

## Attachment 2

### **WAPC Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities (March 2020)**

The Western Australian Planning Commission's State Planning Strategy 2050 promotes renewable energy initiatives. The position statement outlines the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) requirements to support the consistent consideration and provision of renewable energy facilities. The policy identifies assessment measures to facilitate appropriate development of renewable energy facilities. It seeks to ensure these facilities are in areas that minimise potential impact upon the environment, natural landscape and urban areas while maximising energy production returns and operational efficiency.

The position statement states that a local planning policy can be used to provide specific development standards applicable to renewable energy facilities, and any other matters required to guide the local government in its decision making on a renewable energy facility.

In regard to a proposal, early consultation with the community and stakeholders by the proponents is encouraged to ensure that the proposal is compatible with existing land uses on and near the site. A list of potential stakeholders is specified.

#### *Environmental impact*

An environmental survey of the site should be conducted prior to the commencement of the renewable energy facility design.

The type, location and significance of flora and fauna, particularly rare endangered or threatened communities that may be impacted, should be described and mapped so that remnant native vegetation and sensitive areas can be avoided.

The EPA Environmental Factor Guideline - Flora and vegetation (December 2016) and EPA Environmental Factor Guideline - Social Surroundings (December 2016) should be used to inform the environmental assessment.

Facilities should be located near the grid to minimise clearing of vegetation for grid connection power lines. Solar arrays over a large area may have a significant effect on the clearing of native vegetation. Already cleared farming land may offer a practical solution to minimise any environmental impact.

To understand the impact of wind turbines on birds and bats, the following matters should be considered:

- stopover sites, local bird species roosting and nesting sites
- location of bat colonies
- areas of high raptor activity
- the cumulative impact of wind turbines on migration routes.

The positioning of wind turbines outside of migratory routes may reduce the risk of avian strikes. An avian study should be undertaken when this risk is identified.

Proposals that may have a detrimental impact upon the environment should be referred to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

The proposal could be referred by the decision-making authority, the proponent, or any individual. The EPA will determine whether the proposal should be subject to an environmental impact assessment (see EPA Guidance Statement No.33 Environmental Guidance for Planning and Development (May 2008) for further information).

Referral to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment through the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment, under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, may also be required for matters of national environmental significance.

### *Visual and landscape impact*

The location and siting of a renewable energy facility may require a visual and landscape impact assessment that addresses:

- landscape significance and sensitivity to change, site earthworks, topography, extent of cut and fill, the extent and type of vegetation, clearing and rehabilitation areas, land use patterns, built form character, public amenity and community value likely impact on views including the visibility of the facility using view shed analysis and simulations of views from significant viewing locations including residential areas, major scenic drives and lookouts
- layout of the facility including the number, height, scale, spacing, colour, surface reflectivity and design of components, including any ancillary buildings, signage, access roads, and incidental facilities
- measures proposed to minimise unwanted, unacceptable or adverse visual impacts.

Visual Landscape Planning in WA: a manual for evaluation, assessment, siting and design, (November 2007) and the Australian Wind Energy Association and the Australian Council of National Trusts Publication Wind Farms and Landscape Values (2005) provide detailed guidance on visual landscape impact assessments.

### *Noise impact (wind turbine proposals)*

The minimum recommended distance between noise-sensitive land uses and a wind turbine is 1,500 metres\*.

\* Evidence suggests that there are unlikely to be any significant effects on physical or mental health for noise-sensitive land uses at distances greater than 1,500m from wind turbines Source: National Health and Medical Research Council (February 2015 ref # EH57)

The minimum distance may be reduced with the approval of the local government, based upon advice from DWER.

Proposals for new wind turbines within 1,500 metres of an existing or new noise sensitive premises (excluding caretaker dwellings) will require an acoustic study to enable the local government to determine the acceptability of a lesser separation distance. The acoustic study should be completed by a qualified acoustic consultant and include the provision of suitable noise attenuation measures, where required. Noise emissions from renewable energy facilities, including wind turbines, are required to meet the standards prescribed under the Environmental Protection (Noise) Regulations 1997. The South Australian Environmental Protection Authority – Wind Farms Environmental Noise Guidelines (2009) should also be referenced for assessment purposes. These guidelines acknowledge the potential for operation in the presence of higher wind-induced background noise levels.

### *Public and aviation safety*

Appropriate measures should be provided, in consultation with the local government, to manage public access near a renewable energy facility (particularly wind turbines) and any public building, road or pathway including visitor facilities such as car parks, platforms, information facilities and toilets.

Wind turbines proposed in areas subject to cyclones need to be designed and constructed to enable safe stowage if high winds are forecast.

Proponents of wind turbine proposals should refer to the National Airports Safeguarding Framework (NASF) Guideline D: Managing the Risk to Aviation Safety of Wind Turbine Installation (Wind Farms) / Wind Monitoring Towers to determine any potential aviation safety risks and possible mitigation measures. Any potential aviation safety risks identified require consultation with Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), Air Services Australia and/or the Commonwealth Department of Defence.

### *Bushfire*

Wind turbines and solar arrays in bushfire prone areas should be designed and maintained so they are not a bushfire risk to surrounding bushland, and where possible should not be in bushfire prone areas with an 'extreme' bushfire hazard level or bushfire attack level (BAL) - 40 or BAL- Flame Zone. A minimum 10 metres clearance to combustible vegetation in the form of an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) is recommended. The APZ should be managed in a low threat state, in accordance with the Guidelines for Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas (DPLH/DFES: 2017).

### *Heritage*

Some locations may hold Aboriginal heritage, natural or historic heritage significance which may impact site suitability. An assessment should address:

- local archaeological and ethnographical records
- any impact upon the natural environment that have aesthetic, historical, scientific or social significance or other special value for the present and future community
- any impact upon the historic heritage characteristics of adjoining/nearby places with an impact assessment of the proposal undertaken where relevant.

### *Construction impact*

It is important to accommodate the full scope of works to occur on the site in the development of a renewable energy facility. Consideration needs to be given to potential staging that may occur including one type of renewable energy being subsequently complemented by a second type of renewable energy to supplement continuity of feed into the grid, for example, wind turbines supplemented by solar arrays on the same site.

### *Decommissioning*

A decommissioning program should be separately developed in relation to removal of the facility and any rehabilitation requirements.