

Environment Protection Authority

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12 August 2025

Paul West
Chairperson
Development Assessment Panel, Cellars Hill Wind Farm Major Project

By Email Only: tpc@planning.tas.gov.au

Dear Paul

NOISE LIMITS FOR WIND ENERGY PROJECTS

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the Development Assessment Panel (the Panel) for the Cellars Hill Wind Farm Major Project (the Major Project) to advise that the Board of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA Board) has adopted a new policy for assessing wind energy projects and imposing conditions or restrictions for wind farm noise under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* (EMPCA). I have also written separately to the proponent of the Major Project and their consultants to advise them about the new *EPA Board Policy – Noise limits for wind energy projects* (EPA Board Policy).

I note that staff from the EPA Assessments Branch met with Michael Hogan and Luke Newman of the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) on 21 July 2025 to advise them about the EPA Policy and my intention to engage more formally with the TPC and Panel.

The EPA Board Policy

The EPA Board Policy:

- explains the design criteria and operational noise limit that applies to wind farms and how it is to be measured and expressed;
- clarifies that the noise limit applies to the entire wind energy project, including wind turbines and ancillary infrastructure such as electrical substations, switches and service yards;
- explains the requirement to adjust the measured L_{A90} level to allow comparison with the L_{Aeq} noise limit;
- explains the requirement to adjust for special audible characteristics (dominant or intrusive characteristics); and
- specifies the guidelines that should be used for predictive and actual noise measurements.

The EPA Board Policy supersedes any previous policy of the EPA Board for noise criteria for wind energy projects. The EPA Board Policy takes effect on 31 July 2025 and will apply to all wind farms currently under assessment.

Please find attached a copy of the EPA Board Policy, and an FAQ document. Information is also available electronically on the EPA website at [Wind Farms | EPA Tasmania](#).

Implications of the EPA Board Policy for the Major Project

As you are aware, the EPA Board is a participating regulator for the Major Project and is required to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with EMPCA, as modified by the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (LUPAA). The draft and/or final assessment criteria published by the Panel for the Major Project specify the matters required to be addressed by the proponent in the Major Project Impact Statement (MPIS).

The EPA Board's guidance for the Major Project sets out the information base that the proponent is required to address in the MPIS for the EPA Board to undertake its assessment and provide its preliminary and final advice to the Panel. It is therefore expected that proponents have regard to the EPA Board Policy, as required by the EPA Board's guidance, when addressing noise and vibration emissions in their MPIS. This is important to ensure consistency in assessment and ongoing regulation of wind energy projects across Tasmania and to mitigate the potential for noise emissions generated by wind farms to cause nuisance by way of unreasonable loss of amenity to noise sensitive premises.

Adoption of the *South Australian Wind farms environmental noise guidelines (SA Guidelines)* in the EPA Board Policy

I am aware that the draft and/or final assessment criteria published by the Panel for the Major Project require the sound level of operating wind turbines to comply with the *New Zealand Standard NZS6808:2010 Acoustics – Wind farm noise* (NZ Standard) of 40 dB(A) or background +5 dB(A), whichever is the greater. I note that this conflicts with the EPA Board Policy which requires the predicted equivalent operational noise level at any noise sensitive premises to not exceed the greater of 35dB(A) $L_{Aeq, 10 \text{ min}}$ or background (L_{A90}) + 5 dB(A).

The EPA Board has adopted the SA Guidelines rather than the NZ Standard in the EPA Board Policy as the SA Guidelines offer appropriate protections for noise sensitive premises from potential noise nuisance and are therefore a suitable reference for Tasmania's regulatory framework. The SA Guidelines also include specific provisions for cumulative noise impacts from nearby wind farms and reflect a contemporary understanding of best practice in environmental noise management.

The EPA Board also considers the NZ Standard unsuitable for use as the only basis for setting or enforcing noise limits for wind energy projects in Tasmania for the following reasons:

- It was developed to assess noise from wind turbines specifically and cannot be applied to wind farm ancillary infrastructure such as transformers;
- It sets noise limits using the L_{A90} metric, which is not always suitable or appropriate for measuring wind farm operational noise;
- The adjustment factors for special audible characteristics like tonality or amplitude modulation are generally lower than those used in other standards;
- The NZ Standard also does not provide any adjustment for low frequency noise; and
- There have been cases in Australia where, despite compliance with the NZ Standard, noise nuisance was found to have occurred.

To allow for questions and discussion about the EPA Board Policy and its implications for the Panel's assessment of the Major Project, the EPA would like to host a formal briefing with relevant TPC staff and, as appropriate, members of the Panel. An invitation for this briefing will be sent out in due course.

If you have questions after reviewing these documents, please contact Catherine Browning, Principal Assessment Officer (Renewables) at 0472 552 681 or via email at Catherine.Browning@epa.tas.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Murdoch

DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Enc: *EPA Board Policy – Noise limits for wind energy projects*

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – EPA Board Policy – Noise limits for wind energy projects

cc: Karen Fyfe, Planning Assistant, Tasmanian Planning Commission, Karen.Fyfe@planning.tas.gov.au;
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