including individuals and groups receiving small lump sums versus community projects with a strategic vision.

**Dieuwer Reynders** explained that The Office of Environment and Heritage has a pilot funding program currently running (open for two weeks) and suggested that it might be of interest to the committee. She undertook to distribute information.

**James McKay** highlighted the need to develop a strategy and obtain expert advice.

**Gary Poile** spoke about the previous example of the Gunning Town Life Program which had been beneficial.

The meeting concluded with the next meeting being set for three months time (May 2013) on a Thursday evening.

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Actions arising from meeting:

- Anthony Yeates to develop Collector Wind Farm Forum webpage on Ratch Australia's website- activities, agendas and minutes to be posted on a regular basis
- KJA to develop and circulate draft key messages to Forum members that explain the purpose of the forum and the involvement of members
- KJA is to draft an introductory paragraph about the forum that is to be posted on the Ratch Australia website
- KJA to schedule next meeting in the second or third week of May, in consultation with members