



# Wind Energy in Australia

The Opportunity for Consensus Building Using New Online Technologies



Tim Offor & Barbara Sharp  
Directors, Pax Republic  
[toffor@paxrepublic.com](mailto:toffor@paxrepublic.com)

# Outline



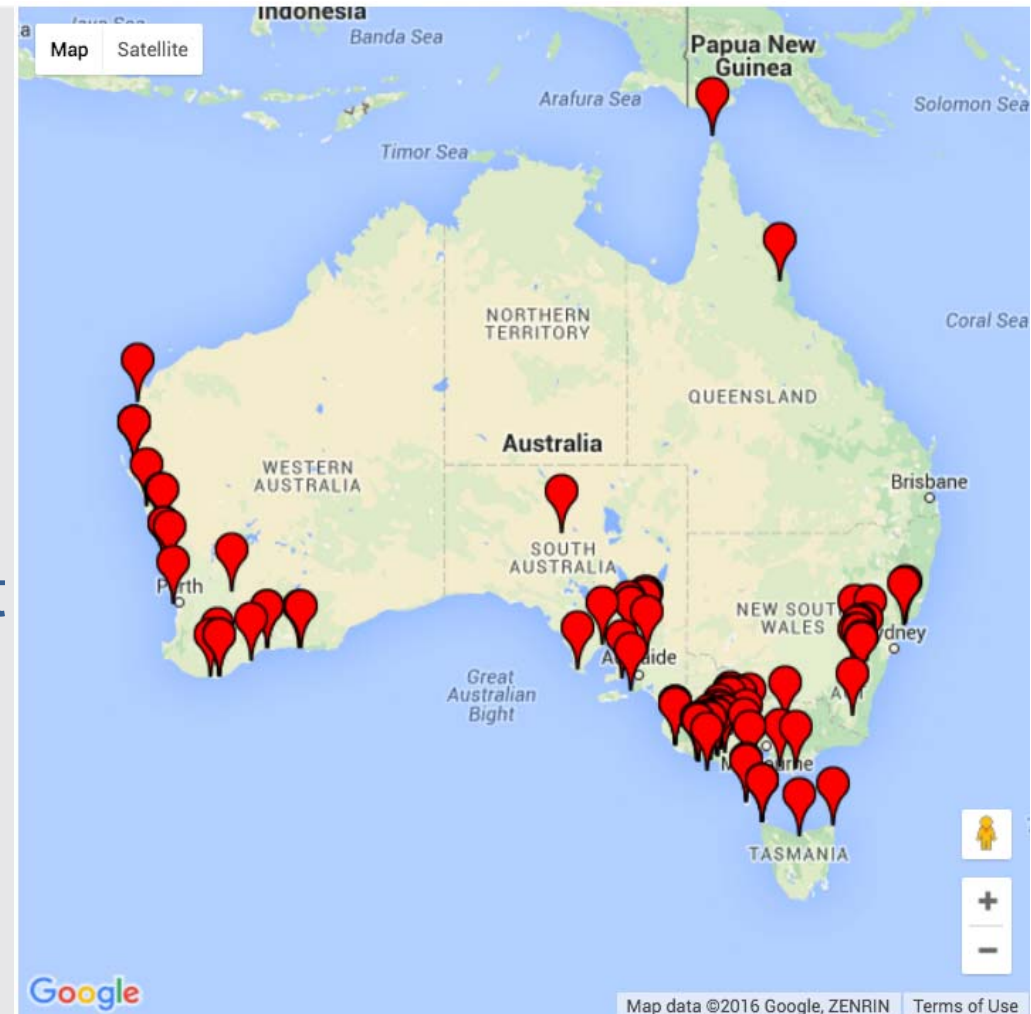
- Wind Energy in Australia
- Bald Hills Wind Farm Case Study
- The Opportunities for Consensus Building through New Technologies



# Wind Energy in Australia



- 39 Registered with AEM
- 3,600 MW installed capacity
- Difficult policy climate
- Large number approved but not built
- Much community conflict



# Wind Energy Approvals



- Government regulated approvals
- Federal, State & Local Government
- Victoria – a Planning Panel does a technical assessment
- Expensive, time consuming approvals process
- Commonly >AUD3 million (¥250m) and 2-3 years+
- Adversarial, public campaigning, legal challenges
- Pax has worked on 11 wind projects



# Typical stakeholder engagement



- Government expectation is “consultation”
- Website, newsletters, media releases
- Maybe an “information session”
  - History of disruption by campaigners
  - Information exchange difficult due to conflict
- Many small private meetings
- Formal written submissions when formal application lodged
- Public hearings (independent planning panel)

# Bald Hills Wind Farm

- 52 turbine, 104 MW
- Owned by Mitsui & Co Ltd
- >10 years start to finish
- Very controversial
  - Close to coast
  - Adjacent to wetlands (rare birds)
  - Popular tourist region
- Early community engagement was poor
  - Limited geographic scope
  - Little opportunity for discussion
  - Inexperienced project developers
- Pax brought in to “fix things up”



# Concerns (cared about?)

- Visual impact
  - “Industrialisation of the landscape”
  - For residents
  - For tourists (beautiful/ugly)
- Impacts on birdlife
  - Rare Orange-bellied Parrot
  - Migrating waterfowl
- Noise & health
  - Fears of “infra-sound”
  - “Wind Turbine Syndrome”
- Property values
- Social impacts
  - Fractured community relationships
  - Pro/anti sentiment split



# Stakeholders (who cared?)



- Turbine hosts v.s. neighbours
- Local community
  - Farmers
  - Adjacent townsfolk (largely holiday population)
  - “Lifestylers” (small rural properties)
- Local, state governments
- Campaigners against turbines
- Environmentalists for renewable energy





# Pax Response

- Re-did the consultation
- Social impact assessment
- Increased communication
- Recommended a Community Benefits Package
- CBP key device for balancing the interests of individuals and the “collective good”
  - (society & planet)



# How would it be done today?



## Pax Guiding Principles:

- 8 Principles embed consensus in process
- 4 chief principles relevant to Bald Hills:
  - Transparency
  - Fairness/equity
  - Participation
  - Communication
- More robust outcomes

# New participative technology



The screenshot displays the Pax Republic forum interface. The browser address bar shows the URL: clients.sandbox.paxrepublic.com/atlasgender\_women/#/. The page title is "The Atlas Corporation Gender Equity Forums - Women Managers". The interface includes a sidebar with navigation options like Home, Rooms, About, Admin Dashboard, Notifications, Private Messages, and Timothy. The main content area features a "Notices" section with a message from Mary White - Facilitator, a "Timeline" section with "Part 1: Listening & Learning" and "Part 2: What we heard", a "Quick Links" section with categories like "Listening and Learning" and "Resources Room", and a "News Feed" section listing recent conversations. A "Controls" dropdown menu is visible on the right, and a "Current Conversations" section shows a list of recent comments and replies. A "HELP" button is located in the bottom right corner.

- Facilitated discussions
- Many participants
- From anywhere
- At any time
- Easier, faster, cheaper

# Consensus & new technology



Tech enables and amplifies:

- Transparency

- Anyone can see what's happening – internet

- Fairness/equity

- Neutral facilitator manages behaviour, balances competing interests

- Participation

- Technology means anyone can take part any time from anywhere (lifestylers)

- Communication

- Done through the tech platform to all

# Excellence made easy



- **Cost** as major impetus for positive change:
- Sound process:
  - Cheaper
  - Faster
  - More participation (better informed)
  - Greater inclusion of more people means more robust data for independent panel
  - Reduces uncertainty (refine project before submitting)
- Greater opportunity for “voice”, mutual gain and leadership.

Questions?





Thank You

