

ACNT/AUSWIND joint project to develop a national methodology for assessing landscape values for the siting of wind farms.

Wind Farms and Landscape Values

National Assessment Framework

This Framework was developed over 2006/07 in a joint project between the Australian Council of National Trusts (ACNT) and the then Australian Wind Energy Association (Auswind), now Clean Energy Council.

This partnership recognised that although the organisations came to the project from different perspectives, the National Trust to preserve significant landscapes and Auswind to support the growth of the wind industry in Australia, their desired outcome was the same – to see the sensitive and appropriate uptake of wind farm projects in Australia.

The project was funded by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. It followed some earlier joint work between the ACNT and Auswind which sought to scope the issues with respect to landscape values and wind farms. The outcome of that scoping project was the identification that “there is a growing unity of the need for consistent, transparent and comprehensive consideration of the special values of the landscapes in which wind farms might be sited, and there is a desire for consistent and adequate community involvement in this.”

The draft Framework was initially developed through a process of international research into best practice in this area, and this draft was refined through an extensive consultation process undertaken in all Capital Cities and two regional locations (with experience of wind farm development) in each state. The outcomes of that consultation process have also been documented and provide valuable feedback to Government and industry not only on landscape values of communities but also on other areas of concern with respect to development in regional locations.

The National Assessment Framework recommends a series of steps be undertaken to ensure adequate community involvement throughout the assessment process. These steps being:

Step 1A

Preliminary Landscape Assessment

Direct community involvement recommended

Step 1B

Full Landscape Assessment

Direct community involvement essential

Step 2

Describe and model the wind farm in the landscape

Direct community involvement recommended

Step 3

Assess the impacts of the Wind Farm on the Landscape

Direct community involvement essential

Step 4

Respond to Impacts

Direct community involvement essential

As can be seen direct community involvement is highlighted in each step as being either recommended or essential. The rationale as to why some steps are recommended and some essential is further defined in the Framework document.

The National Assessment Framework was finalized in July 2007 and has been recognised for sound practice in planning by the Planning Institute of Australia (Victoria) and Planning Institute of Australia (National) Awards.

It is noted that the Report on Impediments to Wind Development references the National Assessment Framework and recommends that jurisdictions review their processes in line with the steps suggested in the Framework. The ACNT and now Clean Energy Council support this approach, including if found necessary a review of the Framework.