

# The Coolah District Diary

Home of the Black Stump

Issue 689/20

WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH, 2020

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With Anthony O'Brien

**T**he first Valley of the Winds community information session was held last Friday at the Coolah Recreational Showgrounds, to introduce the exciting new renewable energy project to the local community.

More than 50 people dropped by throughout the afternoon to meet the project team, learn more about the proposed

development and provide their feedback.

Valley of the Winds is an 800-megawatt wind farm that is in the early stages of planning. The project is expected to create up to 400 jobs during construction and 50 ongoing jobs throughout its operational life.

It will be located on the hills to the south of Coolah, capturing the natural energy of the wind across the region to provide clean

renewable energy to the National Electricity Market.

Project manager Jeremy Ellis said there was strong interest from the people who attended on how the benefits from the project could be shared with the local community.

"We are in the very early stages of planning, which makes it the ideal time

*continues on pages 2 and 3*



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COOLAH DISTRICT DIARY  
ISSUE 690  
RELEASING 18th March, 2020

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**Email:** coolahdiary@outbackpress.com.au  
**Website:** www.outbackpress.com.au  
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to hear what people think about the project," he said.

"There was a very clear focus on employment that will come from the project, and finding ways to maximise the opportunities for local workers and businesses. This includes the construction of the wind farm but also the 50 long-term operational jobs that we expect the project will bring to the local community.

"We can see that there are people with the skills to deliver much of the work required. There will also be opportunities to upskill others so that they're capable to deliver different aspects of the project.

"We also heard very clearly how important it is for young people in and around Coolah to have access to these sorts of jobs. A number of people were very interested in other economic benefits and how they can tap into secondary flow on opportunities that comes from constructing and operating

a wind farm.

"We were pleased with the very positive response and the strong sense of community that exists in the region. We've learnt that it's going to be very important that Valley of the Winds makes a positive contribution to the region and its people."

The project team also heard about the well-established Coolah District Development Group and the need to work with it to help explore opportunities for a shared community benefit program.

We met a number of our project neighbours and discussed the proposed location of the wind farm and how it could co-exist and compliment the rural use of the land.

The sorts of work opportunities will include access track construction, trenching and other civil works, fencing, plumbing, vegetation control and other site preparation work. There will also be



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requirements for electricians focusing on low, medium and high voltage services.

“We would like as many of these opportunities as possible to flow to the local community. We’re therefore encouraging people to register their skills as we proceed through the project’s development,” Jeremy said.

People can register their interest for work opportunities on the project website at [www.valleyofthewinds.com.au](http://www.valleyofthewinds.com.au)

**PLANNING PATHWAY**

Valley of the Winds will be assessed by The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) as a State Significant Development under Part 4 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

We are in the process of developing an initial scoping report. Following submission, DPIE will issue the Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (known as ‘SEARs’) for the project.

A wide range of studies and assessments will be undertaken as plans are further developed and evaluated for the wind farm and the transmission line. Key studies will include noise, visual and landscape, biodiversity, heritage, traffic and transport, social, economic and cumulative impacts.

Approval will also be sought from the Commonwealth through the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act).

**NEXT STEPS**

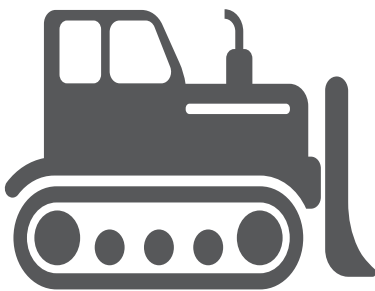
Our project team will continue to meet and discuss the project with members of the community as part of the planning process.

We plan to keep the community informed as we progress through the different stages of the approvals process. To do this, we’ll be holding a number of one on one meetings and wider group discussions to help promote an open and two-way conversation about the project.



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