

EPA Board Communiqué

April 2020

Regular Meeting 137, Tuesday 7 April (by video-conference)

Policy Register update

The EPA maintains a public register of policies, both statutory and non-statutory, and guidelines that form a framework for decisions by the Board and the Director. This is periodically reviewed and updated. The Board noted and approved the most recent update for publication on the EPA website, agreed that the Policy Register should be listed as a standing agenda item to ensure it is as up to date as possible, and requested the superseded DPEMP Guidelines be removed from the web site.

Assessment – UPC Jim’s Plains Renewable Energy Park

UPC Renewables Pty Ltd proposes to build and operate a 200 MW windfarm and 40 MW solar farm at Jim’s Plains, between Smithton and Marrawah in north-west Tasmania. The Board received a briefing from EPA officers and reviewed and discussed the draft Assessment Report. The Board noted that the nearest residence is over 1.8 km away and protected by the crest of a hill. Therefore, the key issues were identified as the potential impact of the windfarm on birds, and in particular, eagles, and other natural values.

There were 9 representations raising concerns about the windfarm. Common issues raised included the effect of increased traffic during construction and the impacts resulting from the construction of a transmission line to connect the energy farm to the Tasmanian grid. The Board discussed:

- The transmission line, noting that it was excluded from this assessment as it was not included in the development application, but would be assessed separately.
- Traffic impacts, noting there is already significant heavy transport movement along that part of the route where houses are close to the road.
- The impacts on eagles, noting that in comparison to other wind farms this is a relatively low risk site. The potential to require the use of IdentiFlight or similar technology to avert eagle collisions was discussed and the Board noted that, while it is too early to predict the success of this technology in Tasmania, an Eagle Monitoring and Management Plan will be required and that anti-collision technology could be included or required in this.
- Other natural values issues, including the potential for the use of virtual fencing, and concluded that these could be managed satisfactorily.
- Other issues including groundwater drawdown, dangerous goods storage and rehabilitation.

The Board concluded that the environmental issues arising from the construction and management of the Energy Park could be managed satisfactorily and approved the modified Assessment Report and permit conditions for transmission to the Circular Head Council.

Williams Quarry – Request for waiver of fees

This small quarry at Cambridge was subject to a recent assessment by the Board. The owners requested a waiver of the assessment fee. The Board agreed that the assessment fee represented only a small proportion of the cost of the assessment undertaken by the EPA and should still be paid.

Impact of COVID-19 on the EPA's work

The Board was briefed on the effect of COVID-19 on the EPA's work. Most staff are working from home and many are also responsible for home-schooling and/or supervising children. Site inspections are restricted. Overall, the objective is to maintain high quality work while acknowledging that less will be possible while the COVID-19 restrictions remain in place.
