

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Local Wind Farm threatens Eagles**

*13 July 2005*

Opponents of the proposed Molonglo Ridge wind-farm south of Queanbeyan say their campaign has been bolstered by a recent decision by the Victorian government to refuse a permit for the 70 turbine wind-farm at Yaloak, south of Ballan.

The permit was refused because an independent panel believed that a naturally occurring updraft used by wedge-tailed eagles to soar while hunting would put significant numbers of the birds at risk of colliding with the blades, possibly pushing the birds into the threatened species category.

According to Molonglo Landscape Guardians spokesperson, Wendy Bell, the situation in Victoria appears very similar to the Molonglo Ridge, where eagles use the updraft over the ridges to soar for hunting. "Wedge tailed eagles are known to breed in the Molonglo Ridge area and residents regularly report sightings of eagles hunting over the same ridges that the developer is targeting for up to 60 wind-turbines".

Developer, EHN, has told residents it will locate turbines to minimise bird kills, but residents fear that, with the tips spinning at over 300kph, many birds will still fall victim to the blades.

"Some wind-industry people say birds start to avoid the blades after a number have been killed. Even if that's true, the problem with the eagles is that the population is small to start with, so as few as one kill every two years or so could be very damaging to the long-term viability of the population" said Ms Bell.

The Victorian wind-farm panel also expressed concern about the high visual impact of locating turbines on prominent ridgelines and the adverse effect on nearby residents. Victorian Planning Minister, Rob Hulls, said his government was committed to supporting renewable energy in the right location, however wind farms needed to be properly located to deliver sustainable outcomes for the natural environment, landscapes and rural communities.

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Ms Bell said that Mr Hulls' sentiments echo those of local residents, many of whom support renewable energy, but don't agree that the Molonglo Ridge is a good place for a wind-farm. "It's exactly what we, and our local, State and Federal politicians have been saying for months. It's just too visible to too many people, and too close to homes and wildlife refuges. The Victorian decision sends a clear message to developers like EHN that Australians won't tolerate our national icons like wedgies being killed, or having our unique landscapes ruined into the bargain."

Molonglo Landscape Guardians President, Margaret Ritchie, said she had written to Spanish- owned developer, EHN (Oceania) Pty Ltd a month ago asking them when they intended to hold their Open Days, now six months overdue, which would reveal final plans for the wind-farm. "EHN have not replied, but they have previously told us that residents won't be allowed onto the ridges. This means we won't be able to adequately question or verify the findings of their environmental impact studies."

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