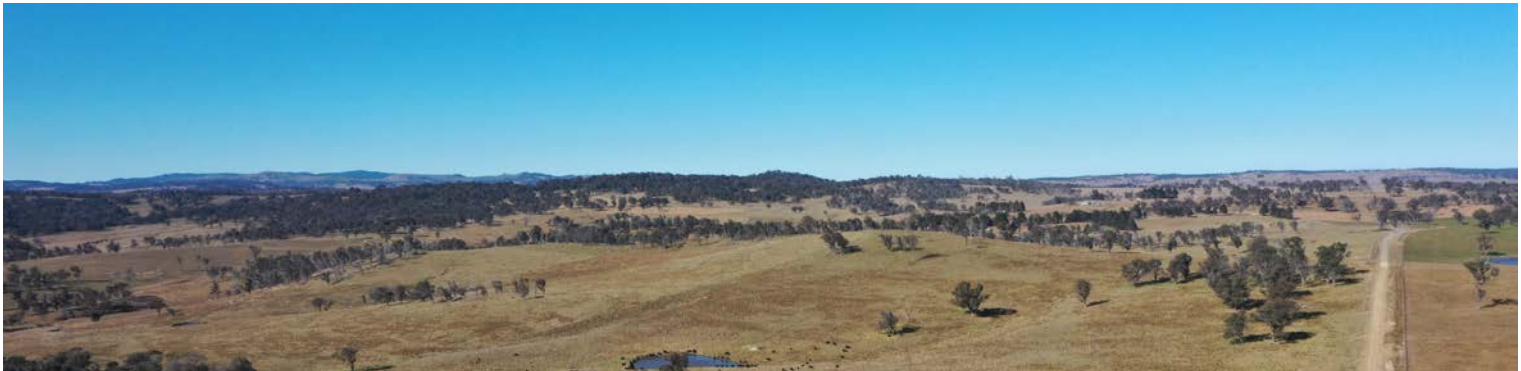


Ecology



Photograph of the project area

Caring for the natural environment

Australia's electricity market is in transition to clean, renewable sources of energy to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. The impacts of climate change, including rising temperatures and severe weather events, are among the greatest threats to biodiversity, threatened species and other wildlife.

Increasing renewable energy capacity and biodiversity conservation are both critically important and compatible objectives, with careful planning and management.

Avoiding and minimising impacts to flora and fauna species that might utilise the project area is a priority. The project team is committed to collaborating with environment stakeholders, ecology specialists and host landowners to implement responsible strategies to avoid and mitigate ecological and biodiversity impacts of the development.

An aim of the project will be to achieve net positive outcomes for biodiversity and key species in the project area over the longer term. Measures to achieve this and improve the area's habitat values include rehabilitation of the initial construction disturbance, management regimes for threatening processes such as for pest control, weed control and fire management, and offset areas that present the opportunity to increase and improve available local habitat for key species.

Environmental assessment

Comprehensive and rigorous assessment of the project's potential environmental impacts is required by both the New South Wales (NSW) and Australian Governments.

The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) requires a detailed Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) outlining likely biodiversity impacts, proposed regimes for avoiding, minimising, managing and reporting impacts, and offset measures if those are required.

The project has also been determined a controlled action under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) by the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) (Ref 2021/8905). The project's EPBC Act assessment requirements will be addressed in the BDAR and assessed by the DPHI under a bilateral agreement.

Requirements for the BDAR are outlined in the project's SEARs, which are available online from the NSW Government's Major Projects Planning Portal (SSD-64152463) – <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/doughboy-wind-farm-0> and documentation for the Commonwealth's requirements are available from the EPBC Act Public Portal (Ref 2021/8905) – epbcpublicportal.awe.gov.au

Location



The project area for the proposed Doughboy Wind Farm is approximately 50 km east of Armidale, in the New England region of New South Wales.

The site has an excellent wind resource and is within the NSW Government's New England Renewable Energy Zone, an area identified as optimal for new renewable energy projects due to the natural resources and proximity to existing or planned network infrastructure.

The project area is north-west of Cathedral Rock National Park. The project will not impact on this protected area however the environmental impact assessment will take into consideration any key species that use this area as habitat and might also use parts of the host properties.

The project could involve up to 55 wind turbines and connect to the existing 330 kV transmission line that traverses the southern end of the site.

Planning & assessment

Utility-scale wind farms in NSW are considered State Significant Development and assessed by the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI).

- 1 Site selection and preliminary investigations ✓
- 2 Initial concept and consultation ✓
- 3 Referral to the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) for review under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) ✓
- 4 Determination on EPBC Act referral by DCCEEW - controlled action with assessment under bilateral agreement (ref 2021/8905) ✓
- 5 Preparation of updated Scoping Report for the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) ✓
- 6 Planning Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) issued by DPE ✓
- 7 Studies, assessments, design **WE ARE HERE**
- 8 Design completed, finalising EIS for lodgment
- 9 Development application (DA) and EIS lodged with DPHI (formerly DPE)
- 10 DA and EIS on public exhibition
- 11 Responses to submissions and requests for further information (if required)
- 12 Assessment by DPHI
- 13 DPHI assessment report and recommendation
- 14 Determination by DCCEEW

Findings to date

The ecological assessment work is being done by ecologists and specialist teams in accordance with the relevant methodologies and guidelines. It has involved field studies and surveys across the project area over multiple seasons and targeted investigations for key species.

Seasonal and targeted surveys for threatened species of flora, nocturnal birds, diurnal birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and microbats have been ongoing throughout June 2023 to the present, and will continue to in preparation for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

During preliminary assessments, two endangered tree species (Ribbon Gum and Carex Sedgeland) were confirmed on the site, with two others requiring further assessment (New England Peppermint and White Box – Yellow Box – Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland). A number of bird and bat species are also predicted to occur.

As more information from surveys has become available the project's design has been refined and modified. Work to date has focused on reducing potential clearing in areas of high biodiversity.

A new pully system has been fixed to the temporary meteorological monitoring mast on site to enable microphones designed to identify and monitor different bat species to be placed at different heights. This will assist in understanding flight patterns of particular bat species, in order to better mitigate potential impacts.

The BDAR including details of all the ecology work undertaken for the assessment will be available when the EIS is placed on public exhibition by the DPHI.

Environmentally responsible development

Avoiding and minimising ecological impacts is an important focus during planning and assessment. Ark Energy's approach is to:

- Iterate the project design as more information becomes available, to avoid and minimise environmental impacts to the maximum extent achievable.
- Consult with ecology stakeholders and workshop solutions where required.
- Find workable compromises with meaningful benefit.
- Invest and collaborate on strategies and commitments for repair such as rehabilitation of the initial construction disturbance.
- Develop strategic environmental offsets where required, with tailored management regimes such as for fire management and weed control, to improve habitat values.
- Focus on nature positive outcomes.

More information

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Newsletters – register at arkenergy.com.au/mailling-list-details for email news, or to receive newsletters by post, send us your postal address and a request to be added to the mail (post) list.

Website - doughboywindfarm.com.au or scan the QR code right



Scan QR code to visit the project website