

# Media Release

## Environment Protection Authority



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### **EPA PRESENTS ITS WATERLOO WIND FARM NOISE STUDY REPORT**

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) today released its report on the Waterloo Wind Farm Noise Study undertaken during April and June this year.

Earlier today, staff of the EPA met with residents who participated in the study to discuss the results, as well as presented findings to the wider community in Clare.

#### Key findings :

- Noise from the Waterloo Wind Farm did not breach EPA guidelines.
- Infrasound levels from the wind farm were found to be below the internationally accepted threshold for perception.
- The frequencies at which turbine blades pass the tower were not shown to be significant at Waterloo.
- At one location, amplified audio records enabled identification of rumbling that was associated with operation of the Wind Farm under certain weather conditions. The rumbling was not audible to a typical listener if replayed at actual levels; however, it is possible that people who are sensitive may be able to hear some of these effects.
- In many cases, analyses of audio records and data were unable to demonstrate associations with events described in noise diaries. In general, where some relationship was shown, amplification was necessary to hear those effects.
- The EPA has at no time disputed that the residents of Waterloo have experienced some type of audible experience; however, the study has concluded that this is not related to the Waterloo Wind Farm.

EPA Operations Director of Science, Assessment and Planning Peter Dolan said the study showed that the Waterloo Wind Farm is operating within EPA's guidelines.

"The EPA understands that some residents feel they are affected, however the Waterloo Wind Farm meets relevant South Australian and international standards and there is no evidence linking the noise from the wind farm to adverse impacts on residents." said Mr Dolan.

"The findings of this study do not provide absolute evidence that all wind farms perform in the same manner. Topography, layout and weather conditions can all influence perceived outcomes and affects."

Wind farms are not a licensed activity by the EPA; however the General Environmental Duty under the *Environment Protection Act 1993* applies. The EPA's main role is to provide advice into development applications and review noise impact assessment undertaken at pre- and post-construction phases.

Following meetings in December 2012 and January 2013 with residents, local government and other stakeholders, the EPA decided to undertake an independent noise study to investigate the concerns of the community regarding noise impacts from the Waterloo Wind Farm.

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The study had two components; a noise and weather monitoring component, and a community diary component.

From April to June 2013, the EPA undertook noise (both audible and infrasound) and weather monitoring at six locations at varying distance and direction from the Waterloo Wind Farm. During the study, the EPA also received weekly noise diaries from approximately 23 residents who volunteered to take part in the study.

The owner and operator of the Waterloo Wind Farm, Energy Australia, fully cooperated in the study, and has provided operational and meteorological information to the EPA as well as undertaking six shutdowns of the wind farm, at the request of the EPA in accordance with set criteria. These shutdowns were conducted under conditions when the wind farm would normally generate power.

Following collection of monitoring data and noise diaries, the EPA has undertaken significant analyses and prepared a final report.

The New South Wales (NSW) EPA conducted a technical peer review of the methodology, data analysis and reporting, and found the study to fundamentally be of a high technical standard. The peer review was advisory only, and the NSW EPA's role should not be misconstrued as an audit of the study or indicate agreement or otherwise with all of the findings or conclusions in the report.

It was not the intent of the study to look at any perceived health impacts from the wind farm. Although, health-based information obtained during the study will be made available on request to health authorities for any further evaluation or research that they may wish to undertake.

The EPA is aware that the National Health and Medical Research Council is currently reviewing the impacts of wind farms on people's health and depending on the results of that review, would be prepared to alter its own guidelines.

The EPA acknowledges the participation of residents of the Waterloo community, whose noise diaries were essential to the study in focusing acoustic analyses on events and descriptions recorded by the community.

The EPA also acknowledges the cooperation of Energy Australia during the study.

A copy of the final report along with Frequently Asked Questions is available on the EPA website [www.epa.sa.gov.au](http://www.epa.sa.gov.au).

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