



## Issue 2 October 2008

Welcome to the second edition of the Bald Hills Wind Farm Newsletter. This newsletter provides information to the communities in and around the Bald Hills Wind Farm development, situated about 10 kilometres south east of Tarwin Lower in South Gippsland. More copies are available by either contacting us, or downloading from our website. See below for details.



Bald Hills Wind Farm Monitoring Tower

## What's Happening

The Bald Hills Wind Farm project team has engaged a variety of specialist consultants and is working closely with them to carry out studies and assessments on site. At this stage, work is focused on Flora & Fauna; Cultural and Heritage; and Topographical survey.

To limit disruptions to local residents and their properties, the topographical survey will take the form of an aerial survey. Up-to-date site information from this survey forms the basis for the preliminary design of the wind farm site.

These studies will help guide the development of the Bald Hills Wind Farm so that it will be built with minimal disruptions and any impacts on the environment and the local community will be managed appropriately.

## Opportunity Knocks

Construction of the Bald Hills Wind Farm is likely to generate a number of employment opportunities in Victoria. While it is not always possible to 'buy local', we are giving local suppliers the opportunity to participate whenever it is possible and appropriate to do so.

To help match our project's needs with the right capabilities, the Bald Hills Wind Farm is working with the Industry Capability Network (ICN) to help facilitate local and regional employment opportunities.

ICN is an independent organisation funded by the Victorian government that matches local industry capability with business opportunities from major projects and procurements nationally and internationally. ICN's business matching services aim to replace imports with locally-made products and services, generate export opportunities and promote regional industry for the economic growth of Victoria.

Businesses, contractors or suppliers wishing to register their Expression of Interest or to receive further information about employment opportunities associated with the Bald Hills Wind Farm should log onto ICN's Regional Industry Link (RIL) - [www.regionalindustrylink.com.au](http://www.regionalindustrylink.com.au) or contact the Gippsland Regional Manager of ICN, Bob Stevenson, on 03 5176 1901.



A view from the Transmission Line

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## Birds and Wind Farms

The potential impact of the Bald Hills Wind Farm on birds was one of the most talked about topics during the State and Federal Government planning processes. Rigorous studies in the area, conducted as part of the State and Federal Government processes, have confirmed that the risk of the wind farm to birds in the Bald Hills area is minimal. This is because much of the land in the area has been cleared for grazing and supports very little suitable habitat for birds.

Despite the Orange Bellied Parrot capturing public attention several years ago, there has been no recording of it at the wind farm site in Bald Hills and very few recorded over the last 30 years in the surrounding region. The Orange Bellied Parrot favours saltmarsh habitat and prefers to feed on vegetation such as glasswort and sea heath. As the land in the Bald Hills area is not saltmarsh and has been cleared of native vegetation for farming, there is little food available for the species. Another migratory parrot, the Swift Parrot, occasionally appears in the region, but there is no suitable habitat for the Swift Parrot in the wind farm site.

Local dams and a nearby wetland attract a small number of waterbirds. Studies show that waterbirds generally confine their activities to wetlands and rarely fly across farmland, except when moving long distances, which they do infrequently.



*A saltmarsh habitat, preferred by the Orange-Bellied Parrot*

### *Did You Know?*

A lot of hard work goes into ensuring that the risk of fire on a wind farm is kept to a minimum. All wind turbines are equipped with comprehensive lightning protection systems which transfer high voltages and currents to the ground without affecting turbine performance. Flammable components in turbines are located high above the ground, while high voltage connections are underground. There is emergency equipment located in both the tower and the nacelle of every turbine. In addition to this, all turbines have a sophisticated early warning system which notifies the full time maintenance and service manager of any problems immediately.

Bird surveys on the wind farm site have found that birds from the nearby wetlands very rarely move across the wind farm site.

Monitoring programs have shown that wind farms in Australia cause very little bird mortality, with each turbine generally affecting less than two birds per year. This contrasts with the situation at a small proportion of overseas wind farms where bird behaviour can be very different. The birds affected are principally common farmland species that are abundant throughout Australia, basically because it is this habitat in which most wind farms are located.

Even though there is little risk, any impact on bats and birds is taken seriously. Work has already commenced on developing a Bat and Avifauna Management Plan for the Bald Hills Wind Farm. This includes further monitoring and seasonal surveys of bird and bat movements. The plan and the associated monitoring will ensure that if impacts occur, they will be detected and the information used in developing methods to minimise the impacts on bats and birds in the area.



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