

Stockyard Hill Wind Farm

Newsletter

Edition 6: July 2010



Together we can
make a difference.™

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Stockyard Hill newsletter. This newsletter provides information to the communities involved in the Stockyard Hill Wind Farm development, situated between Sipton and Beaufort, 35 km west of Ballarat. More copies are available by either contacting us, or downloading from our website.

Origin contributes to South-West Victoria Brolga Research

The South-West Victoria Brolga Research Study is a three-year project to investigate the movements and routes flown between breeding and non-breeding sites for the Brolga. This study will help us better understand how to protect and manage key habitat and flight paths for the Brolga, as well as to understand the collision risks that they may have with man-made structures.

Led by University of Ballarat PhD candidate, Inka Veltheim, the project involves catching and colour-banding chicks and juvenile birds to understand their survival rates and fitting satellite transmitters to birds to monitor their movements.

There is a need for greater understanding of the life-cycle and behaviour of the Brolga, one of only two Australian crane species. Over 90% of brolga habitat is on private land. While satellite transmitters have been used extensively to study the movement of birds and other species, this has not been done for the Brolga, partly due to difficulties in approaching and catching them.

Eight Brolga chicks have been successfully caught, colour-banded and released between December 2009 and January 2010. So far only one adult brolga has been successfully fitted with a satellite transmitter. There are now two Brolgas wearing satellite trackers in western Victoria.

An independent Scientific Panel has been established to oversee the development of methods and tools to predict, assess and mitigate the impacts of wind farm development on the Brolga. The Panel is chaired by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and includes scientific experts in Brolga biology and ecology and ecological modelling.

Origin is a proud partner of the South-West Victoria Brolga Research Study and is contributing data collected for the Stockyard Hill Wind Farm project to this ground-breaking research study. The project is also supported through funding from the Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, and Sustainability Victoria.

For more information about the South West Victoria Brolga Study visit
victorianbrolgastudy.com.au

Brolgas
observed
in western
Victoria

Contact us

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Where to from here?

The planning panel hearings and associated site visits for the Stockyard Hill Wind Farm formally concluded on 26 May 2010.

During the panel hearing process, new information and issues were raised with respect to the project. Consistent with our approach throughout the development of the proposed Stockyard Hill Wind Farm, issues were referred to subject matter experts and consultants for further investigation.

As a result of additional assessments undertaken, a total of 30 turbines were removed from the original proposal of 242. Of this, about 20 turbines have been removed as a result of previously unpublished Broilga records presented by the Department of Sustainability and Environment during the panel hearing. Other turbines were removed due to visual impact, heritage issues and potential interference with existing land use.

The Panel is currently preparing its recommendations on the project to the Minister for Planning for him to make the final decision including any conditions that the project has to meet. The Federal Minister for Environment will also make a decision in respect of certain environmental matters.

Expert witness reports commissioned by Origin and updates on the project are available on the Stockyard Hill Wind Farm project website: www.stockyardhillwindfarm.com.au. If you would like to speak with us about the project please call **1800 753 730**.

NHMRC study into Wind Farms and Health

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia's peak Government body for supporting health and medical research and for developing health advice for the community, has found no scientific evidence that wind turbines have a direct adverse effect on people's health.

Responding to claims that infrasound (sound that is generally inaudible to the human ear) from wind turbines are making some people living near wind farms sick, the Victorian Chief Health Officer referred the matter to the NHMRC for further investigation.

Professor John McCallum, NHMRC Executive Director on Health Evidence and Advice, said that the NHMRC's review of all known published results of infrasound from wind turbines has found that modern wind turbine designs, where rotor blades are in front of the tower, produce very low levels of infrasound.

Findings from the NHMRC report is consistent with advice from the World Health Organization which states that there is no reliable evidence that sounds below the hearing threshold produce physiological or psychological effects.

The NHMRC noted that complying with standards relating to wind turbine design, manufacture, and site evaluation will minimise any potential impacts of wind turbines on surrounding areas. Origin will continue to monitor research in this area.

You can access the NHMRC study at www.nhmrc.gov.au. Other resources on this subject are also available on the Clean Energy Council website: www.cleanenergycouncil.org.au

Enhanced Renewable Energy Target boosts wind development

The Federal Parliament's passage of the enhanced Renewable Energy Target legislation (eRET) on 24 June marks an important step in driving Australia's renewable energy future.

Under eRET small and large scale renewable technologies are now split into two separate schemes. This has been designed to deliver greater regulatory certainty to large scale renewable energy projects such as the Stockyard Hill Wind Farm while continuing to support the growth in household schemes.

The eRET is estimated to cut Australia's greenhouse emissions by around 380 million tonnes and deliver 45,000 gigawatts of clean energy generation by 2020. What this means is that, in ten years time, the amount of electricity coming from sources like wind, solar and geothermal will be around the same as all of Australia's current household electricity use.

Having a greater mix of energy sources, including renewable energy, is essential for Australia to move towards a less carbon-intensive future.

As a proven technology, wind energy currently makes the second largest contribution to clean energy capacity in Australia, behind hydro power. As at November 2009, wind

technology generates enough energy to supply power to 690,000 households in Australia.

Origin has long supported the Federal Government's Renewable Energy Target as part of a suite of policies aimed at developing a range of renewable technologies to supply Australia's future energy needs.

Cumulative installed wind energy capacity in Australia (2000 – 2009)

