

Hexham Wind Farm

FACT SHEET Brolga



The proposed Hexham Wind Farm (the project) is located between Hexham, Caramut and Ellerslie in the Moyne Shire in south-west Victoria. If approved, the project would incorporate up to 106 wind turbines with an approximate height of up to 260 metres from ground to blade tip. The proposed project also includes an on-site terminal station and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and other associated infrastructure.

As part of the Victorian Government's planning and approvals process for major projects, Wind Prospect has prepared an Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the proposed Hexham Wind Farm. An EES is a requirement under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* and includes a detailed assessment of a wide range of environmental and social aspects such as biodiversity, ecology, historical heritage, Aboriginal cultural heritage, landscape and visual amenity, traffic and transport, noise, socioeconomic and surface and groundwater.

Extensive research has been undertaken to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects on the environment and the social fabric of the community during construction, operation and decommissioning of the project. Wind Prospect recognises the value of the natural and built environment in which the project is based and understands and respects the community's desire to protect both the environmental and social landscape that has existed for many years.



Assessment

As part of the EES, Wind Prospect engaged Nature Advisory to prepare a Brolga Impact Assessment (BIA) for the project. The assessment has been prepared in accordance with the Victorian Government Planning Minister's scoping requirements for the assessment of environment effects, the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act), and the Interim guidelines for the assessment, avoidance, mitigation and offsetting of potential wind farm impacts on the *Victorian Brolga population 2011* (DSE, 2012), referred to as the 'Interim Brolga Guidelines.'

Regular consultation with the state Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) has taken place to ensure the Interim Brolga Guidelines are applied as required. Interim Brolga Guidelines were established in Victoria to ensure that wind farm projects do not have a negative impact on the Brolga population.



How the assessment was carried out

The risk to the state-threatened Brolga has been carefully considered through a rigorous environmental planning and assessment process. The Interim Brolga Guidelines require a three-level assessment of the potential impacts on Brolga.

Level 1 assessment

Level one involved desktop studies to identify known and potential Brolga habitat within a 10-kilometre radius from the proposed project site. This included:

- Looking at past and recent Brolga records to see where Brolgas have been recorded.
- Conducting initial field surveys between 2009 and 2013, including:
 - › Brolga searches in November 2009 and February 2010
 - › an aerial survey for Brolga in October 2010
 - › community consultation in 2011 and 2019 with landowners and neighbours to gather information on Brolga habitat
 - › Brolga breeding season searches during 2012-13, involving the investigation of 11 wetland areas within the proposed project site to identify Brolga breeding activity

Level 2 assessment

Level two involved collecting comprehensive data about the location, nature and extent of Brolga habitats, as well as patterns of habitat use and behaviour at breeding, flocking and foraging sites within a 10-kilometre radius from the proposed project site (the study area). Extensive investigations were undertaken between 2018 and 2020, and from 2022 to 2025. Survey methods included:

- targeted consultation with landholders
- a comprehensive aerial survey for breeding Brolga
- ground-based roaming observational surveys
- a review of Brolga flight and ground movement data collected at other project sites
- hydrological assessments to show wetlands most suitable for Brolga breeding, foraging and roosting

Level 3 assessment

Level three involves four steps. To date, steps one, two and three have been completed:

Step one: Turbine-free buffers have been established around breeding and flocking sites, in consultation with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). The turbine-free buffer areas are designed to protect Brolga breeding wetlands from potential construction and operational impacts and consider:

- Historical breeding records
- other suitable wetland areas within two kilometres of a breeding site
- non-wetland areas and movement corridors connecting breeding sites and other suitable wetlands

Step two: A site-specific collision risk model (CRM) has been developed to estimate the number of Brolga that could be affected by turbine collision over the project's operating life.

Step three: A Population Viability Analysis (PVA) has been undertaken to determine the potential impact of the project on the future Brolga population size in south-eastern Australia.

Step four: Would include compensation to achieve zero net impact on the Victorian Brolga population.



Findings

The key findings of the Brolga Impact Assessment are:

- 62% of the assessed wetlands were deemed unsuitable as Brolga habitat as they were inaccurately mapped or permanently drained, with no confirmed breeding records.
- A significant proportion of the area, in particular the southern and north-western portions, lack wetlands and the Brolga has not historically been recorded there.
- Eight breeding pairs of Brolga were confirmed inhabiting the study area during 2019. During the assessment period, 2019 was the most successful year for Brolga breeding and therefore this is assumed to be the maximum number occurring in any year.
- No flocking activity has been recorded during the flocking season, with the closest flocking site 20 kilometres to the north-west.
- 22 breeding wetlands within five kilometres of the project site are considered suitable for future Brolga breeding.
- Initial Collision Risk Modelling (CRM) estimates a potential loss of one to 10 Brolga (average 5.3) over the operating life of the project, based on the conservative 90% avoidance rate. It should be noted that it is well established that even collision-prone bird species avoid collisions with wind generators on most occasions.*
- The Brolga Population Viability Assessment (PVA) estimated that after 30 years at a 90% avoidance rate, the reduction of the Brolga population due to the project would be 2.6 birds. The PVA would be updated once the final project layout is confirmed.

Managing adverse effects

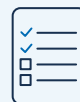
Based on the assessment findings, the following mitigation measures are proposed:



Turbine-free buffers around breeding wetlands on and near the proposed project site.



Implementation of the Interim Brolga Guidelines to ensure the project does not contribute to cumulative impacts on the Victorian Brolga population in south-western Victoria.



Consideration of a framework for Brolga compensation to replace the estimated number of Brolga affected by the project.

*www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/wind-farm-bird-risk.pdf



Next steps

As part of the EES process, the Brolga Impact Assessment has been submitted for review and assessment by the Planning Minister.

The EES and supporting technical assessments are placed on public exhibition for a period of 30 days and you can review the EES and technical reports on the Hexham Wind Farm website at: hexhamwindfarm.com.au/ees.

Formal submissions received from the community during the public exhibition period will be summarised in a Submissions Report and considered as part of the Minister's Assessment of the project.



Have your say

During the public exhibition period, you have the opportunity to provide a formal submission on the proposed Hexham Wind Farm. There will be opportunities to meet the project team and hear from technical experts about the project, the EES and technical studies.


Visit the Community page (hexhamwindfarm.com.au/community) of the website for more information on our upcoming in-region engagement activities and ways to get in touch.

Wind Prospect respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which our office and each of our projects are located. We also acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to the land and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Contact

If you need an interpreter, please call 13 14 50. If you are deaf and/or find hearing or speaking with people on the phone difficult, please contact the National Relay Service on voice relay number 1300 555 727, TTY number 133 677 or SMS relay number 0423 677 767.

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