Bango Wind Farm Preliminary Environmental Assessment March 2011



Document Control

| Revision | Date | Description | Author | Reviewed | Approved |
|----------|----------|------------------------|--------|----------|----------|
| A | Feb 2011 | Draft for consultation | SE | АМ | EM |
| B.2 | Mar 2011 | Final | SE | EM | EM |

Prepared by Wind Prospect CWP Pty Ltd on behalf of Bango Wind Farm Pty Ltd

Wind Prospect CWP Pty Ltd

ABN 57 127 205 645 PO Box 1708 Level 5, 45 Hunter Street Newcastle NSW 2300 Australia

Telephone: +61 2 4013 4640 Facsimile: +61 2 4926 2154

 $Email: \underline{newcastle@windprospect.com.au}\\$

Web: www.windprospect.com.au



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1. Introduction

Wind Prospect CWP Pty Ltd (WPCWP) has prepared this Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) to provide preliminary details of the proposed Bango Wind Farm (BWF) located between Yass and Boorowa, with Goulburn to the east (see map in Appendix 1).

This report provides a description of the development proposal, lists the relevant planning instruments, provides a general description of the key environmental issues and outlines the studies to be undertaken as part of the development process.

1.1 Applicant Details

The applicant for BWF is Bango Wind Farm Pty Ltd (BWFPL). Documentation for the project has been prepared by WPCWP. Both BWFPL and WPCWP are jointly owned by the Wind Prospect Group (WP) and Continental Wind Partners (CWP).

Contact details for the project are as follows:

Project Manager: Scott Evans

Company: Wind Prospect CWP Pty Ltd

Address: PO Box 1708

Newcastle NSW 2300

Contact: T: (02) 4013 4640

F: (02) 4926 2154 M: 0428 998 311

Email: <u>scott.evans@windprospect.com.au</u>

Web: www.bangowindfarm.com.au (to be activated in coming months)

WPCWP draws on extensive experience in the development of wind farms, the portfolio of which includes those identified in sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2.

1.1.1 Wind Prospect Group

WP undertakes all aspects of wind energy development, including design, construction, operation and commercial services, with offices in the UK, Ireland, Canada, Australia and China. With over 18 years of successful development within the industry, WP has been involved in over 2,500 MW of approved wind farms, including onshore and offshore projects, in terms of development, construction, operations and commercial services, and has a further 4,000 MW in the early phase of development. The company's civil, electrical and mechanical engineers have been involved in the commissioning of over 50 wind farms around the world.

WP's development offices in Australia are in Adelaide, Newcastle, Brisbane and Melbourne. Wind Prospect Pty Ltd (WPPL) is the most successful developer in Australia, having achieved planning approval for 12 wind farms totalling over 1,000 MW, of which 565 MW is operating or under construction. Our most recent planning success is in New South Wales with the Boco Rock Wind Farm (260 MW) located approximately 40 km south of Cooma (Table 1).

Table 1 – WPPL Wind Farm Developments To Date

| Wind Farm | State | Turbines | Total MW | Status |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------|----------|--------------------|
| Hallett I (Brown Hill) | SA | 45 | 94.5 | Operating |
| Snowtown (Stage 1) | SA | 47 | 98.7 | Operating |
| Canunda | SA | 23 | 46 | Operating |
| Mt Millar | SA | 35 | 70 | Operating |
| Hallett II (Hallett Hill) | SA | 34 | 71.4 | Operating |
| Hallett IV (North Brown Hill) | SA | 63 | 132.3 | Under Construction |
| Hallett V (The Bluff Range) | SA | 25 | 52.5 | Under Construction |
| Snowtown (Stage 2) | SA | 83 | 166 | Approved |
| Willogoleche Hill | SA | 26 | 52 | Approved |
| Troubridge Point | SA | 15 | 30 | Approved |
| Green Point | SA | 18 | 54 | Approved |
| Boco Rock | NSW | 122 | 260 | Approved |
| Sapphire | NSW | 159 | 325 | Near Submission |
| Totals | | 695 | 1,452 MW | |

1.1.2 Continental Wind Partners

CWP were established in 2007 to finance the development of wind farms in Romania and Poland. They have since grown to be a leader in renewable energy development, expanding into the rest of Europe and Australia; with projects totalling over 4,500 MW including the largest project in Europe, the 600 MW Fantanele wind farm now operating in Romania. Their primary focus remains in wind energy, however they also have interests in solar, hydro, biomass and other renewable energies.

Their successful and rapid expansion is based on a proven model of co-operation with local developers. Here CWP's international expertise in the finance/banking industry and technical aspects of development are combined with the developers own technical expertise and local knowledge. It is this collaborative partnership that ensures accelerated, professional wind development in a mutually successful manner.

2. Project Description

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a description of the proposed BWF, together with a review of the environmental issues associated with the development, which will assist the Director-General of the Department of Planning to determine appropriate environmental assessment requirements.

Inputs will be obtained from the following stakeholders:

- Boorowa Shire Council (BSC);
- Yass Valley Council (YVC);
- Upper Lachlan Shire Council (ULSC);
- Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW);
- Rural Fire Service (RFS);
- · Department of Primary Industries (DPI); and
- NSW Department of Planning (DoP).

This document sets out:

- A summary of the project;
- Potential impacts arising from the wind farm's development and operation;
- Potential project timeframe;
- A overview of planning context and review process for the project; and
- Proposed approach to the assessment of key potential impacts.

2.2 Project Overview

2.2.1 Turbine Layout

Wind turbine layouts for BWF are in the process of being defined with an exploratory envelope shown in Appendix 2. At this stage we envisage the potential for upwards of 100 wind turbines, however it is anticipated that final numbers and positions of the wind turbines will be refined through the assessment process, with adjustments being made with respect to social, environmental and/or engineering issues.

2.2.2 Turbine Specifications and Operation

The current BWF layout has been modelled using a range of wind turbines that have rotor diameters in the range of 80 m to 120 m, with nominal capacities from 1.5 MW up to 3.4 MW based on available technology in the market. Wind turbines in this range include tower heights (or hub heights) of 70 m to 100 m.

The wind turbines will be automated to face into the wind with cut-in and cut-out speeds dependent on the model of turbine selected. Typically a turbine will begin generating around 4 metres per second (m/s) and shut down around 25 m/s to avoid damage to the equipment and prevent unsafe operation.

2.2.3 Electrical Connection and Ancillary Facilities

The individual turbines will be connected electrically by underground cables (where possible) to a number of new collector substations constructed on site. The location of the collector substations will take into account the findings of the various assessments which will be carried out as part of the

planning process. It is likely that a facilities building will also be located close or adjacent to the collector substation.

The existing transmission lines within the Project area are the 330 kV Yass-Bannaby (circuit 39) power line on the south boundary and the two 132 kV Yass-Cowra (circuits 999 and 973) power lines on the western boundary (refer to Appendix 2 which shows the power line locations). Connecting to the high voltage grid will probably require a switching substation be constructed close to the point of connection with the existing transmission line. If required, the location of the switching substation will take into account the finding of the various assessments to be carried out as part of the planning process.

2.2.4 Access Routes

Access tracks will be required between each of the wind turbine sites, the collector substation and facilities building. Access to the wind farm would be required from local roads in the area. Possible locations include Cooks Hill Road, Rye Park-Dalton Road, Wargeila Road, Tangmangaroo Road, Harrys Creek Road and Boorowa Road. The suitability of locations for site access will be assessed as part of the planning process.

2.2.5 Material Supplies and Compounds

During the construction phase it will be necessary to supply concrete for turbine footings and substation construction works, as well as gravel for surfacing access roads. Concrete mix for the project is most likely to be produced from a temporary batching plant constructed on or close to site. The supply of water will be a key consideration in this decision.

Gravel for road base will comprise of the material excavated from turbine footings and if necessary other local or on site sources may be required.

Both temporary (during the construction phase) and permanent materials compounds will be required for the project, locations of which will be determined through the assessment process.

2.3 Location Details and Environmental Setting

The proposed BWF is centred approximately 20 km north of Yass, 20 km south-west of Boorowa and 80 km west of Goulburn, New South Wales. The turbines extend over a 25 km span running generally north west-south east, beginning along Boorowa Rd. The individual turbine positions are located on land with elevations ranging from approximately 570 m to 760 m Australian Height Datum (AHD).

The project site is on rural land within the Boorowa, Yass Valley and possibly Upper Lachlan Shire Council areas. Currently over thirty (30) privately owned properties are being investigated for the proposed wind farm, however again it is anticipated that final numbers and positions of the wind turbines will be refined through the assessment process. The current investigation area is shown by the layout envelope given in Appendix 2.

Appendix 2 also shows the locations of residences surrounding the proposed wind farm. These have been identified from a review of topographic maps and by ground-truthing visits to the area. Neighbouring properties will be assessed against the potential audio and visual impacts of the wind farm and appropriate setback distances will be a key design consideration in finalising the wind farm layout.

The site displays some granite and basalt rock outcrops and the elevated areas appear to have soil cover to a reasonable depth. The climate of the site is characterised by annual rainfall of about 650-690 mm, and mean daily temperatures ranging from 1 °C in winter to 30 °C in summer.

The BWF is situated within the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority area. Locally, the site drains into the Boorowa River and Derringullen and Pudman Creeks. Based on the nature of the project and controls to be implemented, it is not expected that any of the local watercourses will be affected by the development.

2.3.1 Project Contractor

WPCWP, on behalf of BWFPL, will engage a contractor to supply the required equipment and construct the BWF. The contract specification will address the project's 'Statement of Commitments', submitted with the Environmental Assessment (EA), and if necessary, amend the statement to address any consent conditions. WPCWP will work with the contractor to finalise design elements, complete planning and, subject to obtaining the necessary approvals, to progress the construction and operation of the wind farm.

Most of the wind farm equipment suppliers are familiar with environmental construction issues and have well developed environmental management systems. In selecting the project contractor, WPCWP will review the contractor's prior environmental performance to make certain that the contractor has an effective environmental management system ensuring that the project's environmental commitments are achieved.

2.3.2 TransGrid

TransGrid will have a key role in specifying its requirements for the grid connection, as the owner and operator of the existing high voltage transmission lines to which the wind farm could be connected. WPCWP, the project contractor and TransGrid will work together to reach a suitable design that facilitates wind farm operation while maintaining a secure grid.

The final grid connection arrangement will be dependent on the outcome of the formal connection process and the proposed construction schedule.

2.4 Project Timeframe

This PEA is provided to seek environmental assessment requirements from the NSW Director-General of The Department of Planning. We would look to lodge an EA in 2012 with the objective of obtaining planning approval four to six months thereafter.

Construction would commence following the completion of all pre-construction consent commitments and the awarding of the final construction contract. Assuming satisfactory progress of the pre-construction stage and construction works it is anticipated that the wind farm will commence commissioning during 2014, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 – Potential Project Timeframe

| Project Stage | Duration | Completion |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| DG's Assessment Requirements issued | 15 months | March 2011 |
| Planning and Environmental Assessment | 4 -6 months | June 2012 |
| Consent authority review and approvals | 6 months | December 2012 |
| Pre-construction contract negotiations | 18 months | June 2013 |
| Construction and grid connection | 2 months | December 2014 |
| Commissioning (commences during construction) | 20 years | 2015 |
| Operation | 1 year | 2035 |
| Decommissioning or re-powering | 15 months | 2036 |

3. Planning Context and Instruments

3.1 Context for Wind Energy Development

The Australian Government's legislated Renewable Energy Target (RET) is a scheme which has been established to encourage additional generation of electricity from renewable energy sources to achieve a commitment of a 20 percent share of renewables in Australia's electricity supply by 2020. The RET places a legal liability on wholesale purchases of electricity (e.g. electricity retailers) to proportionally contribute to an additional 45,000 gigawatt hours (GWh) of renewable energy each year.

The steep 'ramp up' profile of the requirements of RET up to 2020 and the significant lead time which is required to complete renewable energy developments and construction, requires the commencement of new projects now.

3.2 Statutory planning requirements

Development of wind farms in NSW is subject to the Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act, its Regulation, various NSW environmental legislations, State Environmental Planning Policies, any relevant Regional Environmental Plans and the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

3.2.1 Local Environmental Plans

The project is located within three local government areas.

Boorowa Council

Interim Development Order No. 1 – Shire of Boorowa. The IDO identifies that the project area is located within *Non Urban A* and *Non Urban B* zones. All development within these zones, excepting prohibited development, is permissible with Council consent. The proposed wind farm would be described as 'generating works' which is not identified as a prohibited development, and is therefore permissible with consent.

Yass Valley Council

Yass Valley Council has a number of Local Environmental Plans which apply to the Yass Valley Local Government Area as a result of the Council amalgamation of February 2004. Under the Yass LEP the project is located within land zoned *No 1(a) Rural Agricultural*. The objective of this zone is to set aside certain land for agricultural purposes and purposes incidental thereto. Agriculture (with some exceptions), dams and forestry developments are permissible without consent. The development proposed would come under the definition given in the Model Provisions as 'generating work' being 'a building or place use for the purpose of making or generating gas, electricity or other forms of energy'. As it is not a prohibited development and is consistent with the objectives of the LEP, the proposed development is therefore permissible with consent.

Upper Lachlan Shire Council

The Site includes land zoned *RU2 Rural Landscape* under the Upper Lachlan LEP (ULLEP) 2010. The proposed wind farm is defined as "*Electricity Generating Works*" for the purposes of the LEP.

Moreover, the proposal is consistent with the Objectives of the Zone and of the LEP which includes "to encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base" and "provide for a range of compatible land uses, including extensive agriculture". Electricity Generating Works are neither identified as being prohibited in this Zone, nor is it a development able to be undertaken without the need to obtain development consent. Therefore, the proposal is permissible and may be undertaken with development consent (or in this case, assessment under State planning processes).

3.2.2 Development Control Plans

Only the Upper Lachlan Shire Council has a project related Development Control Plan (DCP) in place.

Upper Lachlan Development Control Plan (ULDCP)

The ULDCP (2010) provides various development controls and guidelines in relation to wind farm development (amongst other things it recognises that State Significant Development is assessed via the Department of Planning). The DCP included guidelines for a Community Enhancement Program (s3.17) and a process for financial contribution by a wind farm developer. Consideration will be given to the DCP in the Environmental Assessment Report.

3.2.3 Other Environmental Planning Instruments which may require consideration

- Upper Lachlan Strategy Plan 2020 Vision (2009)
- Upper Lachlan Shire Council Biodiversity Planning Framework
- Upper Lachlan Community Heritage Study 2007 2008
- Sydney Canberra Corridor Strategy (2008)

3.2.4 State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) 2005

On 15 February, 2011 an application was made to the Director General of The Department of Planning seeking to classify the BWF as a Major Project and subject to assessment under Part 3A of the EP&A Act. If the project is so determined, the approval authority would be the Minister for Planning and an EA will need to be submitted to support the Project Application.

3.2.5 Roads Act 1993

Permits may be required under Section 138 of the Roads Act 1993 for underground cabling that could pass under the bordering roads. Advice will be sought with respect to the associated road authority.

3.2.6 Environmental Assessment

The matters to be addressed by the EA are identified in the EP&A Act, with further specific considerations issued by the Director-General of the Department of Planning (DG) and generally referred to as the Director-General's Requirements (DGRs).

The EA will describe the potential impacts of the project and how they will be managed. A Statement of Commitments is required to be compiled and incorporated in the EA. The assessment may be completed prior to finalising equipment specifications and will therefore aim to address the potential impacts based on the worst case parameters of each turbine type, size and capacity considered for the project.

3.2.7 Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995

The project will also need to consider relevant matters listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 as well as the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. Any listed matters relevant to the project may be considered in accordance with a bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and State Environment Ministers. Specialist advice will be sought in respect of any such issues.

3.2.8 Stakeholders

Consultation will be required with a range of stakeholders including government agencies, neighbours to the wind farm and the broader local community. Various media types will be used to identify and consult with the local community including the creation of a project specific website which will be launched to coincide with the first public open day exclusively relating to the proposed development. The website will be designed to be interactive to allow for community feedback.

4. Environmental Issues and Management

A range of environmental issues will need to be assessed as part of the planning and approvals process for this project and, where necessary, environmental controls incorporated into the project. The key environmental issues relating to wind farm developments are well defined and for the BWF the key anticipated issues are outlined below.

4.1 Wind Farm Layout

The wind farm layout will be prepared to maximise utilisation of the available wind resource whilst gaining regulatory and broad community acceptance of the development. The planning and design stages of the wind farm layout will consider any potential environmental impacts on flora communities, fauna habitat, heritage aspects as well as the location of neighbouring properties and residences.

It is expected that some adjustment of the turbine locations will occur during the planning and assessment phase in response to stakeholder consultation and findings of the various planning studies. Access routes will be designed to achieve practical transport paths that minimise disruption to local traffic and environmental impacts. Initial options are currently being reviewed with further detailed studies necessary to reflect both practicality and acceptability to the Councils, landowners and local road users.

4.2 Construction Phase

The construction phase is expected to extend over eighteen (18) months and will involve:

- Transport of equipment and materials to site;
- Daily movement of a small work force between the site and the local centres;
- Earthworks for access tracks, turbine footings, underground cables and a substation;
- Erection of turbines and substation structures and construction of a facilities building;
- Electrical connections within the wind farm and to the TransGrid transmission grid;
- Commissioning of the wind farm; and
- Restoration of any disturbed areas of land.

All construction will be undertaken in accordance with an environmental management plan and monitoring of performance will be routinely undertaken.

The transport of materials and equipment to site during the construction phase will involve a temporary increase in the local traffic volume. Vehicles accessing the site will include a range of 'over-size' and 'over-mass' vehicles. Preliminary indications are that several access points from public roads will be needed to access the wind farm. The EA will include a review of the suitability of roads that can be used to access the site and any potential impacts on road safety and local traffic movements. Where necessary, mitigation measures will be proposed and incorporated within a traffic management plan.

Initial site works will include establishment of a temporary construction site office, preparation of access tracks to turbines sites, excavation of footings for turbines and trenching for underground cables.

The potential for soil erosion and dust generation during construction will be assessed and measures identified to mitigate such impacts. Earthworks also have the potential to disturb any surface or

shallow sub-surface heritage items. Accordingly, an assessment of indigenous and non-indigenous heritage values of the site will be undertaken by a specialist consultant in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, prior to the excavation of any earthworks.

Noise impacts can be associated with the construction phase arising from the transport of materials and equipment to site, as well as general construction activity. Controls will be incorporated in the environmental management plan and will include adoption of specific working hours and use of compliant equipment appropriate to the development.

Site restoration following construction works will focus on revegetation of disturbed ground, reduction of weed development and control of any erosion and sedimentation.

Construction contractors will, in consultation with the RFS, implement fire prevention procedures during the wind farm construction phase. Fire fighting equipment will be located on site and where appropriate site vehicles will have diesel engines to minimise fire risk. Construction activities will be modified to suit any fire bans when appropriate to do so.

4.3 Operational Phase

Once constructed and commissioned the wind farm will operate for a period of 20 to 25 years. A regular maintenance program will be an integral part of the operation and any repairs will be undertaken as required. The operation of the wind farm may have various impacts, as detailed below.

4.3.1 *Visual*

Visual impact can be a key issue for neighbours to wind farm developments and a comprehensive visual assessment will be undertaken including landscape assessment, view field analysis, preparation of photomontages from representative view points and a review of options for mitigation of the visual impacts. Issues of shadow flicker and glint will also be addressed.

4.3.2 Noise

Once commissioned, the main potential for noise impacts will be from the operating wind turbines or the substation facility. As part of the EA, a consultant will be appointed to assess the acoustic environment within the vicinity of the site and potential impacts on nearby residences. A management plan to address potential impacts will be developed and implemented.

4.3.3 Blade-strike

Blade strike can affect avifauna species and specialist advice will be sought in relation to the site of the project. The flora and fauna assessment will be undertaken for the site in relation to the species present, their site utilisation and risk of blade strike. As necessary, mitigation measures will be developed and adopted.

4.3.4 Telecommunications

An assessment of local telecommunications services will be made. Potential for interference from the wind farm construction and operation at locations surrounding the site will be assessed. Mitigation measures will be identified for the potential impacts and a management plan developed where necessary.

4.3.5 Aircraft Safety

Consultation with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), Airservices Australia, the Defence Department and the Aerial Agricultural Association of Australia will be incorporated into the

planning stages of the development. This consultation will ensure the safe operation of the wind farm in respect to aircraft. This may include aviation warning lights at selected locations within the wind farm.

4.3.6 Water Quality

While the wind farm will not require any significant amount of water, there is the possibility of an oil leak or other containment failure resulting in contamination of local water courses. Spill containment will be provided as a redundant prevention measure at locations where oil is present should the equipment's default containment become faulty.

4.3.7 Bush Fire

The wind farm operator will maintain a limited fire fighting capability on site to control small grass fires and to assist fire authorities to control any larger fires that may occur on the site. All site vehicles during the construction phase will have diesel engines and will use the site access roads to minimise the likelihood of igniting dry grass. On very rare occasions it is possible that equipment malfunctions could cause a fire on site and appropriate management plans will be put in place to deal with such an event. Agreed procedures for liaison with fire fighting authorities will be developed to address the possibility of a bushfire occurring on site.

5. Proposed Surveys

It is proposed that the EA will provide a comprehensive assessment of all relevant environmental issues. In turn, these issues and their management strategies will play a key role in determining the final wind farm layout. The EA will address the Director-General's Requirements and is expected to include the following key specialist assessments as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Proposed Key Site Surveys

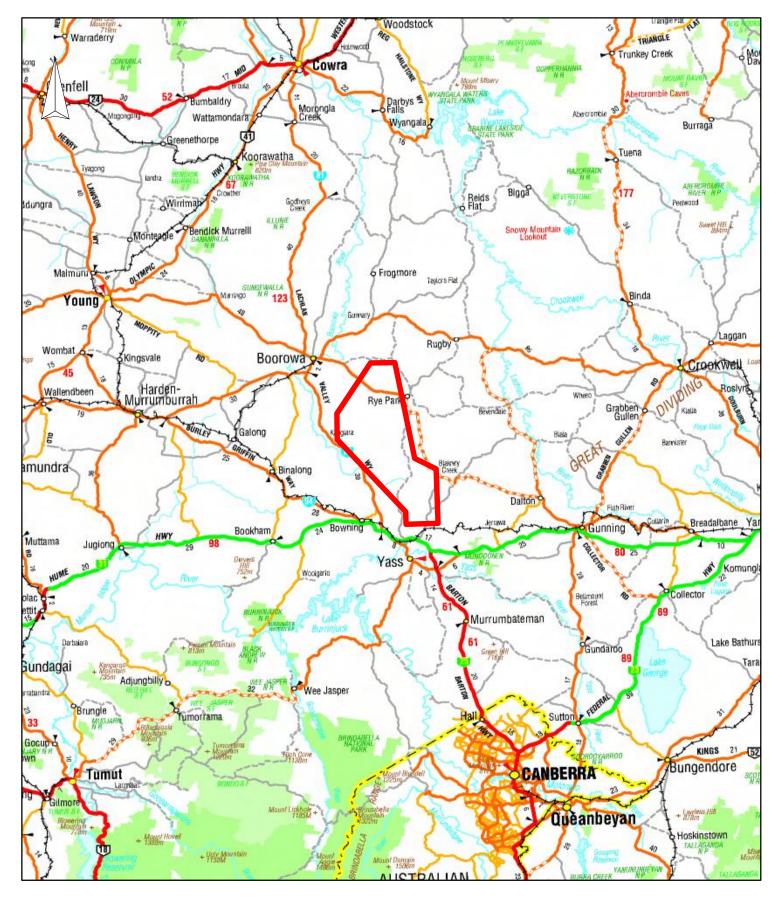
| Issue | Scope of Assessment |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Visual | A comprehensive visual impact assessment will be undertaken incorporating landscape analysis, view field identification, provision of photomontages and review of likely visibility at key viewpoints surrounding the wind farm. Potential mitigation measures will also be identified. Issues of shadow flicker and glint will be assessed and documented in the EA. |
| Noise | A comprehensive Noise Assessment will be undertaken in accordance with the DGR's (using South Australian EPA's Environmental Noise Guidelines for Wind Farms, 2003). |
| Flora and Fauna | A review of vegetation of the site will be conducted with a focus on native vegetation, particularly those having conservation significance. Important areas of vegetation and fauna habitat will be identified and, as far as possible, such areas will be avoided by the development. Impact on such areas would only occur subject to agreement with relevant authorities and the necessary mitigation measures being incorporated into the project. Assessment of relevant avifauna species will be undertaken to identify any potential at-risk species. |
| Archaeological / Heritage | A heritage assessment will be undertaken by a suitable specialist in conjunction with representatives of one or more indigenous stakeholder groups. |
| Traffic Assessment | A comprehensive assessment may be required to determine suitability of local roads to cope with the increased traffic load, and specifically the impacts associated with over-size and overmass vehicles accessing the site during the construction phase. |
| Telecommunications | An assessment of services potentially impacted will be undertaken. |
| Geology soils and geotechnical information | Information on these aspects will be compiled and incorporated in the EA. |
| Air safety, bushfire risk, catchment issues, community consultation, etc. | A number of issues will be dealt with, as necessary, by review of the issue, identification of options for mitigation and consultation with relevant stakeholders. The outcome will be incorporated into the EA. |

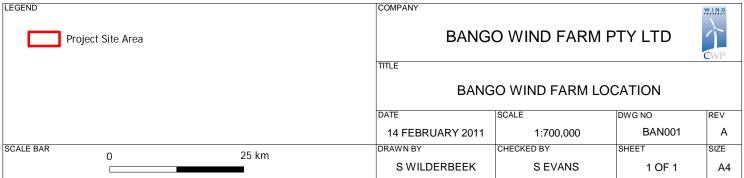
6. Conclusion

The Bango Wind Farm proposes to be an environmentally sensitive, sustainable development in order to contribute to meeting renewable energy targets for Australia's electricity supply.

Through community and stakeholder consultation, meeting planning requirements, carrying out environmental assessments and employing mitigation measures where necessary, the project aims to create minimal environmental impact during construction and operation while generating clean, renewable energy.

Appendix 1 – Locality map





Appendix 2 – Exploratory wind turbine envelope, topographic map and neighbouring residences

