

EPURON'S 05/10/21 CHALUMBIN WIND FARM

PRESS RELEASE – EPURON'S CLAIMS DEBUNKED.

[Updated 8th Feb 2022]

Epuron Project PTY LTD have issued a Chalumbin Wind Farm press release dated 5th October. This press release is aimed to reduce the level of opposition to this development. It is clear that the level of community opposition has been very damaging to Epuron, and the Chalumbin development proposal. With that in mind here are Epuron's claims from this press release – and the verifiable facts.

WHAT IMPACT COULD THE PROJECT HAVE ON WILDLIFE CORRIDORS?

EPURON: "disturbance footprint is relatively small"

THE FACTS: 3089.46 acres is the area of land originally slated to be directly affected by the development. (^1) This was revised to 2797 acres in December (^1b). To be clear that is 2797 acres of habitat that will be destroyed.

HOW WILL RARE AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE BE PROTECTED?

EPURON: "The project is being designed to minimise impacts on preferred habitat"

THE FACTS: Epuron's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act submission states that despite measures to minimise the impacts on Endangered and Vulnerable species, the development may lead to the "**CLEARING OF HABITAT CRITICAL TO THE SURVIVAL**" of two Endangered species, the Red Goshawk and the Magnificent Brood Frog. This submission further states it will lead to the removal of "**CRITICAL HABITAT**" for a declared Vulnerable species, the Northern Greater Glider (^2)

Section 2.4 of Epuron's own EPBC Act referral identifies the specific threats this development poses to these species:

RED GOSHAWK *ENDANGERED* (Nature Conservation Act 1992).

'The Project may lead to the clearing of 165ha of habitat critical to the survival of the species and 1024.86ha of potential habitat for the species.'

'Despite the sensitive design measures and the avoidance, minimisation and mitigation measures proposed, the Project is conservatively assessed as having a potential significant residual impact on the red goshawk'

MAGNIFICENT BROOD FROG *ENDANGERED* (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species: 2020.2 list)

'This project may lead to the clearing of 27.03ha of habitat critical to the survival of the species and 21.15ha of potential habitat for the species.'

'Despite the sensitive design measures and the avoidance, minimisation and mitigation measures proposed, the Project is conservatively assessed as having a potential significant residual impact on the magnificent brood frog'.

NORTHERN GREATER GLIDER *VULNERABLE* (Nature Conservation Act 1992).

'The project will involve the removal of 563.27ha of potential habitat and 56.59ha of critical habitat for the greater glider.'

'Despite the sensitive design measures and the avoidance, minimisation and mitigation measures proposed, the Project is assessed as **having a potential significant residual impact on the northern greater glider**'

WHY DID EPURON CHOOSE THIS SITE?

EPURON: "This site was originally identified because of its excellent wind resource.." and "..work has further demonstrated that the site is an excellent location for a wind farm".

THE FACTS: Epuron clearly did indeed, choose this site due to its value as a "wind resource".

What has been disregarded is that this area and the adjoining Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) is a highly valuable ecological resource. This area is home to 200 recorded species of animals, including three Endangered and Vulnerable species. It is also home to endangered flora.

Had due diligence been undertaken including suitably weighing the value of this area ecologically, this development proposal would not have proceeded. The environmental destruction this development will cause makes it clear that this site is completely incompatible with a wind farm.

WHAT DOES A NET POSITIVE OUTCOME FOR BIODIVERSITY MEAN AND WHAT STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO ACHIEVE IT?

EPURON: "securing and managing land exclusively to create or improve habitat for the particular species being impacted and contributions to new or existing research"

FACT 1: Removing habitat critical to the survival of endangered species (again words taken from Epuron's EPBS submission), cannot be counterbalanced by ticking approval process boxes by purchasing parcels of land elsewhere and claiming they are 'creating habitat' for endangered species. This development site **IS** their habitat. No amount of spin can change that.

FACT 2: Critical research has been commenced into the extremely restricted habitat of the Magnificent Brood Frog. This research began in Feb 2021 and is expected to take two years. ^(^3) Epuron stating they will contribute to research whilst destroying the very habitat Ecologists need to research is astounding.

DOES THE PROJECT INCLUDE ANY PART OF THE WET TROPICS WORLD HERITAGE AREA?

Epuron "No."

THE FACTS: Epuron's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act referral makes a significant contradiction regarding the developments proximity to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA). This requires further investigation.

Section 2.1 of the EPBC Act referral states 'The Project area is located adjacent to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area... The nearest proposed project infrastructure is approximately 500m from the edge of the WTWHA boundary.' ^(^4)

Section 3.8 states 'The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA) is adjacent to, and partially within the Project area'. ^(^5)

Epuron has not provided any explanation for this discrepancy.

That this development proposal borders the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area makes it untenable. Endangered species can not differentiate between this invisible boundary.

CONSULTATION OF TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS – HAVE THE JIRRBAL PEOPLE BEEN INVOLVED?

EPURON: “Yes.”

THE FACTS: Jirrbal Elders with direct links to the land posed for development have made it very clear they have not been consulted in any way. That any organisation claiming to represent them has not engaged with them and does not express their views. Attempts at the 16/09/21 ‘Information Session’ to have their views heard were ignored. A video has since been released outlining some of their concerns: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-6i-j5mBA8>

More videos of members of the Jirrbal community can be viewed at the following link: <https://stopchalumbinwindfarm.com/traditional-custodians> & in the and in the ABC Background Briefing program at: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/giant-wind-farms-clearing-queensland-bush/13670398>

HOW MUCH AND WHAT TYPE OF LAND IS BEING CLEARED?

EPURON: “project footprint of up to 1250 hectares..”

THE FACTS: Epuron has indeed submitted the figure of 3089.46acres (1250.26 ha) to the EPBC, that figure being the actual area directly affected by the development. Epuron has repeatedly tried to play down this figure by stating, as they have done again in this press release, that this accounts for 4% of the total land of the properties this development is slated for. The fact is this project will lead to the destruction of a staggering 2797.23 acres of land. [Revised from 3089.46 acres 8th Dec 2021] Epuron’s own submission states this includes habitat “critical to the survival” of endangered species. (^1)

EPURON: “mostly open Eucalypt woodland”

FACT 2: Four broad habitat types were identified in the project area

1. Eucalypt Woodland
2. Rocky Pavement Shrub Complex
3. Riparian Zones
4. Notophyll Vine Forest (^6)

The vegetation was described in the EPBC as **‘remnant vegetation covering the vast majority (95%) of the Project area and was generally observed to be in good condition’** (^7)

What is “remnant vegetation?” According to a Government website:

“Remnant vegetation or bushland can be defined as those patches of native trees, shrubs and grasses still left.” It goes on to say: *“Remnant vegetation is rapidly disappearing - due to clearing, dieback, overgrazing, inappropriate burning and weed infestation. The small remnants of native vegetation that remain are valuable”* (^8)

With cleared pastureland abundant on the Tablelands, and deforestation a leading cause of climate change, one must ask how Epuron can try and justify the development of this site. Put simply; they can’t!

SEPT 16th PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION.

EPURON: "Apologise that the information session was delayed and overdue, and to anyone who felt that they did not get the information they were seeking".

THE FACTS: At the Public Information Session Epuron refused to answer community questions, refused to consult, refused to acknowledge nor address concerns raised by Traditional Custodians and Elders. There was no consultation at this meeting. Clearly Epuron were not wanting to hear community views and were only interested in providing printed information to outline the development. It was, as a community member stated about 'ticking the box', [for consultation].

For anyone unaware what transpired at this meeting please view the Express Newspaper letter link:

<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c4c6caef-d346-479c-8ad7-2bda6d0a8491/downloads/The%20Express%20Newspaper%20Letter%2029th%20Sept%202021.pdf?ver=1635050564832>

PUBLIC CONSUTATION:

EPURON: "we plan to host more community information sessions in Ravenshoe as soon as possible".

THE FACTS: Epuron have completely failed to consult with the community. They have failed to arrange or attend a proper open community consultation forum. Despite having over two and a half weeks' notice, Epuron failed to send a single representative to speak with the community at the December 4th, 2021, Chalumbin Community Meeting. Instead, they sent Kim Forde as an "observer" who would not answer questions, and in fact did not speak at all. How is it then, that this 'observer' has been seeking 1 on 1 meetings with numerous members of the community on behalf of the Chalumbin development? How is it that Kim Forde (a highly experienced PR expert), can hold closed door meetings but cannot speak at proper community forums?! Epuron have now announced new small group "information sessions" from the 9th of Feb 2022. These are being deliberately held in a smallest possible venue to minimise the number of people that can attend due to QLD government mandates. This is unacceptable! To deliberately manipulate the situation to avoid consultation three times in a row now is despicable. This is nothing short of a box ticking exercise, whilst avoiding open public consultation at all cost! There MUST be proper community consultation. Given the mandates, an open community consultation meeting should be held outdoors in Ravenshoe so all community members can attend and have their voices heard. I wrote to Epuron on the 26th Jan 2022, the date these sessions were announced in *The Express* newspaper, stating the above. Epuron responded on the 27th declining to hold such an event. Of interest, they then BACKDATED their website Chalumbin update by approximately a week to give the false impression more notice had been given of these sessions!

The community have made it clear they want consultation not another "information session," where company propaganda pamphlets are placed on a table and the Qld Epuron Development Manager refuses to answer questions, let alone provide his name. Instead of community consultation, Epuron is engaging with experienced and highly remunerated public relations experts to try and counter the negative publicity this development is generating.

BENEFITS

EPURON: “would provide 250-350 jobs in construction phase and 15-30 jobs for operation.”

FACT 1: Epuron’s EPBC Act submission states “10-15 full time jobs will be generated during operation, typically ten technicians along with a Project Manager, administration and other support roles”. (^1) It is reasonable to assess that the positions of the technicians and the project manager will require specialist skills and that these 10-15 jobs will likely be filled from outside of the local community.

FACT 2: Eco tourism, the preservation of endangered flora and fauna, the preservation of wildlife corridors and habitat critical for the survival of endangered species, both now and into the future, is of far greater benefit to the community than the creation of the short-term construction jobs.

FACT 3: Epuron will NOT employ these workers. Epuron’s business model is to gain development approval and to then sell off the development. In 3/7 cases this has been to a Chinese multi-national. (^9) The purchaser will actively seek to maximise profit by minimising the workforce. Epuron’s stated estimate of the potential workforce is inflated to maximise the appeal to local workers and the community. As their press release figures contradict (by double) the number stated under the EPBC Act referral, it is clear no value can be put in their accuracy. In any event, Epuron will not employ these workers.

SUMMARY - GREEN ENERGY

It cannot be disputed that green energy is the future. However, destroying habitat and ecology critical to the survival of endangered species is not green energy. It is acknowledged that deforestation is the leading cause of climate change. With ample cleared pasture land on the Tablelands, one must ask how in 2021 we can even be in the position of having to argue the merits of this development. The truth is with the huge subsidies available, and the profitability of installing 95 wind turbines on this site, this is not about green power. It is about corporate greed at the incalculable expense of the environment. No environmentally responsible company would consider placing this development on this site. This company must not be allowed to continue to mislead that this is about green energy. It is not. It is about profit.

For further information please refer to the community information website.

<https://stopchalumbinwindfarm.com/>

Matt Lachlan

^{^1} EPBC Act referral 2021/8983 Chalumbin Wind Farm (section 1.2)

^{^1b} Epuron press release 8th Dec 2021 <https://epuron.com.au/news/2021/12/8/269-chalumbin-wind-farm-update-december-2021/>

^{^2} EPBC Act referral 2021/8983 Chalumbin Wind Farm (section 2.4)

^{^3} Source: Ecologist Carly Starr 'Most Magnificent Broodfrog you've never heard of' Report, Bush Heritage Australia. (2021)

<https://www.bushheritage.org.au/blog/magnificent-broodfrog>

^{^4} EPBC Act referral 2021/8983 Chalumbin Wind Farm (section 2.1)

^{^5} EPBC Act referral 2021/8983 Chalumbin Wind Farm (section 3.8)

^{^6} EPBC Act referral 2021/8983 Chalumbin Wind Farm (section 3.1)

^{^7} EPBC Act referral 2021/8983 Chalumbin Wind Farm (section 3.7)

^{^8} Source: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/nature/Factsheet11ProtectingRemnants.pdf>

^{^9} <https://epuron.com.au/wind/> (completed projects). Goldwind own Yass, White Rock, Gullen Range. Goldwind is a Chinese multi-national aka Xinjiang Goldwind Science Technology Co., Ltd. / Beijing Goldwind Science & Creation Windpower Equipment Co., Ltd. / Jiangsu Goldwind Science & Technology Co.,Ltd.