

Mt Fyans Wind Farm Environment

Mt Fyans Wind Farm is located in Victoria's South-West Renewable Energy Zone, a key region earmarked for the development of clean, renewable energy generation, transmission and decarbonisation projects to meet the needs of future generations.

If approved, the Mt Fyans Wind Farm will host up to 85 wind turbines and generate approximately 400 megawatts of clean, zero emission energy per year.

Planning and development of the project is currently underway and detailed investigations have been completed to ensure that all potential impacts from the project are properly considered and assessed. These assessments form part of the projects planning application documents.

Highest environmental standards

In planning the wind farm, Woolnorth Renewables has adopted an avoidance approach, choosing to avoid sensitive, ecological and culturally important areas and developing strict protocols for the ongoing management of key flora and fauna onsite.

More than twenty species and ecological communities have been accommodated in the design of the wind farm. Extensive surveys have mapped the ecological values of the site.



EPBC Act assessment

The *Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)* applies to any project that may have the potential to impact on Matters of National Environmental Significance.

Species listed under the EPBC Act are protected due to their endangered status.

A number of species and ecological communities were identified in the Mt Fyans Wind Farm project area, including:

- Spiny rice-flower
- Basalt rustyhood
- Corangamite water skink
- Striped legless lizard
- Golden sun moth

- Growling grass frog
- Grey headed flying fox
- White throated needle tail
- Southern bent-wing bat
- Dwarf galaxis
- Natural Temperate Grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plain
- Seasonal Herbaceous Wetlands of the Temperate Lowland Plains.

Each species and community has been assessed through the planning process to determine the level of impact and proposed mitigations. Overall, investigations have found that the wind farm is unlikely to cause a significant impact to those species and ecological communities.



Southern Bent-wing Bat *Miniopterus schreibersii bassanii*.
Photo: Terry Reardon and Steve Bourne.

Brolgas

A detailed brolga assessment has been completed to identify local flocking sites and breeding areas that may be impacted by the project. The assessment included aerial and on the ground surveys, monitoring of breeding brolga pairs, as well as surveys of potential other flocking sites. These activities occurred between 2009 and 2020. Three brolga flocking sites and four breeding sites were identified that may be affected by the construction and operation of the project.

In response to this, the turbine layout has been redesigned to ensure a buffer zone of more than 5km between flocking sites and the turbines.

Southern Bent-winged Bat

The Southern Bent-winged Bat was identified in the project area through surveys carried out between 2013 and 2019. The surrounding area has also been identified as supporting potential foraging habitat.

A 770 night survey program was undertaken to inform the assessment and included surveys to identify roost sites and habitat, acoustic surveys, both on the wind farm site and in surrounding regional areas, roost surveys of nearby caves and locations likely to support roosting.

Studies determined that the project is not near any known breeding sites, there is a low number of bats detected on the site, and turbines are located away from areas where bats are more likely to feed and roost.

Noise

The noise levels for Mt Fyans Wind Farm have been assessed according to the Victorian Wind Energy Guidelines. The operational noise modelling demonstrated the predicted noise levels for the proposed turbine layout were within these guidelines.

A cumulative noise impact assessment was also undertaken, which assessed the cumulative noise of other approved and operational wind farms in the area. The assessment found that the noise contribution of the other wind farms in the area is so low that they are inconsequential to the noise assessment.

Noise from the project will be monitored throughout construction and operation to ensure compliance with the regulations.

Visual impact

The turbines proposed for the Mt Fyans Wind Farm have a tip height of up to 200m, which is around 11m higher than those at the nearby Dundonnell Wind Farm.

The proposed transmission line will be approximately 18km of 220kV power poles between 42 and 44m tall. A matte, non-reflective finish will be used to reduce glint and glare from the power poles.

A visual screening program has been offered to the project's neighbouring properties. The program involves planting native tree tube stock and other landscaping works to form a natural screen from the turbines.

While the project hasn't been formally approved, Mt Fyans Wind Farm is progressing these works now to allow more time for the natural visual screening to grow and develop. The visual screening program is open to neighbours within 3kms of the project.

Cultural Heritage

A cultural heritage assessment was first undertaken in 2012 and has been ongoing. This includes a desktop assessment, site walks and field work. Following the assessment, the project design was amended to avoid highly sensitive Cultural Heritage areas.

Representatives from Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation were involved in these initial assessments and development of the Cultural Heritage Management Plan. The project continues to liaise with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation.

Environmental management

Environmental management plans will be in place during the construction and operation of the wind farm. The management plans will cover all health, safety and environment aspects of the project, and ensure these continue to be considered as the project is developed, commissioned, operates and decommissioned. Management plans will be updated and adapted as needed throughout the lifespan of the project.

Decommissioning

Decommissioning of the wind farm is the responsibility of Woolnorth Renewables. Woolnorth Renewables will work with each landholder to determine where infrastructure would remain. Land would be returned to pre-construction conditions as required.